

**ROBERT
ALEXANDER
WATSON**

EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE: THE
BOOK OF JOB

Robert Alexander Watson
Expositor's Bible: The Book of Job

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=34335898

Expositor's Bible: The Book of Job:

Содержание

PROLOGUE	4
I.	4
II.	22
III.	37
IV.	55
V.	74
THE FIRST COLLOQUY	90
VI.	90
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	106

Robert A. Watson Expositor's Bible: The Book of Job

PROLOGUE

I.

THE AUTHOR AND HIS WORK

The Book of Job is the first great poem of the soul in its mundane conflict, facing the inexorable of sorrow, change, pain, and death, and feeling within itself at one and the same time weakness and energy, the hero and the serf, brilliant hopes, terrible fears. With entire veracity and amazing force this book represents the never-ending drama renewed in every generation and every genuine life. It breaks upon us out of the old world and dim muffled centuries with all the vigour of the modern soul and that religious impetuosity which none but Hebrews seem fully to have known. Looking for precursors of Job we find a seeming spiritual burden and intensity in the Accadian psalms, their confessions and prayers; but if they prepared the

way for Hebrew psalmists and for the author of Job, it was not by awaking the cardinal thoughts that make this book what it is, nor by supplying an example of the dramatic order, the fine sincerity and abounding art we find here welling up out of the desert. The Accadian psalms are fragments of a polytheistic and ceremonial world; they spring from the soil which Abraham abandoned that he might found a race of strong men and strike out a new clear way of life. Exhibiting the fear, superstition, and ignorance of our race, they fall away from comparison with the marvellous later work and leave it unique among the legacies of man's genius to man's need. Before it a few notes of the awakening heart, athirst for God, were struck in those Chaldean entreaties, and more finely in Hebrew psalm and oracle: but after it have come in rich multiplying succession the Lamentations of Jeremiah, Ecclesiastes, the Apocalypse, the Confessions of Augustine, the Divina Commedia, Hamlet, Paradise Regained, the Grace Abounding of Bunyan, the Faust of Goethe and its progeny, Shelley's poems of revolt and freedom, Sartor Resartus, Browning's Easter Day and Rabbi Ben Ezra, Amiel's Journal, with many other writings, down to "Mark Rutherford" and the "Story of an African Farm." The old tree has sent forth a hundred shoots, and is still full of sap to our most modern sense. It is a chief source of the world's penetrating and poignant literature.

But there is another view of the book. It may well be the despair of those who desire above all things to separate letters from theology. The surpassing genius of the writer is seen not

in his fine calm of assurance and self-possession, nor in the deft gathering and arranging of beautiful images, but in his sense of elemental realities and the daring with which he launches on a painful conflict. He is convinced of Divine sovereignty, and yet has to seek room for faith in a world shadowed and confused. He is a prophet in quest of an oracle, a poet, a maker, striving to find where and how the man for whom he is concerned shall sustain himself. And yet, with this paradox wrought into its very substance, his work is richly fashioned, a type of the highest literature, drawing upon every region natural and supernatural, descending into the depths of human woe, rising to the heights of the glory of God, never for one moment insensible to the beauty and sublimity of the universe. It is literature with which theology is so blended that none can say, Here is one, there the other. The passion of that race which gave the world the idea of the soul, which clung with growing zeal to the faith of the One Eternal God as the fountain of life and equally of justice, this passion in one of its rarest modes pours through the Book of Job like a torrent, forcing its way towards the freedom of faith, the harmony of intuition with the truth of things. The book is all theology, one may say, and all humanity no less. Singularly liberal in spirit and awake to the various elements of our life, it is moulded, notwithstanding its passion, by the artist's pleasure in perfecting form, adding wealth of allusion and ornament to strength of thought. The mind of the writer has not hastened. He has taken long time to brood over his torment and seek

deliverance. The fire burns through the sculpture and carved framework and painted windows of his art with no loss of heat. Yet, as becomes a sacred book, all is sobered and restrained to the rhythmic flow of dramatic evolution, and it is as if the eager soul had been chastened, even in its fieriest endeavour, by the regular procession of nature, sunrise and sunset, spring and harvest, and by the sense of the Eternal One, Lord of light and darkness, life and death. Built where, before it, building had never been reared in such firmness of structure and glow of orderly art, with such design to shelter the soul, the work is a fresh beginning in theology as well as literature, and those who would separate the two must show us how to separate them here, must explain why their union in this poem is to the present moment so richly fruitful. An origin it stands by reason of its subject no less than its power, sincerity, and freedom.

A phenomenon in Hebrew thought and faith—to what age does it belong? No record or reminiscence of the author is left from which the least hint of time may be gathered. He, who by his marvellous poem struck a chord of thought deep and powerful enough to vibrate still and stir the modern heart, is uncelebrated, nameless. A traveller, a master of his country's language, and versed no less in foreign learning, foremost of the men of his day whensoever it was, he passed away as a shadow, though he left an imperishable monument. "Like a star of the first magnitude," says Dr. Samuel Davidson, "the brilliant genius of the writer of Job attracts the admiration of men as it points

to the Almighty Ruler chastening yet loving His people. Of one whose sublime conceptions, (mounting the height where Jehovah is enthroned in light, inaccessible to mortal eye), lift him far above his time and people—who climbs the ladder of the Eternal, as if to open heaven—of this giant philosopher and poet we long to know something, his habitation, name, appearance. The very spot where his ashes rest we desire to gaze upon. But in vain." Strange, do we say? And yet how much of her great poet, Shakespeare, does England know? It is not seldom the fate of those whose genius lifts them highest to be unrecognised by their own time. As English history tells us more of Leicester than of Shakespeare, so Hebrew history records by preference the deeds of its great King Solomon. A greater than Solomon was in Israel, and history knows him not. No prophet who followed him and wrought sentences of his poem into lamentation or oracle, no chronicler of the exile or the return, preserving the names and lineage of the nobles of Israel, has mentioned him. Literary distinction, the praise of service to his country's faith could not have been in his mind. They did not exist. He was content to do his work, and leave it to the world and to God.

And yet the man lives in his poem. We begin to hope that some indication of the period and circumstances in which he wrote may be found when we realise that here and there beneath the heat and eloquence of his words may be heard those undertones of personal desire and trust which once were the solemn music of a life. His own, not his hero's, are the philosophy of the book,

the earnest search for God, the sublime despondency, the bitter anguish, and the prophetic cry that breaks through the darkness. We can see that it is vain to go back to Mosaic or pre-Mosaic times for life and thought and words like his; at whatever time Job lived, the poet-biographer deals with the perplexities of a more anxious world. In the imaginative light with which he invests the past no distinct landmarks of time are to be seen. The treatment is large, general, as if the burden of his subject carried the writer not only into the great spaces of humanity, but into a region where the temporal faded into insignificance as compared with the spiritual. And yet, as through openings in a forest, we have glimpses here and there, vaguely and momentarily showing what age it was the author knew. The picture is mainly of timeless patriarchal life; but, in the foreground or the background, objects and events are sketched that help our inquiry. "His troops come together and cast up their way against me." "From out of the populous city men groan, and the soul of the wounded crieth out." "He looseth the bond of kings, and bindeth their loins with a girdle; He leadeth priests away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty.... He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them; He spreadeth the nations abroad and bringeth them in." No quiet patriarchal life in a region sparsely peopled, where the years went slow and placid, could have supplied these elements of the picture. The writer has seen the woes of the great city in which the tide of prosperity flows over the crushed and dying. He has seen, and, indeed, we are almost sure has suffered in, some

national disaster like those to which he refers. A Hebrew, not of the age after the return from exile,—for the style of his writing, partly through the use of Arabic and Aramaic forms, has more of rude vigour and spontaneity on the whole than fits so late a date,—he appears to have felt all the sorrows of his people when the conquering armies of Assyria or of Babylon overran their land.

The scheme of the book helps to fix the time of the composition. A drama so elaborate could not have been produced until literature had become an art. Such complexity of structure as we find in Psalm cxix. shows that by the time of its composition much attention was paid to form. It is no longer the pure lyric cry of the unlearned singer, but the ode, extremely artificial notwithstanding its sincerity. The comparatively late date of the Book of Job appears in the orderly balanced plan, not indeed so laboured as the psalm referred to, but certainly belonging to a literary age.

Again, a note of time has been found by comparing the contents of Job with Proverbs, Isaiah, Ecclesiastes, and other books. Proverbs, chaps. iii. and viii., for example, may be contrasted with chap. xxviii. of the Book of Job. Placing them together we can hardly escape the conclusion that the one writer had been acquainted with the work of the other. Now, in Proverbs it is taken for granted that wisdom may easily be found: "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.... Keep sound wisdom and discretion; so shall they be life unto thy soul and grace to thy neck." The author

of the panegyric has no difficulty about the Divine rules of life. Again, Proverbs viii. 15, 16: "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth." In Job xxviii., however, we find a different strain. There it is: "Where shall wisdom be found?... It is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air;" and the conclusion is that wisdom is with God, not with man. Of the two it seems clear that the Book of Job is later. It is occupied with questions which make wisdom, the interpretation of providence and the ordering of life, exceedingly hard. The writer of Job, with the passages in Proverbs before him, appears to have said to himself: Ah! it is easy to praise wisdom and advise men to choose wisdom and walk in her ways. But to me the secrets of existence are deep, the purposes of God unfathomable. He is fain, therefore, to put into the mouth of Job the sorrowful cry, "Where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof.... It cannot be gotten for gold." Both in Proverbs and Job, indeed, the source of Hokhma or wisdom is ascribed to the fear of Jehovah; but the whole contention in Job is that man fails in the intellectual apprehension of the ways of God. Referring the earlier portions of Proverbs to the post-Solomonic age we should place the Book of Job at a later date.

It is not within our scope to consider here all the questions raised by parallel passages and discuss the priority and originality in each case. Some resemblances in Isaiah may, however, be

briefly noticed, because we seem on the whole to be led to the conclusion that the Book of Job was written between the periods of the first and second series of Isaian oracles. They are such as these. In Isaiah xix. 5, "The waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and become dry,"—referring to the Nile: parallel in Job xiv. 11, "As the waters fail from the sea, and the river decayeth and drieth up,"—referring to the passing of human life. In Isaiah xix. 13, "The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived; they have caused Egypt to go astray,"—an oracle of specific application: parallel in Job xii. 24, "He taketh away the heart of the chiefs of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way,"—a description at large. In Isaiah xxviii. 29, "This also cometh forth from Jehovah of Hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom": parallel in Job xi. 5, 6, "Oh that God would speak, and open His lips against thee; and that He would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that it is manifold in effectual working!" The resemblance between various parts of Job and "the writing of Hezekiah when he had been sick and was recovered of his sickness," are sufficiently obvious, but cannot be used in any argument of time. And on the whole, so far, the generality and, in the last case, somewhat stiff elaboration of the ideas in Job as compared with Isaiah are almost positive proof that Isaiah went first. Passing now to the fortieth and subsequent chapters of Isaiah we find many parallels and much general similarity to the contents of our poem. In Job xxvi. 12, "He

stirreth up the sea with His power, and by His understanding He smiteth through Rahab": parallel in Isaiah li. 9, 10, "Art thou not it that cut Rahab in pieces, that pierced the dragon? Art thou not it which dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep?" In Job ix. 8, "Which alone stretcheth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea": parallel in Isaiah xl. 22, "That stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." In these and other cases the resemblance is clear, and on the whole the simplicity and apparent originality lie with the Book of Job. Professor Davidson claims that Job, called by God "My servant," resembles in many points the servant of Jehovah in Isaiah liii., and the claim must be admitted. But on what ground Kuenen can affirm that the writer of Job had the second portion of Isaiah before him and painted his hero from it one fails to see. There are many obvious differences.

It has now become almost clear that the book belongs either to the period (favoured by Ewald, Renan, and others) immediately following the captivity of the northern tribes, or to the time of the captivity of Judah (fixed upon by Dr. A. B. Davidson, Professor Cheyne, and others). We must still, however, seek further light by glancing at the main problem of the book, which is to reconcile the justice of Divine providence with the sufferings of the good, so that man may believe in God even in sorest affliction. We must also consider the hint of time to be found in the importance attached to personality, the feelings and destiny of the individual and his claim on God.

Taking first the problem,—while it is stated in some of the psalms and, indeed, is sure to have occurred to many a sufferer, for most think themselves undeserving of great pain and affliction,—the attempt to grapple with it is first made in Job. The Proverbs, Deuteronomy, and the historical books take for granted that prosperity follows religion and obedience to God, and that suffering is the punishment of disobedience. The prophets also, though they have their own view of national success, do not dispense with it as an evidence of Divine favour. Cases no doubt were before the mind of inspired writers which made any form of the theory difficult to hold. But these were regarded as temporary and exceptional, if indeed they could not be explained by the rule that God sends earthly prosperity to the good, and suffering to the bad in the long run. To deny this and to seek another rule was the distinction of the author of Job, his bold and original adventure in theology. And the attempt was natural, one may say necessary, at a time when the Hebrew states were suffering from those shocks of foreign invasion which threw their society, commerce, and politics into the direst confusion. The old ideas of religion no longer sufficed. Overcome in war, driven out of their own land, they needed a faith which could sustain and cheer them in poverty and dispersion. A generation having no outlook beyond captivity was under a curse from which penitence and renewed fidelity could not secure deliverance. The assurance of God's friendship in affliction had to be sought.

The importance attached to personality and the destiny of the

individual is on two sides a guide to the date of the book. In some of the psalms, undoubtedly belonging to an earlier period, the personal cry is heard. No longer content to be part and parcel of the class or nation, the soul in these psalms asserts its direct claim on God for light and comfort and help. And some of them, the thirteenth for example, insist passionately on the right of a believing man to a portion in Jehovah. Now in the dispersion of the northern tribes or the capture of Jerusalem this personal question would be keenly accentuated. Amidst the disasters of such a time those who are faithful and pious suffer along with the rebellious and idolatrous. Because they are faithful to God, virtuous and patriotic beyond the rest, they may indeed have more affliction and loss to endure. The psalmist among his own people, oppressed and cruelly wronged, has the need of a personal hope forced upon him, and feels that he must be able to say, "The Lord is *my* shepherd." Yet he cannot entirely separate himself from his people. When those of his own house and kindred rise against him, still they too may claim Jehovah as their God. But the homeless exile, deprived of all, a solitary wanderer on the face of the earth, has need to seek more earnestly for the reason of his state. The nation is broken up; and if he is to find refuge in God, he must look for other hopes than hinge on national recovery. It is the God of the whole earth he must now seek as his portion. A unit not of Israel but of humanity, he must find a bridge over the deep chasm that seems to separate his feeble life from the Almighty, a chasm all the deeper that

he has been plunged into sore trouble. He must find assurance that the unit is not lost to God among the multitudes, that the life broken and prostrate is neither forgotten nor rejected by the Eternal King. And this precisely corresponds with the temper of our book and the conception of God we find in it. A man who has known Jehovah as the God of Israel seeks his justification, cries for his individual right to Eloah, the Most High, the God of universal nature and humanity and providence.

Now, it has been alleged that through the Book of Job there runs a constant but covert reference to the troubles of the Jewish Church in the Captivity, and especially that Job himself represents the suffering flock of God. It is not proposed to give up entirely the individual problem, but along with that, superseding that, the main question of the poem is held to be why Judah should suffer so keenly and lie on the *mezbele* or ash-heap of exile. With all respect to those who hold this theory one must say that it has no substantial support; and, on the other hand, it seems incredible that a member of the Southern Kingdom (if the writer belonged to it), expending so much care and genius on the problem of his people's defeat and misery, should have passed beyond his own kin for a hero, should have set aside almost entirely the distinctive name Jehovah, should have forgotten the ruined temple and the desolate city to which every Jew looked back across the desert with brimming eyes, should have let himself appear, even while he sought to reassure his compatriots in their faith, as one who set no store by their cherished traditions,

their great names, their religious institutions, but as one whose faith was purely natural like that of Edom. Among the good and true men who, at the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, were left in penury, childless and desolate, a poet of Judah would have found a Jewish hero. To his drama what embellishment and pathos could have been added by genius like our author's, if he had gone back on the terrible siege and painted the Babylonian victors in their cruelty and pride, the misery of the exiles in the land of idolatry. One cannot help believing that to this writer Jerusalem was nothing, that he had no interest in its temple, no love for its ornate religious services and growing exclusiveness. The suggestion of Ewald may be accepted, that he was a member of the Northern Kingdom driven from his home by the overthrow of Samaria. Undeniable is the fact that his religion has more sympathy with Teman than with Jerusalem as it was. If he belonged to the north this seems to be explained. To seek help from the priesthood and worship of the temple did not occur to him. Israel broken up, he has to begin afresh. For it is with his own religious trouble he is occupied; and the problem is universal.

Against the identification of Job with the servant of Jehovah in Isaiah liii. there is one objection, and it is fatal. The author of Job has no thought of the central idea in that passage—vicarious suffering. New light would have been thrown on the whole subject if one of the friends had been made to suggest the possibility that Job was suffering for others, that the

"chastisement of their peace" was laid on him. Had the author lived after the return from captivity and heard of this oracle, he would surely have wrought into his poem the latest revelation of the Divine method in helping and redeeming men.

The distinction of the Book of Job we have seen to be that it offers a new beginning in theology. And it does so not only because it shifts faith in the Divine justice to a fresh basis, but also because it ventures on a universalism for which indeed the Proverbs had made way, which however stood in sharp contrast to the narrowness of the old state religion. Already it was admitted that others than Hebrews might love the truth, follow righteousness, and share the blessings of the heavenly King. To that broader faith, enjoyed by the thinkers and prophets of Israel, if not by the priests and people, the author of the Book of Job added the boldness of a more liberal inspiration. He went beyond the Hebrew family for his hero to make it clear that man, as man, is in direct relation to God. The Psalms and the Book of Proverbs might be read by Israelites and the belief still retained that God would prosper Israel alone, at any rate in the end. Now, the man of Uz, the Arabian sheikh, outside the sacred fraternity of the tribes, is presented as a fearer of the true God—His trusted witness and servant. With the freedom of a prophet bringing a new message of the brotherhood of men our author points us beyond Israel to the desert oasis.

Yes: the creed of Hebraism had ceased to guide thought and lead the soul to strength. The Hokhma literature of Proverbs,

which had become fashionable in Solomon's time, possessed no dogmatic vigour, fell often to the level of moral platitude, as the same kind of literature does with us, and had little help for the soul. The state religion, on the other hand, both in the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, was ritualistic, again like ours, clung to the old tribal notion, and busied itself about the outward more than the inward, the sacrifices rather than the heart, as Amos and Isaiah clearly indicate. Hokhma of various kinds, plus energetic ritualism, was falling into practical uselessness. Those who held the religion as a venerable inheritance and national talisman did not base their action and hope on it out in the world. They were beginning to say, "Who knoweth what is good for man in this life—all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?" A new theology was certainly needed for the crisis of the time.

The author of the Book of Job found no school possessed of the secret of strength. But he sought to God, and inspiration came to him. He found himself in the desert like Elijah, like others long afterwards, John the Baptist, and especially Saul of Tarsus, whose words we remember, "Neither went I up to Jerusalem, ... but I went into Arabia." There he met with a religion not confined by rigid ceremony as that of the southern tribes, not idolatrous like that of the north, a religion elementary indeed, but capable of development. And he became its prophet. He would take the wide world into council. He would hear Teman and Shuach and Naamah; he would also hear the voice from the whirlwind, and

the swelling sea, and the troubled nations, and the eager soul. It was a daring dash beyond the ramparts. Orthodoxy might stand aghast within its fortress. He might appear a renegade in seeking tidings of God from the heathen, as one might now who went from a Christian land to learn from the Brahman and the Buddhist. But he would go nevertheless; and it was his wisdom. He opened his mind to the sight of fact, and reported what he found, so that theology might be corrected and made again a handmaid of faith. He is one of those Scripture writers who vindicate the universality of the Bible, who show it to be a unique foundation, and forbid the theory of a closed record or dried-up spring, which is the error of Bibliolatry. He is a man of his age and of the world, yet in fellowship with the Eternal Mind.

An exile, let us suppose, of the Northern Kingdom, escaping with his life from the sword of the Assyrian, the author of our book has taken his way into the Arabian wilderness and there found the friendship of some chief and a safe retreat among his people. The desert has become familiar to him, the sandy wastes and vivid oases, the fierce storms and affluent sunshine, the animal and vegetable life, the patriarchal customs and legends of old times. He has travelled through Idum[~]ā, and seen the desert tombs, on to Midian and its lonely peaks. He has heard the roll of the Great Sea on the sands of the Shefelah, and seen the vast tide of the Nile flowing through the verdure of the Delta and past the pyramids of Memphis. He has wandered through the cities of Egypt and viewed their teeming life, turning to the

use of imagination and religion all he beheld. With a relish for his own language, yet enriching it by the words and ideas of other lands, he has practised himself in the writer's art, and at length, in some hour of burning memory and revived experience, he has caught at the history of one who, yonder in a valley of the eastern wilderness, knew the shocks of time and pain though his heart was right with God; and in the heat of his spirit the poet-exile makes the story of that life into a drama of the trial of human faith,—his own endurance and vindication, his own sorrow and hope.

II.

THE OPENING SCENE ON EARTH

Chap. i. 1-5

The land of Uz appears to have been a general name for the great Syro-Arabian desert. It is described vaguely as lying "east of Palestine and north of Edom," or as "corresponding to the *Arabia Deserta* of classical geography, at all events so much of it as lies north of the 30th parallel of latitude." In Jer. xxv. 20, among those to whom the wine-cup of fury is sent, are mentioned "all the mingled people and all the kings of the land of Uz." But within this wide region, extending from Damascus to Arabia, from Palestine to ChaldÃa, it seems possible to find a more definite locality for the dwelling-place of Job. Eliphaz, one of his friends, belonged to Teman, a district or city of IdumÃa. In Lam. iv. 21, the writer, who may have had the Book of Job before him, says, "Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz"; a passage that seems to indicate a habitable region, not remote from the gorges of IdumÃa. It is necessary also to fix on a district which lay in the way of the caravans of Sheba and Tema, and was exposed to the attacks of lawless bands of ChaldÃans and Sabeans. At the same time there

must have been a considerable population, abundant pasturage for large flocks of camels and sheep, and extensive tracts of arable land. Then, the dwelling of Job lay near a city at the gate of which he sat with other elders to administer justice. The attention paid to details by the author of the book warrants us in expecting that all these conditions may be satisfied.

A tradition which places the home of Job in the Hauran, the land of Bashan of Scripture, some score of miles from the Sea of Galilee, has been accepted by Delitzsch. A monastery, there, appears to have been regarded from early Christian times as authentically connected with the name of Job. But the tradition has little value in itself, and the locality scarcely agrees in a single particular with the various indications found in the course of the book. The Hauran does not belong to the land of Uz. It was included in the territory of Israel. Nor can it by any stretch of imagination be supposed to lie in the way of wandering bands of Sabeans, whose home was in the centre of Arabia.

But the conditions are met—one has no hesitation in saying, fully met—in a region hitherto unidentified with the dwelling-place of Job, the valley or oasis of Jauf (Palgrave, *Djowf*), lying in the North Arabian desert about two hundred miles almost due east from the modern Maan and the ruins of Petra. Various interesting particulars regarding this valley and its inhabitants are given by Mr. C. M. Doughty in his "Travels in Arabia Deserta." But the best description is that by Mr. Palgrave, who, under the guidance of Bedawin, visited the district in 1862. Travelling

from Maan by way of the Wadi Sirhan, after a difficult and dangerous journey of thirteen days, their track in the last stage following "endless windings among low hills and stony ledges," brought them to greener slopes and traces of tillage, and at length "entered a long and narrow pass, whose precipitous banks shut in the view on either side." After an hour of tedious marching in terrible heat, turning a huge pile of crags, they looked down into the Jauf.

"A broad, deep valley, descending ledge after ledge till its innermost depths are hidden from sight amid far-reaching shelves of reddish rock, below everywhere studded with tufts of palm groves and clustering fruit trees in dark green patches, down to the farthest end of its windings; a large brown mass of irregular masonry crowning a central hill; beyond, a tall and solitary tower overlooking the opposite bank of the hollow, and farther down, small round turrets and flat house-roofs, half buried amid the garden foliage, the whole plunged in a perpendicular flood of light and heat; such was the first aspect of the Djowf as we now approached it from the west." The principal town bears the name of the district, and is composed of eight villages, once distinct, which have in process of time coalesced into one. The principal quarter includes the castle, and numbers about four hundred houses. "The province is a large oval depression, of sixty or seventy miles long by ten or twelve broad, lying between the northern desert that separates it from Syria and Euphrates, and the southern Nefood, or sandy waste." Its fertility is great and is

history forms the basis of the poem. The tradition with which the author began his work probably supplied the name and dwelling-place of Job, his wealth, piety, and afflictions, including the visit of his friends, and his restoration after sore trial from the very gate of despair to faith and prosperity. The rest comes from the genius of the author of the drama. This is a work of imagination based on fact. And we do not proceed far till we find, first ideal touches, then bold flights into a region never opened to the gaze of mortal eye.

Job is described in the third verse as one of the Children of the East or Bene-Kedem, a vague expression denoting the settled inhabitants of the North Arabian desert, in contrast to the wandering Bedawin and the Sabeans of the South. In Genesis and Judges they are mentioned along with the Amalekites, to whom they were akin. But the name as used by the Hebrews probably covered the inhabitants of a large district very little known. Of the Bene-Kedem Job is described as the greatest. His riches meant power, and in the course of the frequent alternations of life in those regions one who had enjoyed unbroken prosperity for many years would be regarded with veneration not only for his wealth, but for what it signified—the constant favour of Heaven. He had his settlement near the city, and was the acknowledged emeer of the valley, taking his place at the gate as chief judge. How great a chief one might become who added to his flocks and herds year by year and managed his affairs with prudence we learn from the history of Abraham; and to the present day,

where the patriarchal mode of living and customs continue, as among the Kurds of the Persian highland, examples of wealth in sheep and oxen, camels and asses almost approaching that of Job are sometimes to be met with. The numbers—seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses—are probably intended simply to represent his greatness. Yet they are not beyond the range of possibility.

The family of Job—his wife, seven sons, and three daughters—are about him when the story begins, sharing his prosperity. In perfect friendliness and idyllic joy the brothers and sisters spend their lives, the shield of their father's care and religion defending them. Each of the sons has a day on which he entertains the others, and at the close of the circle of festivities, whether weekly or once a year, there is a family sacrifice. The father is solicitous lest his children, speaking or even thinking irreverently, may have dishonoured God. For this reason he makes the periodic offering, from time to time keeping on behalf of his household a day of atonement. The number of the children is not necessarily ideal, nor is the round of festivals and sacred observances. Yet the whole picture of happy family life and unbroken joy begins to lift the narrative into an imaginative light. So fine a union of youthful enjoyment and fatherly sympathy and puritanism is seldom approached in this world. The poet has kept out of his picture the shadows which must have lurked beneath the sunny surface of life. It is not even suggested that the recurring sacrifices were required. Job's thoughtfulness is precautionary:

"It may be that my sons have sinned, and renounced God in their hearts." The children are dear to him, so dear that he would have nothing come between them and the light of heaven.

For the religion of Job, sincere and deep, disclosing itself in these offerings to the Most High, is, above his fatherly affection and sympathy, the distinction with which the poet shows him invested. He is a fearer of the One Living and True God, the Supremely Holy. In the course of the drama the speeches of Job often go back on his faithfulness to the Most High; and we can see that he served his fellow-men justly and generously because he believed in a Just and Generous God. Around him were worshippers of the sun and moon, whose adoration he had been invited to share. But he never joined in it, even by kissing his hand when the splendid lights of heaven moved with seeming Divine majesty across the sky. For him there was but One God, unseen yet ever present, to whom, as the Giver of all, he did not fail to offer thanksgiving and prayer with deepening faith. In his worship of this God the old order of sacrifice had its place, simple, unceremonious. Head of the clan, he was the priest by natural right, and offered sheep or bullock that there might be atonement, or maintenance of fellowship with the Friendly Power who ruled the world. His religion may be called a nature religion of the finest type—reverence, faith, love, freedom. There is no formal doctrine beyond what is implied in the names Eloah, the Lofty One, Shaddai, Almighty, and in those simple customs of prayer, confession, and sacrifice in

which all believers agreed. Of the law of Moses, the promises to Abraham, and those prophetic revelations by which the covenant of God was assured to the Hebrew people Job knows nothing. His is a real religion, capable of sustaining the soul of man in righteousness, a religion that can save; but it is a religion learned from the voices of earth and sky and sea, and from human experience through the inspiration of the devout obedient heart. The author makes no attempt to reproduce the beliefs of patriarchal times as described in Genesis, but with a sincere and sympathetic touch he shows what a fearer of God in the Arabian desert might be. Job is such a man as he may have personally known.

In the region of Idumaea the faith of the Most High was held in remarkable purity by learned men, who formed a religious caste or school of wide reputation; and Teman, the home of Eliphaz, appears to have been the centre of the cultus. "Is wisdom no more in Teman?" cries Jeremiah. "Is counsel perished from the prudent? Is their wisdom (hokhma) vanished?" And Obadiah makes a similar reference: "Shall I not in that day, saith the Lord, destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?" In Isaiah the darkened wisdom of some time of trouble and perplexity is reflected in the "burden of Dumah," that is, Idumaea: "One calleth unto me out of Seir," as if with the hope of clearer light on Divine providence, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" And the answer is an oracle in irony, almost enigma: "The

morning cometh, and also the night. If ye will inquire, inquire; turn, come." Not for those who dwelt in shadowed Dumah was the clear light of Hebrew prophecy. But the wisdom or hokhma of Edom and its understanding were nevertheless of the kind in Proverbs and elsewhere constantly associated with true religion and represented as almost identical with it. And we may feel assured that when the Book of Job was written there was good ground for ascribing to sages of Teman and Uz an elevated faith.

For a Hebrew like the author of Job to lay aside for a time the thought of his country's traditions, the law and the prophets, the covenant of Sinai, the sanctuary, and the altar of witness, and return in writing his poem to the primitive faith which his forefathers grasped when they renounced the idolatry of ChaldÃ'a was after all no grave abandonment of privilege. The beliefs of Teman, sincerely held, were better than the degenerate religion of Israel against which Amos testified. Had not that prophet even pointed the way when he cried in Jehovah's name—"Seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba.... Seek Him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; Jehovah is His name"? Israel after apostasy may have needed to begin afresh, and to seek on the basis of the primal faith a new atonement with the Almighty. At all events there were many around, not less the subjects of God and beloved by Him, who stood in doubt

amidst the troubles of life and the ruin of earthly hopes. Teman and Uz were in the dominion of the heavenly King. To correct and confirm their faith would be to help the faith of Israel also and give the true religion of God fresh power against idolatry and superstition.

The book which returned thus to the religion of Teman found an honourable place in the roll of sacred Scriptures. Although the canon was fixed by Hebrews at a time when the narrowness of the post-exilic age drew toward Pharisaism, and the law and the temple were regarded with veneration far greater than in the time of Solomon, room was made for this book of broad human sympathy and free faith. It is a mark at once of the wisdom of the earlier rabbis and their judgment regarding the essentials of religion. To Israel, as St. Paul afterwards said, belonged "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." But he too shows the same disposition as the author of our poem to return on the primitive and fundamental—the justification of Abraham by his faith, the promise made to him, and the covenant that extended to his family: "They which be of faith, the same are sons of Abraham"; "They which be of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham"; "Not through the law was the promise to Abraham or to his seed"; "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." A greater than St. Paul has shown us how to use the Old Testament, and we have perhaps misunderstood the intent with which our Lord

carried the minds of men back to Abraham and Moses and the prophets. He gave a religion to the whole world. Was it not then the spiritual dignity, the religious breadth of the Israelite fathers, their sublime certainty of God, their glow and largeness of faith for which Christ went back to them? Did He not for these find them preparers of His own way?

From the religion of Job we pass to consider his character described in the words, "That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." The use of four strong expressions, cumulatively forming a picture of the highest possible worth and piety, must be held to point to an ideal life. The epithet *perfect* is applied to Noah, and once and again in the Psalms to the disposition of the good. Generally, however, it refers rather to the scheme or plan by which conduct is ordered than to the fulfilment in actual life; and a suggestive parallel may be found in the "perfection" or "entire sanctification" of modern dogma. The word means *complete*, built up all round so that no gaps are to be seen in the character. We are asked to think of Job as a man whose uprightness, goodness, and fidelity towards man were unimpeachable, who was also towards God reverent, obedient, grateful, wearing his religion as a white garment of unsullied virtue. Then is it meant that he had no infirmity of will or soul, that in him for once humanity stood absolutely free from defect? Scarcely. The perfect man in this sense, with all moral excellences and without weakness, would as little have served the purpose of the writer as one marred by any gross or deforming

fault. The course of the poem shows that Job was not free from errors of temper and infirmities of will. He who is proverbially known as the most patient failed in patience when the bitter cup of reproach had to be drained. But undoubtedly the writer exalts the virtue of his hero to the highest range, a plane above the actual. In order to set the problem of the book in a clear light such purity of soul and earnest dutifulness had to be assumed as would by every reckoning deserve the rewards of God, the "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The years of Job have passed hitherto in unbroken prosperity. He has long enjoyed the bounty of providence, his children about him, his increasing flocks of sheep and camels, oxen and asses feeding in abundant pastures. The stroke of bereavement has not fallen since his father and mother died in ripe old age. The dreadful simoom has spared his flocks, the wandering Bedawin have passed them by. An honoured chief, he rules in wisdom and righteousness, ever mindful of the Divine hand by which he is blessed, earning for himself the trust of the poor and the gratitude of the afflicted. Enjoying unbounded respect in his own country, he is known beyond the desert to a circle of friends who admire him as a man and honour him as a servant of God. His steps are washed with butter, and the rock pours him out rivers of oil. The lamp of God shines upon his head, and by His light he walks through darkness. His root is spread out to the waters, and the dew lies all night upon his branch.

Now let us judge this life from a point of view which the

writer may have taken, which at any rate it becomes us to take, with our knowledge of what gives manhood its true dignity and perfectness. Obedience to God, self-control and self-culture, the observance of religious forms, brotherliness and compassion, uprightness and purity of life, these are Job's excellences. But all circumstances are favourable, his wealth makes beneficence easy and moves him to gratitude. His natural disposition is towards piety and generosity; it is pure joy to him to honour God and help his fellow-men. The life is beautiful. But imagine it as the unclouded experience of years in a world where so many are tried with suffering and bereavement, foiled in their strenuous toil and disappointed in their dearest hopes, and is it not evident that Job's would tend to become a kind of dream-life, not deep and strong, but on the surface, a broad stream, clear, glittering with the reflection of moon and stars or of the blue heaven, but shallow, gathering no force, scarcely moving towards the ocean? When a Psalmist says, "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in Thy wrath: we bring our years to an end as a tale that is told," he depicts the common experience of men, a sad experience, yet needful to the highest wisdom and the noblest faith. No dreaming is there when the soul is met with sore rebuffs and made aware of the profound abyss that lies beneath, when the limbs fail on the steep hills of difficult duty. But a long succession of prosperous years, immunity from disappointment, loss, and sorrow, lulls the spirit to repose. Earnestness of heart

is not called for, and the will, however good, is never braced to endurance. Whether by subtle intention or by an instinctive sense of fitness, the writer has painted Job as one who with all his virtue and perfectness spent his life as in a dream and needed to be awakened. He is a Pygmalion's statue of flawless marble, the face divinely calm and not without a trace of self-conscious remoteness from the suffering multitudes, needing the hot blast of misfortune to bring it to life. Or, let us say, he is a new type of humanity in paradise, an Adam enjoying a Garden of Eden fenced in from every storm, as yet undiscovered by the enemy. We are to see the problem of the primitive story of Genesis revived and wrought out afresh, not on the old lines, but in a way that makes it real to the race of suffering men. The dream-life of Job in his time of prosperity corresponds closely with that ignorance of good and evil which the first pair had in the garden eastward in Eden while as yet the forbidden tree bore its fruit untouched, undesired, in the midst of the greenery and flowers.

When did the man Job live? Far back in the patriarchal age, or but a short time before the author of the book came upon his story and made it immortal? We may incline to the later date, but it is of no importance. For us the interest of the book is not antiquarian but humane, the relation of pain and affliction to the character of man, the righteous government of God. The life and experiences of Job are idealised so that the question may be clearly understood; and the writer makes not the slightest attempt to give his book the colour of remote antiquity.

But we cannot fail to be struck from the outset with the genius shown in the choice of a life set in the Arabian desert. For breadth of treatment, for picturesque and poetic effect, for the development of a drama that was to exhibit the individual soul in its need of God, in the shadow of deep trouble as well as the sunshine of success, the scenery is strikingly adapted, far better than if it had been laid in some village of Israel. Inspiration guided the writer's choice. The desert alone gave scope for those splendid pictures of nature, those noble visions of Divine Almightyness, and those sudden and tremendous changes which make the movement impressive and sublime.

The modern analogue in literature is the philosophic novel. But Job is far more intense, more operatic, as Ewald says, and the elements are even simpler. Isolation is secured. Life is bared to its elements. The personality is entangled in disaster with the least possible machinery or incident. The dramatising altogether is singularly abstract. And thus we are enabled to see, as it were, the very thought of the author, lonely, resolute, appealing, under the widespread Arabian sky and the Divine infinitude.

III.

THE OPENING SCENE IN HEAVEN

Chap. i. 6-12

With the presentation of the scene in heaven, the genius, the pious daring, and fine moral insight of the writer at once appear—in one word, his inspiration. From the first we feel a sure yet deeply reverent touch, a spirit composed in its high resolve. The thinking is keen, but entirely without strain. In no mere flash did the over-world disclose itself and those decrees that shape man's destiny. There is constructive imagination. Wherever the idea of the heavenly council was found, whether in the vision Micaiah narrated to Jehoshaphat and Ahab, or in the great vision of Isaiah, it certainly was not unsought. Through the author's own study and art the inspiration came that made the picture what it is. The calm sovereignty of God, not tyrannical but most sympathetic, is presented with simple felicity. It was the distinction of Hebrew prophets to speak of the Almighty with a confidence which bordered on familiarity yet never lost the grace of profound reverence; and here we find that trait of serious naivety. The writer ventures on the scene he paints with no consciousness of daring nor the least air of difficult endeavour,

but quietly, as one who has the thought of the Divine government of human affairs constantly before his mind and glories in the majestic wisdom of God and His friendliness to men. In a single touch the King is shown, and before Him the hierarchies and powers of the invisible world in their responsibility to His rule. Centuries of religious culture are behind the words, and also many years of private meditation and philosophic thought. To this man, because he gave himself to the highest discipline, revelations came, uplifting, broad, and deep.

In contrast to the Almighty we have the figure of the Adversary, or Satan, depicted with sufficient clearness, notably coherent, representing a phase of being not imaginary but actual. He is not, as the Satan of later times came to be, the head of a kingdom peopled with evil spirits, a nether world separated from the abode of the heavenly angels by a broad, impassable gulf. He has no distinctive hideousness, nor is he painted as in any sense independent, although the evil bent of his nature is made plain, and he ventures to dispute the judgment of the Most High. This conception of the Adversary need not be set in opposition to those which afterwards appear in Scripture as if truth must lie entirely there or here. But we cannot help contrasting the Satan of the Book of Job with the grotesque, gigantic, awful, or despicable fallen angels of the world's poetry. Not that the mark of genius is wanting in these; but they reflect the powers of this world and the accompaniments of malignant human despotism. The author of Job, on the contrary, moved little by earthly state

and grandeur, whether good or evil, solely occupied with the Divine sovereignty, never dreams of one who could maintain the slightest shadow of authority in opposition to God. He cannot trifle with his idea of the Almighty in the way of representing a rival to Him; nor can he degrade a subject so serious as that of human faith and well-being by painting with any touch of levity a superhuman adversary of men.

Dante in his *Inferno* attempts the portraiture of the monarch of hell:—

"That emperor who sways
The realm of sorrow, at mid-breast from the ice
Stood forth; and I in stature, am more like
A giant than the giants are to his arms....
... If he were beautiful
As he is hideous now, and yet did dare
To scowl upon his Maker, well from him
May all our misery flow."

The enormous size of this figure is matched by its hideousness; the misery of the arch-fiend, for all its horror, is grotesque:

"At six eyes he wept; the tears
Adown three faces rolled in bloody foam."

Passing to Milton, we find sublimity in his pictures of the

fallen legions, and it culminates in the vision of their king:—

"Above them all the archangel; but his face
Deep scars of thunder had intrenched, and care
Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride
Waiting revenge: cruel his eye, but cast
Signs of remorse and passion, to behold
The fellows of his crime, . . .
Millions of spirits for his fault amerced
Of heaven, and from eternal splendours flung
For his revolt."

The picture is magnificent. It has, however, little justification from Scripture. Even in the Book of Revelation we see a kind of contempt of the Adversary where an angel from heaven with a great chain in his hand lays hold on the dragon, that old serpent which is the devil, and Satan, and binds him a thousand years. Milton has painted his Satan largely, as not altogether unfit to take arms against the Omnipotent, grown gigantic, even sublime, in the course of much theological speculation that had its source far back in Chaldean and Iranian myths. Perhaps, too, the sympathies of the poet, playing about the fortunes of fallen royalty, may have unconsciously coloured the vision which he saw and drew with such marvellous power, dipping his pencil "in the hues of earthquake and eclipse."

This splendid regal arch-fiend has no kinship with the Satan

of the Book of Job; and, on the other hand, the Mephistopheles of the "Faust," although bearing an outward resemblance to him, is, for a quite different reason, essentially unlike. Obviously Goethe's picture of a cynical devil gaily perverting and damning a human mind is based on the Book of Job. The "Prologue in Heaven," in which he first appears, is an imitation of the passage before us. But while the vulgarity and insolence of Mephistopheles are in contrast to the demeanour of the Adversary in presence of Jehovah, the real distinction lies in the kind of power ascribed to the one and the other. Mephistopheles is a cunning tempter. He receives permission to mislead if he can, and not only places his victim in circumstances fitted to ruin his virtue, but plies him with arguments intended to prove that evil is good, that to be pure is to be a fool. No such power of evil suggestion is given to the Adversary of Job. His action extends only to the outward events by which the trial of faith is brought about. Cynical he is and bent on working evil, but not by low cunning and sophistry. He has no access to the mind. While it cannot be said that Goethe has descended beneath the level of possibility, since a contemporary and friend of his own, Schopenhauer, might almost have sat for the portrait of Mephistopheles, the realism in Job befits the age of the writer and the serious purpose he had in view. Faust is a work of genius and art, and succeeds in its degree. The author of Job succeeds in a far higher sense, by the charm of simple sincerity and the strength of Divine inspiration, keeping the play

of supernatural agency beyond human vision, making the Satan a mere instrument of the Divine purpose, in no sense free or intellectually powerful.

The scene opens with a gathering of the "sons of the Elohim" in presence of their King. Professor Cheyne thinks that these are "supernatural Titanic beings who had once been at strife with Jehovah, but who now at stated times paid him their enforced homage"; and this he illustrates by reference to Chap. xxi. 22 and Chap. xxv. 2. But the question in the one passage, "Shall any teach God knowledge? seeing He judgeth those that are high" [רָמִינִי, the heights of heaven, highnesses], and the affirmation in the other, "He maketh peace in His high places," can scarcely be held to prove the supposition. The ordinary view that they are heavenly powers or angels, willing servants not unwilling vassals of Jehovah, is probably correct. They have come together at an appointed time to give account of their doings and to receive commands, and among them the Satan or Adversary presents himself, one distinguished from all the rest by the name he bears and the character and function it implies. There is no hint that he is out of place, that he has impudently forced his way into the audience chamber. Rather does it appear that he, like the rest, has to give his account. The question "Whence comest thou?" expresses no rebuke. It is addressed to the Satan as to the others. We see, therefore, that this "Adversary," to whomsoever he is opposed, is not a being excluded from communication with God, engaged in a princely revolt. When the reply is put into his mouth

that he has been "going to and fro in the earth, and pacing up and down in it," the impression conveyed is that a certain task of observing men, perhaps watching for their misdeeds, has been assumed by him. He appears a spirit of restless and acute inquiry into men's lives and motives, with a keen eye for the weaknesses of humanity and a fancy quick to imagine evil.

Evidently we have here a personification of the doubting, misbelieving, misreading spirit which, in our day, we limit to men and call pessimism. Now Koheleth gives so finished an expression to this temper that we can hardly be wrong in going back some distance of time for its growth; and the state of Israel before the northern captivity was a soil in which every kind of bitter seed might spring up. The author of Job may well have drawn from more than one cynic of his day when he set his mocking figure in the blaze of the celestial court. Satan is the pessimist. He exists, so far as his intent goes, to find cause against man, and therefore, in effect, against God, as man's Creator. A shrewd thinker is this Adversary, but narrowed to one line and that singularly like some modern criticism of religion, the resemblance holding in this that neither shows any feeling of responsibility. The Satan sneers away faith and virtue; the modern countenances both, and so has an excellent reason for pronouncing them hollow; or he avoids both, and is sure there is nothing but emptiness where he has not sought. Either way, all is *habēl habalim*—vanity of vanities. And yet Satan is so held and governed by the Almighty that he can only strike where

permission is given. Evil, as represented by him, is under the control of Divine wisdom and goodness. He appears as one to whom the words of Christ "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve," would bring home a sense neither of duty nor privilege, but of a sheer necessity, to be contested to the last. Nevertheless he is a vassal of the Almighty. Here the touch of the author is firm and true.

So of pessimistic research and philosophy now. We have writers who follow humanity in all its base movements and know nothing of its highest. The research of Schopenhauer and even the psychology of certain modern novelists are mischievous, depraving, for this reason, if no other, that they evaporate the ideal. They promote generally that diseased egotism to which judgment and aspiration are alike unknown. Yet this spirit too serves where it has no dream of serving. It provokes a healthy opposition, shows a hell from which men recoil, and creates so deadly ennui that the least gleam of faith becomes acceptable, and even Theosophy, because it speaks of life, secures the craving mind. Moreover, the pessimist keeps the church a little humble, somewhat awake to the error that may underlie its own glory and the meanness that mingles too often with its piety. A result of the freedom of the human mind to question and deny, pessimism has its place in the scheme of things. Hostile and often railing, it is detestable enough, but needs not alarm those who know that God takes care of His world.

The challenge which begins the action of the drama—by

whom is it thrown out? By the Almighty. God sets before the Satan a good life: "Hast thou considered My servant Job? that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil." The source of the whole movement, then, is a defiance of unbelief by the Divine Friend of men and Lord of all. There is such a thing as human virtue, and it is the glory of God to be served by it, to have His power and divinity reflected in man's spiritual vigour and holiness.

Why does the Almighty throw out the challenge and not wait for Satan's charge? Simply because the trial of virtue must begin with God. This is the first step in a series of providential dealings fraught with the most important results, and there is singular wisdom in attributing it to God. Divine grace is to be seen thrusting back the chaotic falsehoods that darken the world of thought. They exist; they are known to Him who rules; and He does not leave humanity to contend with them unaided. In their keenest trials the faithful are supported by His hand, assured of victory while they fight His battles. Ignorant pride, like that of the Adversary, is not slow to enter into debate even with the All-wise. Satan has the question ready which implies a lie, for his is the voice of that scepticism which knows no reverence. But the entire action of the book is in the line of establishing faith and hope. The Adversary is challenged to do his worst; and man, as God's champion, will have to do his best,—the world and angels looking on.

And this thought of a Divine purpose to confound the falsehoods of scepticism answers another inquiry which may readily occur. From the first the Almighty knows and asserts the virtue of His servant,—that he is one who fears God and eschews evil. But why, then, does He condescend to ask of Satan, "Hast thou considered My servant Job?" Since He has already searched the heart of Job and found it faithful, He does not need for His own satisfaction to hear Satan's opinion. Nor are we to suppose that the expression of this Adversary's doubt can have any real importance. But if we take the Satan as representing all those who depreciate faith and undermine virtue, the challenge is explained. Satan is of no account in himself. He will go on cavilling and suspecting. But for the sake of the race of men, its emancipation from the miserable suspicions that prey on the heart, the question is proposed. The drama has its prophetic design; it embodies a revelation; and in this lies the value of all that is represented. Satan, we shall find, disappears, and thereafter the human reason is alone addressed, solely considered. We pass from scene to scene, from controversy to controversy, and the great problem of man's virtue, which also involves the honour of God Himself, is wrought out that our despondency and fear may be cured; that we may never say with Koheleth, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

To the question of the Almighty, Satan replies by another: "Doth Job fear God for nought?" With a certain air of fairness he points to the extraordinary felicity enjoyed by the man. "Hast

Thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land." It is a thought naturally arising in the mind that very prosperous people have all on the side of their virtue, and may be less pure and faithful than they seem. Satan adopts this thought, which is not only blameless, but suggested by what we see of God's government. He is base and captious in using it, and turns it with a sneer. Yet on the surface he only hints that God should employ His own test, and so vindicate His action in making this man so prosperous. For why should Job show anything but gratitude towards God when all is done for him that heart can desire? The favourites of kings, indeed, who are loaded with titles and wealth, sometimes despise their benefactors, and, being raised to high places, grow ambitious of one still higher, that of royalty itself. The pampered servant becomes an arrogant rival, a leader of revolt. Thus too great bounty is often met with ingratitude. It does not, however, suit the Adversary to suggest that pride and rebellion of this kind have begun to show themselves in Job, or will show themselves. He has no ground for such an accusation, no hope of proving it true. He confines himself, therefore, to a simpler charge, and in making it implies that he is only judging this man on general principles and pointing to what is sure to happen in the case. Yes; he knows men. They are selfish at bottom. Their religion is selfishness. The blameless human fear is that much may be due to favourable position. The Satan is sure

that all is due to it.

Now, the singular thing here is the fact that the Adversary's accusation turns on Job's enjoyment of that outward felicity which the Hebrews were constantly desiring and hoping for as a reward of obedience to God. The writer comes thus at once to show the peril of the belief which had corrupted the popular religion of his time, which may even have been his own error once, that abundant harvests, safety from enemies, freedom from pestilence, such material prosperity as many in Israel had before the great disasters, were to be regarded as the evidence of accepted piety. Now that the crash has fallen and the tribes are scattered, those left in Palestine and those carried into exile alike sunk in poverty and trouble, the author is pointing out what he himself has come to see, that Israel's conception of religion had hitherto admitted and may even have gendered a terrible mistake. Piety might be largely selfishness—was often mingled with it. The message of the author to his countrymen and to the world is that a nobler mind must replace the old desire for happiness and plenty, a better faith the old trust that God would fill the hands that served Him well. He teaches that, whatever may come, though trouble after trouble may fall, the great true Friend is to be adored for what He is, obeyed and loved though the way lies through storm and gloom.

Striking is the thought that, while the prophets Amos and Hosea were fiercely or plaintively assailing the luxury of Israel and the lives of the nobles, among those very men who excited

their holy wrath may have been the author of the Book of Job. Dr. Robertson Smith has shown that from the "gala days" of Jeroboam II. to the fall of Samaria there were only some thirty years. One who wrote after the Captivity as an old man may therefore have been in the flush of youth when Amos prophesied, may have been one of the rich Israelites who lay upon beds of ivory and stretched themselves upon their couches, and ate lambs out of the flock and calves out of the midst of the stall, for whose gain the peasant and the slave were oppressed by stewards and officers. He may have been one of those on whom the blindness of prosperity had fallen so that the storm-cloud from the east with its vivid lightning was not seen, who held it their safety to bring sacrifices every morning and tithes every three days, to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which was leavened, and proclaim freewill offerings and publish them (Amos iv. 4, 5). The mere possibility that the author of Job may have had this very time of prosperity and religious security in his own past and heard Hosea's trumpet blast of doom is very suggestive, for if so he has learned how grandly right the prophets were as messengers of God. By the way of personal sorrow and disaster he has passed to the better faith he urges on the world. He sees what even the prophets did not fully comprehend, that desolation might be gain, that in the most sterile wilderness of life the purest light of religion might shine on the soul, while the tongue was parched with fatal thirst and the eye glazed with the film of death. The prophets looked always beyond the shadows of disaster to

a new and better day when the return of a penitent people to Jehovah should be followed by a restoration of the blessings they had forfeited—fruitful fields and vineyards, busy and populous cities, a general distribution of comfort if not of wealth. Even Amos and Hosea had no clear vision of the prophetic hope the first exile was to yield out of its darkness to Israel and the world.

The question, then, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" sending a flash of penetrating light back on Israel's history, and especially on the glowing pictures of prosperity in Solomon's time, compelling all to look to the foundation and motives of their faith, marks a most important era in Hebrew thought. It is, we may say, the first note of a piercing strain which thrills on to the present time. Taking rise here, the spirit of inquiry and self-examination has already sifted religious belief and separated much of the chaff from the wheat. Yet not all. The comfort and hope of believers are not yet lifted above the reach of Satan's javelin. While salvation is thought of mainly as self-enjoyment, can we say that the purity of religion is assured? When happiness is promised as the result of faith, whether happiness now, or hereafter in heavenly glory, the whole fabric of religion is built on a foundation insecure, because it may be apart from truth, holiness, and virtue. It does not avail to say that holiness is happiness, and so introduce personal craving under cover of the finest spiritual idea. To grant that happiness is in any sense the distinctive issue of faith and faithfulness, to keep happiness in view in submitting to the restraints and bearing the burdens of

religion, is to build the highest and best on the shifting sand of personal taste and craving. Make happiness that for which the believer is to endure and strive, allow the sense of personal comfort and immunity from change to enter into his picture of the reward he may expect, and the question returns, Doth this man serve God for nought? Life is not happiness, and the gift of God is everlasting life. Only when we keep to this supreme word in the teaching of Christ, and seek the fulness and liberty and purity of life, apart from that happiness which is at bottom the satisfaction of predominant desires, shall we escape from the constantly recurring doubt that threatens to undermine and destroy our faith.

If we look further, we find that the very error which has so long impoverished religion prevails in philanthropy and politics, prevails there at the present time to an alarming extent. The favourite aim of social meliorists is to secure happiness for all. While life is the main thing, everywhere and always, strength and breadth and nobleness of life, their dream is to make the warfare and service of man upon the earth so easy that he shall have no need for earnest personal endeavour. He is to serve for happiness, and have no service to do that may even in the time of his probation interfere with happiness. The pity bestowed on those who toil and endure in great cities and on bleak hillsides is that they fail of happiness. Persons who have no conception that vigour and endurance are spiritually profitable, and others who once knew but have forgotten the benefits of vigour and the gains

of endurance, would undo the very order and discipline of God. Are human beings to be encouraged to seek happiness, taught to doubt God because they have little pleasure, given to understand that those who enjoy have the best of the universe, and that they must be lifted up to this level or lose all? Then the sweeping condemnation will hang over the world that it is following a new god and has said farewell to the stern Lord of Providence.

Much may be justly said in condemnation of the jealous, critical spirit of the Adversary. Yet it remains true that his criticism expresses what would be a fair charge against men who passed this stage of existence without full trial. And the Almighty is represented as confirming this when He puts Job into the hands of Satan. He has challenged the Adversary, opening the question of man's fidelity and sincerity. He knows what will result. It is not the will of some eternal Satan that is the motive, but the will of God. The Adversary's scornful question is woven into God's wise ordinance, and made to subserve a purpose which completely transcends the base hope involved in it. The life of Job has not yet had the difficult and strenuous probation necessary to assured faith, or rather to the consciousness of a faith immovably rooted in God. It would be utterly inconsistent with the Divine wisdom to suppose God led on and beguiled by the sneer of His own creature to do what was needless or unfair, or indeed in any sense opposed to His own plan for His creation. And we shall find that throughout the book it is assumed by Job, implied by the author, that what is done is really the doing of God Himself. The Satan

of this Divine poem remains altogether subsidiary as an agent. He may propose, but God disposes. He may pride himself on the keenness of his intellect; but wisdom, compared to which his subtlety is mere blundering, orders the movement of events for good and holy ends.

The Adversary makes his proposal: "Put forth now Thine hand, and touch all that he hath, and he will bid Thee farewell." He does not propose to make use of sensual temptation. The only method of trial he ventures to suggest is deprivation of the prosperity for which he believes Job has served God. He takes on him to indicate what the Almighty may do, acknowledging that the Divine power, and not his, must bring into Job's life those losses and troubles that are to test his faith.

After all some may ask, Is not Satan endeavouring to tempt the Almighty? And if it were true that the prosperous condition of Job, or any man, implies God's entire satisfaction with his faith and dutifulness and with his character as a man, if, further, it must be taken as true that sorrow and loss are evil, then this proposal of the Satan is a temptation. It is not so in reality, for "God cannot be tempted to evil." No creature could approach His holiness with a temptation. But Satan's intention is to move God. He considers success and happiness to be intrinsically good, and poverty and bereavement to be intrinsically evil. That is to say, we have here the spirit of unfaith endeavouring to destroy God as well as man. For the sake of truth professedly, for his own pride of will really, he would arrest the righteousness and

grace of the Divine. He would unmake God and orphan man. The scheme is futile of course. God can allow his proposal, and be no less the Infinitely generous, wise, and true. The Satan shall have his desire; but not a shadow shall fall on the ineffable glory.

At this point, however, we must pause. The question that has just arisen can only be answered after a survey of human life in its relation to God, and especially after an examination of the meaning of the term *evil* as applied to our experiences. We have certain clear principles to begin with: that "God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempteth no man"; that all God does must show not less beneficence, not less love, but more as the days go by. These principles will have to be vindicated when we proceed to consider the losses, what may be called the disasters that follow each other in quick succession and threaten to crush the life they try.

Meanwhile, casting a glance at those happy dwellings in the land of Uz, we see all going on as before, no mind darkened by the shadow that is gathering, or in the least aware of the controversy in heaven so full of moment to the family circle. The pathetic ignorance, the blessed ignorance in which a man may live hangs upon the picture. The cheerful bustle of the homestead goes on, the feasts and sacrifices, diligent labour rewarded with the produce of fields, the wine and oil of vineyards and olive gardens, fleeces of the flock and milk of the kine.

IV.

THE SHADOW OF GOD'S HAND

Chap. i. 13-22

Coming now to the sudden and terrible changes which are to prove the faithfulness of the servant of God, we must not fail to observe that in the development of the drama the trial of Job personally is the sole consideration. No account is taken of the character of those who, being connected with his fortunes and happiness, are now to be swept away that he may suffer. To trace their history and vindicate Divine righteousness in reference to each of them is not within the scope of the poem. A typical man is taken as hero, and we may say the discussion covers the fate of all who suffer, although attention is fixed on him alone.

The writer is dealing with a story of patriarchal life, and himself is touched with the Semitic way of thinking. A certain disregard of the subordinate human characters must not be reckoned strange. His thoughts, far-reaching as they are, run in a channel very different from ours. The world of his book is that of family and clan ideas. The author saw more than any man of his time; but he could not see all that engages modern speculation. Besides, the glory of God is the dominant idea of the poem; not

men's right to joy, or peace, or even life; but God's right to be wholly Himself and greatly true. In the light of this high thought we must be content to have the story of one soul traced with such fulness as might be compassed, the others left practically untouched. If the sufferings of the man whom God approves can be explained in harmony with the glory of Divine justice, then the sudden calamities that fall upon his servants and children will also be explained. For, although death is in a sense an ultimate thing, and loss and affliction, however great, do not mean so much as death; yet, on the other hand, to die is the common lot, and the quick stroke appears merciful in comparison with Job's dreadful experiences. Those who are killed by lightning or by the sword do but swiftly and without protracted pain fall into the hands of God. We need not conclude that the writer means us to regard the sons and daughters of Job and his servants as mere chattels, like the camels and sheep, although the people of the desert would have so regarded them. But the main question presses; the range of the discussion must be limited; and the tradition which forms the basis of the poem is followed by the author whenever it supplies the elements of his inquiry.

We have entirely refused the supposition that the Almighty forgot His righteousness and grace in putting the wealth and happiness of Job into the hands of Satan. The trials we now see falling one after the other are not sent because the Adversary has suggested them, but because it is right and wise, for the glory of God and for the perfecting of faith, that Job should suffer them.

What is God's doing is not in this case nor in any case evil. He cannot wrong His servant that glory may come to Himself.

And just here arises a problem which enters into all religious thought, the wrong solution of which depraves many a philosophy, while the right understanding of it sheds a flood of light on our life in this world. A thousand tongues, Christian, non-Christian, and neo-Christian, affirm that life is for enjoyment. What gives enjoyment is declared to be good, what gives most enjoyment is reckoned best, and all that makes for pain and suffering is held to be evil. It is allowed that pain endured now may bring pleasure hereafter, and that for the sake of future gain a little discomfort may be chosen. But it is evil nevertheless. One doing his best for men would be expected to give them happiness at once and, throughout life, as much of it as possible. If he inflicted pain in order to enhance pleasure by and by, he would have to do so within the strictest limits. Whatever reduces the strength of the body, the capacity of the body for enjoyment and the delight of the mind accompanying the body's vigour, is declared bad, and to do anything which has this effect is to do evil or wrong. Such is the ethic of the philosophy finally and powerfully stated by Mr. Spencer. It has penetrated as widely as he could wish; it underlies volumes of Christian sermons and semi-Christian schemes. If it be true, then the Almighty of the Book of Job, bringing affliction, sorrow, and pain upon His servant, is a cruel enemy of man, to be hated, not revered. This matter needs to be considered at some length.

The notion that pain is evil, that he who suffers is placed at moral disadvantage, appears very plainly in the old belief that those conditions and surroundings of our life which minister to enjoyment are the proofs of the goodness of God on which reliance must be placed so far as nature and providence testify of Him. Pain and sorrow, it was held, need to be accounted for by human sin or otherwise; but we know that God is good because there is enjoyment in the life He gives. Paley, for example, says that the proof of the Divine *goodness* rests upon contrivances everywhere to be seen for the purpose of giving us pleasure. He tells us that, when God created the human species, "either He wished them happiness, or He wished them misery, or He was indifferent and unconcerned about either"; and he goes on to prove that it must be our happiness He desired, for, otherwise, wishing our misery, "He might have made everything we tasted, bitter; everything we saw, loathsome; everything we touched, a sting; every smell, a stench; and every sound, a discord:" while, if He had been indifferent about our happiness we must impute all enjoyment we have "to our good fortune," that is, to bare chance, an impossible supposition. Paley's further survey of life leads to the conclusion that God has it as His chief aim to make His creatures happy and, in the circumstances, does the best He can for them, better far than they are commonly disposed to think. The agreement of this position with that of Spencer lies in the presupposition that goodness can be proved only by arrangements for giving pleasure. If God is good for this reason,

what follows when He appoints pain, especially pain that brings no enjoyment in the long run? Either He is not altogether "good" or He is not all-powerful.

The author of the Book of Job does not enter into the problem of pain and affliction with the same deliberate attempt to exhaust the subject as Paley has made; but he has the problem before him. And in considering the trial of Job as an example of the suffering and sorrow of man in this world of change, we find a strong ray of light thrown upon the darkness. The picture is a Rembrandt; and where the radiance falls all is sharp and bright. But the shadows are deep; and we must seek, if possible, to make out what lies in those shadows. We shall not understand the Book of Job, nor form a just opinion of the author's inspiration, nor shall we understand the Bible as a whole, unless we reach a point of view clear of the mistakes that stultify the reasoning of Paley and plunge the mind of Spencer, who refuses to be called a materialist, into the utter darkness of materialism.

Now, as to enjoyment, we have the capacity for it, and it flows to us from many external objects as well as from the operation of our own minds and the putting forth of energy. It is in the scheme of things ordained by God that His creatures shall enjoy. On the other hand, trouble, sorrow, loss, bodily and mental pain, are also in the scheme of things. They are provided for in numberless ways—in the play of natural forces causing injuries, dangers from which we cannot escape; in the limitations of our power; in

the antagonisms and disappointments of existence; in disease and death. They are provided for by the very laws that bring pleasure, made inevitable under the same Divine ordinance. Some say it detracts from the goodness of God to admit that as He appoints means of enjoyment so He also provides for pain and sorrow and makes these inseparable from life. And this opinion runs into the extreme dogmatic assertion that "good," by which we are to understand *happiness*,

"Shall fall

At last far off, at last to all."

Many hold this to be necessary to the vindication of God's goodness. But the source of the whole confusion lies here, that we prejudge the question by calling pain evil. The light-giving truth for modern perplexity is that pain and loss are not *evil*, are in no sense *evil*.

Because we desire happiness and dislike pain, we must not conclude that pain is bad and that, when any one suffers, it is because he or another has done wrong. There is the mistake that vitiates theological thought, making men run to the extreme either of denying God altogether because there is suffering in the world, or of framing a rose-water eschatology. Pain is one thing, moral evil is quite another thing. He who suffers is not necessarily a wrong-doer; and when, through the laws of nature, God inflicts pain, there is no evil nor anything approaching wrong.

In Scripture, indeed, pain and evil are apparently identified. "Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil?" "Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will bring upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil that I have pronounced against them." In these and many other passages the very thing seems to be meant which has just been denied, for evil and suffering appear to be made identical. But human language is not a perfect instrument of thought, any more than thought is a perfect channel of truth. One word has to do duty in different senses. Moral evil, wrongness, on the one hand; bodily pain, the misery of loss and defeat, on the other hand—both are represented by one Hebrew word [עָרַב]—root meaning, *displeased*]. In the following passages, where moral evil is clearly meant, it occurs just as in those previously quoted: "Wash you, make you clean, cease to do evil, learn to do well"; "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil." The different meanings which one Hebrew word may bear are not generally confused in translation. In this case, however, the confusion has entered into the most modern language. From a highly esteemed thinker the following sentence may be quoted by way of example: "The other religions did not feel evil like Israel; it did not stand in such complete antagonism to their idea of the Supreme, the Creator and Sovereign of man, nor in such absolute contradiction to their notion of what ought to be; and so they either reconciled themselves as best they could to the evil that was

necessary, or invented means by which men could escape from it by escaping from existence." The singular misapprehension of Divine providence which underlies a statement like this can only be got rid of by recognising that enjoyment and suffering are not the good and evil of life, that both of them stand quite apart from what is intrinsically good and bad in a moral sense, and that they are simply means to an end in the providence of God.

It is not difficult, of course, to see how the idea of pain and the idea of moral evil have been linked together. It is by the thought that suffering is punishment for evil done; and that the suffering is therefore itself evil. Pain was simply penalty inflicted by an offended heavenly power. The evil of a man's doings came back to him, made itself felt in his suffering. This was the explanation of all that was unpleasant, disastrous and vexing in the lot of man. He would enjoy always, it was conceived, if wrong-doing or failure in duty to the higher powers did not kindle divine anger against him. True, the wrong-doing might not be his own. The son might suffer for the parent's fault. Iniquity might be remembered to children's children and fall terribly on those who had not themselves transgressed. The fates pursued the descendants of an impious man. But wrong done somewhere, rebellion of some one against a divinity, was always the antecedent of pain and sorrow and disaster. And as the other religions thought, so, in this matter, did that of Israel. To the Hebrew the deep conviction of this, as Dr. Fairbairn has said, made poverty and disease peculiarly abhorrent. In Psalm lxxxix.

the prosperity of David is depicted, and Jehovah speaks of the covenant that must be kept: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; ... then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." The trouble has fallen, and out of the depth of it, attributing to past sin all defeat and disaster from which the people suffer—the breaking down of the hedges, curtailment of the vigour of youth, overthrow in war—the psalmist cries, "How long, O Lord, wilt Thou hide Thyself for ever? How long shall Thy wrath burn like fire? O remember how short my time is: for what vanity hast Thou created all the children of men?" There is here no thought that anything painful or afflictive could manifest the fatherhood of God; it must proceed from His anger, and force the mind back upon the memory of sin, some transgression that has caused the Almighty to suspend His kindness for a time.

Here it was the author of Job found the thought of his people. With this he had to harmonise the other beliefs—peculiarly theirs—that the lovingkindness of the Lord is over all His works, that God who is supremely good cannot inflict moral injury on any of His covenanted servants. And the difficulty he felt survives. The questions are still urged: Is not pain bound up with wrong-doing? Is not suffering the mark of God's displeasure? Are they not evil, therefore? And, on the other hand, Is not enjoyment appointed to him who does right? Does not the whole scheme of Divine providence, as the Bible sets it forth, including the prospect it opens into the eternal future, associate happiness

with well-doing and pain with evil-doing? We desire enjoyment, and cannot help desiring it. We dislike pain, disease, and all that limits our capacity for pleasure. Is it not in accordance with this that Christ appears as the Giver of light and peace and joy to the race of men?

These questions look difficult enough. Let us attempt to answer them.

Pleasure and pain, happiness and suffering, are elements of creaturely experience appointed by God. The right use of them makes life, the wrong use of them mars it. They are ordained, all of them in equal degree, to a good end; for all that God does is done in perfect love as well as in perfect justice. It is no more wonderful that a good man should suffer than that a bad man should suffer; for the good man, the man who believes in God and therefore in goodness, making a right use of suffering, will gain by it in the true sense; he will reach a deeper and nobler life. It is no more wonderful that a bad man, one who disbelieves in God and therefore in goodness, should be happy than that a good man should be happy, the happiness being God's appointed means for both to reach a higher life. The main element of this higher life is vigour, but not of the body. The Divine purpose is *spiritual* evolution. That gratification of the sensuous side of our nature for which physical health and a well-knit organism are indispensable—paramount in the pleasure-philosophy—is not neglected, but is made subordinate in the Divine culture of life. The grace of God aims at the life of the spirit—power to love, to follow

righteousness, to dare for justice' sake, to seek and grasp the true, to sympathise with men and bear with them, to bless them that curse, to suffer and be strong. To promote this vitality all God appoints is fitted—pain as well as pleasure, adversity as well as prosperity, sorrow as well as joy, defeat as well as success. We wonder that suffering is so often the result of imprudence. On the ordinary theory the fact is inexplicable, for imprudence has no dark colour of ethical faultiness. He who by an error of judgment plunges himself and his family into what appears irretrievable disaster, may, by all reckoning, be almost blameless in character. If suffering is held to be penal, no reference to the general sin of humanity will account for the result. But the reason is plain. The suffering is disciplinary. The nobler life at which Divine providence aims must be sagacious no less than pure, guided by sound reason no less than right feeling.

And if it is asked how from this point of view we are to find the punishment of sin, the answer is that happiness as well as suffering is punishment to him whose sin and the unbelief that accompanies it pervert his view of truth, and blind him to the spiritual life and the will of God. The pleasures of a wrong-doer who persistently denies obligation to Divine authority and refuses obedience to the Divine law are no gain, but loss. They dissipate and attenuate his life. His sensuous or sensual enjoyment, his delight in selfish triumph and gratified ambition are real, give at the time quite as much happiness as the good man has in his obedience and virtue, perhaps a great deal more. But they are

penal and retributive nevertheless; and the conviction that they are so becomes clear to the man whenever the light of truth is flashed upon his spiritual state. We read Dante's pictures of the Inferno, and shudder at the dreadful scenes with which he has filled the descending circles of woe. He has omitted one that would have been the most striking of all,—unless indeed an approach to it is to be found in the episode of Paolo and Francesca,—the picture of souls self-doomed to seek happiness and to enjoy, on whose life the keen light of eternity shines, revealing the gradual wasting away of existence, the certain degeneration to which they are condemned.

On the other hand, the pains and disasters which fall to the lot of evil men, intended for their correction, if in perversity or in blindness they are misunderstood, again become punishment; for they, too, dissipate and attenuate life. The real good of existence slips away while the mind is intent on the mere pain or vexation and how it is to be got rid of. In Job we find a purpose to reconcile affliction with the just government of God. The troubles into which the believing man is brought urge him to think more deeply than he has ever thought, become the means of that intellectual and moral education which lies in discovery of the will and character of God. They also bring him by this way into deeper humility, a fine tenderness of spiritual nature, a most needful kinship with his fellows. See then the use of suffering. The impenitent, unbelieving man has no such gains. He is absorbed in the distressing experience, and that absorption

narrows and debases the activity of the soul. The treatment of this matter here is necessarily brief. It is hoped, however, that the principle has been made clear.

Does it require any adaptation or under-reading of the language of Scripture to prove the harmony of its teaching with the view just given of happiness and suffering as related to punishment? Throughout the greater part of the Old Testament the doctrine of suffering is that old doctrine which the author of Job found perplexing. Not infrequently in the New Testament there is a certain formal return to it; for even under the light of revelation the meaning of Divine providence is learnt slowly. But the emphasis rests on *life* rather than happiness, and on *death* rather than suffering in the gospels; and the whole teaching of Christ, pointed to the truth. This world and our discipline here, the trials of men, the doctrine of the cross, the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, are not fitted to introduce us into a state of existence in which mere enjoyment, the gratification of personal tastes and desires, shall be the main experience. They are fitted to educate the spiritual nature for life, fulness of life. Immortality becomes credible when it is seen as progress in vigour, progress towards that profound compassion, that fidelity, that unquenchable devotion to the glory of God the Father which marked the life of the Divine Son in this world.

Observe, it is not denied that joy is and will be desired, that suffering and pain are and will remain experiences from which human nature must recoil. The desire and the aversion are

wrought into our constitution; and just because we feel them our whole mortal discipline has its value. In the experience of them lies the condition of progress. On the one hand pain urges, on the other joy attracts. It is in the line of desire for joy of a finer and higher kind that civilisation realises itself, and even religion lays hold of us and lures us on. But the conditions of progress are not to be mistaken for the end of it. Joy assumes sorrow as a possibility. Pleasure can only exist as alternative to the experience of pain. And the life that expands and reaches finer power and exaltation in the course of this struggle is the main thing. The struggle ceases to be acute in the higher ranges of life; it becomes massive, sustained, and is carried on in the perfect peace of the soul. Therefore the future state of the redeemed is a state of blessedness. But the blessedness accompanying the life is not the glory. The glory of the perfected is life itself. The heaven of the redeemed appears a region of existence in which the exaltation, enlargement, and deepening of life shall constantly and consciously go on. Conversely the hell of evil-doers will not be simply the pain, the suffering, the defeat to which they have doomed themselves, but the constant attenuation of their life, the miserable wasting of which they shall be aware, though they find some pitiful pleasure, as Milton imagined his evil angels finding theirs, in futile schemes of revenge against the Highest.

Pain is not in itself an evil. But our nature recoils from suffering and seeks life in brightness and power, beyond the keen pangs of mortal existence. The creation hopes that itself "shall

be delivered from the bondage of corruption." The finer life is, the more sensible it must be of association with a body doomed to decay, the more sensible also of that gross human injustice and wrong which dare to pervert God's ordinance of pain and His sacrament of death, usurping His holy prerogative for the most unholy ends. And so we are brought to the Cross of Christ. When He "bore our sins in His own body to the tree," when He "suffered for sins once, the Righteous for the unrighteous," the sacrifice was real, awful, immeasurably profound. Yet, could death be in any sense degrading or debasing to Him? Could evil touch His soul? Over its most insolent assumption of the right to injure and destroy He stood, spiritually victorious in the presence of His enemies, and rose, untouched in soul, when His body was broken on the cross. His sacrifice was great because He bore the sins of men and died as God's atonement. His sublime devotion to the Father whose holy law was trampled under foot, His horror and endurance of human iniquity which culminated in His death, made the experience profoundly terrible. Thus the spiritual dignity and power He gained provided new life for the world.

It is now possible to understand the trials of Job. So far as the sufferer is concerned, they are no less beneficent than His joys; for they provide that necessary element of probation by which life of a deeper and stronger kind is to be reached, the opportunity of becoming, as a man and a servant of the Almighty, what he had

never been, what otherwise he could not become. The purpose of God is entirely good; but it will remain with the sufferer himself to enter by the fiery way into full spiritual vigour. He will have the protection and grace of the Divine Spirit in his time of sore bewilderment and anguish. Yet his own faith must be vindicated while the shadow of God's hand rests upon his life.

And now the forces of nature and the wild tribes of the desert gather about the happy settlement of the man of Uz. With dramatic suddenness and cumulative terror stroke after stroke descends. Job is seen before the door of his dwelling. The morning broke calm and cloudless, the bright sunshine of Arabia filling with brilliant colour the far horizon. The day has been peaceful, gracious, another of God's gifts. Perhaps, in the early hours, the father, as priest of his family, offered the burnt-offerings of atonement lest his sons should have renounced God in their hearts; and now, in the evening, he is sitting calm and glad, hearing the appeals of those who need his help and dispensing alms with a generous hand. But one comes in haste, breathless with running, scarcely able to tell his tale. Out in the fields the oxen were ploughing and the asses feeding. Suddenly a great band of Sabeans fell upon them, swept them away, slew the servants with the edge of the sword: this man alone has escaped with his life. Rapidly has he spoken; and before he has done another appears, a shepherd from the more distant pastures, to announce a second calamity. "The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and

consumed them; and I only am escaped to tell thee." They scarcely dare to look on the face of Job, and he has no time to speak, for here is a third messenger, a camel-driver, swarthy and naked to the loins, crying wildly as he runs, The Chaldeans made three bands—fell upon the camels—swept them away—the servants are slain—I only am left. Nor is this the last. A fourth, with every mark of horror in his face, comes slowly and brings the most terrible message of all. The sons and daughters of Job were feasting in their eldest brother's house; there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell. The young men and women are all dead. One only has escaped, he who tells the dreadful tale.

A certain idealism appears in the causes of the different calamities and their simultaneous, or almost simultaneous, occurrence. Nothing, indeed, is assumed which is not possible in the north of Arabia. A raid from the south, of Sabeans, the lawless part of a nation otherwise engaged in traffic; an organised attack by Chaldeans from the east, again the lawless fringe of the population of the Euphrates valley, those who, inhabiting the margin of the desert, had taken to desert ways; then, of natural causes, the lightning or the fearful hot wind which coming suddenly stifles and kills, and the whirlwind, possible enough after a thunderstorm or simoom,—all of these belong to the region in which Job lived. But the grouping of the disasters and the invariable escape of one only from each belong to the dramatic setting, and are intended to have a cumulative

effect. A sense of the mysterious is produced, of supernatural power, discharging bolt after bolt in some inscrutable mood of antagonism. Job is a mark for the arrows of the Unseen. And when the last messenger has spoken, we turn in dismay and pity to look on the rich man made poor, the proud and happy father made childless, the fearer of God on whom the enemy seems to have wrought his will.

In the stately Oriental way, as a man who bows to fate or the irresistible will of the Most High, Job seeks to realise his sudden and awful deprivations. We watch him with silent awe as first he rends his mantle, the acknowledged sign of mourning and of the disorganisation of life, then shaves his head, renouncing in his grief even the natural ornament of the hair, that the sense of loss and resignation may be indicated. This done, in deep humiliation he bows and falls prone on the earth and worships, the fit words falling in a kind of solemn chant from his lips: "Naked came I forth from my mother's womb, and naked I return thereto. Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away. Let Jehovah's name be blessed." The silence of grief and of death has fallen about him. No more shall be heard the bustle of the homestead to which, when the evening shadows were about to fall, a constant stream of servants and laden oxen used to come, where the noise of cattle and asses and the shouts of camel-drivers made the music of prosperity. His wife and the few who remain, with bowed heads, dumb and aimless, stand around. Swiftly the sun goes down, and darkness falls upon the desolate dwelling.

Losses like these are apt to leave men distracted. When everything is swept away, with the riches those who were to inherit them, when a man is left, as Job says, naked, bereft of all that labour had won and the bounty of God had given, expressions of despair do not surprise us, nor even wild accusations of the Most High. But the faith of this sufferer does not yield. He is resigned, submissive. The strong trust that has grown in the course of a religious life withstands the shock, and carries the soul through the crisis. Neither did Job accuse God nor did he sin, though his grief was great. So far he is master of his soul, unbroken though desolated. The first great round of trial has left the man a believer still.

V.

THE DILEMMA OF FAITH

Chap. ii

As the drama proceeds to unfold the conflict between Divine grace in the human soul and those chaotic influences which hold the mind in doubt or drag it back into denial, Job becomes a type of the righteous sufferer, the servant of God in the hot furnace of affliction. All true poetry runs thus into the typical. The interest of the movement depends on the representative character of the life, passionate in jealousy, indignation, grief, or ambition, pressing on exultantly to unheard-of success, borne down into the deepest circles of woe. Here it is not simply a man's constancy that has to be established, but God's truth against the Adversary's lie, the "everlasting yea" against the negations that make all life and virtue seem the mere blossoming of dust. Job has to pass through profoundest trouble, that the drama may exhaust the possibilities of doubt, and lead the faith of man towards liberty.

Yet the typical is based on the real; and the conflict here described has gone on first in the experience of the author. Not from the outside, but from his own life has he painted the sorrows and struggles of a soul urged to the brink of that precipice beyond

which lies the blank darkness of the abyss. There are men in whom the sorrows of a whole people and of a whole age seem to concentrate. They suffer with their fellow-men that all may find a way of hope. Not unconsciously, but with the most vivid sense of duty, a Divine necessity brought to their door, they must undergo all the anguish and hew a track through the dense forest to the light beyond. Such a man in his age was the writer of this book. And when he now proceeds to the second stage of Job's affliction every touch appears to show that, not merely in imagination, but substantially he endured the trials which he paints. It is his passion that strives and cries, his sorrowful soul that longs for death. Imaginary, is this work of his? Nothing so true, vehement, earnest, can be imaginary. "Sublime sorrow," says Carlyle, "sublime reconciliation; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind." But it shows more than "the seeing eye and the mildly understanding heart." It reveals the spirit battling with terrible enemies, doubts that spring out of the darkness of error, brood of the primordial chaos. The man was one who "in this wild element of a life had to struggle onwards; now fallen, deep abased; and ever with tears, repentance, with bleeding heart, rise again, struggle again, still onwards." Not to this writer, any more than to the author of "Sartor Resartus," did anything come in his dreams.

A second scene in heaven is presented to our view. The Satan appears as before with the "sons of the Elohim," is asked by the Most High whence he has come, and replies in the language

previously used. Again he has been abroad amongst men in his restless search for evil. The challenge of God to the Adversary regarding Job is also repeated; but now it has an addition: "Still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause." The expression "although thou movedst me against him" is startling. Is it an admission after all that the Almighty can be moved by any consideration less than pure right, or to act in any way to the disadvantage or hurt of His servant? Such an interpretation would exclude the idea of supreme power, wisdom, and righteousness which unquestionably governs the book from first to last. The words really imply a charge against the Adversary of malicious untruth. The saying of the Almighty is ironical, as Schultens points out: "Although thou, forsooth, didst incite Me against him." He who flings sharp javelins of detraction is pierced with a sharper javelin of judgment. Yet he goes on with his attempt to ruin Job, and prove his own penetration the keenest in the universe.

And now he pleads that it is the way of men to care more for themselves, their own health and comfort, than for anything else. Bereavement and poverty may be like arrows that glance off from polished armour. Let disease and bodily pain attack himself, and a man will show what is really in his heart. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for himself. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will renounce Thee openly."

The proverb put into Satan's mouth carries a plain enough

meaning, and yet is not literally easy to interpret. The sense will be clear if we translate it "Hide for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for himself." The hide of an animal, lion or sheep, which a man wears for clothing will be given up to save his own body. A valued article of property often, it will be promptly renounced when life is in danger the man will flee away naked. In like manner all possessions will be abandoned to keep one's self unharmed. True enough in a sense, true enough to be used as a proverb, for proverbs often express a generalisation of the earthly prudence not of the higher ideal, the saying, nevertheless, is in Satan's use of it a lie—that is, if he includes the children when he says, "all that a man hath will he give for himself." Job would have died for his children. Many a father and mother, with far less pride in their children than Job had in his, would die for them. Possessions indeed, mere worldly gear, find their real value or worthlessness when weighed against life, and human love has Divine depths which a sneering devil cannot see. The portraiture of soulless human beings is one of the recent experiments in fictitious literature, and it may have some justification. When the design is to show the dreadful issue of unmitigated selfishness, a distinctly moral purpose. If, on the other hand, "art for art's sake" is the plea, and the writer's skill in painting the vacant ribs of death is used with a sinister reflection on human nature as a whole, the approach to Satan's temper marks the degradation of literature. Christian faith clings to the hope that Divine grace may create a soul in the ghastly skeleton. The Adversary gloats

over the lifeless picture of his own imagining and affirms that man can never be animated by the love of God. The problem which the Satan of Job long ago presented haunts the mind of our age. It is one of those ominous symptoms that point to times of trial in which the experience of humanity may resemble the typical affliction and desperate struggle of the man of Uz.

A grim possibility of truth lies in the taunt of Satan that, if Job's flesh and bone are touched, he will renounce God openly. The test of sore disease is more trying than loss of wealth at least. And, besides, bodily affliction, added to the rest, will carry Job into yet another region of vital experience. Therefore it is the will of God to send it. Again Satan is the instrument, and the permission is given, "Behold, he is in thine hand: only save his life—imperil not his life." Here, as before, when causes are to be brought into operation that are obscure and may appear to involve harshness, the Adversary is the intermediary agent. On the face of the drama a certain formal deference is paid to the opinion that God cannot inflict pain on those whom He loves. But for a short time only is the responsibility, so to speak, of afflicting Job partly removed from the Almighty to Satan. At this point the Adversary disappears; and henceforth God is acknowledged to have sent the disease as well as all the other afflictions to His servant. It is only in a poetic sense that Satan is represented as wielding natural forces and sowing the seeds of disease; the writer has no theory and needs no theory of malignant activity. He knows that "all is of God."

Time has passed sufficient for the realisation by Job of his poverty and bereavement. The sense of desolation has settled on his soul as morning after morning dawned, week after week went by, emptied of the loving voices he used to hear, and the delightful and honourable tasks that used to engage him. In sympathy with the exhausted mind, the body has become languid, and the change from sufficiency of the best food to something like starvation gives the germs of disease an easy hold. He is stricken with elephantiasis, one of the most terrible forms of leprosy, a tedious malady attended with intolerable irritation and loathsome ulcers. The disfigured face, the blackened body, soon reveal the nature of the infection; and he is forthwith carried out according to the invariable custom and laid on the heap of refuse, chiefly burnt litter, which has accumulated near his dwelling. In Arab villages this *mezbele* is often a mound of considerable size, where, if any breath of wind is blowing, the full benefit of its coolness can be enjoyed. It is the common playground of the children, "and there the outcast, who has been stricken with some loathsome malady, and is not allowed to enter the dwellings of men, lays himself down, begging an alms of the passers-by, by day, and by night sheltering himself among the ashes which the heat of the sun has warmed." At the beginning Job was seen in the full stateliness of Oriental life; now the contrasting misery of it appears, the abjectness into which it may rapidly fall. Without proper medical skill or appliances, the houses no way adapted for a case of disease like Job's, the

wealthiest pass like the poorest into what appears the nadir of existence. Now at length the trial of faithfulness is in the way of being perfected. If the helplessness, the torment of disease, the misery of this abject state do not move his mind from its trust in God, he will indeed be a bulwark of religion against the atheism of the world.

But in what form does the question of Job's continued fidelity present itself now to the mind of the writer? Singularly, as a question regarding his integrity. From the general wreck one life has been spared, that of Job's wife. To her it appears that the wrath of the Almighty has been launched against her husband, and all that prevents him from finding refuge in death from the horrors of lingering disease is his integrity. If he maintains the pious resignation he showed under the first afflictions and during the early stages of his malady, he will have to suffer on. But it will be better to die at once. "Why," she asks, "dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? Renounce God, and die." It is a different note from that which runs through the controversy between Job and his friends. Always on his integrity he takes his stand; against his right to affirm it they direct their arguments. They do not insist on the duty of a man under all circumstances to believe in God and submit to His will. Their sole concern is to prove that Job has not been sincere and faithful and deserving of acceptance before God. But his wife knows him to have been righteous and pious; and that, she thinks, will serve him no longer. Let him abandon his integrity; renounce God. On two sides the sufferer is plied.

But he does not waver. Between the two he stands, a man who has integrity and will keep it till he die.

The accusations of Satan, turning on the question whether Job was sincere in religion or one who served God for what he got, prepare us to understand why his integrity is made the hinge of the debate. To Job his upright obedience was the heart of his life, and it alone made his indefeasible claim on God. But faith, not obedience, is the only real claim a man can advance. And the connection is to be found in this way. As a man perfect and upright, who feared God and eschewed evil, Job enjoyed the approval of his conscience and the sense of Divine favour. His life had been rooted in the steady assurance that the Almighty was his friend. He had walked in freedom and joy cared for by the providence of the Eternal, guarded by His love, his soul at peace with that Divine Lawgiver whose will he did. His faith rested like an arch on two piers—one, his own righteousness which God had inspired; the other, the righteousness of God which his own reflected. If it were proved that he had not been righteous, his belief that God had been guarding him, teaching him, filling his soul with light, would break under him like a withered branch. If he had not been righteous indeed, he could not know what righteousness is, he could not know whether God is righteous or not, he could not know God nor trust in Him. The experience of the past was, in this case, a delusion. He had nothing to rest upon, no faith. On the other hand, if those afflictions, coming why he could not tell, proved God to be capricious, unjust, all would

equally be lost. The dilemma was that, holding to the belief in his own integrity, he seemed to be driven to doubt God; but if he believed God to be righteous he seemed to be driven to doubt his own integrity. Either was fatal. He was in a narrow strait between two rocks, on one or other of which faith was like to be shattered.

But his integrity was clear to him. That stood within the region of his own consciousness. He knew that God had made him of dutiful heart and given him a constant will to be obedient. Only while he believed this could he keep hold of his life. As the one treasure saved out of the wreck, when possessions, children, health were gone, to cherish his integrity was the last duty. Renounce his conscience of goodwill and faithfulness? It was the one fact bridging the gulf of disaster, the safeguard against despair. And is this not a true presentation of the ultimate inquiry regarding faith? If the justice we know is not an adumbration of Divine justice, if the righteousness we do is not taught us by God, of the same kind as His, if loving justice and doing righteousness we are not showing faith in God, if renouncing all for the right, clinging to it though the heavens should fall, we are not in touch with the Highest, then there is no basis for faith, no link between our human life and the Eternal. All must go if these deep principles of morality and religion are not to be trusted. What a man knows of the just and good by clinging to it, suffering for it, rejoicing in it, is indeed the anchor that keeps him from being swept into the waste of waters.

The woman's part in the controversy is still to be considered;

and it is but faintly indicated. Upon the Arab soul there lay no sense of woman's life. Her view of providence or of religion was never asked. The writer probably means here that Job's wife would naturally, as a woman, complicate the sum of his troubles. She expresses ill-considered resentment against his piety. To her he is "righteous over much," and her counsel is that of despair. Was this all that the Great God whom he trusted could do for him? Better bid farewell to such a God. She can do nothing to relieve the dreadful torment and can see but the one possible end. But it is God who is keeping her husband alive, and one word would be enough to set him free. Her language is strangely illogical, meant indeed to be so,—a woman's desperate talk. She does not see that, though Job renounced God, he might yet live on, in greater misery than ever, just because he would then have no spiritual stay.

Well, some have spoken very strongly about Job's wife. She has been called a helper of the Devil, an organ of Satan, an infernal fury. Chrysostom thinks that the Enemy left her alive because he deemed her a fit scourge to Job by which to plague him more acutely than by any other. Ewald, with more point, says: "Nothing can be more scornful than her words which mean, 'Thou, who under all the undeserved sufferings which have been inflicted on thee by thy God, hast been faithful to Him even in fatal sickness, as if He would help or desired to help thee who art beyond help,—to thee, fool, I say, Bid God farewell, and die!'" There can be no doubt that she appears as the temptress

of her husband, putting into speech the atheistic doubt which the Adversary could not directly suggest. And the case is all the worse for Job that affection and sympathy are beneath her words. Brave and true life appears to her to profit nothing if it has to be spent in pain and desolation. She does not seem to speak so much in scorn as in the bitterness of her soul. She is no infernal fury, but one whose love, genuine enough, does not enter into the fellowship of his sufferings. It was necessary to Job's trial that the temptation should be presented, and the ignorant affection of the woman serves the needful purpose. She speaks not knowing what she says, not knowing that her words pierce like sharp arrows into his very soul. As a figure in the drama she has her place, helping to complete the round of trial.

The answer of Job is one of the fine touches of the book. He does not denounce her as an instrument of Satan nor dismiss her from his presence. In the midst of his pain he is the great chief of Uz and the generous husband. "Thou speakest," he mildly says, "as one of the foolish, that is, godless, women speaketh." It is not like thee to say such things as these. And then he adds the question born of sublime faith, "Shall we receive gladness at the hand of God, and shall we not receive affliction?"

One might declare this affirmation of faith so clear and decisive that the trial of Job as a servant of God might well close with it. Earthly good, temporal joy, abundance of possessions, children, health,—these he had received. Now in poverty and desolation, his body wrecked by disease, he lies tormented

and helpless. Suffering of mind and physical affliction are his in almost unexampled keenness, acute in themselves and by contrast with previous felicity. His wife, too, instead of helping him to endure, urges him to dishonour and death. Still he does not doubt that all is wisely ordered by God. He puts aside, if indeed with a strenuous effort of the soul, that cruel suggestion of despair, and affirms anew the faith which is supposed to bind him to a life of torment. Should not this repel the accusations brought against the religion of Job and of humanity? The author does not think so. He has only prepared the way for his great discussion. But the stages of trial already passed show how deep and vital is the problem that lies beyond. The faith which has emerged so triumphantly is to be shaken as by the ruin of the world.

Strangely and erroneously has a distinction been drawn between the previous afflictions and the disease which, it is said, "opens or reveals greater depths in Job's reverent piety." One says: "In his former trial he blessed God who took away the good He had added to naked man; this was strictly no evil: now Job bows beneath God's hand when He inflicts positive evil." Such literalism in reading the words "shall we not receive evil?" implies a gross slander on Job. If he had meant that the loss of health was "evil" as contrasted with the loss of children, that from his point of view bereavement was no "evil," then indeed he would have sinned against love, and therefore against God. It is the whole course of his trial he is reviewing. Shall we receive "good"—joy, prosperity, the love of children, years

of physical vigour, and shall we not receive pain—this burden of loss, desolation, bodily torment? Herein Job sinned not with his lips. Again, had he meant moral evil, something involving cruelty and unrighteousness, he would have sinned indeed, his faith would have been destroyed by his own false judgment of God. The words here must be interpreted in harmony with the distinction already drawn between physical and mental suffering, which, as God appoints them, have a good design, and moral evil, which can in no way have its source in Him.

And now the narrative passes into a new phase. As a chief of Uz, the greatest of the Bene-Kedem, Job was known beyond the desert. As a man of wisdom and generosity he had many friends. The tidings of his disasters and finally of his sore malady are carried abroad; and after months, perhaps (for a journey across the sandy waste needs preparation and time), three of those who know him best and admire him most, "Job's three friends," appear upon the scene. To sympathise with him, to cheer and comfort him, they come with one accord, each on his camel, not unattended, for the way is beset with dangers.

They are men of mark all of them. The emeer of Uz has chiefs, no doubt, as his peculiar friends, although the Septuagint colours too much in calling them kings. It is, however, their piety, their likeness to himself, as men who fear and serve the True God, that binds them to Job's heart. They will contribute what they can of counsel and wise suggestion to throw light on his trials and lift him into hope. No arguments of unbelief

or cowardice will be used by them, nor will they propose that a stricken man should renounce God and die. Eliphaz is from Teman, that centre of thought and culture where men worshipped the Most High and meditated upon His providence. Shuach, the city of Bildad, can scarcely be identified with the modern Shuwak, about two hundred and fifty miles south-west from the Jauf near the Red Sea, nor with the land of the Tsukhi of the Assyrian inscriptions, lying on the Chaldæan frontier. It was probably a city, now forgotten, in the Idumæan region. Maan, also near Petra, may be the Naamah of Zophar. It is at least tempting to regard all the three as neighbours who might without great difficulty communicate with each other and arrange a visit to their common friend. From their meeting-place at Teman or at Maan they would, in that case, have to make a journey of some two hundred miles across one of the most barren and dangerous deserts of Arabia,—clear enough proof of their esteem for Job and their deep sympathy.

The fine idealism of the poem is maintained in this new act. Men of knowledge and standing are these. They may fail; they may take a false view of their friend and his state; but their sincerity must not be doubted nor their rank as thinkers. Whether the three represent ancient culture, or rather the conceptions of the writer's own time, is a question that may be variously answered. The book, however, is so full of life, the life of earnest thought and keen thirst for truth, that the type of religious belief found in all the three must have been familiar to the author.

These men are not, any more than Job himself, contemporaries of Ephron the Hittite or the Balaam of Numbers. They stand out as religious thinkers of a far later age, and represent the current Rabbinism of the post-Solomonic era. The characters are filled in from a profound knowledge of man and man's life. Yet each of them, Temanite, Shuchite, Naamathite, is at bottom a Hebrew believer striving to make his creed apply to a case not yet brought into his system, and finally, when every suggestion is repelled, taking refuge in that hardness of temper which is peculiarly Jewish. They are not men of straw, as some imagine, but types of the culture and thought which led to Pharisaism. The writer argues not so much with Edom as with his own people.

Approaching Job's dwelling the three friends look eagerly from their camels, and at length perceive one prostrate, disfigured, lying on the *mezbele*, a miserable wreck of manhood. "That is not our friend," they say to each other. Again and yet again, "This is not he; this surely cannot be he." Yet nowhere else than in the place of the forsaken do they find their noble friend. The brave, bright chief they knew, so stately in his bearing, so abundant and honourable, how has he fallen! They lift up their voices and weep; then, struck into amazed silence, each with torn mantle and dust-sprinkled head, for seven days and nights they sit beside him in grief unspeakable.

Real is their sympathy; deep too, as deep as their character and sentiments admit. As comforters they are proverbial in a bad sense. Yet one says truly, perhaps out of bitter experience, "Who

that knows what most modern consolation is can prevent a prayer that Job's comforters may be his? They do not call upon him for an hour and invent excuses for the departure which they so anxiously await; they do not write notes to him, and go about their business as if nothing had happened; they do not inflict upon him meaningless commonplaces."¹ It was their misfortune, not altogether their fault, that they had mistaken notions which they deemed it their duty to urge upon him. Job, disappointed by-and-by, did not spare them, and we feel so much for him that we are apt to deny them their due. Yet are we not bound to ask, What friend has had equal proof of our sympathy? Depth of nature; sincerity of friendship; the will to console: let those mock at Job's comforters as wanting here who have travelled two hundred miles over the burning sand to visit a man sunk in disaster, brought to poverty and the gate of death, and sat with him seven days and nights in generous silence.

¹ "Mark Rutherford."

THE FIRST COLLOQUY

VI.

THE CRY FROM THE DEPTH

Job speaks. Chap. iii

While the friends of Job sat beside him that dreary week of silence, each of them was meditating in his own way the sudden calamities which had brought the prosperous emeer to poverty, the strong man to this extremity of miserable disease. Many thoughts came and were dismissed; but always the question returned, Why these disasters, this shadow of dreadful death? And for very compassion and sorrow each kept secret the answer that came and came again and would not be rejected. Meanwhile the silence has weighed upon the sufferer, and the burden of it becomes at length insupportable. He has tried to read their thoughts, to assure himself that grief alone kept them dumb, that when they spoke it would be to cheer him with kindly words, to praise and reinvigorate his faith, to tell him of Divine help that would not fail him in life or death. But as he sees their faces darken into inquiry first and then into suspicion, and reads at

length in averted looks the thought they cannot conceal, when he comprehends that the men he loved and trusted hold him to be a transgressor and under the ban of God, this final disaster of false judgment is overwhelming. The man whom all circumstances appear to condemn, who is bankrupt, solitary, outworn with anxiety and futile efforts to prove his honour, if he have but one to believe in him, is helped to endure and hope. But Job finds human friendship yield like a reed. All the past is swallowed up in one tragical thought that, be a man what he may, there is no refuge for him in the justice of man. Everything is gone that made human society and existence in the world worth caring for. His wife, indeed, believes in his integrity, but values it so little that she would have him cast it away with a taunt against God. His friends, it is plain to see, deny it. He is suffering at God's hand, and they are hardened against him. The iron enters into his soul.

True, it is the shame and torment of his disease that move him to utter his bitter lamentation. Yet the underlying cause of his loss of self-command and of patient confidence in God must not be missed. The disease has made life a physical agony; but he could bear that if still no cloud came between him and the face of God. Now these dark, suspicious looks which meet him every time he lifts his eyes, which he feels resting upon him even when he bows his head in the attempt to pray, make religion seem a mockery. And in pitiful anticipation of the doom to which they are silently driving him, he cries aloud against the life that remains. He has lived in vain. Would he had never been born!

In this first lyrical speech put into the mouth of Job there is an Oriental, hyperbolic strain, suited to the speaker and his circumstances. But we are also made to feel that calamity and dejection have gone near to unhinging his mind. He is not mad, but his language is vehement, almost that of insanity. It would be wrong, therefore, to criticise the words in a matter-of-fact way, and against the spirit of the book to try by the rules of Christian resignation one so tossed and racked, in the very throat of the furnace. This is a pious man, a patient man, who lately said, "Shall we receive joy at the hand of God, and shall we not receive affliction?" He seems to have lost all control of himself and plunges into wild untamed speech filled with anathemas, as one who had never feared God. But he is driven from self-possession. Phantasmal now is all that brave life of his as prince and as father, as a man in honour beloved of the Highest. Did he ever enjoy it? If he did, was it not as in a dream? Was he not rather a deceiver, a vile transgressor? His state befits that. Light and love and life are turned into bitter gall. "I lived," says one distressed like Job, "in a continual, indefinite, pining fear; tremulous, pusillanimous, apprehensive of I knew not what; it seemed as if the heavens and the earth were but boundless jaws of a devouring monster wherein I, palpitating, waited to be devoured.... 'Man is, properly speaking, based upon hope, he has no other possession but hope; this world of his is emphatically the Place of Hope.'" We see Job, "for the present, quite shut out from hope; looking not into the golden orient, but vaguely all round into a dim firmament

pregnant with earthquake and tornado."

The poem may be read calmly. Let us remember that it came not calmly from the pen of the writer, but as the outburst of volcanic feeling from the deep centres of life. It is Job we hear; the language befits his despondency, his position in the drama. But surely it presents to us a real experience of one who, in the hour of Israel's defeat and captivity, had seen his home swept bare, wife and children seized and tortured or borne down in the rush of savage soldiery, while he himself lived on, reduced in one day to awful memories and doubts as the sole consciousness of life. Is not some crisis like this with its irretrievable woes translated for us here into the language of Job's bitter cry? Are we not made witnesses of a tragedy greater even than his?

"What is to become of us," asks Amiel, "when everything leaves us, health, joy, affections, when the sun seems to have lost its warmth, and life is stripped of all charm? Must we either harden or forget? There is but one answer, Keep close to duty, do what you ought, come what may." The mood of these words is not so devout as other passages of the same writer. The advice, however, is often tendered in the name of religion to the life-weary and desolate; and there are circumstances to which it well applies. But a distracting sense of impotence weighed down the life of Job. Duty? He could do nothing. It was impossible to find relief in work; hence the fierceness of his words. Nor can we fail to hear in them a strain of impatience almost of anger: "To the unregenerate Prometheus Vincit of a man, it is ever the

bitterest aggravation of his wretchedness that he is conscious of virtue, that he feels himself the victim not of suffering only, but of injustice. What then? Is the heroic inspiration we name Virtue but some passion, some bubble of the blood?... Thus has the bewildered wanderer to stand, as so many have done, shouting question after question into the sibyl cave of Destiny, and receive no answer but an echo. It is all a grim desert, this once fair world of his."

Job is already asserting to himself the reality of his own virtue, for he resents the suspicion of it. Indeed, with all the mystery of his affliction yet to solve, he can but think that Providence is also casting doubt on him. A keen sense of the favour of God had been his. Now he becomes aware that while he is still the same man who moved about in gladness and power, his life has a different look to others; men and nature conspire against him. His once brave faith—the Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away—is almost overborne. He does not renounce, but he has a struggle to save it. The subtle Divine grace at his heart alone keeps him from bidding farewell to God.

The outburst of Job's speech falls into three lyrical strophes, the first ending at the tenth verse, the second at the nineteenth, the third closing with the chapter.

I. "Job opened his mouth and cursed his day." In a kind of wild impossible revision of providence and reopening of questions long settled, he assumes the right of heaping denunciations on

the day of his birth. He is so fallen, so distraught, and the end of his existence appears to have come in such profound disaster, the face of God as well as of man frowning on him, that he turns savagely on the only fact left to strike at,—his birth into the world. But the whole strain is imaginative. His revolt is unreason, not impiety either against God or his parents. He does not lose the instinct of a good man, one who keeps in mind the love of father and mother and the intention of the Almighty whom he still reveres. Life is an act of God: he would not have it marred again by infelicity like his own. So the day as an ideal factor in history or cause of existence is given up to chaos.

"That day, there! Darkness be it.
Seek it not the High God from above;
And no light stream on it.
Darkness and the nether gloom reclaim it.
Encamp over it the clouds;
Scare it blacknesses of the day."

The idea is, Let the day of my birth be got rid of, so that no other come into being on such a day; let God pass from it—then He will not give life on that day. Mingled in this is the old world notion of days having meanings and powers of their own. This day had proved malign, terribly bad. It was already a chaotic day, not fit for a man's birth. Let every natural power of storm and eclipse draw it back to the void. The night too, as part of the day, comes under imprecation.

"That night, there! Darkness seize it,
Joy have it none among the days of the year,
Nor come into the numbering of months.
See! That night, be it barren;
No song-voice come to it:
Ban it, the cursers of day
Skilful to stir up leviathan.
Dark be the stars of its twilight,
May it long for the light—find none,
Nor see the eyelids of dawn."

The vividness here is from superstition, fancies of past generations, old dreams of a child race. Foreign they would be to the mind of Job in his strength; but in great disaster the thoughts are apt to fall back on these levels of ignorance and dim efforts to explain, omens and powers intangible. It is quite easy to follow Job in this relapse, half wilful, half for easing of his bosom. Throughout Arabia, ChaldÃa, and India went a belief in evil powers that might be invoked to make a particular day one of misfortune. The leviathan is the dragon which was thought to cause eclipses by twining its black coils about the sun and moon. These vague undertones of belief ran back probably to myths of the sky and the storm, and Job ordinarily must have scorned them. Now, for the time, he chooses to make them serve his need of stormy utterance. If any who hear him really believe in magicians and their spells, they are welcome to gather through

that belief a sense of his condition; or if they choose to feel pious horror, they may be shocked. He flings out maledictions, knowing in his heart that they are vain words.

Is it not something strange that the happy past is here entirely forgotten? Why has Job nothing to say of the days that shone brightly upon him? Have they no weight in the balance against pain and grief?

"The tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else
Save what beats there."

His mind is certainly clouded; for it is not vain to say that piety preserves the thought of what God once gave, and Job had himself spoken of it when his disease was young. At this point he is an example of what man is when he allows the water-floods to overflow him and the sad present to extinguish a brighter past. The sense of a wasted life is upon him, because he does not yet understand what the saving of life is. To be kind to others and to be happy in one's own kindness is not for man so great a benefit, so high a use of life, as to suffer with others and for them. What were the life of our Lord on earth and His death but a revelation to man of the secret he had never grasped and still but half approves? The Book of Job, a long, yearning cry out of the night, shows how the world needed Christ to shed His Divine light upon all our experiences and unite them in a religion of sacrifice and triumph. The book moves toward that reconciliation which only

the Christ can achieve. As yet, looking at the sufferer here, we see that the light of the future has not dawned upon him. Only when he is brought to bay by the falsehoods of man, in the absolute need of his soul, will he boldly anticipate the redemption and fling himself for refuge on a justifying God.

II. In the second strophe cursing is exchanged for wailing, fruitless reproach of a long past day for a touching chant in praise of the grave. If his birth had to be, why could he not have passed at once into the shades? The lament, though not so passionate, is full of tragic emotion. The phrases of it have been woven into a modern hymn and used to express what Christians may feel; but they are pagan in tone, and meant by the writer to embody the unhopeful thought of the race. Here is no outlook beyond the inanition of death, the oblivion and silence of the tomb. It is not the extreme of unfaith, but rather of weakness and misery.

"Wherefore hastened the knees to meet me,
And why the breasts that I should suck?
For then, having sunk down, would I repose,
Fallen asleep there would be rest for me.
With kings and councillors of the earth
Who built them solitary piles;
Or with princes who had gold,
Who filled their houses with silver;
Or as a hidden abortion I had not been,
As infants who never saw light.
There the wicked cease from raging,

And there the outworn rest.
Together the prisoners are at ease,
Not hearing the call of the task-master.
Small and great are there the same,
The slave set free from his lord."

It is beautiful poetry, and the images have a singular charm for the dejected mind. The chief point, however, for us to notice is the absence of any thought of judgment. In the dim under-world, hid as beneath heavy clouds, power and energy are not. Existence has fallen to so low an ebb that it scarcely matters whether men were good or bad in this life, nor is it needful to separate them. For the tyrant can do no more harm to the captive, nor the robber to his victim. The astute councillor is no better than the slave. It is a kind of existence below the level of moral judgment, below the level either of fear or joy. From the peacefulness of this region none are excluded; as there will be no strength to do good there will be none to do evil. "The small and great are there the same." The stillness and calm of the dead body deceive the mind, willing in its wretchedness to be deceived.

When the writer put this chant into the mouth of Job, he had in memory the pyramids of Egypt and tombs, like those of Petra, carved in the lonely hills. The contrast is thus made picturesque between the state of Job lying in loathsome disease and the lot of those who are gathered to the mighty dead. For whether the rich are buried in their stately sepulchres, or the body of a slave is hastily covered with desert sand, all enter

into one painless repose. The whole purpose of the passage is to mark the extremity of hopelessness, the mind revelling in images of its own decay. We are not meant to rest in that love of death from which Job vainly seeks comfort. On the contrary, we are to see him by-and-by roused to interest in life and its issues. This is no halting-place in the poem, as it often is in human thought. A great problem of Divine righteousness hangs unsolved. With the death of the prisoner and the down-trodden slave whose worn-out body is left a prey to the vulture—with the death of the tyrant whose evil pride has built a stately tomb for his remains—all is not ended. Peace has not come. Rather has the unravelling of the tangle to begin. The All-righteous has to make His inquisition and deal out the justice of eternity. Modern poetry, however, often repeats in its own way the old-world dream, mistaking the silence and composure of the dead face for a spiritual deliverance:—

"The aching craze to live ends, and life glides
Lifeless—to nameless quiet, nameless joy.
Blessed Nirvana, sinless, stirless rest,
That change which never changes."

To Christianity this idea is utterly foreign, yet it mingles with some religious teaching, and is often to be found in the weaker sorts of religious fiction and verse.

III. The last portion of Job's address begins with a note of inquiry. He strikes into eager questioning of heaven and earth

regarding his state. What is he kept alive for? He pursues death with his longing as one goes into the mountains to seek treasure. And again, his way is hid; he has no future. God hath hedged him in on this side by losses, on that by grief; behind a past mocks him, before is a shape which he follows and yet dreads.

"Wherefore gives He light to wretched men
Life to the bitter in soul?
Who long for death but no!
Search for it more than for treasures."

It is indeed a horrible condition, this of the baffled mind to which nothing remains but its own gnawing thought that finds neither reason of being nor end of turmoil, that can neither cease to question nor find answer to inquiries that rack the spirit. There is energy enough, life enough to feel life a terror, and no more; not enough for any mastery even of stoical resolve. The power of self-consciousness seems to be the last injury, a Nessus-shirt, the gift of a strange hate. "The real agony is the silence, the ignorance of the why and the wherefore, the Sphinx-like imperturbability which meets his prayers." This struggle for a light that will not come has been expressed by Matthew Arnold in his "Empedocles on Etna," a poem which may in some respects be named a modern version of Job:—

"This heart will glow no more; thou art
A living man no more, Empedocles!"

Nothing but a devouring flame of thought—
But a naked eternally restless mind....
To the elements it came from
Everything will return—
Our bodies to earth,
Our blood to water,
Heat to fire,
Breath to air.
They were well born,
They will be well entombed—
But mind, but thought—
Where will they find their parent element?
What will receive them, who will call them home?
But we shall still be in them and they in us....
And we shall be unsatisfied as now;
And we shall feel the agony of thirst,
The ineffable longing for the life of life,
Baffled for ever."

Thought yields no result; the outer universe is dumb and impenetrable. Still Job would revive if a battle for righteousness offered itself to him. He has never had to fight for God or for his own faith. When the trumpet call is heard he will respond; but he is not yet aware of hearing it.

The closing verses have presented considerable difficulty to interpreters, who on the one hand shrink from the supposition that Job is going back on his past life of prosperity and finding there the origin of his fear, and on the other hand see the danger

of leaving so significant a passage without definite meaning. The Revised Version puts all the verbs of the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth verses into the present tense, and Dr. A. B. Davidson thinks translation into the past tense would give a meaning "contrary to the idea of the poem." Now, a considerable interval had already elapsed from the time of Job's calamities, even from the beginning of his illness, quite long enough to allow the growth of anxiety and fear as to the judgment of the world. Job was not ignorant of the caprice and hardness of men. He knew how calamity was interpreted; he knew that many who once bowed to his greatness already heaped scorn upon his fall. May not his fear have been that his friends from beyond the desert would furnish the last and in some respects most cutting of his sorrows?

"I have feared a fear; it has come upon me,
And that which I dread has come to me.
I have not been at ease, nor quiet, nor have I had rest;
Yet trouble has come."

In his brooding soul, those seven days and nights, fear has deepened into certainty. He is a man despised. Even for those three his circumstances have proved too much. Did he imagine for a moment that their coming might relieve the pressure of his lot and open a way to the recovery of his place among men? The trouble is deeper than ever; they have stirred a tempest in his breast.

Note that in his whole agony Job makes no motion towards

suicide. Arnold's Empedocles cries against life, flings out his questions to a dumb universe, and then plunges into the crater of Etna. Here, as at other points, the inspiration of the author of our book strikes clear between stoicism and pessimism, defiance of the world to do its worst and confession that the struggle is too terrible. The deep sense of all that is tragic in life, and, with this, the firm persuasion that nothing is appointed to man but what he is able to bear, together make the clear Bible note. It may seem that Job's ejaculations differ little from the cry out of the "City of Dreadful Night,"

"Weary of erring in this desert, Life,
Weary of hoping hopes for ever vain,
Weary of struggling in all sterile strife,
Weary of thought which maketh nothing plain,
I close my eyes and calm my panting breath
And pray to thee, O ever quiet Death,
To come and soothe away my bitter pain."

But the writer of the book knows what is in hand. He has to show how far faith may be pressed down and bent by the sore burdens of life without breaking. He has to give us the sense of a soul in the uttermost depth, that we may understand the sublime argument which follows, know its importance, and find our own tragedy exhibited, our own need met, the personal and the universal marching together to an issue. Suicide is no issue for a life, any more than universal cataclysm for the evolution of a

world. Despair is no refuge. The inspired writer here sees so far, so clearly, that to mention suicide would be absurd. The struggle of life cannot be renounced. So much he knows by a spiritual instinct which anticipates the wisdom of later times. Were this book a simple record of fact, we have Job in a position far more trying than that of Saul after his defeat on Gilboa; but it is an ideal prophetic writing, a Divine poem, and the faith it is designed to commend saves the man from interfering by any deed of his with the will of God.

We are prepared for the vehement controversy that follows and the sustained appeal of the sufferer to that Power which has laid upon him such a weight of agony. When he breaks into passionate cries and seems to be falling away from all trust, we do not despair of him nor of the cause he represents. The intensity with which he longs for death is actually a sign and measure of the strong life that throbs within him, which yet will be led out into light and freedom and come to peace as it were in the very clash of revolt.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.