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CRITICAL DISQUISITIONS

ON THE

Eighteenth Chapter

OF

Isaiah.

IN A LETTER TO

EDWARD KING, ESQ. F. R. S. A. S.

BY

SAMUEL LORD BISHOP OF ROCHESTER,
F. R. S. A. S.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE old English Bibles, occasionally cited in the following pages, are Coverdale's, the great English Bible, the Bishop's Bible, and the English Geneva Bible.

COVERDALE's translation was printed in folio, in the year 1535, and made its public appearance in the summer of the following year. It was the work of the pious and learned Divine, whose name it bears, Myles Coverdale, afterwards Lord Bishop of Exeter. Of all our authorised translations it has the least pretensions to accuracy. By the author's own account of it, he relied more upon earlier translations, than upon any examination of his own, of the original texts. For he professes, that he "translated purely and faithfully
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“ out of foregoing interpreters,” who had translated the Scriptures, “ not only into Latin, but also into Dutch.”

The GREAT ENGLISH BIBLE is the translation made under the direction of Archbishop Cranmer, and printed in large folio in 1539. A noble work, well corresponding with its title: “ The Byble in Englyshe, that is to say, the content of all the holy scripture both of the olde and newe testament, truly translated after the veryte of the Hebrue and Greke textes, by the dylygent studye of dyverse excellent learned men, expert in the forsayde tonges.”

The BISHOP'S BIBLE is the revised and amended edition of Cranmer's, made by the most eminent divines and scholars of the times, under the direction of Archbishop Parker, and splendidly published in folio in 1568.

The

The ENGLISH GENEVA BIBLE is the translation made by the English Protestants, in exile at Geneva, in the reign of Philip and Mary. It was first printed at Geneva in 1560; and between that time and the year 1616, it underwent above thirty editions at London, in different sizes. It was the common family Bible in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and is often cited by the title of Queen Elizabeth's Bible.

The editions that have been used upon the present occasion have been, of Coverdale's and the Great Bible, the original editions in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth.

Of the Bishop's Bible, the original edition in the Library of the Collegiate Church of Westminster.

Of the English Geneva, the 4to's of 1589, and 1599, both in the possession of the author.

TO EDWARD KING, ESQUIRE.

DEAR SIR,

CONSIDERABLE portions of my time, for some years past, have been employed in the study, of all studies the most interesting, of the Prophetic parts of the Holy Scriptures; and among the rest, the Prophecies of Isaiah, have deeply engaged my attention. But it was a conversation with you, in the early part of last spring, that put me, at that time, upon a more minute examination, than I had ever made before, of the XVIIIth Chapter of that Prophet. The conclusions to which I found myself inevitably brought, differ in some very important points, though concerning the general scope of the Prophecy they agree, with the interpretation which you communicated to me. I felt however no inclination to agitate the question (even with yourself I mean, for there was nothing at that time to bring into discussion before the Public) and after much deliberation with myself, I
thought

thought it better avoided; knowing, that your opinions are not rashly taken up; conceiving, that you might re-consider the subject; and persuaded, that a man of your learning and upright intention, is more likely to set himself right by his own meditation of an abstruse question, than to be set right by another. But now that you have given that same interpretation of this Prophecy to the Public, in your Supplement to your Remarks on the Signs of the Times, I should think myself wanting to the duties of the station, to which God has been pleased to call me, if I were any longer to suppress the result of a diligent meditation of so important a portion of the Prophetic Word. I cannot however enter upon the subject without professing, not to yourself, but to the world, how highly I value and esteem your writings, for the variety and depth of Erudition, the Sagacity and Piety which appear in every part of them; but appear not more in them, than in your conversation and the habits of your Life, to those who have the happiness, as I have had the happiness, to enjoy your intimacy and friendship. I must publicly declare, that I think you are rendering the best service to

to the Church of God, by turning the attention of believers to the true sense of the Prophecies. For you are perfectly right in the opinion you maintain, that a far greater proportion of the Prophecies, even of the Old Testament, than is generally imagined, relate to the Second Advent of our Lord. Few comparatively relate to the First Advent by itself, without reference to the Second. And of those, that have been supposed to be accomplished in the First, many had in that only an inchoate accomplishment, and have yet to receive their full completion. While we agree in these great and leading principles, I hope that a difference of opinion upon subordinate points, upon the particulars of interpretation (so far as either of us may venture upon particular interpretation, which is to be ventured upon with the greatest caution, with fear, indeed, and trembling) will be received, on both sides, with that candour and charity, which is due from one to another, among all those who, in these eventful times, are anxiously waiting for the redemption of Israel, and marking the awful Signs of its gradual approach.

This XVIIIth Chapter of Isaiah is, as
you

you have with great truth remarked, one of the most obscure passages of the ancient Prophets. It has been considered as such by the whole succession of Interpreters, from St. Jerome to Bishop Lowth. "The object of it," says the Bishop, "the end and design of it, the people to whom it is addressed, the history to which it belongs, the person who sends the messengers, and the nation to whom the messengers are sent, are all obscure and doubtful." Much of this obscurity lies in the diction (*propter inusitata verba*, says Munster, *propter figuratas sententias*) in the highly figured cast of the language, and in the ambiguity of some of the principal words, arising from the great variety of senses often comprehended under the primary meaning of a single root. Few, I fear, will have the patience to follow me; but you, I flatter myself, will be one of the Few that will, in the slow and laborious method of investigation, by which I endeavour to dispel this obscurity; which however is the only method, by which obscurity of this sort is ever to be dispelled. Discarding all previous assumptions, concerning the design of the Prophecy, the people to whom it is addressed, the history

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ry or the times to which it belongs ; I enter into a critical examination of every word of which the meaning is at all doubtful ; and I consider the meaning of every word as, in some degree, doubtful, which has been taken in different senses by different interpreters of note. I consider the etymology of the word ; I enquire in what senses it is actually used, by the Sacred Writers in other passages ; and I compare with the original, and with one another, the translations of Interpreters, in different languages, and of different ages.

And here I must take occasion to remark, that, among the ancient translations, attention is principally due to the Syriac, to the fragments that are come down to us from Aquila, and to the Septuagint. To the Syriac, because it was the work of Christians in the very earliest age of Christianity ; it gives us therefore the sense, which was received by the immediate successors of our Lord's Apostles. To what remains of Aquila's version, for the contrary reason ; it was the work of an enemy ; and gave that sense of the Original (where the sense was at all uncertain) which was the least favourable to Christianity. To the

the Septuagint; not only because it was a translation made before the Hebrew ceased altogether to be a living language, but, being made by Jews long before the birth of Christ, the authors could be biassed by no prejudice against the particular claims of our Lord Jesus to the character of the Messiah of the Israelites. And whenever it gives a sense particularly favourable to his pretensions, and such a sense it gives in many passages, every such interpretation may be taken as an admission of the adversary. It is much to be lamented, that this translation is not come down to us in a more perfect state. Great indeed would its authority be, had we reason to receive it as the genuine unadulterated work of Ptolemy's translators. And yet, even in that perfect state, the authority, I should have allowed to it, would have been far short, I confess, of what you seem to ascribe to it; I should not have made it my Text. I should have claimed for myself, and other men of learning of the present day, a full competence to judge of the sense of the Original, in opposition to the sense of the Seventy-Two. The fact however is, that this translation having been the most used, both in the

synagogue

synagogue and in the church, in the first ages of Christianity, has for that very reason been the most tampered with both by Jews and Christians. It has been corrupted, by the very means, that were used to preserve and improve it. For I cannot but agree with St. Jerome, though I know how much his judgment in this point has been decried, that Origen's additions and detractions, however guarded by his asterisks, his lemnisks, and his obelisks, were, in the nature of the thing, a source of inevitable corruption (for I give the name of Corruption to any alteration, though for the better, of an author's own words.) And in the present state of this Greek Version, it is impossible to distinguish, with certainty, what is pure Septuagint, what is Septuagint corrected by Origen, and still more corrupted by careless transcribers or presumptuous emendators of Origen's corrected Text. Great attention still is due to it; but not more than is due to an imperfect vitiated copy of a venerable original. Which original was but itself a shadow of the Hebrew Verity, the only prototype. It ought always to be consulted in difficulties, and much light is occasionally to be derived from it. But

I say without hesitation, that upon the whole, it represents the whole of the Hebrew Text with less exactness, than either the Vulgate or the common English translation. In these sentiments, I fear, you will not concur. But this is a point upon which I think it my duty to speak out. For it would be very mischievous in the present times, very contrary to the interests of sacred truth, if a party were to be formed in favour of any particular translation. But to return to the immediate subject.

When by this process, by scrutinizing etymologies, exploring usage, and consulting translations, I think I have ascertained the plain literal meaning of a word, and have selected, from a variety of senses, that which seems the best suited to the context; my next step is to consider, what the thing denoted by the word, in the literary meaning, may figuratively represent, according to the principles of the prophetic imagery; for these two things, the literal meaning, as the foundation of the figurative, and the figurative meaning, according to the principles and usage of the prophetic style, are the only sure basis of interpretation; which will ever be precarious
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and delusive, if it be founded only on some general resemblance, hastily caught up by the imagination, between particular detached events, and the expressions of the Prophet loosely and fancifully expounded. And such, I believe, all interpretations will be found to be, which refer texts of Prophecy to events merely secular ; not connected, or but very remotely connected, with the state of Religion and the fortunes of the Church. These fanciful interpretations, in one way or other, always are mischievous. Either they take ; and then they spread a general error ; or, if they find few admirers, they raise a prejudice against the interpreter, who in other respects may deserve attention, or, what is worse, against the word of Prophecy itself. And for this reason, I confess, I have often wished, that the formation of the Goodwin Sands, the invention of the Telescope, the discoveries with regard to Fixed Air, and the invention of the Air-Balloon, had not been brought forward, as things at all connected with the effusion of the tremendous Vials of Wrath, on the Sea, the Sun, and the Air. Great as these things seem to the narrow mind of Man, I cannot think, that even greater things
than

than these, not even the discoveries of Copernicus and Newton, were worthy of the notice of that Spirit, which was in the Holy Prophets.

The method of investigation I have described, if men had the patience to pursue it, in most cases, I am persuaded, would discover the general subject of a prophecy, and even develope the particulars of the accomplishment, when the general subject lies in any part of the history of past times, if the detail of that part of history is accurately known. But when the accomplishment of a prophecy is still future ; when once the general subject is ascertained, at that point interpretation ought to stop for the present, reverently expecting the farther comments of Time, the authorised and infalliable expositor. You have well remarked, that, with respect to the detail of things future, “ Sacred Truth should
 “ be very much left to speak for itself,
 “ by slow degrees.” And for itself it will speak, in God’s good time ; and it is only to a certain extent, that Man should attempt to speak for it : just so far, as to lay hold of the general subject, that we know whereabouts, if we may so speak, in what particular quarter of the
 world

world Politico-Ecclesiastic, we may watch for the completion. If we go beyond this, and attempt to descend into particulars, it is difficult, I am persuaded, even for a man of the most sober mind to keep his Imagination in order. And, though among the fanciful guesses of a man of learning and judgment, one perhaps in twenty, which I think is a large allowance, may turn out true; it is far better to leave this truth to be brought to light by Time, than to hazard the credit, both of the exposition and the text, by the other nineteen, which Time will confute. No mischief is done in the one case; much, in the other.

This Eighteenth Chapter of Isaiah is one instance among many, in which Expositors have perplexed themselves by gratuitous assumptions, concerning the general scope of the Prophecy, before they attempt to settle the signification of the terms in which it is delivered; and then they have sought for such interpretations of the language, as might suit the applications they had assumed. But it is a preposterous way of dealing with any writer, to interpret his words by his supposed meaning, instead of deducing his meaning from his words. It has been

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assumed

assumed by most interpreters, first, that the principal matter of this prophecy is a Woe, or Judgement. 2. That the object of this woe is the land of Egypt itself, or some of the contiguous countries. 3. That the time of the execution of the judgement was at hand, when the prophecy was delivered.

I set out with considering every one of these assumptions as doubtful; and the conclusion to which my investigations bring me, is, that every one of them is false. First, the prophecy indeed predicts some woeful judgment. But the principal matter of the prophecy is not judgment, but mercy; a gracious promise of the final restoration of the Israelites. Secondly, the prophecy has no respect to Egypt, or any of the contiguous countries. What has been applied to Egypt is a description of some people, or another, destined to be principal instruments in the hand of Providence, in the great work of the re-settlement of the Jews in the Holy Land; a description of that people, by characters by which they will be evidently known, when the time arrives. Thirdly, the time for the completion of the prophecy was very remote, when it was delivered,
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and is yet future ; being indeed the season of the Second Advent of our Lord.

You may say perhaps, that in stating these conclusions here, before I have discussed the difficulties and ambiguities of the language of the Sacred Text, I am myself doing the very thing I blame in others ; that I assume a certain general application, which I mean to confirm by critical reasoning on the holy prophet's words. But you will find, that my own conclusions are not assumed in any part of my enquiry, any more than the assumptions of others, which I discard. I consider the words in themselves ; and I come to the conclusions by a grammatical examination of the words, independent of all assumed applications. My only reason for stating my conclusions here is, that I think the disquisition, upon which I am entering, will be more perspicuous, and the length and minuteness of it less tedious, if the general result in which it is to terminate, be previously known. Just as, in any mathematical investigation, the analytical process is more luminous and satisfactory in every step, if the theorem, to which it conducts, is distinctly enounced in the beginning.

As

As far as the conclusions which I have stated, go, I have the satisfaction to think you agree with me. The difference between us lies chiefly in this: You maintain in your Remarks on the Signs of the Times, that it is expressly declared in certain passages of Isaiah's prophecy, by *what people*, and *from what place*, and at *what time*, the Jews shall be restored. In your Supplement, you alledge the 18th Chapter of Isaiah, as giving the fullest information with respect to the matter: And you think the French are described, in that chapter, as the restorers of the Jews. It is my opinion, on the contrary, that the time for the restoration of the Jews is no otherwise defined than as the season of our Lord's Second Advent. I contend, that although this XVIIIth Chapter of Isaiah describes a people destined to be instruments of Providence in the restoration of the Jews, it describes that people only by certain characters, which have actually belonged to different people in different periods of the history of Man, and leaves it undetermined to what people, among the various nations of the earth, these characters may belong, when the time shall come for the accomplishment of the prophecy;

phesy ; and I contend, that it is a matter equally undetermined, from what place the restoration of the Jews will begin. But although I pretend not positively to say, what nation God has chosen to be the conductors of the Israelites to their ancient seats, and maintain that Prophecy gives no clear light upon that question : I say, negatively, that there is no reason to believe, that the Atheistical Democracy of France is destined to so high an office. The grounds, upon which I find myself compelled to differ upon these points will appear in the sequel. I shall now give you my analysis of the Sacred Text, in the shape of notes upon the public translation. To these I shall subjoin a translation of the whole chapter, accompanied with short explanatory notes, for the information of the common English reader. For this I take to be the only way, in which the result of these critical enquiries can be communicated to the unlearned. And to them it is to be communicated. For I never will admit, nor would you, I think, be inclined to admit, that our Religion has belonging to it, any secret doctrine, from the hearing of which the illiterate laity are to be excluded. The
 notion

notion of the incompetence of the common people to understand the whole of the revealed doctrine, and of the danger of expounding the prophecies to them, is false and abominable. It is the very principle, upon which the Sacred Text was, for so many ages, kept under the lock and key of the dead languages. "Would to God, say I, all the Lord's people were prophets." And in this, I think, you will agree with me.

ISAIAH, CHAP. XVIII.

Verse 1. "Wo to the Land"—וְאֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ

In the 5th and 6th verses there is allusion to some severe judgement; and from a notion, which may perhaps be found to be erroneous, that the country, addressed in this verse, is to be the object of that threatened judgement, many interpreters, among these the LXX. Vulg. and Chald, render וְאֵלֶּיךָ by "Wo to—." But the particle וְאֵלֶּיךָ is not necessarily comminatory. Sometimes it is an exclamation of surprize; and very often it is simply compellative of persons

sons at a distance. And so it is taken here by Calvin, Castalio, in the Great Bible, the Bishop's Bible, the English Geneva Bible, and by Vitranga.

—shadowing with wings”—צלצל כנפיים

The word צלצל, which our translators, very judiciously in my opinion, have taken in the sense of “shadowing,” must be confessed however to be of doubtful meaning.

The root צל, or צלל, has two principal senses. “To quiver,” like the lips in fear (Hab. III. 16.) and “to shade,” or “shelter.” It is often applied particularly to the ears, and predicates of the ears, that they sing or tingle. This particular sense arises naturally out of the general sense of quivering; the singing, or tingling of the ear, being a sound produced within the ear itself, when the nerves, and other parts of the organ, are, by any external cause, thrown into a vehement vibratory motion. Hence some nouns, derived from this root, are used for the names of such musical instruments as, from the readiness with which their parts are thrown into quick vibrations, give a sound particularly shrill and sharp.

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Of these nouns צלצל is one. It occurs in four passages only besides this. Namely, 2 Sam. VI. 5. Ps. CL. 5. Job. XL. 26. Deut. XXVIII. 42. In the text in Job, indeed, it denotes some implement of a fisherman. In Deuteronomy, “the locust;” whether from the sound of its wings, or from the other sense of the root צל is doubtful. But in both the other passages, it is evident from the context, that it renders some musical instrument; and it is, by most interpreters, understood of cymbals. And so it is taken by St. Jerome here. “*Væ terræ cymbalo alarum,*” is his rendering. That is, “Wo to the land the cymbal of wings.” By the structure of this Latin sentence, the country intended, whatever it may be, is described under the image, or emblem, of a “cymbal of wings.” For *terræ* is a dative in apposition with “*cymbalo.*” But it is evident from St. Jerome’s commentary, that he neither knew, what sort of a thing a “cymbal of wings” might be, or what country was so described.

Symmachus seems to have understood the expression of some adjunct of the particular country intended, described under the image, not of a cymbal, or of any particular

particular musical instrument, but of sounding wings.

St. Jerome's notion of the Cymbal has been caught up by three commentators of consummate taste and erudition, the great Bochart, Huetius, and Bishop Lowth. But, understanding the כנפיה צלצל, with Symmachus, as an adjunct of the land, not as an emblem of the land itself; they have added, what was wanting of perspicuity to St. Jerome's translation; or, rather, they have found a meaning for St. Jerome, which he could not find for himself. Their rendering is, "land of the winged cymbal." Then assuming, (for they cannot prove it, and Bishop Lowth, with his usual candour, allows that the thing is doubtful) that Egypt is the country intended, they take "the winged cymbal" to be a poetical periphrasis for the Egyptian Sistrum; which differed, as they think, from the common cymbal in certain appendages of its structure, which resembled "wings;" or at least might be called כנפיה according to the large acceptation of that word in the Hebrew language. For Huetius, I think, was the only one of

the three, whose imagination found in the figure of the Egyptian Sistrum, with its lateral appendages, an exact resemblance of a bird with expanded wings. Be that as it may, they agreed that the “winged cymbal” was the Egyptian Sistrum; and they considered this as a characteristic of the land of Egypt, taken from the frequent use of the Sistrum, in the rites of her idolatrous worship. This interpretation no where makes a better figure, than in the elegant paraphrase of Carpentius :

Væ tibi quæ reducem, sistris crepitanti-
bus, Apim

Concelebras, crotalos et inania tympana
pulsans,

Amne superba sacro tellus————

And if it were certain, that Egypt is the country upon which the prophet calls, and that these words are inapplicable to Egypt, in any other sense, which they may admit; then indeed it would follow, that this must be the true sense of them in this place. But so long as it is at least doubtful, whether Egypt be the country intended; and so long as it is certain, that these words admit of other senses, in which they would be applicable to Egypt, if Egypt were the country intended;

tended, it will be reasonable to suspend our judgement, and to seek an exposition of less refinement.

The second principal sense of the root
 is, “to shade, to overshade, to shel-
 ter;” and as a noun, “shade,” “a
 shadow,” “a shelter;” and this is
 the sense, in which it is most frequently
 used. It is true, the word in the re-
 duplicate form never occurs in this sense,
 except it be so used in this place. But
 in this place it is so taken by the Syriac
 interpreter, and by Aquila. 1220?

וְצִלָּהּ; וְצִלָּהּ; וְצִלָּהּ. And this rendering
 is followed by most modern interpreters;
 by Calvin, Diodati, the Spanish, and
 our English translators, Castalio, Ju-
 nius, Ostervald, and the very learned
 Vitringa; except that instead of a noun
 substantive for the word צִלָּהּ, which
 Aquila and the Syriac use, these mo-
 derns put either a participle, or some-
 thing equivalent to a participle. Inum-
 brans alis. Calvin. Shadowing with
 wings. Eng. Alis umbrosa tellus. Cas-
 talio. Terræ umbrosæ oris. Jun. and
 Trem. Pais qui fait ombre avec des
 ailes. Ostervald. Terra obumbrata alis.
 Vitringa.

It is certainly an objection of no great weight

weight against those renderings, that the word **לַלְלָה**, in the reduplicate form, is not to be found in any other text, in the sense of shade, shadowing or overshadowing. According to the principles of the Hebrew language, the reduplication of the letters of a root only gives intensity to the sense, whatever it may be. So that in whatever sense a word in the simple form is used, in the same it may be used in the reduplicate form, if the occasion requires an intention of the signification. **לַלְלָה לַלְלָה**,—*latè obumbrans alis*. But taking this as the literal rendering, still the image is of doubtful meaning.

The mention of the rivers of Ethiopia, which immediately follows, has led almost all expositors to look to Egypt, as the country addressed. If Egypt be intended, the allusion may be to the geographical features of that country. The wings of Egypt may be understood, as Vitringa, Grotius, and Junius understand them, of the ridges of mountains running from South to North, on either side of the Nile; by their divergency, as they advance northward, somewhat resembling a pair of pinions, and overshadowing the intermediate vale of Egypt. But it is
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by no means certain that Egypt is the country intended ; and, whether Egypt be intended or not, the image may allude to nothing in the figure of the country, but to something in the national character or habits of the people. So they must have understood it (and among them are the LXX. Jonathan and Coverdale) who take the wings for the sails of numerous vessels, overshadowing the surface of the ocean. But the shadow of wings is a very usual image in the prophetic language, for protection afforded by the stronger to the weak. God's protection of his servants is described by their being safe under the shadow of his wings. And in this passage, the broad shadowing wings may be intended to characterize some great people, who should be famous for the protection they should give to those whom they received into their alliance ; and I cannot but think this the most simple and natural exposition of the expression.

I shall therefore dismiss, without ceremony, those fanciful expositions, which would explain these wings of those of the swallow over the statue of Isis, or of the wings of the idol Kneph. But there is another exposition which demands more

attention, as it has dropped from your pen. “Lands,” you premise, “have
 “been sometimes geographically de-
 “scribed, by some fancied appearance
 “in their outlines. Thus we read of
 “the Delta in Egypt, of the tongue of
 “the Egyptian Sea, &c. In the pre-
 “sent instance, we have a description of
 “a land, appearing geographically, in
 “its outlines, with extended wings;
 “something like those of a fluttering
 “bird.—Let any one cast his eyes upon
 “a globe, or upon a map of the world
 “(and especially upon one well colour-
 “ed) and let him see what land does so,
 “and he will find one, and one only,
 “on the whole face of the whole earth,
 “that has that appearance. This Land
 “so appearing is France, which has
 “Spain on one side, and Germany on
 “the other; in the form of their out-
 “lines, like two extended wings.”*

I confess, I cannot easily be persuaded, that the prophet takes his images and allusions from things, which neither he, nor any one of his contemporaries, had ever seen. Have you, my dear Sir, considered, whether a globe, or even a map
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of the world, in which the appearance of the different countries could have any resemblance of that which they exhibit upon our modern globes and maps, had ever met the eye of mortal man in the time of the prophet Ifaiah? And the notion of Germany and Spain, as the wings of France, could according to your own principles, occur only to the imagination of one, who had seen the outlines of these countries, as they are laid down in our globes and maps, according to their present boundaries. And even then, a little good colouring, you seem to think, might be of great use, though not of absolute necessity, to assist the imagination. The invention of geographical charts is generally ascribed by the Greeks to Anaximander, the disciple of Thales, who was at least a century and a half later than the prophet. In the time of Darius Hyftafpes, Aristagoras the Milesian, the countryman of Anaximander, and half a century his junior, when he went to Sparta to persuade the Spartans to attack the Persian monarch, is said to have carried with him a plate of brass, on which was engraven the whole circuit of the dry land, the whole sea, and all the rivers. This is the earliest mention,

which

which occurs to my recollection, in profane history, of any thing like a general map of the world; and this was 200 years later than Isaiah. Chorographic charts, indeed, or plans of a small extent of country, such as might be formed by the common principles of land-surveying, might be much older. Certain passages in the book of Joshua incline me to believe, that an actual survey was taken of the land of Canaan in Joshua's time, and a plan of it laid down, for the purpose of setting out the allotments of the different tribes. As for what was engraved, or written, on the pillars at *Æa*, by the Egyptians settled there by Sesostris, it might be nothing more, for any thing that appears from the words of Apollonius Rhodius, than a description in words, of the tract of the fleet along the coasts, and the march of the troops by land; the names of the places in order, where the ships came to anchor, and the army encamped; something like the catalogue of the mansions in the XXXIII Chapter of the Book of Numbers; and I should not have taken notice of this engraving or writing, here, had it not been mentioned by
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the learned Montucla,† as a map of the entire conquests of Sesostris. But suppose, we carry back the invention of Anaximander to the age of Isaiah. Suppose, that the prophet had seen Arista-goras's copper plate, or such another; What resemblance to the accurate picture of the earth's surface, exhibited in our modern maps and globes, could these delineations of it bear, which must have been made before the positions of the principal points: that is, not only of towns, but of the inland mountains, of promontories, capes, head-lands, and bays, upon the coast, were accurately fixed, by observations of the latitude and longitude of each? But of this method of pricking down the principal points by longitude and latitude; and of what was previously necessary, before this method could be brought into practice, the method of finding differences of longitude by eclipses of the sun and moon, Hipparchus was the first inventor. Hipparchus flourished not before the middle of the second century before our Lord. And Marinus of Tyre, about the year of our Lord 70, seems to have been the first

† Hist. des Math. tom. I. p. 106.

first, who applied Hipparchus's principles to the construction of general maps; and strange things the maps of Marinus must have been, by Ptolomy's account of them. Yet better, perhaps, than any Isaiah ever saw. Marinus had settled the latitude of some places, and the longitude of others; but in very few instances had settled both latitude and longitude of the same place. Ptolomy's own maps were, I believe, the first, that gave the surface of the habitable earth, in any thing like its real shape; and still, not without enormous deviations from the truth in many parts. Of a terrestrial globe, I believe, he was the first constructor. Harduin, I know, in his notes upon Pliny, ascribes that invention to Anaximander; but he is confuted (if so absurd a notion needed confutation, that a globe could be made before latitudes and longitudes were determined) by the very passage of Diogenes Laertius, which he cites in support of his conjecture; by Pliny's own words; and by the words in which other writers mention Anaximander's invention.

Shall we suppose then that a terrestrial globe, or a general map, in which the countries of the world were laid down according

according to their present boundaries (this supposition is necessary, for, if we alter the boundaries, the shape of the outline is changed, and upon the outline of the several countries the appearance of Spain and Germany, as the wings of France, depends) shall we suppose, that such a globe, or map, was exhibited to the prophet in vision? That his mind was enlightened by the inspiring Spirit, to know what it was; and that his attention was particularly directed to France, lying between Spain and Germany, like the body of a bird between its expanded wings? There is nothing, in the sacred Text, to warrant such a supposition. It must all be supplied by the reader's imagination. And it appears to me unwarrantable, to found an exposition of the text, of an inspired writer, upon any such supplement; unless the words taken by themselves, without some such supplement, were incapable of exposition. Whereas in the present instance, the words admit a most easy and simple interpretation, founded on the usual and frequent import of the like image in other passages of holy writ. You will forgive me therefore, if I take the sense which the words themselves offer,

fer, in preference to any that rests upon precarious assumptions, or, as they seem to me, more precarious imaginations. To judge otherwise would be to fail, in my apprehension, in the respect that is due to an inspired Prophet.

———“beyond the rivers of Ethiopia”

מעבר לגהר-יבוש

This seems to have been generally taken for a precise determination of the geographical site of the country; which, for this description of its situation chiefly, has been supposed to be Egypt. If Ethiopia, or Cush rather, in this text, be the Ethiopia of profane geographers; or, to speak more accurately, if it be that acquired territory of the Cushites in Africa, which, stretching all along the coast from Ptolemais to Arsinoë, that is, from Derbeta to the streights of Babal Mandeb, extended inland to the very banks of the Nile, and was washed in its breadth by the Astaboras and the Astapus; to which African territory of the Cushites, the name of Cush in Scripture (commonly rendered Ethiopia by all interpreters before Bochart) sometimes is applied; the rivers of Cush must be the Nile in its various branches, and its tributary

butary streams. But how was Egypt, beyond the rivers of Cush, so understood, with respect to Judæa? From Meroë to the head of the Delta, Egypt was not more beyond, than on this side of the Nile; for the river divided the breadth of the country. From the head of the Delta to the coast of the Mediterranean, the various branches of the river intersected the whole surface of the country. The preposition—מֵעֵבֶר לְ is used with great latitude of meaning, either for that side, or this side, of a river, for *trans* and *ultra*, or *cis* and *citra*. And Vitranga in this place renders it by *citra*. But for the very same reason that Egypt was not *beyond* the Nile, with respect to Judæa; it was not on this side of it. It was on both sides from Meroë to the head of the Delta; and below the head of the Delta, the country was on all sides of the innumerable streams into which the river was divided. Bishop Lowth therefore rejects the use both of *trans* and *citra*, and conceives that the Hebrew preposition renders “bordering on,” without specifying one side or the other. And this is a sense, which unquestionably it sometimes bears. But yet it is not usual, I think, to say of a broad plain, intersected by canals, which was

the case of Egypt in the part most known to foreigners, that it borders on them. Egypt, therefore, is positively excluded, by every possible interpretation of the preposition—מֵעַרְבָּ; and, Egypt being out of the question, it is reasonable to understand the preposition in the sense of “beyond;” as it has been understood by all interpreters, except Vitranga, Houbigant, Bishop Lowth, Diodati, and Coverdale. Diodati hesitates between the two senses of “on this side” and “beyond.” Bishop Lowth takes “bordering on.” The other three, “on this side.” But “beyond is to be preferred. For the contrary sense seems excluded by the distance of the country. The country is evidently distant, because the prophet calls, or rather hollas to it. But a country, not Egypt, and yet on this side of these rivers of Cush with respect to Judæa, must have lain between Egypt and Judæa; consequently at no such great distance from Judæa. And these are the only circumstances of its geographical situation, which the prophecy discovers; that, with respect to Judæa, it is far distant, and “beyond the rivers of Cush.”

“And so,” you say, “the land of France actually geographically is.”

I admit, that in a certain sense it is;
but

but yet I think the prophet, in the reference which you suppose to a globe or a general map of the world, could not have so described it. A person, taking his notions of the relative situations of countries, from their appearance on a map lying before him, would observe, that no strait line drawn from any point in Judæa to any point in France, would cross any one of these Cushæan streams; which are all lost, the rest in the main stream of the Nile, and the Nile itself in the ocean, before the line of direction of any one of them meets any such strait line. No one therefore, contemplating a map of the world, would describe France as beyond these streams of Cush. But my notion of the prophet's geographical language is, that it is the language of the Phœnician voyagers of his time. And in those times, the most distant voyages being made along the coasts, the Phœnician mariners would speak of every place which lay to the west of the mouths of the Nile, as beyond the Nile; that is, in the poetical language of the prophet, beyond the rivers of Cush; because, keeping always along the coast, they would pass within sight of the mouth of the Nile, before they

they reached that western place. According to this nautical phraseology of the voyagers of those times, the circumstance of being beyond the rivers of Cush was applicable, indeed to France. But not particularly to France, more than to Spain, Portugal, Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark, in short any part of Europe, without the streights. Not more to any part of Europe, than to any part of Africa, without the streights. Not more to any part of Europe, or Africa, than to the whole eastern coast of North and South America. The particular situation of the country therefore is by no means ascertained by this circumstance.

But in truth, it is much more undetermined, than as yet appears. Since the country, intended in the prophecy, is not Egypt; the Cush of this text, for any thing that appears to the contrary from the text itself, may be the Asiatic Cush; to which country the name is more frequently applied. Not indeed, that particular district of Arabia Deserta, to which, as the original seat of the sons of Cush, Bochart would restrict the name: That by itself cannot be the Cush of this place; for that district had no rivers. The four which Bochart gives it, he is forced

forced to borrow for it, as Vitringa has observed, from other countries ; and three of the four are mere torrents. But the name of Cush (vulgarly, as hath been observed, rendered Ethiopia) is applied in holy writ to a large tract of country, comprehending, besides the proper territory of the Cushites, the rest of Arabia Deserta, the whole peninsula of Arabia Felix, and extending east, along the coast of the Persian Gulph, at least as far as the Tigris. The great Bochart would find it difficult to dispute this with me, upon his own principles ; because he allows, that the Cushites, as they grew more numerous, spread themselves from the territory he assigns to them as originally their own, into other parts of Arabia, and eastward even into Carmania. Be that as it may, we read in Scripture of a land of Cush, of which the boundary on one side was the river Gihon.—“ And the name of the second river is Gihon ; the same is that which compasseth the whole land of Cush.” Gen. II. 13. No one, I suppose, that has considered what has been written by Calvin, and after him by Huetius, Vitringa, and others, upon the subject of the site of Paradise, can entertain a doubt, that Gihon was

one of the two branches, into which the streams of the Euphrates and the Tigris, uniting at Apamea, part again at Asia; and through which their waters were discharged into the Persian Gulph, before the natural course of those great rivers, in this lower part, was altered by the hand of man. Phison and Gihon, rivers of Eden, were these two diverging streams. Which of the two was the eastern, and which the western branch, is a matter of some doubt; but it is of little importance to the present question. They ran at no great distance from each other: Gihon was unquestionably one of them; and it was the boundary of the Asiatic land of Cush. These therefore, for aught that appears to the contrary, may be the rivers of Cush in this passage; and the land beyond these rivers of Cush, with respect to Judæa, will be some country on the coast, east of the Tigris. So that, unless we can determine, whether it be the African or the Asiatic land of Cush, of which the prophet speaks, we know not, in which quarter to look for the land beyond the rivers of Cush, whether far to the west, or far to the east of Palestine.

But though the geographical site of
the

the country is left thus uncertain, for very uncertain it would be, even if we could tell which Cush is meant ; yet the people of the country are marked, as will appear, by characters, by which they will be distinguished from all other people of the earth, when the time comes.

2. “ That sendeth ambassadors by the sea.”

“ —ambassadors”—צִירִים. Vitranga, solicitous to find Egypt in every characteristic of the country mentioned by the Prophet, understands the word צִירִים of epistolary dispatches, or pacquets. He expounds the passage of that extraordinary pacquet, which the Egyptians sent annually to the Syrians, with the joyful news that Adonis was found. The epistle was put into a sort of flask, made of the bulrush, which was committed to the waves, to be floated to Byblus. And of this bulrush-flask he understands the “ vessels of bulrush,” of which the mention follows.

But I cannot find a single instance, in which the word צִירִים signifies “ parcels, bundles, or pacquets ;” however consistent this sense might seem with the etymology of the word. Nor is this sense
in

in any degree supported by the version of the LXX. It is true, they render the word צִירִים by the neuter ὅμηρα. But the neuter ὅμηρα, instead of the masculine ὅμηροι, is invariably their word for “hostages.” The masculine ὅμηροι they never use, and the neuter ὅμηρα they never use in any other sense, or for pledges of any other sort, than persons pledged: they join, indeed, with ὅμηρα, in this place, ἐπιστολὰς βιβλίας; evidently meaning, not epistles inclosed in a bulrush-flask, but epistles written on the Papyrus. And these words they give, not as expostive of the former word ὅμηρα but as rendering נִמְנֵם (or perhaps their reading might be נִמְנֵם without the prefix נ.) And when נִמְנֵם or the bulrush, was the substance, on which men usually wrote; נִמְנֵם, according to the wide signification of the word נִמְנֵם in the Hebrew language, would be no unnatural phrase for “epistles.” Though connected, as it is here, with the notion of floating on the surface of the waters, it seems far more probable, that it signifies navigable vessels.

צִירִים is used in another passage of Isaiah (LVII. 9.) for confidential messengers; and the singular צִיר is twice used

used for a person charged with a public message; and in that sense it is taken here by all the ancient interpreters; by LXX. Syr. Chald. Vulg. Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. “Messengers,” in this place, in the English, might be better than ambassadors; for the original word may be taken for persons employed, between nation and nation, for the purposes either of negotiation, or commerce. “Messengers” is the word in the great Bible, and in the Bishop’s Bible.

—— “in vessels of bulrushes.”

Navigable vessels are certainly meant; and if it could be proved, that Egypt is the country spoken to, these vessels of bulrushes might be understood literally of the light skiffs, made of that material, and used by the Egyptians upon the Nile. But if the country spoken to be distant from Egypt, vessels of bulrush are only used as an apt image, on account of their levity, for quick sailing vessels of any material. The country therefore, to which the prophet calls, is characterised as one, which, in the days of the completion of this prophecy, should be a
great

great maritime and commercial power, forming remote alliances, making distant voyages to all parts of the world, with expedition and security, and in the habit of affording protection to their friends and allies. Where this country is to be found is not otherwise said, than that it will be remote from Judæa, and with respect to that country, beyond the Cushæan streams.

——“ saying, Go ye swift messengers.”

The word “saying” is not in the original; nor in the LXX. Vulg. Chald. or Syr. nor in the great Bible, nor in the Bishop’s Bible. It has been inserted in our public translation, and many others of a late date, upon a supposition, that the words which follow, “Go ye swift messengers,” &c. are a command given by the people, called to in the first verse, to messengers sent by them. But it should rather seem, that the command to the swift messengers is the prophet’s command, that is, God’s command by the prophet; and that the swift messengers, to whom the command is given, are the very people called upon in the first verse; who, by their skill in navigation, and
their

their perpetual voyages to distant parts, were qualified to be swift carriers of the message. First, the prophet calls upon this people; he summons them to attend to him; then he declares, for what immediate purpose they are summoned; viz. to be the carriers of a message.

The word "saying" is not inserted by Vitringa, Houbigant, or Bishop Lowth. Houbigant understands the whole chapter of the Jews, Sennacherib, and Tirhaka; and the swift messengers he takes to be messengers sent by Tirhaka to the Jews, to inform them, that he was upon the march against their enemy Sennacherib.

Vitringa and Bishop Lowth understand the prophecy of Sennacherib. But the command given to the messengers, they take to be the command of God by his prophet. But the people, summoned in the first verse, they take to be the very people to whom these swift messengers are sent, described by other characteristics in the sequel of this second verse; and the "swift messengers" they understand of no particular people, nor of any certain persons, but of any the usual "conveyors of news whatsoever," (says Bishop Lowth) "travellers, mer-

chants,

“ chants, and the like ; the instruments
 “ and agents of common fame.” “ Nun-
 “ tii hic sunt obvii quique,” says Vitrin-
 ga. These learned interpreters were all
 misled by an error common to them
 all, and to them with many others ; that
 contiguity to the rivers of Cush is one
 principal circumstance in the prophet’s
 description of the country, to the peo-
 ple of which he speaks ; and nothing but
 the difficulty, in which every interpreter
 will find himself involved, who adopts
 this erroneous principle, could have in-
 duced writers of the piety, judgement,
 and good taste of Bishop Lowth and Vi-
 tringa, to take up the strange notion,
 that God’s awful message is committed
 to any one and every one, who might
 chance to be passing to and fro. “ Ite
 “ nunc obvii qualescunque,” says Vitrin-
 ga, “ quibus decretum hoc curiæ cœlestis
 “ innotuerit, et denuntiate,” &c.

The message certainly is God’s. The
 command to messengers, to go swiftly
 upon the message, is God’s command,
 issued by his prophet ; but the swift
 messengers, charged with the message,
 are not the “ instruments and agents of
 “ common fame,” but the particular
 people, summoned by the prophet in the
 first

first verse to attend him, in order to be charged with the commission he now seems about to give them.

——to a nation scattered and peeled,
 “or, spread out and polished.” (margin).

אל בני ממועד ומורט. Kennicot's best MSS have וממורט ממועד; a more regular orthography of the words, producing no alteration of the sense.—πρὸς ἔθνος ἀσπείρωτον, καὶ ξένον. LXX. ad gentem convulsam et dilaceratam. Vulg. to a nation that is scattered abroad and robbed of that they had. Great Bible, and Bishop's Bible. ad gentem distractam et expilatam. Calvin. ad gentem distractam et depilatam. Jun. et Tremell. ad distractam direptamque gentem. Castalio. à la gente arrastrada y repelada. Span. alla gente di lunga statūra e dipe-lata. Diodati. vers la nation de grand atirail sans poil. Ostervald. ad gentem protractam et depilatam. Vitringa. ad gentem quæ raptatur et laceratur. Houbigant. the nation drawn out and made bare. Purver. to a nation stretched out in length, and smoothed. Bishop Lowth.

Different as these translations are, not

one of them can be said to be erroneous. Since no one of them affixes a sense to either of the two participles, which is not in some degree justified, either by the etymology of the word, or by the use of it in other places; except, indeed, that in the version of the LXX, it is difficult to discern any correspondence, between their word $\xi\lambda\upsilon\gamma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ and the Hebrew, שׁוּם , which it should render. The verb שׁוּם signifies “to draw” in any manner; that is to say, it renders the Latin *trahere*, and every one of its compounds, *attrahere*, *contrahere*, *extrahere*, *protrahere*, *distrabere*, *vi abripere*—to drag forcibly away. שׁוּם renders “to pluck the hair”—“to become bald by the falling of the hair”—“to make smooth by rubbing”—“to furbish”—“to fret or gall the skin.”

Vitringa and Bishop Lowth, resolute in the application of the description to Egypt, and supported in this by the authority of Bochart, find in the first of these participles, an allusion to the shape of that country; and in the second, an allusion either to one of the characteristic customs of the people, the practice of smoothing their bodies by the extirpation of the hair in all parts,

or

or else to the annual smoothing of the surface of the land, by the overflowing of the Nile. But the participle ממש, in the sense of “dragged away,” may be applied to a people forcibly torn from their country, and carried into captivity. And the participle ממש, or ממוש, “plucked,” may be applied to a people plundered of their wealth, and stripped of their power. Or, as the word is sometimes used for the plucking of the hair of the beard in contumely, it may be applied figuratively to a depressed people, treated every where with insult and indignity. Thus both these participles may be more naturally applied to the Jews, in their present condition, than to any other nation of any other time. The sense is perspicuously expressed in the Bishop’s Bible—“scattered abroad and robbed of that they had.” But the force of the original words is better preserved in the Spanish, than in any other translation; and I question whether it can be expressed, with equal brevity, in any other of the modern languages of Europe—“gente arrastrada y repelada.” *Arrastrar* is “to drag about by force.” *Andar un hombre arrastrado*, is a proverbial expression in the Spanish language, applied

applied to a man who roams about, an outcast of society, every where seeking relief, which he no where finds, from the extreme of necessity and poverty. *Repelar* is not only to pluck the hair, but to tear it up by the roots, pulling it against the grain of its growth.

I must observe, that the word מורש, which occurs in twelve passages, and no more in the whole Bible, besides this and the seventh verse of this chapter, is not used in any one of them in a moral sense, answering to the English word "polite." Nor can I find, that it bears that sense in any of the dialects.

— to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto. "נורא מנ חוּמ חזלמח" "אֵל עַם—to a people terrible, &c." "To wit, the Jews," says the annotator in the English Geneva Bible, "who, because of God's plagues, made all other nations afraid of the like; as God threatened." Deut. xxviii. 37. And the Jews are certainly the people meant; though interpreters differ much, both in the rendering, and in the application of the words.—λαὸν καὶ χαλεπὸν τις (or τι) ἀνέβη ἐπ' αὐτοὺς; LXX. The text of the LXX, seems to be in some disorder. I suspect the true reading of the entire passage to have

have been—πρὸς ἔθνος μέγαλον καὶ ἕτερον, καὶ λαὸν χαλεπὸν. τίς αὖτις ἐπέκεινα; *unto a nation of stately stature and strange, and a people bard* [to encounter.] *What people more so than this?* that is, what people more hard to encounter than this?—μᾶθ' ὅτι ἐκ ἑστίν ἐπέκεινα. Sym.—ad populum terribilem, post quem non est alius. Vulg. ad populum formidabilem ab eo et deinceps. Calv. ad populum eorum qui sunt ultra ipsum formidabilissimum. Castalio. ad populum formidabilem ex eo loco populus alterius. Jun. et Tremell. to a fearful people, and to a people that is fiercer than thys. Coverdale. a fearful people from their begynnyng hitherto. Great Bible, and Bishop's Bible. al pueblo llene de temores des de su principio y despues. Span. al popolo spaventevole, che è più oltre di quella. Diodati. Diodati conceives that the נַחַשׁ וְעַר, &c. is another people. For so he explains himself in his notes. *al popolo c. a que' più salvaticchi, c' habicano nell' Etiopia interiore, più lontani del mare, più neri, sparuti, horridi, e barbari.* vers le peuple terrible depuis là où il est, et par delà. Ostervald. populum formidabilem, à quo fuit et usque. Vitranga. ad populum fractum

E 2

arumnis

ærumnis et fatiscantem. Houbigant, applying this character to the Jews of the prophet's times. But *אָרָא* is never used as a participle passive, that is, as applied to the person affected with fear, as Houbigant understands it here. "the people terrible not only where they are, but farther. Purver. "to a people terrible from the first and hitherto." Bishop Lowth.

Of these renderings some seem to give hardly any sense; some senses quite foreign to the context. The sense, which most naturally arises from the words, and best suits the context, is that which is given in the Great Bible, the Bishop's Bible, and the Spanish, and is adopted in our later English translations, and followed by Vitranga and Bishop Lowth. But even in these translations the word *אָרָא* is not well rendered by "fearfull," "lloeno de temore," or "formidabilem" or "terrible." The word, if I mistake not, is applicable to whatever excites admiration, or awe, with or without any mixture of terror. There is no word in the English language which will render it universally. It must be rendered differently in different places, according to its connection. Majestic, sublime, grand, awful,

awful, and sometimes terrible. In this place I would render it “ awfully remarkable.” But with respect to the phrase, *בן דור הולא*, I agree with Vitrin-
ga, that it will best suit the context, if it be understood not of place, but of time. But understanding the time, de-
scribed as present by the adverb *הולא* (hitherto), of the time present when the prophecy was uttered; he applies the character contained in these words, as rendered by himself and in our public translation, to the Egyptians; of whom he observes with truth, that they had been formidable from the earliest times to the times of the prophet. But the time present in prophetic vision, is not the time of the delivery, but that of the fulfilment of the prophecy. The people, to whom the character is to be applied, must exist, and the character must notoriously belong to them, at the time of the accomplishment of the prophecy. If therefore the prophecy is not yet accomplished, which will appear to be the case, the application of this character to the people of Egypt must be erroneous. For that people is gone; and has long since ceased to be of any consideration. But the people of the Jew
have

have been from their very beginning, are at this day, and will be to the end of time, a people venerable in a religious sense, awfully remarkable, (in which sense, rather than in that of terrible, as I have observed, I would take נורא here) on account of the special providence visibly attending them. And, with this correction of the word “terrible,” I should not much object to Purver’s rendering. The words, I think, may bear it. And the sense it gives, applies more aptly to the Jews, than to any other people. They have been a people awfully remarkable, not only in the part of the world where they were settled, but, since their dispersion particularly, to the utmost corners of the earth.

——“a nation meted out and trodden down;” or, “a nation that meteth out and treadeth down.” Margin. In these renderings, as well as in Vitranga’s and Bishop Lowth’s, the allusion seems to be to Egypt; but in the original, and in the antient versions, it is evidently to the Jews.

גַּם קוֹ קוֹמְמוֹסָה——The interpretations of the words are so various, and the manner of application so different, even among those who apply the words to the
same

same people, that it will be proper to state the different renderings one by one; and the order I shall observe in stating them shall be, to begin with those which seem to me the most extravagant.

The first therefore, I shall mention, is that of Ostervald; because I have not the least conception of his meaning—*vers la nation allant à la file, et foulée*. The next shall be Diodati's—*alla gente sparsa qua e la, e calpestata*. This he applies to the Nomad tribes of Ethiopians and Moors, not settled in walled towns, but scattered in villages. But how *sparsa qua e la* is to be brought out of the Hebrew, *קָקָק*, he has not informed us. The third place is due to Junius and Tremellius—"gentem omnibus delineantem et conculcantem." They understand these to be the words of Tirhaka, describing the haughty overbearing character of the Assyrian empire. The next in order shall be Grotius—"gentem lineæ lineæ et conculcationis." "Id est," he says, (his rendering wants an *id est* indeed) "gentem quæ paulatim protendit imperii sui terminos, et superbo pede victos proterit," applying the character to the Assyrians. Next hear Castalio—"gentem alios atque alios limites habentem,

habentem, attritamque.” He understands the passage of the countries bordering on the Nile; of which the boundaries, he says, were perpetually changed by the inundations of the river. Next let Vitranga speak—“*ad gentem canonis et canonis [or præcepti et præcepti] et conculationis.*” He applies the passage to the Egyptians, and imagines, that the Egyptians are characterized in it by two circumstances; the number of precise rules, to the observance of which they were held in their idolatrous rites, and their practice of trampling in their seed with cattle. Bishop Lowth renders—“a nation meted out by line and trodden down.” This he applies to Egypt, expounding the “meted out” of the frequent necessity, in that country, of having recourse to mensuration, in order to determine the boundaries after the inundations of the Nile; and the “trodden down,” of the trampling in of the seed.

I proceed now to those interpretations, which refer the passage to the Jews; beginning with those in which the rendering is the most questionable, though the application be right. Among those interpreters, who, rightly applying the passage to the Jewish people, seem to
mistake

mistake the sense in which it is applied to them, Houbigant must take the lead —“ ad gentem limitibus angustis conclusam, et proculcatam.” He observes, that the limits of the kingdom of Judæa had been often shortened by the conquests of the Assyrians. Next in order comes the venerable Calvin,—“ gentem undique conculcatam.” He supports this rendering thus; “קו קו id est, Undique; ac si quis duceret lineas, iisque
 “ inter se conjunctis, nullum locum
 “ vacuum relinqueret: vel fulcos duceret in agro, quibus omnes glebas
 “ subigeret.” Last in this class are the old translations in our own language, —“ a desperate and pyllled folke.” Coverdale; badly rendering, not the Hebrew, but the Greek of the LXX. —“ a nacyon troden downe by lytle and lytle.” Great Bible, and Bishop’s Bible, “ a nation by little and little even trodden under foot.” English Geneva. Would you know, by what process of criticism, “ by little and little” is brought out of קו כו? Hear Vatablus, —“ Metaphora, tracta ab architectis, qui ordinem unum post ordinem alterum collocare solent, *i. e.* cui paulatim conculcatio evenit.”

In all these renderings the sense is far-fetched, drawn by a torture of criticism from the words.

The antient translations seem far preferable, arising naturally out of the words of the original, without any previous assumptions, or any accommodation to assumptions, by violent efforts of the critical art.

—ad gentem expectantem et conculcatam. Vulg. “ἔθνος ὑπομένον καὶ συμπεπαλῆμενον.”

Aquila. ἔθνος ἀνέλπισον καὶ καλῶς πεπαλῆμενον. LXX. “gente harta de esperar y hollada.”

Span. All these versions are to the same effect; but those of the Vulgate, and the Spanish, are incomparably the best.

The word *ὑπο* is unquestionably from the root *ὑπ*. The verb *ὑπ* signifies “to stretch, to stretch away.” Hence the noun *ὑπ* sometimes signifies a measuring line, sometimes a strait rule of the mason or carpenter, and thence figuratively a rule of conduct, or a precept. But the verb *ὑπ* signifies also “to expect,” to look for with eager desire”—ἐποκαρδοῦν; from the natural act of stretching the neck to look for a thing coming from a distance. The use of the verb in this sense, is far more frequent, than in the other. And when used in this sense, the
verb

verb in some instances, though it must be confessed in few, drops the final π . Why therefore may not $\pi \pi$ render “expecting, expecting.” It is probable, that the true reading of the Vulgate may be *ad gentem expectantem, expectantem, et conculcatam*. For we find the word *expectante* thus doubled, in strict conformity to the original, in the repetition of this description of the people intended, in the 7th verse; and Lucas Brugensis testifies, that sixteen MSS. repeat *expectantem* in this place. Now are not the Jews in their present state, a nation “expecting, expecting, and trampled under foot?” still without end expecting their Messiah, who came so many ages since, and every where trampled under foot, held in subjection, and generally treated with contempt? And is not this likely to be their character and condition till their conversion shall take place? The $\alpha\nu\epsilon\lambda\pi\iota\varsigma\epsilon\nu$ of the LXX. may signify “not gratified in their hope.”

The Syriac version appears, at first sight, to be different from these; but I believe, upon examination it will be found to be equivalent— ܐܠܗܝܢ ܩܪܝܢܝܢ for which the Latin translation gives “populum foedum et conculcatum,”

tum;" but in the Hebrew language שׂוּכָר as a verb, renders "to be drunk;" as a noun, both in the Hebrew and the Chaldee dialect, "an inebriating drink;" and the same sense is given to the Syriac noun ܫܘܚܐ both by Schindler, and the younger Buxtorf. The judgment of these learned lexicographers is confirmed by the actual use of the word in the Syriac version of Isa. XXIX. 9. where it is put to render the Hebrew שׂוּכָר in the sense of intoxicating drink. Hence it seems reasonable to suppose, that the verb ܫܘܚܐ may signify, in Syriac as in Hebrew, "to be drunk," and the participle aphel ܫܘܚܐ "drunken." Indeed, Schindler makes "foedum esse," a secondary sense. I suspect that he is right, and that the filthiness, unsightliness, or vileness expressed by the word, is that sort of unseemliness which disgraces the figure and actions of a drunken man. If I am right in this inference, the Syriac should be rendered *populum temulentum et conculcatum*—"a people drunk and trodden under foot." The drunkenness is that drunkenness of intellect, which makes them blind to the prophecies relating to the Messiah, and to themselves, and keeps them to this hour in expectation

tion of another Messiah, than he whom they crucified. “ —They are drunken, “ but not with wine—they stagger, but “ not with strong drink. For Jehovah “ hath poured upon them the spirit of “ deep sleep, and hath closed their eyes; “ their prophets, their rulers, and their “ seers, hath he covered.” Isaiah XXIX. 9. 10. The Syriac, so rendered, gives a sense perfectly equivalent to that of the other ancient versions, though under an image borrowed, as it should seem, from other parts of the prophetic writings. I have a suspicion, that this interpreter, some how or other connected, or confounded, the word קא in this place, with the root קאח , or קא , “ to vomit;”

———“ whose land the rivers have “ spoiled,” or “ despise.” Margin. To this effect the passage is rendered by all interpreters, except Coverdale, the learned Julius Bate, and Bishop Lowth. Coverdale’s interpretation deserves to be mentioned only for its singularity, for it is impossible to trace it to any principle —“ whose londe is devyded from us “ with ryvers of water.” Julius Bate and Bishop Lowth give the verb נאח , by all

all others rendered “spoiled,” a sense directly opposite to that of spoiling. The former in his *Critica Hebræa*, under the word נז, says, “by the context [viz. in “this place] it may be overflow, or, in-
“rich, or fatten, or, &c.” and Bishop Lowth renders it by the word “nourish.”

It is certain, the root נז occurs nowhere in the Bible, but in this one passage. And it passed with all interpreters before Schultens, Coverdale alone excepted, and some one perhaps, or more, of the unknown interpreters whom Coverdale followed, for an unusual form of the root נז “to spoil.” But Schultens thought, the change of נז into נז would be an anomaly, to which nothing similar is to be found in the whole compass of the Hebrew language. He would refer the word, therefore, to the root נז, rather than to נז. נז signifies “to slight,” “to despise,” “to insult.” And he thinks, that to say of a river, that it despises, or insults a country, is a noble metaphor for overflowing and destroying. And he attempts to confirm this exposition by the senses of the verb נז in the Arabic language. Upon the whole therefore, Schultens agrees with others in the sense of the passage. - Only
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he imagines, that the verb **נָמַן** expresses by a metaphor, what all interpreters before him thought it expressed literally.

Bishop Lowth, assenting as it should seem to Schultens's objection to the usual exposition of this word, gives it the contrary sense of nourishing, upon the suggestion, as he tells us, of a learned friend, who reminded him that the noun **נֶמֶן** in Syriac, and **נִמָּן** in Chaldee, signifies a breast, dug, or teat. This sense of nourishing, the learned Bishop says, would perfectly suit with the Nile—"for
 " to the inundation of the Nile, Egypt
 " owed every thing; the fertility of the
 " soil, and the very soil itself. Besides,
 " the overflowing of the Nile came on
 " by gentle degrees, covering, not lay-
 " ing waste the country." All this is most unquestionably true. But the mention of it here only shews, that this conjectural interpretation of nourishing, an interpretation not transferred directly to the Hebrew verb from the actual sense of a corresponding word in any of the dialects, but derived indirectly, by critical theory, from the sense of a noun of the same letters in the Syriac; that this conjectural interpretation is put upon the word, upon the ground of assumptions,

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which

which the learned prelate himself considered as doubtful. 1st. That the word " Rivers," in this passage, is to be understood literally, of some natural rivers. 2. That Egypt is the country described in this second verse. Whence indeed it would follow, that the Nile, in its various branches, must be the rivers; and that this clause must be so interpreted, as to describe the effects of the inundation of the Nile upon the land of Egypt. But in the same degree that these assumptions are doubtful, the supposed discordance of the received interpretation, and the supposed agreement of this new interpretation, with the subject matter of the prophecy, will be likewise doubtful. Deny these assumptions, and nothing will be found in the context, to which Julius Bates appeals, and on which Bishop Lowth in effect relies, in favour of this interpretation,

Schultens's objection to the common rendering appears to me, I confess, more subtle than solid. When he says, that ~~was~~ for ~~was~~ " would be an anomaly, of which the like is not to be found in the whole compass of the Hebrew language;" I conceive he means, that an instance is not to be found among the
verbs

verbs that double the second radical, of a change of the radical, so doubled, into \aleph . At the same time he seems to admit, in the very next sentence, that among the verbs which end in π , the change of the final π into \aleph is not uncommon. Now we very often find three verbs in the Hebrew, differing in their form no otherwise than thus; that the one shall be a verb ain \imath (for the sake of brevity, upon a very dry subject, you must permit me here to assume a very technical language) the second a verb doubling ain, and the third a verb lamed π . Three such verbs have not only so near a resemblance in the letters, that, in the oblique forms, you will find it difficult to distinguish one from another, otherwise than by the differences of the Masoretic points, which holding the points to be of no authority, I consider as no distinction; but though each may have strictly its proper sense, yet in many instances, in the latitude of usage, they have often an intercommunity of signification. When this happens, it is because there is some general radical meaning common to them all, comprehending under it the several specific meanings of each, and producing something of an indiscrimination

indiscrimination in the application of them, even in these secondary meanings.

Thus the old lexicographers give us three roots כָּנָה, כִּנָּה, and כָּנָה. כָּנָה, "to brand with infamy, to disgrace," כִּנָּה, "to despise, to slight." כָּנָה, "to plunder, to spoil." It is evident that the difference in sense, between כָּנָה and כִּנָּה, is not great; the latter expressing an act of the same kind, in a less degree or to a smaller extent. But it is not so obvious, but it is very certain, that כָּנָה is the real primary root; for its sense "to rob, or plunder," comprehends under it the senses of both the other. For "to disgrace a man," "to brand him with infamy," what is it but to rob him, to despoil him of his good name and reputation? And to slight, or condemn a man, what is it, but not to give him that respect which is his due? which is the next thing to robbery. Hence it is not to be wondered, if כָּנָה should sometimes give its own proper meaning to its subordinates כָּנָה or כִּנָּה. Accordingly we find כִּנָּה actually used in the sense of כָּנָה "to spoil." 1 Sam. XIV. 36. This, I confess, is the only passage, in which the word occurs in that sense. But one clear unquestionable instance is decisive; and

and I find the MSS. all agree in the reading. One, indeed, of Kennicott's MSS. but only one, omits the word altogether; but no one gives it without the final ך. The instance is one of the strongest that can be. It occurs in a simple historical narrative in prose. The verb is the 1st person pl. of the future in Kal. in which the final ך, in the verbs, quiescent lamed ך, to the best of my recollection, never is quiescent. The verb is transitive. Its object is the detached pronoun masc. of the 3d person plur. with a prefix; so that the final ך can be nothing but radical.

Hence, I think, we may conclude, that the verb כָּוֶה, in this place, is not, indeed, for כָּוֶה, but for כָּוֶה (or rather כָּוֶה; for so the verb כָּוֶה, according to the rule of conjugation of the verbs quiescent lamed ך, should form the 3d pers. pl. præter. Kal.) in the sense of כָּוֶה; and that it renders literally, not by a metaphor, as Schultens imagined, "have spoiled."

Perhaps if we knew the laws of the Hebrew prosody, as accurately as we know those of the Greek and Latin, we should see, that the change of the ך into ך is by a poetic dialect, on account of the verse. I must observe however, that

that *ma* is found in this place in one of Kennicott's MSS. mentioned by Bishop Lowth, and in three of De Rossi's. "Omnes," says De Rossi, speaking of "his three, prior manu, formâ regulari." If this should be received as the true reading, which would be contrary to my judgement, Schultens's difficulty would disappear, and any solution of it would be unnecessary.

Believe me, my dear Sir, it is not from any ambition to make a display of critical learning (which of all learning that a man may possess, I hold to be of itself, and for its own sake, of the least value) that I have run into so great a length of discussion upon a single word. But from a conviction, that this is the only safe way of dealing with difficult and doubtful passages. Some, perhaps, would ask me, is it necessary to the understanding of the prophecies, that all the obscurities and ambiguities should be thus discussed? Certainly not for the understanding of them. Many may be capable of understanding the sense, once found out, of receiving it upon the credit of the expositor, to whom the detail of the process of investigation will give little light. Nor is it necessary, to a right understanding

standing of the general sense of the prophecies, that every particular text should be understood. But for the explication, for the finding out of the sense where it is doubtful, I would answer decidedly, that every obscure passage must be thus dissected, and every unusual word thus sifted. I need not say to you (for no one, I am persuaded, hath an higher reverence for the sacred text, or a deeper sense of its importance) that it is the language of inspired writers, on which we bestow so much time and labour; and if any one thinks it too much, he may be a humble hearer of the word, but let him not presume to meddle with the office of interpretation.

With respect to this particular passage, I shall venture to conclude, that the English translation gives the true rendering of the original words; that the original expresses the spoiling of inundation, not by a metaphor, but literally; and, with the greatest deference for the judgement of my late friend Bishop Lowth, that there is no room in this passage for conjectural interpretations.

Perhaps you will tell me, that when I speak of the unanimous consent of all interpreters, before Bates and Bishop Lowth, in the sense of this passage which

I uphold (I speak of the literal meaning of the words) I ought to qualify the assertion, with an exception with respect to the LXX. whose version, from the varieties of the MSS. you may think in some degree doubtful. But upon the maturest consideration, I see no reason to think, that their version of this clause differed from that of all other interpreters. Their text, as it is given from the Alexandrian MS. in the London Polyglott is, indeed, wholly unintelligible. It is equally so in the Roman edition, from the Vatican MS. A version, so depraved by the injuries of time, or other causes, as to be unintelligible, is to be considered as neutral; or as conducing nothing to the choice of the critic, between two different meanings. But in Breitenger's edition, the text is given thus: *ἔ διήεπασαν οἱ ποταμοὶ τῆς γῆς πάντες*, the two words, *ἔ διήεπασαν*, being marked indeed as insertions; the one, of the editor from other MSS; the other, of the Hexaplar edition, as cited by early writers. In the margin of Froben's edition of St. Jerome, printed at Basle, under the patronage of Leo X. in the year 1516, in a note which I guess to be of Erasmus, I find the passage given

given somewhat differently, thus : ὁ δὲ ἠρ-
 πασα νῦν οἱ ποταμοὶ τῆς γῆς πάντες : where the
 pronoun ὁ rehearses ἔθνος I have no doubt
 that one or other of these is the true text
 of the LXX ; and in either way it gives
 the very same sense, which, in agreement
 with almost all interpreters, ancient and
 modern, is expressed in our English Bible
 —“ whose land the rivers have spoiled.”

“ Rivers,” *i. e.* the armies of conquere-
 rors, which long since have spoiled the
 land of the Jews. And so the passage
 was understood by Jonathan ; who, for
 the metaphor “ rivers,” puts, what he
 understood to be denoted by it, “ peo-
 ples.” The inundation of rivers is a
 frequent image in the prophetic stile, for
 the ravages of armies of foreign invaders.
 I must observe, however, that the inunda-
 tion of rivers symbolizes the devastations
 of foreign armies only, not of intestine
 commotion ; the outrages of invaders, not
 of intestine commotion ; not the turbu-
 lence of the rabble, of any nation, rising
 in rebellion against their own govern-
 ment. It cannot therefore, be applied to
 the ruin brought upon France, by the ac-
 cursed spawn of Jacobins swarming out
 of her own bowels.

Thus it appears, that the description
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of the people to whom the swift messengers are sent, agrees most accurately in every particular, with the character and condition of the Jews in their present state of dispersion.

WE have now heard messengers summoned. We have heard a command given to them, to go swiftly with the message. We have heard the people described to whom the message was to be carried. It might be expected, we should next hear the message given to the messengers in precise terms. Homer's Jupiter gives the lying spirit of the dream, the message, to be delivered to Agamemnon, in precise terms ; in which terms it is afterwards delivered. This we admire in the Epic poet ; because by the apparent sobriety and order of the narrative, he contrives to give palpable fiction the air of truth. Sacred truth is often delivered by the holy prophets, in the loftiest strains of poetry, and in the boldest imagery, but without fiction. It needs therefore, no such artificial colouring. This portion of Isaiah strikes me, as affording a remarkable contrast, in this particular, between the stile of sacred and profane poetry. In prophecy, the curtain (if the expression may be allowed)

lowed) is often suddenly dropped upon the action that is going on, before it is finished; and the subject is continued in a shifted scene, as it were, of vision. This I take to be a natural consequence of the manner in which futurity was represented, in emblematical pictures, to the imagination of the prophet; and the breaks, and transitions, are more or less sudden, according to the natural turn of the writer's mind. For prophecy was a business, in which the intellect of the man, under the controul of the inspiring spirit, had an active share; and accordingly the composition owes much of its colouring (but nothing more) to the natural genius and taste of the writer. And hence it is, that such a variety of stile is found in the works of the different authors of the Old Testament, all equally inspired. In Isaiah the transitions are remarkably sudden and bold; and yet this suddenness and boldness of transition is seldom, I think, if ever, in him a cause of obscurity. In the present instance, the scene of messengers, sent upon a message, is suddenly closed with this second verse, before the messengers set out, before even the message is given to them. But the new objects, which are immediately

ately brought in view, evidently represent, under the usual emblems of sacred prophecy, other parts of the same entire action; and declare with the greatest perspicuity, the purport, the season, and the effect of the message. An ensign, or standard, is lifted up on the mountains—a trumpet is blown on the hills—the standard of the Cross of Christ—the trumpet of the Gospel. The resort to the standard, the effect of the summons in the end, will be universal. A pruning of the vine shall take place, after a long suspension of visible interpositions of Providence, just before the season of the gathering of the fruits. Fowls of prey, and wild beasts, shall take possession of Jehovah's dwelling place. But at that very season, when the affairs of the church seem ruined and desperate, a sudden reverse shall take place. The people, to whom the message is sent shall be conducted in pomp, as a Present to Jehovah, to the place of his name, to Mount Zion.

3 “——See ye——hear ye.” These imperative should be future indicatives. So the original words are taken by Vulg. Syr. and Chald. by Calvin, Junius and Tremellius; the English Geneva, and
by

by Vitranga. The prophecy announces a display of God's power and providence, which should be notorious to the whole world; and particularly, I think, alludes to a renewed preaching of the Gospel, with great power and effect in the latter ages.

4. "For so the Lord, &c.——"

This verse seems to describe a long suspension of the visible interpositions of Providence in the affairs of this world, and in favour of his people, under the image of that stillness and stagnation of the atmosphere, which takes place in the extreme heats of the latter end of summer.

——"I will consider in my dwelling place," rather with the margin, "I will regard my set dwelling place," or with Bishop Lowth, "I will regard my fixed habitation." It is very extraordinary, that these verbs, "I will take my rest—I will consider"—are imperatives of the 2d pers. sing. in the Syriac; but they have not that form in the original; nor so taken will they give any sense consistent with the context.

The sentiment is, that, notwithstanding a long cessation of extraordinary manifestations of God's power, his providence is not asleep—he is all the while

regarding the conduct, and the fortunes of his people; he is not forgetful of his promises to his chosen people, but, though often by a silent and secret operation, is at all times directing everything to their ultimate prosperity, and to the universal establishment of the true religion.

——“like a clear heat upon herbs,” or according to the Margin and Bishop Lowth—after rain”—על אור. But the word אור never signifies rain; for the text cited by Kimchi (Job XXXVII. 11.) as an instance of this sense, is not at all to the purpose. The physiology of the book of Job lies much too deep for Kimchi's penetration. Nor does the word, in the singular number, ever signify “herbs.” The sort of heat, described in this passage, never follows rain, but frequently precedes it. The particle אור denotes only close proximity. Applied therefore, to time, it may as well express the moment just before, as the moment just after. The word אור in Job XXXVII. 3. certainly signifies lightning. It will bear the same sense in the 11th verse of the same chapter. It signifies lightning, Hab. III. 4. and Hos. VI. 5. And the sense of lightning will very well apply in

in this place. For the heat, which the prophet describes, is of that sort which precedes a thunder storm.

——“a cloud of dew.” This still heat is often accompanied with a moisture of the atmosphere, and always with a clouded sky.

——“in the heat of harvest.” For כחם, “in the heat,” several respectable MSS. of Kennicott’s collation, and others of De Rossi’s, have כחם—“in the day of harvest.” And this sense is certainly expressed in the versions of the Syr. LXX. and Vulg. But the received reading gives so clear and strong a sense, that I prefer it.

5——“and take away and cut down.”

——“cut down”—הח. The word occurs in this place only. Instead of a verb in Hiphil, from the root חח I would take it as a noun substantive, the name of some lopping instrument, with ח prefixed, and the nominative case of the verb הח. This both simplifies the construction; and by introducing a noun corresponding with מחרח, produces a parallelism, between this and the preceding hemistick, which otherwise is wanting.

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The word is so taken in the Great Bible:
 “ and he shall cut downe the increace
 “ with sythes, and the braunches shall
 “ be taken away with hokes.”

——“sprigs—branches——” החללים—
הזנוים. These words express, not simply sprigs and branches, but “useless shoots,” “luxuriant branches,” which bear no fruit, and weaken the plant; and properly such shoots and branches of a vine. A vine, in the prophetic language, is an image of the church of God; the branches of the vine are the members of the church; and the useless shoots, and unfruitful luxuriant branches, are the insincere nominal members of the church. And the pruning of such shoots and branches of the vine, is the excision of such false hypocritical professors, at least the separation of them from the church, by God’s judgments. This verse therefore, and the following, clearly predict a judgment to fall upon the church for its purification, and the utter destruction of hypocritical professors of the truth. It is remarkable, that the object of this mystical pruning is not named, otherwise, than as the species of the tree is implied in the names given to the branches. The reason of this may be,

be, that the Israelites, in particular, having been often signified in prophecy under the image of the vine, so long as they in particular formed the whole of God's visible church on earth, to have named the vine expressly, might have given them occasion, to appropriate this part of the prophecy to themselves. Whereas it is another vine, that will be the object of this pruning, as is evident from the season fixed for this visitation.

The season is fixed in the beginning of this verse. "For afore the harvest, &c." This pruning will immediately precede the harvest, and the in-gathering. The season of the harvest, and of the gathering of the fruit, is the prophetic image of that period, when our Lord will send forth his angels, to gather his elect from the four winds of Heaven; of that period, when a renewed preaching of the Gospel shall take place in all parts of the world; of which, the conversion of the Jews will perhaps be the first effect. The purification of the Christian Church, by the awful visitations predicted in this passage, seems to be the proper preparative for this renewal of the call, to them that are near, the Jews; and

and to them that are yet afar off, the Gentile tribes not yet converted.

6. "They shall be left together," &c.

i. e. The shoots and branches, cut off as unfruitful and useless, shall be left.

—————"summer upon them———
winter upon them." The pronoun of the 3d person in the original is singular—"it." and is very properly rendered by the singular pronoun by Vulg. Syr. Calvin, Junius and Tremellius, in the Great Bible, the Bishop's Bible, the English Geneva Bible; by Vitranga, Houbigant, and Bishop Lowth. But the greater part of these interpreters expound this singular pronoun, as if in sense it were collective; which brings the passage to the same meaning, as if it were plural. But the true antecedent of this singular pronoun, in the original, is the word *בית* "my dwelling place," in v. 4. Which dwelling place may be understood literally of Mount Sion. It was a prevailing opinion in the primitive ages, that Antichrist's last exploit would be, to fix his seat of empire on that holy spot, where he would ultimately perish. To those to whom the prophetic stile, in
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the original language, is not familiar, (but to those, I think, only) it will appear strange, that a pronoun should refer to an antecedent at so great a distance.

7. "In that time shall the Present be brought, &c."

"In that time." Immediately after this purgation of the church, at the very time when the Bird of prey, with all the beasts of the earth, Antichrist with his rebel rout, shall have fixed his seat between the seas, in the holy mountain; "a Present shall be brought," &c. the nation described in v. 2. as those to whom the swift messengers are sent, after their long infidelity, shall be brought as a Present unto Jehovah (compare LXVI. 20.) They shall be converted to the acknowledgment of the truth, and they shall be brought to the place of the name of Jehovah, to Mount Sion: they shall be settled, in peace and prosperity, in the land of their original inheritance.

This then is the sum of this prophecy, and the substance of the message, sent to the people dragged about and pluckt. That in the latter ages, after a
long

long suspension of the visible interpositions of Providence, God, who all the while regards that dwelling place, which he never will abandon, and is, at all times directing the events of the world to the accomplishment of his own purposes of Wisdom and Mercy; immediately before the final gathering of his elect from the four winds of Heaven, will purify his church, by such signal judgements, as shall rouse the attention of the whole world, and, in the end, strike all nations with religious awe. At this period the apostate faction will occupy the Holy Land. This faction will certainly be an instrument of those judgements, by which the church will be purified. That purification, therefore, is not at all inconsistent with the seeming prosperity of the affairs of the atheistical confederacy. But, after such duration, as God shall see fit to allow, to the plenitude of its power; the Jews, converted to the faith of Christ, will be unexpectedly restored to their antient possessions.

The swift messengers will certainly have a considerable share, as instruments in the hand of God, in the restoration of the chosen people. Otherwise, to what purpose are they called upon (v. 1.) to
receive

receive their commission from the prophet? It will perhaps be some part of their business, to afford the Jews the assistance and protection of their fleets. This seems to be insinuated in the imagery of the 1st verse. But the principal part they will have to act, will be that of the carriers of God's message to his people. This character seems to describe some christian country, where the prophecies relating to the latter ages will meet with particular attention; where the literal sense of those, which promise the restoration of the Jewish people, will be strenuously upheld; and where these will be so successfully expounded, as to be the principal means, by God's blessing, of removing the veil from the hearts of the Israelites.

Those, who shall thus be the instruments of this blessed work, may well be described, in the figured language of prophecy, as the carriers of God's message to his people. The situation of the country destined to so high an office, is not otherwise described in the prophecy, than by this circumstance; that it is "beyond the rivers of Cush." That is far to the west of Judæa, if these rivers of Cush are to be understood, as they

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have

have been generally understood, of the Nile and other Ethiopian rivers ; far to the East, if of the Tigris and Euphrates. The one, or the other, they must denote ; but which, is uncertain.—It will be natural to ask, of what importance is this circumstance in the character of the country ; which if it be any thing, is a geographical character, and yet leaves the particular situation so much undetermined, that we know not, in what quarter of the world to look for the country intended, whether in the East Indies, or in the western parts of Africa, or Europe, or in America ? I answer, that the full importance of this circumstance will not appear, till the completion of the prophecy shall discover it. But it had as I conceive, a temporary importance, at the time of the delivery of the prophecy ; namely, that it excluded Egypt.

The Jews of Isaiah's time, by a perverse policy, were upon all occasions courting the alliance of the Egyptians, in opposition to God's express injunctions, by his prophets, to the contrary. Isaiah, therefore, as if he would discourage the hope of aid from Egypt at any time, tells them, that the foreign alliance, which God prepares for them in
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the latter times, is not that of Egypt which he teaches them at all times to renounce and to despise, but that of a country far remote; as every country must be, that lies either west of the Nile, or east of the Tigris.

I shall now sum up the result of these long disquisitions in a translation of the prophecy, illustrated with short notes.

ISAIAH, CHAP. XVIII.

1. Ho! Land spreading wide the shadow of (thy) wings,* which art beyond the rivers of Cush.†

2. Accustomed

* *i. e.* Affording aid and protection to friends and allies in remote countries.

† The land of Cush in Holy Writ (commonly, but by mistake, rendered Ethiopia) is properly that district of Arabia, where the sons of Cush first settled. But, as this race multiplied exceedingly, and spread, not only into other parts of Arabia, but eastward, round the head of the Persian Gulph, to the confines of Sussianna; and westward, across the Arabian Gulph, into the region since called Abyssinia, which extended along the coast from Ptolemæis to Arsinoë, and inland to the very sources of the Nile; the land of Cush is often taken more largely for a great tract of country, not only comprehending the whole of Arabia Felix, but having for its eastern boundary the

2. Accustomed to send† messengers
by sea,

Even in bulrush-vessels,‡ upon the
surface of the waters !

Go swift messengers,§

Unto a nation¶ dragged away and
plucked,

Unto

branch of the Tigris, below the town of Asia, and for its western boundary the Nile. The rivers of Cush, in this place, may be either the Euphrates and the Tigris, on the east ; or the Nile, the Astaboras, and the Astapus, on the west. But which of these are meant, it must be left for time to shew.

† “ Accustomed to send.” The form of the expression in the original signifies, not a single act of sending once, but the habit of sending perpetually.

‡ Sending by sea, in bulrush vessels, is a figurative expression ; descriptive of skill in navigation, and of the safety and expedition, with which the inhabitants, of the land called to, are supposed to perform distant voyages.

§ “ Go swift messengers”—You, who, by your skill in navigation and your extensive commerce and alliances, are so well qualified to be carriers of a message to a people in the remotest corners, Go with God’s message.—

¶ Unto a nation, &c. viz. To the dispersed Jews ; a nation dragged away from its proper seat, and plucked of its wealth and power ; a people wonderful, from the beginning to this very time, for the special providence which ever has attended them, and directed their fortunes ; a nation still lingering in expectation of the Messiah, who so long since came, and was rejected by them, and now is coming again in glory ; a nation universally trampled under foot ; whose land, “ rivers,” armies of foreign invaders,

Unto a people wonderful from their
beginning hitherto,

A nation expecting, expecting, and
trampled under foot,

Whose land rivers have spoiled.

3. All the inhabitants of the world,
and dwellers upon earth,

Shall see the lifting up, as it were, of
a banner* upon the mountains

And shall hear the sounding as it were
of a trumpet.*

4. For thus saith Jehovah unto me :

I will sit still† (but I will keep my
eye upon my prepared habitation.)

H 2

As

the Assyrians, Babylonians, Syromacedonians, Romans, Saracens, and Turks, have overrun and depopulated.

* “ A banner—a trumpet.” The banner of the Cross, to be lifted up more conspicuously, than ever before ; the trumpet of the Gospel to be sounded more loudly, than ever before, in the latter ages.

† This 4th verse represents a long cessation of visible interpositions of providence, under the image of God’s sitting still ; the stillness of that awful pause, under the image of that torpid state of the atmosphere, in hot weather, when not a gleam of sun-shine breaks for a moment through the sullen gloom ; not a breath stirs ; not a leaf wags ; not a blade of grass is shaken ; no rippling wave curls upon the sleeping surface of the waters ; the black ponderous cloud, covering the whole sky, seems to hang fixed and motionless as an arch of stone. Nature seems benumbed in all her operations. The vigilance nevertheless of God’s silent providence, is represented under the image of his

As the parching heat just before lighting,

As the dewy cloud in the heat of harvest.

5. For afore the harvest,† when the bud is coming to perfection,

And the blossom is become a juicy berry,

He will cut off the useless shoots with pruning hooks

And

keeping his eye, while he thus sits still, upon his prepared habitation. The sudden eruption of judgement, threatened in the next verse, after this total cessation, just before the final call to Jew and Gentile, answers to the storms of thunder and lightning, which, in the suffocating heats of the latter end of summer, succeed that perfect stillness and stagnation of the atmosphere. And as the natural thunder, at such seasons, is the welcome harbinger of refreshing and copious showers; so, it appears, the thunder of God's judgements will usher in the long desired season of the consummation of Mercy. So accurate is the allusion in all its parts.

† The harvest is the constant image of that season, when God shall gather his elect from the four winds of heaven—reap the field of the world—gather his wheat into his barns, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Images, which relate not to the translation of the just to heaven, and the burning of the wicked in hell; but to the placing of the faithful in a state of peace and security on earth, and to the excision of the incorrigible of the irreligious faction.

And the bill shall take away the luxuriant branches.†

6. They shall be left together to the bird of prey of the mountains.

And to the beasts of the earth.

And upon it|| shall the bird of prey summer,

And all beasts of the earth upon it shall winter.

7. At that season a present shall be ledde,§

To Jehovah of hosts,

A people dragged away and plucked ;
Even of a people wonderful from their beginning hitherto.

A nation expecting, expecting, and trampled underfoot,

Whose land rivers have spoiled,

Unto the place of the name of Jehovah of Hosts, Mount Sion.

I

† God, in the latter ages, will purify his church with sore but wholesome judgements. Compare John XV. 1. 2.

|| It was a prevailing opinion among the early fathers that Antichrist is to possess himself of the Holy Land, and that there he is to perish.

§ Compare II. LXVI. 20. and Zeph. III. 9. 10.

I MUST yet add a few words, to obviate a difficulty which may seem to press, with equal weight, your interpretation and my own. How, it may be asked of us, is this prophecy, in your sense of it, or in mine, or in any sense which applies it to the final restoration of the Jews, connected with what precedes, and follows it in the context of the prophet? The burthen of Damascus precedes, the burthen of Egypt follows. The subversion of the kingdom of the Syrians of Damascus by the Assyrians; the detail of the judgments which are to fall upon Egypt, in various periods of her history, from the time of the prophet downwards. With what coherence is the final restoration of the Jews brought in between?

I answer, this prophecy is indeed a sort of episode, interrupting the regular order of the discourse, and yet not unnaturally introduced.

The burthen of Damascus, opened at the beginning of the 17th chapter, naturally brings the prophet to speak of the subversion of the kingdom of Israel, in those days in alliance with the Syrians; and to be overthrown, by the same enemy, at the same time. The prediction
of

of the subversion of the kingdom of Israel, leads the prophet to warn the Jewish people, in general, of the judgements that await them, with manifest allusion, in the 11th verse, as Casaubon has observed, to the final dispersion of the nation by the Romans. And the allusion to this final dispersion leads, as it almost always does, to a prediction of the final restoration. This is delivered generally in the 12th, 13th, and 14th verses of Chap. XVII. The prophet, by a sudden exclamation of surprise (ill rendered "Woe to") gives notice, that a new scene suddenly breaks upon him. He sees the armies of Antichrist rushing on in the full tide of conquest, and pouring like a deluge over the land of God's people (v. 12.) He no sooner sees them, than he declares that "God shall rebuke them," that they shall flee with precipitation and in dismay and "shall be chased, as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and as a rolling thing before the whirlwind." (v. 13) Elated with this glorious scene of the total rout of the apostate confederacy, he addresses his countrymen in words of exultation and triumph: "This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them
 " that

“ that rob us. (v. 14) Having thus in general terms, predicted the final success and happiness of his nation, he proceeds, in the 18th Chapter, to the description of visions, more particularly declarative of the manner, and of the time, of their deliverance; which nevertheless leaves much unexplained. In what people of the earth, of the eastern or the western world, the characters of the messenger-people may be found, when the time shall come for the accomplishment of the prophecy, is hitherto uncertain in that degree, that we are hardly at liberty in my judgement, to conjecture. But I cannot but say, that it seems in the highest degree improbable, that the atheistical democracy of France should be the people, for whom the honour of that office is intended. The French democracy, from its infancy to the present moment, has been a conspicuous and principal branch at least of the western Antichrist. The messenger-people are certainly to be a Christian people. For, I think, it cannot be doubted, that the messenger-people, and the leaders of the present to Jehovah to Mount Sion, are the same people. And the act of leading a present to Jehovah to Mount Sion, must be an act
of

of worshippers of Jehovah; for it is an act of worship. They therefore who lead the present, will be true worshippers, performing that service from religious motives. And as such they are most expressly described by the prophet Zephaniah, if I construe his words aright.

מעבד לנחרי כוש עתרי

בת פוצי ייכלון מנחתי

Zeph. III. 10.

I take עתרי to be the nominative of the verb transitive ייכלון; and בת and מנחתי, to be accusatives after it, in apposition. And I render the lines thus:

My worshippers, beyond the rivers of
Cush,

Shall conduct, as an offering to me,
the daughter of my dispersion [*i. e.*
my dispersed nation.]

I have an unfashionable partiality for the opinions of antiquity. I think, there is ground in the prophecies for the notion of the early fathers, that Palestine is the stage, on which Antichrist, in the height of his impiety, will perish. I am much inclined too to assent to another opinion of the fathers; that a small band of the Jews will join Antichrist, and be active instruments of his persecutions.

And

And I agree with you, that it is not unlikely, that this small part of the Jews will be settled in Jerusalem, under the protection of Antichrist. But it is not to the settlement of this apostate band, that the prophecy of this 18th chapter relates. For I must observe that, when the present offered consists of persons, the offered, as well as the offerers, must be worshippers. For to be offered is to be made a worshipper; or, in some instances, to be devoted to some particular service in which the general character of a worshipper is previously implied, both in the person who hath authority so to devote, and in the devoted; as in the instances of Jephtha's daughter, and the child Samuel. The people therefore, brought as a present to Jehovah to Mount Sion (if Mount Sion is to be taken literally, as, not from this passage by itself, but by the collation of this passage with many others, I think it is) will be brought thither in a converted state. The great body of the Jewish people will be converted previous to their restoration; and, being converted, will be assisted, by Christian nations of the uncircumcision, in settling themselves in their ancient seats. I agree with you, that some passages, in
 Zachariah

Zachariah in particular, make strongly for this notion of a previous settlement of worse than unconverted Jews. But I am not without hope, from the same passages, that the great body of the converted Jews returning will find those first settlers, broken off from the Antichristian faction, in a state of deep contrition, and ready to receive their brethren with open arms. So the whole race shall be offered to Jehovah at Mount Sion, and not one of Israel shall be lost. And so far, but no farther, I can admit an inchoate restoration of the Jews, antecedent to their conversion; and a settlement of a small body of them, in the Holy Land, by the Antichristian powers. But this, I repeat it, is not the great subject to which the prophecy relates, the general restoration of the Jewish people; a business, in which the atheistical faction will have no share.

I would now conclude this long epistle. But I cannot quit the subject without declaring my sentiments upon an important point, upon which much error is abroad. Indifference to the Signs of the Times is criminal. Misconstruction of them may be dangerous. I confess, I cannot discern any immediate signs of the

fall of Antichrist. I fear, I see too clearly the rise, instead of the fall, of the Antichrist of the West. Or rather I fear, I see him rapidly advancing to full stature and ripe age. His rise, strictly speaking, the beginning of the monster, was in the apostolic age. For it were easy to trace the pedigree of French Philosophy, Jacobinism, and Bavarian Illumination, up to the first heresies. But it is now we see the *adulthood* of that man of sin, or rather of lawlessness, who is to throw off all the restraints of religion, morality, and custom, and undo the bands of civil society. That son of perdition, who is to rise out of an apostacy—not a constructive apostacy; never understood to be such, by those to whom the guilt has been imputed; but an open undisguised apostacy. That son of perdition, who shall be neither a Protestant, nor a Papist; neither Christian, Jew, nor Heathen; who shall worship neither God, Angel, nor Saint—who will neither supplicate the invisible Majesty of Heaven, nor fall down before an idol. He will magnify himself against every thing that is called God, or is worshipped; and, with a bold flight of impiety, soaring far above his precursors and types

types in the times of paganism, the Sennacheribs, the Nebuchadnezzars, the Antiochus's, and the Heathen Emperors, will claim divine honors to himself exclusively, and consecrate an image of himself. I doubt not, but this monster will be made an instrument of that pruning, which the vine must undergo. I am afraid to say, that the judgement will begin, or fall with the greatest severity, in that part of the church which most needs purgation. For, when I consider the superstitions introduced in the rites of worship in some parts; the unwarrantable innovations, in the form of church government, in others; the relaxation of discipline, the lukewarmness, the neglect and violation of the ordinary private duties, the frequent breach of the Ten Commandments, 'in those parts where the doctrine, the form of government, and the rites of public worship seem to me the most conformable to the model of the primitive ages; I am afraid to say, which of the various branches of the church of Christ it is, in which the purgation may be most needed. I see therefore, nothing in the subversion of the ancient monarchy of France, but what is cause of alarm to every government upon.

upon earth; nothing, in the subversion of the Gallican church, but what is cause of alarm to every church in Christendom; nothing in the sufferings of the aged Pope, which can be cause of exultation and joy, in the heart of any Christian; nothing in the indignities and insults which have been put upon him by low-born miscreants, a disgrace to the reformed religion which they profess, but what should excite horror and indignation. But, though in all these things I see no cause of triumph to the reformed churches, but such symptoms of judgement gone abroad, as should awaken all to repentance; lest all, who repent not, should likewise perish; yet I see nothing in the progress of the French arms, which any nation, fearing God, and worshipping the Son, should fear to resist. I see every thing, that should rouse all Christendom to a vigorous confederate resistance. I see every thing, that should excite this country, in particular, to resist, and to take the lead in a confederacy of resistance, by all measures, which policy may suggest, and the valour and the opulence of a great nation can supply. Whether you agree with me in these sentiments, I know not. In
this,

this, I know, you will agree ; that whether in peace or in war, the only sure anchor of hope, to any nation, is God's favour, and the only means of his favour, obedience to the gospel of his Son.

I remain,

My dear Sir,

With the most cordial regards and esteem,

Your affectionate and faithful humble servant,

S. ROFFENS.

Deanery, April 3, 1799.

FINIS.