

but fail to recognize that in the end this alliance will bring terrible disaster to their nation. In chapters 18 to 21, Isaiah took up one after another of the possible sources of help and showed that nothing but God's own power would suffice to bring deliverance. Our present chapter faces the people directly and describes the results which their ungodly bravado is certain to bring.

In our English translation, the first verse includes a phrase after the title which seems at first sight to contradict this idea. The words, "What aileth thee now?" might suggest that Isaiah is speaking to a city that is right in the midst of its misfortunes, but, on examination, we find that this translation is actually a rather free rendering of the Hebrew. The Hebrew simply says, "What is to thee?" which means, "What is the matter with you?" "What concerns you?" "What are you excited about?" It does not necessarily mean that they are in misery. We, ourselves, sometimes use similar expressions in colloquial speech. We may say, "What ails you?" or "What is the matter with you?" without necessarily implying that the one to whom we speak is actually suffering. This is probably what the translators meant by the phrase, "What aileth thee?"

The passage continues. The people have gone up to the housetops. They are full of excitement, tumult, and joy. This is not a picture of those who are sad or in gloom. He is saying, "What is the matter with you that you are taking the wrong attitude in the present situation?"

The last part of verse 2 reads, "My slain men are not slain with the sword, nor dead in battle." This is generally taken as showing that the city is in the midst of a siege. Yet it is hard to see much purpose in it if that is what it means. Commentators suggest that it describes such results of a siege as pestilence or famine, but in that case it is hard to see how people could be joyous. It is more reasonable to take it as pointing out the callousness of the people in a situation where sin is rampant. Although people are not now dying in war, he says, many are dying as a result of the sin and carelessness of the Israelites themselves.

An interesting parallel may be drawn from safety placards occasionally seen in the United States, pointing out that just as many people die in auto accidents as would die from