

CHAPTER III
HOW THEY LEFT THE WORLD.

MOSES.

THE culmination of the work of a prophet will have to be judged by the condition of the peoples to whom his mission was directed at the time of his leaving the physical world: A tree is known by its fruits and a prophet is known by his works. As mentioned above, time and again, Moses had to face complaints and outbreaks of rebellious feeling among his followers. We read of the rebellion of Aaron and Miriam, which latter was punished with leprosy, but afterwards cured by Moses' intercession, and the attempts to return to the Egyptians, whose fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic they had the most pleasing recollections. They found a contrast in the quails and manna. For the attempted rebellion, two of the spies were punished with death and the Israelites were commanded to march backwards into the wilderness where they had to wander for 37 or 38 years longer. We read further of the rebellion of Korah. The lapse into idolatry oft repeated was punished (Numbers ch. 20. v. 12). And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron "Because ye believed Me not to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." For this offence Moses was not to be allowed to enter into the Promised Land,

of which, however, he was permitted to have a sight, from Mount Pisgah, east of Jordan, where he died. There he died, having had leadership of the Israelites during their long wandering, and faced complaints, opposition and rebellion in the course of his arduous work. Few of those who set out from Egypt, entered into their inheritance in the Promised Land; 40 years had gone by, one generation in full since their departure. Of his active supporters, Joshua and Caleb were the most loyal and the former was his successor. The condition in which he left the Israelites was the same as that in which he had found them, full of complaints; if they had luxuries and the delicacies of Egypt, they were satisfied, if not, they complained, firstly of water, and secondly, of quails, and lastly of solitude. They were a people of material inclinations only. Immediately prior to the ascent of Mount Pisgah, to view the land of Canaan, his last words to the Children of Israel, before he gave them his song which set forth God's mercy and vengeance, were as follows:— (Deut. ch. 31. v. 25—30) "That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, saying, 'Take this Book of the Law, and put in the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.' For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck, behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death? Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record it against them. For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves,

and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands."

Thus it will be seen that he left the Children of Israel, full of misgivings and fears as to their future actions etc., for right well did he understand them, having had 40 years experience of them.

JESUS

also was a messenger to the same recalcitrant, stiff-necked people, and his experience was similar to that of Moses, allowing a slight variation for time elapsed. A leopard cannot change his spots, neither can a people change their character. He clearly realized the Hebrew character. Matthew (ch. 23). "Woe unto ye, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for neither go ye in yourselves, neither suffer them that are entering to go in"; he also styles them "blind guides". The animosity against him of the scribes and pharisees, filled him with sorrow, as well as the opposition he encountered in general. The impending destruction of the Temple and the days of calamity which were almost at hand filled him with grief, for he, without doubt, saw them coming also his own fate. The 23rd chapter of Matthew is eloquent as to the condition of the Jews and shows that he left them and his mission full of trouble and disappointment. His lament over Jerusalem, the Sacred City "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest those that are sent to thee. How often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen..

gathereth her chickens under her wing and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate." This was amply fulfilled in the terrible siege of the city and its fall to the victorious Roman army under Titus in the year 60 A.D.

The last words of Jesus, before his betrayal by Judas into the hands of the priests clearly show great despondency and sorrow over the coming events and trials (Matthew ch. 26. v. 38-45). "Then he said unto them, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with me'. And he went a little further, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt'. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, 'What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak'. He went away the second time, and prayed, saying, 'O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, Thy Will be done'. And he came and found them asleep again for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them 'sleep on now and take your rest; behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners'. The whole trend of these short and plaintive sentences is on a parity with the lament over Jerusalem and bears comparison with the last words of Moses.

MUHAMMAD.

Far different from the last mentioned was the spiritual state of Arabia at the close of Muhammad's life. To have lived as Muhammad lived and to have died as Muhammad died, to have conquered Arabia with a smile and a Book and to die, surrounded by his faithful followers and sorrowing adherents, what more could have been desired?

In his last pilgrimage to Mecca, the year before his death, having successfully completed his mission, the following sermon was given from the Mount of Arafat near Mecca to a vast concourse of assembled Muslims.

"Ye people, listen to my words, for I know not whether another year will be vouchsafed to me after this year to find myself amongst you at this place."

"Your lives and property are sacred and inviolable amongst one another until ye appear before the Lord, as this day and this month is sacred for all; and (remember) ye shall have to appear before your Lord, Who shall demand from you an account of all your actions. . . . Ye people, ye have rights over your wives, and your wives have rights over you. . . . Treat your wives with kindness and love. Verily ye have taken them on the security of God, and have made their persons lawful to you by the words of God." "Keep always faithful to the trust reposed in you and avoid sins." "Usury is forbidden. The debtor shall return only the principal; and the beginning will be made with (the loans of) my uncle Abbas, son of Abd-ul-Muttalib. . . . Henceforth the vengeance of blood

practices in the days of Paganism is prohibited; and all blood-feud abolished commencing with the murder of my cousin Rabia son of Harith son of Abd-ul-Muttalib" . . .

"And your slaves See that ye feed them with such food as ye eat yourselves, and clothe them with the stuff ye wear; and if they commit a fault which ye are not inclined to forgive, then part from them, for they are the servants of the Lord and are not to be harshly treated."

"Ye people listen to my words and understand the same. Know *that all Muslims are brothers unto one another*. Ye are one brotherhood. Nothing that belongs to another is lawful unto his brother, unless freely given out of goodwill. Guard yourselves from committing injustice."

"Let him that is present tell it to him that is absent. Haply he that shall be told may remember better than he who hath heard it."

This was the finale of his work and its influence and the way it was received by the Muslims shows the happiest ending to a strenuous and successful life.

We will briefly enumerate in a few words what Muhammad did for Arabia and for the world when he established his religion and his civilization among the people of his country.

In a single generation, namely, his lifetime, Muhammad removed all disorders and evils, as if by the touch of a magic hand. Infanticide was abolished. Gambling and drunkenness disappeared. Sexual promiscuity and vice were suppressed. Slavery was regulated and placed on a just and equitable basis. Blood-feuds and ven-

dettas, those barriers to unity, were done away with and the spirit of brotherhood was established among the people and behold, Arabia was a nation, inspired and formed by the genius of one man and one man alone; and a religion established which has stood the test of 1,300 years as a carrier of the doctrine of the unity of God to all nations and peoples; and a civilization formulated which has spread far and wide over alien peoples carrying culture, sobriety and moral and religious precepts with it as a rescuer from the darkness of ignorance and barbarism; and as a writer says "making Europe indebted to it for its intellectual existence". Evolved from the mind of a single man, if it be regarded as of human source, but out of Divine Inspiration, if he be regarded as a Messenger from God to uplift him and to raise him to a knowledge of his duty to God and to himself.