

Hosea exercised his prophetic office in the second half of the eighth century before Christ. This was a great age. Greece was beginning to rise into consciousness and to number her years. Romulus was rocking the cradle of the city of the Seven Hills, destined for a time to become the mistress of the world. It was the beginning of great nations on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates. It was also a time of literary activity. Amos, Joel, Hosea, Isaiah, Zechariah, Micah preached and wrote. The deeds of the mighty were recorded in libraries of brick and stone which we are now reading. They also translated the writings of the great Hamitic race, from which Abraham had been called a thousand years before. It was the time of Samaria's greatest glory and deepest shame. Hosea began his work of prophesying in the closing years of the reign of Jeroboam II., fourth King of the ill-fated house of Jehu. During the reign of this king the Northern Kingdom had acquired great wealth and great fame, and a war-like spirit had been developed. We are not so certain as to the time Hosea ceased to prophecy. Some suppose (Sayce and others) he continued to the close of the Kingdom, 722 B. C.; others, that he ceased in the time of Menahem. He was indeed the prophet of the decline and fall of the Kingdom of Israel; this much is sure from a glance at his book. We are also assured from reading his book that Hosea was a member of the Northern Kingdom. (It is worthy of note that he is the only prophet of that kingdom who has left any written prophecy.) The sympathy expressed for the Israelites, "the intimate knowledge of their circumstances, the topographical and historical allusions point unmistakably to one bred and born in the north." He is a Northerner in heart and his whole soul yearns for his native country. With the Divine insight of a prophet he looks to the very depths of the heart of his country and sees that notwithstanding all the wealth and prosperity of the rule of Jeroboam that it is in a state of corruption, which can only end in dissolution. He saw that immorality in high places, associated with falseness in religion and a wrong foreign policy, was speedily working national ruin. When Jeroboam died and his strong hand was removed from state affairs things became worse. In the words of Farrar, "King succeeded king, and dynasty, dynasty with horrible rapidity. As in the days of the Barrack-Emperors of falling