

ited wastes. Professor Hall notes that in the East almost wherever an unusually good spot of road is found a tradition lies along it to the effect that that piece of road was built expressly for the passage of some royal personage, the Prince of Wales, the Khedive of Egypt, or the Emperor Napoleon. **A highway for our God.** Very many men have been engaged during very many centuries in building a highway for our God, who never dreamed that they were doing so, and who would not have willingly helped his cause. Exploration and commerce, national aggrandizement, even unworthy motives, "the wrath of man," have all been used by divine providence to advance the missionary movement, and to heighten and prolong God's praise. The first meaning of this passage is, of course, for the exiles. When Cyrus conquered Babylon, perhaps the greatest obstacle to their return was removed, and very marvelously did God open their way. But there is a second and much more important meaning. In the hearts of all Christendom the way of the Lord has been prepared, and the teacher can easily trace how the divine influences have permeated art and music and government and commerce. How the chief works of the greatest composers are oratorios in praise of God; and the chief works of architects are abbeys and cathedrals; and the chief works of the greatest painters are the subjects suggested by the divine revelation; and the chief works of the greatest legislators are those laws which formulate and emphasize the divine will. Beyond this is still a third meaning which has to do directly with missionary effort. At the beginning of this century the Gospel preacher was shut out from most of India, all of China, all of Japan, most of the islands of the sea, all of Central Africa, and most of Central Asia. Now it would be difficult to find a small principality anywhere from which missionaries are excluded. And the preparation of this highway in the moral desert has often been made by men who sought their own selfish purposes, but were used by the molding hand of Providence.

5. All flesh shall see it together. Shall see the glory of the Lord. People who do not like

it, as well as those who do; flouting infidels, as well as earnest Christians, recognize the rapid growth of Christianity.

6. The voice said, Cry. This entire passage is intensely dramatic, and it would be well for the class to read it alternately, omitting the phrases "the voice said," and "he said," so as to preserve the interlocutory form. **All flesh is grass.** Poetry has not reached a truer, sadder note than this in its consideration of the brevity of human life. Poets and philosophers can find no better figure:

"As shadows cast by cloud and sun
Flit o'er the summer grass,
So in thy sight, almighty One,
Earth's generations pass."

8. The word of our God shall stand. If Christians were perfectly sincere they would find to their astonishment that the one thing that gives them more uneasiness than any other is the fear that God's word shall not stand. If they had as little doubt concerning it as Isaiah had, there would be a great difference in missionary collections and in home missions, in the support of our churches and in the aggressive movements for the sake of the unchurched masses. The greatest of evils, perhaps, in modern Christendom, perhaps in your heart and mine, is want of profound faith in the exact and unchanging truth of God's word.

9. Zion . . . of Jerusalem that bringeth good tidings. Instead of this many scholars read, "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion. . . O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem," and understand it to be an appeal to all who are called of God to proclaim his word—prophets, apostles, teachers. But see Critical Notes. **The cities of Judah.** Which when these words were written were tumbling in decay, and one by one submitting to the attacks of the overflowing Eastern conquerors, and which, when these words were first read and practically applied to the condition of the Hebrews, were entirely uninhabited and many of them razed to the ground.

13. His reward . . . his work. His wages. God pays liberally all those who make an endeavor for his sake.

CRITICAL NOTES.

The great critical question which meets us at the opening of this chapter is that of the date and authorship of the last twenty-seven chapters of this Book of Isaiah. The exposition of several passages will be governed by our view of the actual stand-point of the writer. Many eminent biblical scholars are of the opinion that these chapters are not the work of Isaiah the son of Amoz, but of another writer, who flourished near the close of the Babylonian exile. The chief grounds for this belief are (1) that the author

manifestly assumes that the Jewish people are in exile, and Judah and Jerusalem are a desolation; (2) that Cyrus is mentioned by name, and spoken of as one already on the stage of history; and (3) that the language and style of thought are quite different from what appears in the acknowledged writings of the son of Amoz. On the other hand, we have these chapters bound up with the other writings attributed to Isaiah, and the uniform tradition and consensus of the Jewish and Christian people until recent times have attributed them all