

a retardation or acceleration of the earth's movements, might a flood return again, and the waters at the equator be precipitated on the poles, or those at the poles on the equator! But how gloriously constant are the ordinances of heaven! with what unbroken regularity has the clock of time proceeded in its rounds! Not a day's variation, not an hour's, in the sun's returnings, in the moon's waxings or wanings, during all the generations since Noah's day. The most perfect chronometer of man's constructing has its deflections—what touching, what correcting is requisite to check these! But no variations here. Have you ever seen the morning when the looked-for orient beam failed to break upon the mountains? Have you ever seen the winter which did not usher in the spring? Has it ever failed that Earth has put on its verdure, and trees and flowers have bloomed again? Has the cherishing glow of summer been denied to the tender herb, the product of earth's cold womb? Have the appointed weeks of harvest failed to gladden the expectant husbandman? Have the fields failed to wave with their yellow treasures, wherewith the mower has filled his hand, and he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.

But we must consider what the text *does not* warrant us to expect as well as does. It does not mean that seed-time and harvest shall always bless alike every locality. While keeping truth with the race, the God of judgment has not surrendered his right to deal with communities of men, or with individuals, as befits a moral administrator. Day and night, summer and winter, so regular in their vicissitudes, are not unvarying in their character. The heavens may be made to be as brass, and the earth as iron, for the transgressions of a land. Famine, as well as pestilence or the sword, may be the rod of God's indignation. "Your sins," says Jeremiah, speaking of

the appointed weeks of harvest, "have withholden good things from you" (chap. v.). Yet the remark may be justified that, as if in regard to the literality of the promise, it is seldom that, among the threatenings of the Word of God, inundations are mentioned, or alarming overflows of water. Drought—the absence rather than the excess of water—has been commissioned to plead the quarrel of his covenant. Still, not in Ezra's time alone, the rain of heaven has fallen alarmingly. Brooks have portentously swollen; neighbourhoods familiar to us have seen fields and flocks and dwellings swept away by the mountain torrent. The lowering sky has emptied its dreaded waterspout on the frail bark of the mariner. God has not promised that the heavens shall not gather blackness; but he has promised that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and that he will remember his covenant with all flesh.

The chapter following that where the text lies, tells us of this sign or token by which, in gracious condescension, God confirmed His covenant. Not surely that the simple promise of God requires confirmation. Yet the better to allay man's fears, he adds the sign, just as he added to his word his oath for the abundant consolation of the heirs of greater promises:—"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. . . . I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth" (Gen. ix. 13-16).

Shall we notice the cavil of the sciolist that Moses seems to date only from the time of the flood the occurrence of such a phenomenon as the rainbow? It is enough to say that the sacred historian by the term "set" or "appoint" does not describe the rainbow as now for the first time to appear. Granted that in certain dispositions of the