AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

OF THE PROPHECY OF

NAHUM.

The name of this prophet signifies a comforter; for it was a charge given to all the prophets, Comfort ye, comfort ye my people; and even this prophet, though wholly taken up in foretelling the destruction of Nineveh, which speaks terror to the Assyrians, is, even in that, comforter to the ten tribes of Israel, who, it is probable, were now lately carried captives into Assyria. It is very uncertain at what time he lived and prophesied, but it is most probable that he lived in the time of Hezekiah, and prophesied against Nineveh, after the captivity of Israel by the king of Assyria, which was in the ninth year of Hezekiah, and before Sennacherib’s invading Judah, which was in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, for to that attempt, and the defeat of it, it is supposed, the first chapter has reference; and it is probable that it was delivered a little before it, for the encouragement of God’s people in that day of treading down and perplexity. It is the conjecture of the learned Huculus, that the two other chapters of this book were delivered by Nahum some years after, perhaps in the reign of Manasseh, and in that reign the Jewish chronologies generally place him; somewhat nearer to the time when Nineveh was conquered, and the Assyrian monarchy reduced, by Cyaxares and Nebuchadnezzar, some time before the first captivity of Judah. It is probable that Nahum did by word of mouth prophesy many things concerning Israel and Judah, as it is certain that Jonah did, (2 Kings xiv. 25.) though we have nothing of either of them in writing, but what related to Nineveh, of which, though a great and ancient city, yet, probably, we should never have heard in sacred writ, if the Israel of God had not had some concern in it.

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CHAP. I.

In this chapter we have, I. The inscription of the book, v. 1. II. A magnificent display of the glory of God, in a mixture of wrath and justice against the wicked, and mercy and grace toward his people, and the discovery of his majesty and power in both, v. 2. III. A particular application of this (as most interpreters think) to the destruction of Sennacherib and the Assyrian army, when they besieged Jerusalem, which was a very memorable and illustrious instance of the power both of God’s justice and of his mercy, and spake abundance of terror to his enemies, and encouragement to his faithful servants, v. 9. 16.

1. THE burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

This title directs us to consider,

1. The great city against which the word of the Lord is here delivered; it is the burden of Nineveh; Vol. iv.—6 R

not only a prophecy, and a weighty one, but a burdensome prophecy, a dead weight to Nineveh, a mill-stone hanged about its neck. Nineveh was the place concerned, and the Assyrian monarchy, which that was the royal seat of. About a hundred years before this, Jonah had, in God’s name, foretold the speedy overthrow of this great city; but then the Ninevites repented, and were spared, and that decree did not bring forth; the Ninevites then saw clearly how much it was to their advantage, to turn from their evil way, it was the saving of their city; and yet, soon after, they returned to it again; it became worse than ever, a bloody city, and full of lies and robbery; they repented of their repentance, returned with the dog to his vomit, and at length grew worse than ever they had been; then God sent them not this prophet, as Jonah, but this prophecy, to read them their doom, which was now irreversible. Note, The reprieve will not be continued, if the repentance be not continued in. If men turn from the good they began to do, they can
expect no other than that God should turn from the favour he began to show, Jer. xviii. 10.

2. The poor prophet by whom the word of the Lord is here delivered; it is the book of the vision of Nahum in the Elkesihite. The burden of Nahum was what the prophet plainly foresaw, for it was his vision, and what he left upon record; it is the book of the vision, that, when he was gone, the event might be compared with the prediction, and might confirm it. All the account we have of the prophet himself, is, that he was an Elkesihite, of the town called Edes, or Elesa, which, St. Jerome says, was in Galilee. Some observe, that the scripture ordinarily says little of the prophets themselves, that our faith might not stand upon their authority, but upon that of the blessed Spirit by whom their prophecies were ended.

2. God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious: the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. 3. The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. 4. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. 5. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. 6. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. 7. The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him. 8. But with an over-running flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

Nineveh knows not God, that God that contends with her, and therefore is here told what a God he is; and it is good for us all to mix faith with that which is here said concerning him, which speaks a great deal of terror to the wicked, and comfort to good people; for this glorious description of the Sovereign of the world, like the pillar of cloud and fire, has a bright side towards Israel, and a dark side toward the Egyptians. Let each take his portion from it; let sinners read it and tremble, let saints read it and triumph. The wrath of God is here revealed from heaven against his enemies, his favour and mercy are here assured to his faithful, loyal subjects, and his almighty power in both, making his wrath very terrible, and his favour very desirable.

1. He is a God of inflexible justice, a jealous God, and will take vengeance on his enemies; let Nineveh know this, and tremble before him. Their idols are insignificant things, there is nothing formidable in them; but the God of Israel is greatly to be feared; for, 1. He renews the affrights and indignities done him by those that deny his being or any of his perfections, that set up other gods in competition with him, that destroy his laws, arraign his proceedings, ridicule his word, or are abusive to his people. Let such know that Jehovah, the one only living and true God, is a jealous God, and a Re-
venger; he is jealous for his own honour in the matters of his worship, and will not endure a rival; he is jealous for the comfort of his worshippers, jealous for his land, (Joel ii. 18.) and will not have that injured. He is a Revenger, and he is furious; he has fury, (so the word is, Hab. ii. 12.) but when it is an ungoverned passion, (so he has said, fury in not in me, Isa. xxvii. 4.) but he has it in such a way as becomes the righteous God, to put an edge upon his justice, and to make it appear more terrible to those who otherwise would stand in no awe of it. He is Lord of anger; so the Hebrew phrase is, for that which we read, he is furious; he has anger, but he keep it at command and may use it, whenever it is often Lord over us, as theirs that have no rule over their own spirits, but God is always Lord of his anger, and weighs a path to it, Ps. lxviii. 50.

2. He resolved to reckon with those that put those affronts upon him. We are told here, not only that he is a Revenger, but that he will take vengeance; he has said he will, he has sworn it, Deut. xxxii. 40. 41. Whoever are his adversaries and enemies among men, he will make them feel his resentment; and though the sentence against his enemies is not executed speedily, yet he reserves wrath for them, and reserves them for it in the day of wrath. Against his own people, who repent, and humble themselves before him, he keeps not his anger for ever, but against his enemies he will for ever let out his anger. 9. He will not at all acquit the wicked that sin, and stand to it, and doe not depart wickedly depart from their God, that depart, and never return; (Ps. xviii. 21.) and these he will not acquit. Humble supplicants will find him gracious, but scornful beggars will not find him easy, or that the door of mercy will be opened to a loud, but late, Lord, Lord. This revelation of the wrath of God against his enemies is applied to Nineveh, (v. 8.) and should be applied by all those to themselves who go on still in their trespasses; With an over-running flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof. The army of the Chaldeans shall overrun the country of the Assyrians, and lay it all waste. God's judgments, when they come with commission, are like a deluge to any people, which they cannot keep off, or make head against. Darkness shall pursue his enemies, and the Chaldeans shall follow them, whithersoever they go, shall pursue them unto utter darkness; if they think to flee from the darkness that pursues them, they will but fall into that which is before them.

II. He is a God of irresistible power, and is able to deal with his enemies, be they ever so many, ever so mighty, ever so hardy. He is great in power, (v. 3.) and therefore it is good having him our Friend, and bad having him our Enemy. Now here, 1. The power of God is asserted and proved by divers instances of it in the kingdom of nature, where we always find its visible effects in the ordinary course of nature, and sometimes in the surprising alterations of that course. (1.) If we look up into the regions of the air, there we shall find proofs of his power, for he has his ways in the whirlwind and the storm; which way soever God goes, he carries a whirlwind and a storm along with him, for the terror of his enemies, Ps. xviii. 9, 8c. And wherever there is a whirlwind and a storm, God has the command of it, the control of it, makes his way through it, goes on his way in it, and serves his own purposes by it. He speaks command of the whirlwind, even stormy winds fulfil his word. He has his way in the whirlwind, he goes on undiscovered, and the methods of his providence are as unaccountable; as it is said, His way is in the sea. The clouds are the dust of his feet, he treads on them, walks on them, raises them when he pleases.
as a man with his feet raises a cloud of dust. It is but by permission, or usurpation rather, that the devil is the prince of the power of the air, for that power is in God's hand. (2.) If we cast our eye upon the great deeps, there we find that the sea is his, for he made it; for when he pleases, he rebukes the sea, and makes it dry, by blowing up with his wind rivers and streams which wholly disappear. He gave those proofs of his power when he divided the Red sea and Jordan, and can do the same again whenever he pleases. (3.) If we look round us on this earth, we find proofs of his power, when either by the extreme heat and drought of summer, or the cold and frost of winter, Bashan languishes, and Carmel, and the valley of Lebanon, and strongest flower languishes. His power is often seen in earthquakes, which shake the mountains, (v. 5.) melt the hills and melt them down, and level them with the plains. When he pleases, the earth is burnt at his presence by the scorching heat of the sun, and he could burn it with fire from heaven, as he did Sodom, and at the end of time he will burn the world and all that dwell therein. The earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Thus great is the Lord, and of great power.

2. This is particularly applied to his anger. If God be an almighty God, we may thence infer, (v. 6.) Who can stand before his indignation? The Ninivites had once found God slow to anger, (as he says, v. 5.) and perhaps presumed on it. But God had a mind to make them feel this. (1.) See God here, as a consuming fire, terrible and mighty. Here is his indignation against sin, and the fierceness of his anger, his fury poured out, not like water, but like fire, like the fire and brimstone rained upon Sodom, Ps. xi. 6. Hell is the fierceness of God's anger, Rev. xvi. 19. God's anger is so fierce, that it beats down all before it; the rocks are thrown down by him, which seemed unable to stand. (2.) See sinners here, as stubble before the fire, weak and impotent, and a very unequal match for the wrath of God. [1.] They are utterly unable to bear up against it, so as to resist it, and put by the strokes of it; Who can stand before his indignation? Not the poorest and most daring sinner; not the world of the ungodly, no, not the angels that sinned. [2.] They are utterly unable to bear up against it, so as to keep up their spirits, and preserve any enjoyment of themselves; Who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? As it is impossible for the devil to abide in God's presence, so is it impossible for sinners to abide in his anger. Some of the effects of God's displeasure in this world a man may bear up under, but the fierceness of his anger, when it fastens immediately upon the soul, who can bear it? Let us therefore fear before him, let us stand in awe, and not sin.

III. He is a God of infinite mercy; and in the midst of all the wrath mercies are remembered. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, that go on still in their transgressions, but let not those that trust in God, tremble before him. For, 1. He is slow to anger, (v. 3.) not easily provoked, but ready to show mercy to those who have offended him, and to receive them into favour upon their repentance. 2. When the tokens of his rage against the wicked are abroad, he takes care for the safety and comfort of his own people; (v. 7.) The Lord is good to those that are good, and to them he will be a strong hold in the day of trouble. Note, The same Almighty power that is exerted for the terror and destruction of the wicked is engaged, and shall be employed, for the protection and satisfaction of his own people; he is able both to save and to destroy. In the day of public trouble, when God's judgments are in the earth, laying all waste, he will be a Place of defence to those that by faith put themselves under his protection, those that trust in him in the way of their duty, that live a life of dependence upon him, and devotedly commit themselves to him; for him he takes cognizance of their case, knows what is best for them, and what course to take most effectually for their relief. They are perhaps obscure and little regarded in the world, but the Lord knows them, Ps. i. 6.

9. What do ye imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time. 10. For while they be folded together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry. 11. There is one come out of thee that imagineth evil against the Lord, a wicked counsellor. 12. Thus saith the Lord, Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. 13. For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder. 14. And the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image, and the molten image; I will make thy grave; for thou art vile. 15. Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

These verses seem to point at the destruction of the army of the Assyrians under Sennacherib, which may well be reckoned a part of the burthen of Nineveh, the head city of the Assyrian empire, and a pledge of the destruction of Nineveh itself about an hundred years after: and this was an event which Isaiah, with whom, probably, this prophet was contemporary, spake much of. Now observe here, 1. The great provocation which the Assyrians gave to God, the just and jealous God, for which, though slow to anger, he would take vengeance; (v. 11.) There is one come out of thee, and imagines evil against the Lord—Sennacherib and his spokesman Rabshakeh; they framed an evil letter and an evil speech, not only against Hezekiah and his people, but against God himself; reflecting upon him as level with the gods of the heathen, and unable to protect his worshippers, he challenged his people from putting confidence in him, and urging them rather to put themselves under the protection of the great king, the king of Assyria; they contrived to alter the property of Jerusalem, that it should be no longer the city of the Lord, the holy city, this one, this mighty one, so he thinks himself, that
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comes out of Nineveh, imagining evil against the Lord, brings on Nineveh this burden; never was the wise counsel of Magasts of her wisdom more daringly, more blasphemously affronted than by Sennacherib at that time: he was a wicked counselor, who counselled them to despair of God's protection, and surrender themselves to the king of Assyria, and endeavoured to put them out of conceit with Hezekiah's reformation; (Isa. xxxvi. 7) with this wicked counsellor he here expostulates, (v. 9.) He, therefore, imagines evil against the Lord, that foolish, wicked thing is it for you to plot against God, as if you could outwit divine wisdom, and overpower Omnipotence itself! Note, There is a great deal imagined against the Lord by the gates of hell, and against the interests of his kingdom in the world; but it will prove a vain thing, Ps. ii. 2. He that sits in heaven, laughs at the imaginations of the pretex, and shall smite against him, and will turn their counsels headlong.

2. The great destruction which God will bring upon them for it; not immediately upon the whole monarchy, (the ruin of that was deferred till the measure of their iniquity was full,) but, (1.) Upon the army; God will make an utter end of that; it shall be totally cut off and ruined at one blow; one fatal stroke of the destroying angel shall lay them desolate and rooted out as the first time, (II. Kings xiv. 10,) for the second time, for it shall not need. With some sinners God makes a quick despatch, does their business at once; divine vengeance goes not by one certain rule, nor in one constant track; but, one way or other, by acute diseases or chronic ones, by slow deaths or lingering ones, he will make an utter end of all his enemies, who persist in their imaginations against him. We have reason to think that the Assyrian army was mostly of the same spirit, and spoke the same language, with their general, and now God would take them to task, though they did but say as they were taught; and it shall appear that they have laid themselves open to divine wrath by their own act and deed, v. 10. (1.) They are as thorns that entangle one another, and are folded together; they make one another worse, and more involved in sin, and so spread anger and mischief, and entangle one another's hearts, and strengthen one another's hands, in their impiety; and therefore God will do with them as the husbandman does with a bush of thorns, when he cannot bear it, he puts them all into the fire together. (2.) They are as drunkards, intoxicated with pride and rage; and such as they shall be irrecoverably overthrown and destroyed. They shall be as drunkards, besotted to their own ruin, and shall stagger and fall, and make themselves a reproach, and be justly laughed at. (3.) They shall be devoured as stubble fully dry, which is irresistibly and irrecoverably consumed by the flame. The judgments of God are as devouring fire to those that make themselves as stubble to them. It is again threatened concerning this great army, (v. 12.) that though they be quiet and likewise many, yet shall they be as thorns besieged upon them, because they are numerous, yet thus shall they be cut down, or certainly shall they be cut down, as grass and corn are cut down, with as little ado, when he shall pass through, even the destroying angel that is commissioned to cut them down. Note, The security of sinners, and their confidence in their own strength, are often presages of ruin approaching. (4.) The destruction comes upon the king; he imagines evil against the Lord, and shall he escape? No, (v. 14.) "The Lord has given a commandment concerning thee, the decree is gone forth, that thy name be no more sown, that thy memory perish, that thou be no more talked of as thou hast been, and that the report of thy mighty actions be dispersed upon the wings of fame, and celebrated with her trumpet." Because Sennacherib's son reigned in his stead, he makes another part of his army the Assyrian empire entombed. Note, They that imagine evil against the Lord, hasten evil upon themselves and their own families and interests, and ruin their own names by dishonouring his name. It is further threatened, (1.) That the images he worshipped should be cut off from their temple; the graven image and the molten image out of the house of their god, which some think, will happen when Sennacherib was slain by his two sons, as he was worshipping in the house of Ninoeh his god; by which barbarous parricide we may suppose the temple was looked upon as defiled, and was therefore disused, and the images cut off from it, the worshippers of these images no longer attending there. Or, it may be taken more generally to speak of utter ruin of Assyria; the army of the enemy shall lay all waste, and not spare even the images of their gods; by which God would intimate to them that one of the grounds of his controversy with them was, their idolatry. (2.) That Sennacherib's grave shall be made there, some think in the house of his god; there he was skinned, and there he shall be buried, for he is vile; he lies under this perpetual mark of disgrace, that he had so far lost his interest in the favor of God, that he perished by the hand of a man and by the hands of two of them murdered him. Or, it may be meant of the ignominious fall of the Assyrian monarchy itself, upon the ruins of which that of Babylon was raised; what a noise was made about the grave of that once formidable state, but now despicable, is largely described, Ezek. xxxvi. 3, 11, 15, 16. Note, Those that make themselves vile by scandalous sins, God will make them vile by shameful punishments. 3. The great deliverance which God would hereby work for his own people, and the city that was called by his name. The ruin of the church's enemies is the salvation of the church, and a very great salvation it was, that was wrought for Jerusalem by the overthrow of Sennacherib's army. (1.) The siege shall hereby be raised; "Now will I break his yoke from off thee, by which thou art kept in bondage, and shall deliver thee from under the burden, by which thou seemest bound over to the Assyrian's wrath." That vast victorious army, when it forced free quarters for itself throughout all the land of Judah, and lived at discretion there, was as yokes and bonds upon them. Jerusalem, when it was besieged, was, as it were, bound and fettered by it; but when the destroying angelf had done his work, Jerusalem's bonds were burst asunder, and she was set at liberty again; this was a figure of the great salvation, by which the Jerusalem that is above is made free, is made free indeed. (2.) The enemy shall be so weakened and dispirited, that they shall never make any such attempt again, and the end of this trouble shall be so well gained by the grace of God, that there shall be no more occasion for such a severe correction. (1.) God will not again afflict, nor make the Israelites to suffer distresses on their adversaries, as he did by the destruction of this army, but "for he has by this frit accomplished his whole work upon mount Zion, (Isa. x. 12) and therefore, though I have afflicted thee, I will afflic thee no more; the bitter portion shall not be repeated, unless there he need, and the patient's case shall call for it; for God doth not afflict willingly.

It is enough; for he has by this frit accomplished his whole work upon mount Zion, (Isa. x. 12) and therefore, though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more; the bitter portion shall not be repeated, unless there he need, and the patient's case shall call for it; for God doth not afflict willingly. (2.) The enemy shall not dare again to set his face against Jerusalem, and to attempt the ruin of the children of God; he that has passed through thee as they have done, to lay all waste, for he is utterly cut off, and disabled to do it. His army is cut off, his spirit cut off, and at length he is himself cut off. Lastly, The tiding of this great deliverance shall be published and welcomed with abundance of joy throughout the kingdom, v. 15. While Sennacherib prevailed, and carried all
before him, every day brought bad news; but now, behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, the feet of the evangelist; he is seen coming at a distance upon the mountains, as fast as his feet will carry him; and how pleasant a sight is it once more to see a messenger of peace, after we have received so many of Job's messengers! We find these words made use of by another prophet, to illustrate the meaning of the deliverance of the people of God out of Babylon; (Isa. liii. 7.) not that the prophets stole the word one from another, (as those did, Jer. xxxiii. 30.) but, speaking by the same Spirit, they often used the same expressions: and it may be of good use for ministers to testify their consent to wholesome truths. (1 Tim. vi. 3.) by concerning in the same forms of sound words. 2 Tim. i. 13. (The word is trustworthy;) by the apostle both from Isaiah and Nahum, and applied to the great redemption wrought out for us by our Lord Jesus, and the publishing of it to the world by the everlasting gospel, Rom. x. 15. Christ's ministers are those messengers of good tidings that preach peace by Jesus Christ; how beautiful are the feet of those messengers! How welcome their message to the heart and dwelling place of sin! And observe, He that brings these good tidings, brings them with a call to Judah to keep her solemn feasts, and perform her vows. During the trouble, [1.] The ordinary feasts had been intermitted. Inter arma silent leges—The voice of law cannot be heard amid the shouts of battle. While Jerusalem was compassed with armies, they could not turn to God, that then would they have removed the hope is taken off, they must return to the observation of their feasts; and the feasts of the Lord will then be doubly sweet to the people of God, when they have been for some time deprived of the benefit of them, and God graciously restores them their opportunities again; for we are taught the worth of such mercies by the want of them. [2.] They had made vows to God, and would deliver them out of this distress, they would do something extraordinary in his service, to his honour; and now that the deliverance is wrought, they are called upon to perform their vows; the promise they had then made must now be made good, for better it is not to vow, than to vow and not to pay. And those words, The wicked shall no more pass through thee, may be taken as a promise of the perfecting the good work of reformation, which Hezekiah had begun; the wicked shall not, as they have done, walk on every side, but they shall be cut off. Then the baffling of the attempts from the wicked enemies abroad is a mercy indeed to a nation, when it is accompanied with the restraint and reformation of the wicked at home, who are its more dangerous enemies.

CHAP. II.

We now come closer to Nineveh, that great city; she took not warning by the destruction of her armies, and the fall of her king, and therefore may expect, since she persists in her enmity to God, that he will proceed in his execution of judgment. Here he forecasts, I. The approach of the enemy that should destroy Nineveh, and the terror of his military preparations, v. 1.-5. II. The taking of the city, v. 6. III. The captivity of the queen, the flight of the inhabitants, the wasting of all its wealth, and the consternation it should be in, v. 7.-10. IV. All this is run up to its true causes, their sinning against God, and God's appearing against them, v. 11.-13. All this is fulfilled with Nebuchadnezzar, king of Chaldea, 2 Kings, xxiv. 1. the year of his reign, in conjunction with Cyparisses, or Ahasuerus, king of the Medes, conquered Nineveh, and made himself master of the Assyrian monarchy.

1. If that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, for-
turn away the pride of Jacob, by the captivity of the two tribes, as he did the pride of Israel, by their captivity: he has done it. He has determined to do it, to bring captives upon them, and the enemy that is to do it must begin with Nineveh, and reduce that first, and humble the pride of that. God is looking upon proud cities, and abusing them, even those that were nearest to him. Samaria is humbled, Jerusalem is to be humbled, and their pride broken. God has been more generous than he was: they earned to the city, he brought down too: Emptiers have emptied the cities, and marred the vine-branches, in the country of Jacob and Israel; and must not the excellence of Nineveh, that is so much her pride, be turned away too?

3. A particular account given in of the terrors within the invading enemy shall appear against Nineveh in these things, no way, that the enemy made: for

(1.) The shields of his mighty men are made red, and, probably, their other arms and array; as if they were already tinctured with the blood they had shed, or intended hereby to signify they would put all to the sword; they hung out a red flag, in token that they would give no quarter. (2.) The valiant men are in scarlet, not only red clothes, to indicate their bravery and exultation in the day of battle, but rich clothes, to intimate the wealth of the army, and that is the sinews of war. (3.) The chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation; when they are making their approaches, they shall fly as swift as lightning, the wheels shall strike fire upon the stones, and those that drive them shall drive furiously with a flaming indignation. (4.) The fir-trees shall be terribly shaken; the great men of Nineveh, that overtop their neighbours, as the stately firs do the shrubs; on, or the very standing trees shall be made to shake by the violent concussions of the earth, that which great army shall cause. (5.) The chariots of war shall be very terrible; (v. 4.) They shall rage in the streets, that is, those that drive them shall rage, you would think the chariots themselves raging; they shall be so numerous, and drive with so much fury, that even in the city, as they come where, one would think, there should be room enough, they shall justle one another; and these iron chariots shall be made so bright, that in the beams of the sun they shall seem like torches in the night; they shall run like the lightnings, so swiftly, so furiously. Nebuchadnezzar's commandments are here called his worthies, his gallants, (so the margin reads it,) his heroes, those he shall recount, and order their march and with them all the蜱iest whores at their respective posts, he is entering upon action, is resolved to take the field immediately, and to open the campaign with the siege of Nineveh. His worthies shall remember, (so some read it,) they shall be mindful of the duty of their place, and the charge they have received, and shall thereby be made so intent upon their business, that their minds and hearts will be wholly set upon the success of their undertaking, and be more haste than good speed; they stumble, but shall not fall; for they shall make haste to the wall thereof, shall open the trenches; and the defence, or the covered way, shall be prepared, (something to shelter them from the darts of the besieged,) and they shall so closely carry on the siege, and with so much vigour, that at length the gates of the river, or the gates of Nineveh, (as they are called,) which opened upon the river Tigris, (on which Nineveh was built,) shall be first forced by, or betrayed to, the enemy; and by those gates they shall enter. And then the palace shall be dissolved, either the king's house, or the house of Nisroch his god; the same word signifies both a palace and a temple. When the God of heaven goes forth to contend with a people, neither the palaces nor their kings, neither the temples nor their gods, can protect and shelter them, but must all inevitably fall with them.

4. A prediction of the consequences of this, and is easy to be seen and understood; so miraculous those will be. (1.) The queen shall fall into the hands of the enemy; (v. 7.) Huzzab shall be led away captive; she that was established, (so some read it,) thought herself safe, because she was concealed, and shut up in secret, shall be discovered, (so the margin reads it,) and shall be led away captive, in greater disgrace than that of common prisoners; she shall be brought of a mock-state, and her maidens of them shall lead her, because she is weak and faint, not able to bear such frights and hardships, which are doubly hard and frightful to those that have not been used to them; they shall attend her, not to speak cheerfully to her and to encourage her, but murmuring and maiming themselves, as with the voice of doves, the doves of the valleys, (Ezek. vii. 16.) noted for their kind and tender ways, shall be crying upon their breasts, their heads shall be shaven; they shall be shaven; they shall be babbling upon their breasts, beating their own breasts in grief and vexation, as if they were drumming upon them, for so the word signifies. (2.) The inhabitants, though numerous, shall none of them be able to make head against the invaders, or stand their ground; (v. 8.) Nineveh is of old like a pool of water, replenished with people as a pool with fish; and now, though they are so many, and so close together, though they have within them (as they have within them a mass,) to bear the shock as it were, but they shall not be able to inspire one another with courage, but they shall flee away like waters. Their commanders shall do what they can to animate them; they shall cry, "Stand, stand, have a good heart on it, and we shall do well enough," but none shall so much as look back; they shall not have the least spark of courage remaining, but every one shall think it his wisest course to make his best of the opportunity to escape; they shall not so much as think of standing, but will fly as fast as they can, that they may dispirit the strongest and bestest, in the day of distress, so that they shall not be what one would expect from them, but like a pool of water, the water whereof is dried up and gone. (3.) The wealth of the city shall become a prey, and all its rich furnishings shall fall into the hands of the victorious enemy; (v. 9.) they shall thus animate and invite one another to plunder, Take the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold; thus the officers shall stir up the soldiers to improve their opportunity; here are silver and gold enough for them, for there is no end of the store of money and plate. Nineveh, having been of old like a pool of water, has gathered a vast deal of mud; and abundance of glory it has out of all the pleasant furniture, all the vessels of silver, gold again, gold again; Take the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold; thus the officers shall stir up the soldiers to improve their opportunity; here are silver and gold enough for them. They now shall be a prey and a pride to the conquerors. Note, Those who prepare raiment as the clay, and heap up silver as the dust, know not who may put on the raiment, and divide the silver, Job xxxvi. 16, 17. Thus this rich city is empty, and void, and waste, v. 10. See the vanity of worldly wealth; instead of defending its owners, it does but expose them, and enable others to make new mischief. (4.) The soldiers and people shall have no heart to appear for the defence of the city. Their spirits shall melt away like wax before the
The phrase "fire, their knees shall smite together, (as Belshazzar's did in his agony, Dan. v. 6.) so that they shall not be able to stand their ground, nor, to make their escape; much pain shall be in all lions, as is the case in extreme frights, so that they shall not be able to hold up their backs. And the eyes of them all shall gather blackness, like that of a pot that is every day over the fire; so the Lord signifies, Not, Guilt in the conscience will fill men with terror in an evil day, and those who place their happiness in the wealth of this world, and set their hearts upon it, think themselves undone when their silver and their gold and their pleasant furniture are taken from them.

11. Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding-place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid? 12. The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey and his dens with ravin. 13. Behold I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will burn thy chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions; and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

Here we have Nineveh's ruin.

1. Triumphed in by its neighbours, who now remember against it all the oppressions and abuse of power it had been guilty of in its pomp and prosperity; (v. 11, 12.) Where is the dwelling of the lions? It is gone, there appears no remnants, no footsteps of it; Where is the feeding-place of the young lions, where they glut themselves with prey; The princes of Nineveh had been as lions, as beasts of prey; cruel tyrants are no better, nor, in this respect much worse—than being men, humanity is expected from them; nay, if they were indeed lions, they would not prey upon those of their own kind; Sevis inter se convent us—Fierce bears agree together. But in the shape of business, they have a multitude of lions; they walked in Nineveh as a lion in the woods, and none made them afraid; every one stood in awe of them, and they were under no apprehensions of danger from any; though no body loved them, every body feared them, and that was all they desired; Oderint, dum mutuant—Let them hate, so that they do but fear. The king himself, and every prince, made it their business, by all the arts of violence and extortion, to enrich himself, and raise his family; he did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, (and no little would be enough for them,) and he strangled for his lionesses, killed all that came near him, and seized what they had for his children, for his wives and concubines, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin, as lions are wont to do. Note, Many make it an excuse for their rapine and injustice, that they have wives and children to provide for, whereas what is so got will never do them any good; they that fear the Lord, and get what they have honestly, shall not want a competency for themselves and theirs, verily they shall be fed, when the young lions, though dens and holes were filled with prey and game for them, shall lack and suffer hunger, Ps. xxxiv. 10.

2. It is avowed by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, it is his doing, and let all the world take notice that it is so; (v. 13.) Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts. And what good can hosts do for her in her defence, when the Lord of hosts is against her for her destruction? The oppressors in Nineveh thought they only set their neighbours against them, who were not a match for them, and whom they could easily overpower; but it proved they set God against them, who is, and will be, the Assreater of right, and the Avenger of wrong. God is against the princes of Nineveh, and then, (1.) These military preparations will stand them in no stead; I will burn her chariots in the smoke; he does not say in the fire, but in contempt of them, the very smoke of God's indignation shall serve to burn their chariots; they shall be consumed as soon as the fire of his indignation is kindled, while as yet it does but smoke, and not flame out. (2.) The disguises of the chariots shall be removed, and stinted with the smoke; then the chariots of their glory shall be the shame of their families, Isa. xlix. 18. (2). Their children, the hopes of their families, shall be cut off; The sword shall devour the young lions, whom they were so solicitous to provide for by oppression and extortion. Note, It is just with God to deprive those of their children, which is all of comfort in the latter days, who take sinful courses to enrich them, and (as has been said of some) damn their souls to make their sons gentlemen. (3.) The wealth they have heaped up by fraud and violence, shall neither be enjoyed by them, nor employed for them; I will cut off thy prey from the earth; not only shall not be the better for it, but the contrary shall. Some understand it of the disabling of them for the future to prey upon their neighbours. (4.) Their agents abroad shall not have that respect from their neighbours, and that influence upon them, which sometimes they had had; The voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard, no more be heeded. Which some think refers to Rabshekeh, one of Nineveh's messengers, that had blasphemed the living iniquity which was remembered against Nineveh long after. Those are not worthy to be heard again that have once spoken reproachfully of God.

CHAP. III.

This chapter goes on with the burden of Nineveh, and concludes it. 1. The sins of that great city are charged upon it, murder, (v. 1.) whoredom and witchcraft, (v. 4.) and a general extent of wickedness, v. 19. II. Just judgments are here threatened against it, blood for blood, (v. 2, 3,) and shame for shameful sins, v. 5—7. III. Instances are given of the like desolations being brought upon other places for the like sins, v. 8—11. IV. The enumeration of all those things which they depended upon, and put confidence in, is foretold, v. 12—19.

1. Wo to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not; 2. The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. 3. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses: 4. Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. 5. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the
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6. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazng-stock.

7. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

Here is,

I. Nineveh arraigned and indicted; it is a high charge: that is here drawn up against that great city, and neither her numbers nor her grandeur shall secure her from prosecution. 1. It is a city of blood, in which a great deal of innocent blood is shed, either by unrighteous war, or under colour and pretence of public justice, or by suffering barbarous murderers to go unpunished; for this the righteous God will make inquisition. 2. It is all full of lies, truth is banished from among them, there is no such thing as honesty, one knows not whom to believe, nor whom to trust. 3. It is all full of robbery and rapine; no man cares what mischief he does, nor to whom he does it; The prey departs not, they never knew when to stop; pride, haughtiness, and oppression. They shed blood, and told lies, in pursuit of the prey, that they might enrich themselves. 4. There is a multitude of whoredoms in it, that is, idolatries, spiritual whoredoms, by which she defiled herself, and to which she seduced the neighbouring nations, as a well-favoured harlot, and sold, and ruined nations through her whoredoms. 5. She is a mistress of witchcrafts, and by which she seduced nations, and brought down them to destruction. 6. These were the whoredoms, like those of Tyre, Isa. xxxii. 17. 17. These were her witchcrafts, with which she unaccountably gained dominion. And this it is that God says, (from whom she made to join with her in her idolatrous rites, to tie them the tighter to her interests; and made use of her wealth, power, and greatness, to draw people into alliances with her, by which she gained advantages over them, and made a band of them. These were the whoredoms, which she joined, and her pride and喜爱 with her, who, having made of one blood all nations of men, never designed one to be a nation of tyrants, and another of slaves, and who claims it as his prerogative to be universal Monarch.

II. Nineveh condemned to ruin, upon this indictment. Wo to this bloody city! v. 1. See what this wo is.

1. Nineveh had with her cruelties been a terror and destruction to others, and therefore destruction and terror shall be brought upon her. Those that are for overthrowing all that come in their way, will, sooner or later, meet with their match. (1.) Hear the alarm with which Nineveh shall be terrified, v. 2. It is a formidable army that advances against it, you may hear them at a distance, the noise of their whir, driving the chariot-horses with fury; you may hear the noise of the rattling of the wheels, the francing of the horses, and the jouncing chariots; the very noise is frightful, but much more so when they know that all this force is coming with all this speed against them, and they are not able to make head against it. (2.) See the slaughter with which Nineveh shall be laid waste, v. 3. The sword drawn, with which execution shall be done, the bright sword uplifted, and the glittering spear, the dazzling brightness of which is very terrible to those whom they are lifted up against. Some have left the execution to others, who are commissioned to slay; There is a great number of carcasses, for the slain of the land shall be many, there is no end of their corpses, there is such a multitude of slain, that it is vain to go about to take the number of them, they lie so thick, that passengers are ready to stumble upon their corpses at every step. The destruction of Semachcrib's city, which was the glory of Nineveh, is perhaps looked upon here as a figure of the like destruction that should afterwards be in Nineveh; for they that will not take warning by judgments at a distance, shall have them come nearer.

2. Nineveh had with her whoredoms and witchcrafts drawn others to shameful wickedness, and therefore God will lead her with shame and confusion; (v. 5—7.) The Lord of hosts is against her, and then she shall be exposed to the highest degree of disgrace and ignominy, shall not only lose all her charms, but shall be made to appear very odious. When it shall be seen that while she courted her neighbours, it was with design to ruin their liberty and property, when all her wicked arts should be brought to light, then her shame is discovered to nations. When her proud pretensions are laid to the ground, and her vain towering hopes of an absolute and universal dominion brought to nought, and she appears not to have been so strong and considerable as she would have been thought to be, then to see the nakedness of thy land do they come, and it appears ridiculous. Then do they cast abominable filth upon her, as upon a carted swarmet, and make her vile as the obfuscation of all things; that great city, which all the nations had made court to, and coveted an alliance with, is become a gazng-stock, a laughing-stock. They that formerly looked upon her, and fled to her, in hopes of protection from her, now look upon her, and flee from her, for fear of being ruined by her. Note, Those that abuse their honour and interest, will justly be disgraced and abandoned, and, because miserable, will be made contemptible, and thereby be made more miserable. When Nineveh is laid waste, who will bemoan her? Her trouble will be so great, and her sense of it so deep, as not to admit of relief from sympathy, or any comforting considerations; or, if it would, none shall do any such good office; Whence shall I seek comforters for thee? Note, Those that showed no pity in the day of their power, may expect what has been dealt upon them in the day of their fall. When those about Nineveh, that had been deceived by her wiles, come to be undescribed in her ruin, every one shall insult over her, and none bemoan her. This was Nineveh's fate, when she was made a spectacle or gazng-stock. Note, The greater men's show was in the day of their abused prosperity, the greater will their shame be in the day of their fall. When those about Nineveh, that had been deceived by her wiles, come to be underserved in her ruin, every one shall insult over her, and none bemoan her.
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streets; and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains. 11. Thou also shalt be drunken; thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy. 12. All thy strong holds shall be like fig-trees with the first-ripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater. 13. Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars. 14. Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brick-kiln. 15. There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off; it shall eat thee up like the canker-worm: make thyself many as the canker-worm, make thyself many as the locusts. 16. Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven; the canker-worm pollutes, and fleeth away. 17. Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them. 18. There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually!

Nineveh has been told that God is against her, and then none can be for her, to stand in her any stead; yet she sets God himself at defiance, and his power and justice, and says, I shall have peace. Threatened folks live long; therefore here the prophet largely shows how vain her confidences would prove, and how God would strike off the judgment of God. To convince them of this,

1. He shows them that other places, which had been as strong and as secure as they, could not keep their ground against the judgments of God. Nineveh shall fall unpitied and unconfounded, (for miserable comforters will they prove, who speak peace to those on whom God will fasten trouble,) and she shall be close locked up; and her spoil shall not be better than populous. v. 8. 2. He takes them off from their vain confidences by quoting precedents. The city mentioned is Vó, a great city in the land of Egypt; (Jer. xlv. 23.) vó-Ammon, so some read it, both there and here. We read of it, Ezek. xxx. 14.—16. Some think it was Diospolis, others Alexandria. As God said to Jerusalem, Go, see what I did to Sodom. (ch. ii. 12.) so to Nineveh that great city, Go, see what I did to populous Vó. Note, It will help to keep us in a holy fear of the judgments of God, to consider that we are not better than those that have fallen under those judgments before us. We deserve them as much, and are as little able to grapple with them. This also should help to reconcile us to afflictions. Are we better than such and such, who were in like manner ex-
2. Did they depend upon their barrier, the garrisons and strongholds they had, which were regular fortifications; and these are as prove but paper walls, and like the fine-ripe figs, which, if you give the tree but a little shake, will fall into the mouth of the easter that gapes for them; so easily will their strong holds be made to surrender to the advancing enemy, upon the first summons, v. 12. Note, Strong holds, even the strongest, are no fence against the judgments of God, when they are used as security to resist and hold out, as Nineveh's was, that is, his strong city, and a high wall, but only in his own conceit, Prov. xviii. 10. They are supposed to make their strong holds as strong as possible, and are challenged to do their utmost to make them tenable, and serviceable to them against the invader; (v. 14.) Draw the water for the siege, lay in great quantities of water, that that is so necessary to the support of human life, may not be wanting; it is put here for all manner of provision, with which Nineveh is indirectly bid to furnish herself, in expectation of a siege. Take ever so much care that thou mayst not be starved out, and forced by famine to surrender, yet that shall not avail; fortify the strong holds, by adding out-works to them, or putting men and arms into them, as with the great planting upon them, and treading the mortar, and making the strong brickly, take all the pains thou canst in erecting new fortifications, but it shall be all in vain, for (v. 15.) there shall even the fire devour thee, if the strong hold be burnt, or the sword cut thee off, if it be taken by storm. It is by fire and sword that in time of war the great devastations are made.

3. Did they put confidence in the multitude of their inhabitants? Were their number and valour reckoned their strongest walls and fortifications? Alas! these shall stand them no stead, they shall but sink the sooner under the weight of their own numbers; (v. 13.) Thy people in the midst of thee are women; they have no conduct, no courage, they shall be fickle, feeble, and faint-hearted, as women commonly are in such times of danger and distress, they shall be at their wife's end, adding to their griefs and fears by the power of their own imagination, and utterly unable to do any thing for themselves; the valiant men shall become cowards. O vero Phrygus, neque enim Phrygus—Phrygian names, not Phrygian men. Though they make themselves many, (v. 13.) as the canker-worm and as the locusts, in their own eyes, but no, they hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven, though thy exchange be thronged with wealthy traders, who having so much money to stand up in defence of, and so much to lay out in the means of their defence, should, one would think, give the enemy a warm reception; yet their hearts shall fail them too; though they be numerous as cattle-fishers, yet the fire and sword shall eat them up, (v. 15.) and that at last. There is enough to horrify them all; 'They are as numerous as those wasting insects, but their enemies shall be mischievous like them. He adds, (v. 16.) The canker-worm spoils, or spreads herself, and flies away. Both the merchants and the enemies were compared to canker-worms. The enemies shall spoil Nineveh, and carry away the spoil, without opposition, or any hopes of recovery. Or else these canker-worms, who have come from abroad to settle in Nineveh, and have raised vast estates there, out of which it was hoped they would contribute largely for the defence of the city, when they see the country invaded, and the city likely to be besieged, will send away their effects, and remove themselves to some other place, will spread their wings, and fly away where they may be safe, and Nineveh shall be never the better for them. Note, It is rare to find even those that have shared with us in our joys, willing to share with us in our griefs. The canker-worms, which have found the field where there is any thing to be had, but they are gone when all is gone. Those that have got by, they do not care to lose by. Nineveh's merchants bid her farewell in her distress. Riches themselves are as the canker-worms, which on a sudden fly away as the eagle toward heaven, Prov. xxviii. 5.

4. Did they put a confidence in the strength of the gates of their city? They are not so strong of the power of God, which shall be against the force of the judgments of God? v. 13. The gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies, the gates of thy rivers, (ch. ii. 6.) the flood-gates, or the passes and avenues, by which the enemy would make his entrance into the country; or the gates of the cities; these, though ever so strong and well guarded, shall not answer their end; the fire shall devour the bars, the bars of thy gates, and then they shall fly open.

5. Did they put a confidence in their king and princes? They should do them no service; (v. 17.) Thy crowned are as the locusts; those that had pomp and power, as crowned heads, were enfeebled, and had no power to make resistance, when the enemy came in like a flood. Thy captains, that should lead them forward, were all fore-shortened, and made great, but they are as the great grasshoppers, the maximum quod sic—the largest specimens of that species; still they are but grasshoppers, worthless things, that can do no service. They camp in the hedges in the cold day, the cold weather; but when the sun rises, they flee away, and are gone nobody knows whither. So these mercenary soldiers that lay slumbering about Nineveh, when trouble arises, flee away, and shift for their own safety; the hircling flies, because he is a hirpling. The king of Assyria is told, and it is a shame he needs to be told it, (who might observe it himself,) that his shepherds stumber; they have no life or spirit to appear for the flock, and are very remiss in the discharge of the duty of their place, and the trust reposed in them; Thy nobles shall dwell in the dust, and be buried in silence.

6. Did they hope that they should yet recover themselves, and rally again? In this also they should be disappointed; for when the shepherds are smitten, the sheep are scattered, the people are dispersed upon the mountains, and no man gathers them, nor will they ever come together of themselves. The sovereign power was taken away, and it is a duty for them to observe, (v. 18.) that when the people are gone, they shall not immediately come again. The judgment they are under is as a wound, and it is incurable; there is no relief for it, no healing of thy bruise, no possibility that the wound, which is so grievous and painful to thee, should be so much as skinned over; thy case is desperate, (v. 19.) and thy neighbours, instead of lending a hand to help thee, shall clap their hands over thee, and triumph in thy fall; and the reason is, because they shall be glad to see thee reckoned with. Note, Those that have been abusive to their neighbours, will, one that is taken, the other will further find it come to them; they are but preparing enemies to themselves against their day comes to fall; and these that dare not lay hands on them themselves, will clap their hands over them, and upbraide them with their former wickedness, for which they are now well enough served, and paid in their own coin. The troubles shall be troubled, will be the burden of many, as here, the burden of Nineveh.