

brew nation become of the first importance in the history of the world. Mankind is prone to exalt its martial leaders, but the men who are the true leaders in the progress of God's work in the world—they who represent the ideas that typify the evolution of righteousness—are often lost to history because they stand in the background. Those are the world's true heroes who catch glimpses of the nobler life, the higher light, that the Over Soul is constantly revealing to humanity, and who quicken the spirit of their fellowmen so that they too begin to yearn for better things. Such were the prophets.

In the early Christian ages the name prophets implied simply preachers, or more exactly religious teachers. They were considered as inspired men, *i. e.* men endowed with a clearer discernment of the will of God than ordinary men possessed. Says Prof Noyes (Prof. of Hebrew, Harvard College): "The Hebrew prophet was in greater or less degree a man of genius. He was filled with a lofty enthusiasm, and an invincible energy. He was moved, excited, rapt into ecstasy. He was endued with an uncommon capacity for discerning the true and the excellent. His pure reason, illuminated by God, pierced into the character of the Divine government and its issues. His comprehensive and far-reaching understanding, intently employed on causes, character and consequences of everything which concerned the well being of the people of God, foresaw events hidden from common eyes. His exalted imagination presented to him visions of God. His pure and sensitive conscience heard the call of God, and felt a Divine command or commission in relation to all which he felt and saw. He had thus a marked superiority over his contemporaries, and this superiority he attributed to the spirit of God. The influence of the Divine Spirit upon his soul is the key for the explanation of all the various language which is used to express the reception of Divine communications, such as hearing the

voice of God, seeing visions of God, having the word of God come to him, etc."

Accepting this as a fair definition of the Hebrew prophet, we are prepared to find a difference in them. As men—men of genius, even inspired men—they were the product of their time. And so we find the earlier prophets far less exalted in their spiritual perceptions than were those of succeeding ages, and in none of them do we find infallibility. In reading into their characters, as religious people are wont to do—superhuman powers of predicting coming events, or future history, we not only misinterpret them, but we obscure from our minds the most important elements of their strength, that made the prophets for all ages examples for human aspiration and endeavor. In reading the story of the prophets we must keep in view the circumstance that the Hebrew nation was a theocratic government, and that there was not a shadow of doubt in the minds of any of the people that God communicated His will to those who were endowed with the capacity to hear His voice. It was not believed in David's reign to be within the power of all men to receive this gift of reading the mind of God, as was afterwards taught by the prophets, but the people had unwavering faith that there were men and women among them who had peculiar access to the mind of God, and who as messengers of God's will must be obeyed. Nor must we make the mistake to infer that such messengers were priests or of priestly rank. It was not yet the day of the priests. The prophets ante-date the priests. All that we read in the first six books of the Bible of the organization and the work of the priesthood, was written centuries after David's time, and refers to an institution that had no existence in the age of the prophets. Unlike the priesthood, there was nothing hereditary in the office of the prophets. They were in all cases persons who sprang up from the ranks of the common people. When the occasion demanded, as in