**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**JEREMIAH-008. CALMS AND CRISES by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and though in a land of peace thou art secure, yet how wilt thou do in the pride of Jordan?"*

*Jeremiah 12:5 (R.V.)*

The prophet has been complaining of his persecutors. The divine answer is here, reproving his impatience, and giving him to understand that harder trials are in store for him.

Both clauses mean substantially the same thing, and are of a parabolic nature. The one adduces the metaphor of a race: Footmen have beaten you, have they? Then how will you run with cavalry? The other is more clear in the Revised Version rendering: Though in a land of peace you are secure, what will you do in Jordan when it swells? The swelling of Jordan is a figure for extreme danger.

The questions may be taken as referring to our own lives. Note how the one refers more to strength for duties, the other to peace and safety in dangers. They both recognise that life has great alternations as to the magnitude of its tasks and trials, and they call on experience to answer the question whether we are ready for times of stress and peril.

**I. Think of what may come to us.**

We all have had the experience of how in our lives there are long stretches of uneventful days, and then, generally without warning, some crisis is sprung on us, which demands quite a different order of qualities to cope with it. Our typhoons generally come without any warning from a falling barometer.

We may at any moment be confronted with some hard duty which will task our utmost energy.

We may at any moment be plunged in some great calamity to which the quiet course of our lives for years will be as the still flow of the river between smiling lawns is to the dash and fierce currents of the rapids in a grim canyon.

The tasks that may come on us and the tasks that must come, the dangers that may beset us and the dangers that must envelop us, the possibilities that lie hidden in the future, and the certainties that we know to be shrouded there, should surely sometimes occupy a wise man's thoughts. It is but living in a fool's paradise to soothe ourselves with the assurance which a moment's thought will shatter: To-morrow shall be as this day. We shall not always have the easy competition with footmen; there will some time come a call to strain our muscles to keep up with the gallop of cavalry. We shall have to struggle to keep our feet in the swelling of Jordan, and must not expect to have a continual leisurely life in a land of peace.

**II. Think of what experience tells us as to our power to meet these crises.**

The footmen have wearied you. The small tasks have been more than your patience and strength could manage. No doubt great exigencies often call forth great powers that were dormant in the humdrum of ordinary life. But the man who knows himself best will be the most ready to shrink with distrust from the dread possibilities of duty.

If we think of the footmen with whom we have contended as representing the smaller faults that we have tried to overcome, does our success in conquering some small bad habit, some little sin, encourage the hope that we could keep our footing when some great temptation of a lifetime came down on us with a rush like the charge of a battalion of horsemen? Or, if we cast our eyes forward to the calamities that lie still on the knees of the gods for us, do we feel ready to meet the hours of desolating disaster, the hour of death and the day of judgment? Even in a land of peace we have all had alarms, perturbations, and defeats enough, and our security has been at the mercy of marauders so often that if we are wise, and take due heed of what experience has to say to us of our reserve of force, we shall not be hopeful of keeping our footing in the whirling currents of a river in full flood.

**III. Think of the power that will fit us for all crises.**

With the power of Jesus in our spirits we shall never have to attempt a duty for which we are not strengthened, nor to front a danger from and in which He will not defend us. With His life in us we shall be ready for the long hours of uneventful, unexciting duties, and for the short spurts that make exacting calls on us. We shall run and not be weary; we shall walk and not faint. If we live in Jesus we shall always be in a land of peace, and no plague shall come nigh our dwelling. Even when the soles of our feet rest in the waters of Jordan, the waters of Jordan shall be cut off, and we shall pass over on dry ground into the land of peace, where they that would swallow us up shall be far away for ever.