

forgiveness, been expounded in more glowing periods. But Mr. Smith sees fit to hang all this on an "ideal biography" of Isaiah, which appears to us as insecure in its historical foundations,¹ as it is gratuitous in the slight it puts on the earlier portion of the prophet's ministry. According to this new reading of events, Isaiah was at first a sharer "in the too easy public religion of his youth," an idealist dreaming of the impossible, and was only awakened to a sense of the realities of the situation by the shock of the great king's leprosy and death. It is certainly a hitherto unheard of idea that the magnificent passage in chap. ii. 2-5, common to Isaiah and Micah ["It shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established," &c.], is an Utopia, and "simply a less gross form of the king's own religious presumption" (p. 61). When chap. vi. was written down we shall not discuss, but we hesitate to assume that it was the product of a soul "grown somewhat uncertain, it may be, of her original inspiration" (p. 58). Whatever may have been Isaiah's moral and spiritual preparation for the call he received, one thing is clear, there was need for a prophet, and God gave one. The call came at a crisis when the nation was about to enter on a new step in its downward moral course. When after a brief independent reign Jotham died, and the throne was occupied by Ahaz—a weak and frivolous prince—the change became fully apparent. It is to the beginning of his reign, and the close of his predecessor's, that the prophecies of chaps. ii.-v. belong, which, with their terrible pictures of misgovernment and oppression, of nobles and ladies rolling in luxury at one end of the social scale, and squalid poverty clamouring for bare subsistence at the other, of shameless debauchery, and heartless grinding down of the cultivators of the soil, hold up to us so vividly

¹ There are three historical assumptions which underlie this part of Mr. Smith's book: (1) That Uzziah died in 740, (2) that his leprosy and death were nearly contemporaneous, (3) that the vision of Isa. vi. took place not before but after Uzziah's death. All these assumptions are doubtful, and the removal of any one of them shakes the foundations of Mr. Smith's theory.