

some would, and do, say now. They would assign every change to the unfailing working of natural laws without any regard to the origin of these laws or to the will of which they are the expression. We would likely all hesitate to say that the state of God's house and men's indifference towards it had anything to do with the weather, with the falling of rain and the distilling of the dew, with the failure of the crops and vintage, or with the purchasing power of money, if the matter were not clearly revealed. It has been revealed that these two things—their attitude towards God's cause, and their own state—were related as cause and effect are related. For this view we have, not the opinion of men but, a "thus saith the Lord." Let us then hear and note His declaration. Here it is: "Ye looked for much and lo it came to little; and when ye brought it home I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of Mine house that is waste, and ye run every man to his own house." That is clear enough. God clearly indicated that they were responsible for their own calamities—the cause of their own sufferings. They thought they would keep poverty away by keeping to themselves the labor and money necessary for building the temple; but poverty came because they did not build. They thought they would save money by keeping the portion which the building of the temple would require; but that was putting money into bags with holes in them. By plausible excuses they thought they would cheat the Lord; but they cheated themselves. They said: "When better times come, when we get good crops and good wages, and have good raiment, we will build the temple." But He seems to reply: "While ye continue to think so much of yourselves and your houses and comforts, the better times and better wages shall not come. The quickest way out of your distress is to bestir yourselves and deliver my house from the waste in which it lies." We are perhaps very apt to think that there was much reason in their contention. They held it was not a fitting time to undertake the building of the Lord's house; the times were hard, the wages low, the money scarce.