tain age had been numbered, he com-
manded that the tribe of Levi should be
numbered, and upon numbering them
it was found that the firstborn of Israel
outnumbered the Levites by two hun-
dred and seventy-three, if I remember
aright. The Lord had already stated that
it was his intention to take the tribe of
Levi instead of the firstborn of Israel,
and when it was found that the firstborn
outnumbered the Levites by two hun-
dred and seventy-three he commanded
that they should be redeemed, and that
the redemption money should be handed
over to the tribe of Levi.
These were very singular laws and
ordinances, but God had a design in
view in enforcing them. Everything
he does is dictated by infinite wisdom,
and when the people strictly complied
with these laws and ordinances I have
mentioned the Lord blessed them in all
things, so much so that it became a
proverb in the midst of Israel—"Honor
the Lord with thy substance, and with
the firstfruits of thy increase: So shall
thy barns be filled with plenty, and
thy presses burst forth with new wine."
When the people honored the Lord with
their substance his blessings rested upon
them and they were prospered. The
palmer worm, blight, grasshopper and
other evils which afflicted the land un-
der some circumstances, were removed
far from them. Their trees did not
cast their fruit untimely, and they pro-
duced in abundance, and Israel pros-
pered and waxed fat in the land. They
spread abroad on the right hand and
on the left, and the land teemed with
fertility. There were times when Is-
rael neglected this law, when they fell
into idolatry, became careless and in-
different concerning the requirements of
the Lord; when the tribe of Levi for-
sook the service of God and became idol-
aters; when the priests quit the service of
Jehovah, and the temples became des-
ecrated and filled with rubbish. It
was during one of these periods that
Hezekiah came to the throne of his fa-
thor Ahaz, who had allowed the ordi-
nces of God to fall into disuse. He put
aside the service of God and instituted
in its stead idolatrous service. Tithing
had been neglected, and when Hezekiah
came to the throne, his heart being set
in him to do right, he commenced to
cleanse the temple, and to restore the
ordinances of the house of God, and the
ministers who had been set apart to this
service he called back to its performance,
and the people brought in their cattle,
wine, oil, honey, and in fact a tithe of all
their substance as well as freewill offer-
ings unto the Lord; and when the king
looked upon it, we are told, in the words
which I have read, that he blessed the
Lord and his people Israel, and upon in-
quiry of the chief priest he was told that,
"since the people began to bring in the
offerings into the house of the Lord, we
have had enough to eat, and have left
plenty, for the Lord hath blessed his peo-
ple." The Lord blessed them because they
had complied with his requirements, and
they were prospered. The land prospered
under their cultivation, and it yielded its
strength in abundance.

In connection with this I would like to
read to you, my brethren and sisters, the
remarks of Malachi. You are doubtless
familiar with them, but they are words
which can be read and pondered on time
and time again, without any loss of inter-
est in the subject. Says Malachi—

"Even from the days of your fathers
ye are gone away from mine ordinances,
and have not kept them. Return unto me,
and I will return unto you, saith the Lord
of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we
return?