

The Prophet Joel.

Written for the Review.

Joel lived within the tribal limits of Judah and probably in Jerusalem. Some suppose him to have been a priest serving the temple.

In his day a heavy calamity fell upon Judah. A plague of locusts swept over the land. This was rather a common occurrence in those early days, as it is yet in the East. The sands of the desert prove a prolific nursery for these hungry hordes, and from their native wastes they spread themselves, a destructive scourge over the neighbouring lands.

What distinguished the plague in Joel's day was its severity. It surpassed all preceding visitations of the kind, nor was it expected that succeeding generations would see anything more severe. Swarm after swarm of these greedy creatures swept over the country devouring everything in their course. "The land was as the garden of Eden before them and behind them a desolate wilderness." The barley crop was destroyed. It was the first to ripen but the locusts overtook it. The wheat crop coming some what later became their prey. Fruit of all sorts suffered similarly. Grapes, figs, apples and pomegranates were completely ruined. Even the wild fruits were not spared. Every tree and vine whether in garden or field were entirely stripped. Not even the bark was left. For pressed by hunger these relentless armies of the desert consumed fruit and bark alike leaving nothing behind but the whitened skeleton of trunk and branch. Throughout the summer they continued to come swarm upon swarm. Appearing first in the north they swept over the land cloud after cloud. Should anything escape the passing hordes or spring up in their desolated path it would be licked up by those that followed. What the palmerworm left the locust would eat, what the locust left the cankerworm would eat, what the cankerworm left the caterpillar would eat, each succeeding swarm devouring what was left by the preceding. Well might the prophet say: "There hath not been over the like neither shall be any more after them." The prophet gives two touches that especially emphasize the countless multitude. One is that as a deep dark cloud they hid the sun moon and stars, keeping back the light. The other is that being destroyed their decayed carcasses for days tainted the air. No wonder that the people in the presence of such a visitation were dismayed.

Nor was this all. It is said that calamities never come singly. At any rate the plague of locusts was not the only calamity that befell Judah during that eventful summer. A severe drought also visited the land. Indeed the drought may have been the cause of the first named calamity. For one thing is sure, the locusts do not thrive during a wet season and can hardly survive heavy rains. In itself, however, the drought was a heavy disaster. It was so severe that much of the grain sown in the spring never germinated; and if any did germinate and succeeded in escaping the locusts it could not through lack of moisture reach maturity. It was this the prophet had in view when he said: "The seeds rot under the clods," and again "The corn is withered."

In addition to the locusts and the drought there was a third and lesser calamity. Fires swept over parts of the land. The pastures and woodlands especially suffered from this scourge. To this the prophet refers in the words: "the fire hath devoured the pastures in the wilderness and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field."

Nor is it to be forgotten that some time before this Judah had been invaded by a foreign army which carried away some of the people to be sold as slaves. To this the prophet refers when he speaks of the children of Judah and Jerusalem being sold to the Grecians, a boy being exchanged for a harlot and a girl sold for wine. Such an experience would naturally make the subsequent visitations all the more disastrous. So that with locusts and drought and fires following close upon an invasion the cup of the nation's suffering was almost full. No harvest, no fruit, flocks and herds perishing from hunger and thirst, the very beasts of the field panting for their well-known springs, wearily seeking the well-known pastures! Was it any wonder that the people turned pale and trembled at the outlook.

It was in these circumstances that Joel made himself known in all his God given power. Some of the people doubtless knew him before. He may, indeed, in a quiet way have been known as a preacher of righteousness. It was these calamities, however, that brought him to the front. Long before the desolation had reached its highest he had been distressed by the suffering which he saw on every hand. He longed to be of service to his afflicted people. He agonized for them in spirit. While thus possessed by godlike thoughts and desires the divine spirit flooded his soul in a manner and to an extent that he had not before experienced, telling him the meaning of the nation's desolation and how it could be removed and urging him with an irresistible impulse to go and tell the desolate people what he had learned to know.

(Continued next week.)

Daily Thoughts for January.

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen Thy face,
By faith, and faith alone embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove. —Tennyson

A talent is perfected in solitude; a character in the streams of the world.—Goethe.

We are always complaining our days are few, and acting as though there would be no end of them.—Joseph Addison.

When we are alone we have our thoughts to watch; in our family, our tempers; and in society our tongues.—Hannah More.

Keep your conduct abreast of your conscience, and very soon your conscience will be illumined by the radiance of God.—W. M. Taylor, D.D.

It is not by turning over libraries, but by repeatedly porusing and intently contemplating a few great models, that the mind is best disciplined.—Macaulay

Not until you make men self-reliant, intelligent, and fonder of struggle than of help—not till then have you relieved poverty.—Phillips Brooks.

Our safety is in having lofty ideals and in constant labour to secure their realization. Let the getting of money be a man's ideal, and he will of necessity grow toward the dust.—Joseph Parker.

Nearness of life to the Saviour will necessarily involve greatness of love to Him. As nearness to the sun increases the temperature of the various planets, so near and intimate communion with Jesus raises the heat of the soul's affections for Him.—Spurgeon

Fidelity in trifles and an earnest seeking to please God in little matters is a test of real devotion and love. Let your aim be to please our dear Lord, perfectly in little things, and to attain a spirit of childlike simplicity and dependence.—Jean Nicolas Grou.

It seems to me that five minutes of real thankfulness for the love of our dear Saviour is worth a year of hard reasoning on the hidden parts of our redemption.—Dean Alford.

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children.—Bible.

No troubles are so great that they cannot be built into the steps of the staircase by which souls mount up to heaven.—Canon Liddon.

Always remember that sincerity is the very soul of religion. A single intention to please God and to approve ourselves to Him, must animate and govern all that we do.—Dodgridge.

Prayer is the peace of our spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the evenness of recollecting, the seat of meditation, the rest of our cares, and the calm of our tempest. It is the daughter of charity, and the sister of meekness.—Taylor.

The pure in heart see God in everything, and see Him everywhere; and they are supremely blessed.—J. G. Holland.

Failure after a long perseverance is much grander than never to have a striving good enough to be called a failure.—George Eliot.

It is a great mercy to enjoy the gospel of peace, but a greater to enjoy the peace of the Gospel.—Dyer.

Give what you have. To some one it may be better than you dare to think.—Longfellow.

God never wrought miracles to convince atheism, because his ordinary works convince it.—Bacon.

One may live as a conqueror, a king or a magistrate; but he must die as a man.—Daniel Webster.

Goodness expands the heart and makes it humble. The larger the better, the nobler your heart is, the more you will be inclined to make allowance for others, and the more you will say and feel, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"—Robertson.

Our life is determined for us; and it makes the mind very free when we give up wishing, and only think of bearing what is laid upon us and doing what is given us to do.—George Eliot.