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THE PROBLEM OF PAIN

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A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF JOB

BY

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PREFACE

NOTHING that any one has ever said or will ever say about the book of Job can remotely approach the titanic impression made by the book itself. It is therefore all the more to be regretted that it is so little known. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." Many people have heard no more about Job than that, and do not even know enough of the book to know that it is his endurance rather than his patience that stamps him as the hero that he is, and that is commended in the well-known words of St. James (v.11). It is therefore at least as important to present the book as to discuss it. For this reason I have woven the translation continuously through the discussion, so that neither reader nor discussion can ever wander very far from the book itself.

The glory of the book could not be altogether extinguished even by a feeble prose translation, and in many places it is quite clearly reflected from the noble prose of the Authorized Version. But I have ventured to present it, or most of it, in a fresh translation, which attempts to do what little justice is possible to the rhythmical and sonorous cadences of the original. I hope soon to publish a continuous translation of the book. The text bristles with difficulties and obscurities of every kind—many of them probably for ever insoluble. It is not the

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function of this volume to discuss critical and textual questions ; in the translation I have adopted such emendations as seemed to me most reasonable.

Probably the poetical part of the book would lend itself to dramatic representation as readily, say, as *Everyman* ; but without discussing the question whether it is technically a drama or not, no one can deny that it is alive with dramatic quality. Partly to bring this out, and partly to articulate the progress of its thought, I have given to its clearly marked divisions the name of Acts, instead of the more familiar " Cycles of Speeches."

The book of Job is astonishingly modern. It may be true, as Cheyne has said, ¹ that " more than any other book in the Hebrew canon it needs bringing near to the modern reader " ; nevertheless, Job's questions are ours—the meaning of life, the purpose of pain, the nature of religion, the seat of authority, etc. This volume, however, does not discuss the general problem of pain : it simply seeks to interpret this marvellously penetrating discussion of it from a far-off day, when the world, though younger, was already perplexed and sorrowful.

There is nothing here about the War. Yet it is perhaps not too much to hope that this noble ancient discussion will shed some light on the sorrows which have perplexed the faith of some and broken the hearts of many.

JOHN E. McFADYEN.

¹ *Job and Solomon*, p. 107.

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THE PROLOGUE : A GOOD MAN
CRUSHED (JOB i. AND ii.)

THE PROLOGUE

RUINED FORTUNES (Job i.)

THE story opens with a simple quiet dignity, which raises no suspicion of the storm that is so soon to break. "In the land of Uz there was a man called Job—a man blameless and upright, who feared God and shunned evil." It is the story of an innocent sufferer; but, already in his opening words, the large and generous outlook of the writer is evident: for, Jew though he be himself, his hero is a foreigner. As if to deliver us at the very outset from all little views of life and its problems, he brings up upon his stage a blameless and God-fearing man from *the land of Uz*. Where Uz was we know not—enough that it was not Judæa; but if, as seems most probable, it was in Edom, the marvel is all the greater that this good and saintly man belonged not only to a foreign, but to a hostile and hated people. For it was Edomites who had said of Jerusalem in the day of her anguish, "Lay her bare, lay her bare, right down to her very foundation" (Ps. cxxxvii. 7); and it was of Edom that a Hebrew prophet, possibly contemporary, or nearly so, with the writer of Job, speaking in the name of Jehovah, declared, "Jacob I loved, but Esau (i.e., Edom) I hated" (Mal. i. 2f). In this man therefore we see something of the breadth of the mind of Jesus, who made the kind hero of his famous parable a Samaritan and not a Jew. By

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setting his story beyond the limits of Israel, he further reminds us that just as there are good men beyond her borders—in Uz or anywhere—so the problem with which he is about to wrestle is a universal problem, not Israel's any more than ours. The story makes its grand appeal “ wherever on the wide earth tears are shed and hearts are broken.”

The goodness of Job is drawn in simple but firm outlines. He is not perfect—no man is ; and more than once in the course of the argument, Job frankly acknowledges his sins ; but he is a man of *blameless* life, rooted in the *fear of God*. The unanimous voice of the Old Testament, heard in the Decalogue, in the prophets, everywhere, is that no morality is secure, or in the true sense even possible, which is not rooted in religion : the good man of the prophets is he who rests an active life of justice and mercy upon a humble walk with God (cf. Mic. vi. 8). And such was Job. His was not merely the negative morality of “ avoiding evil.” The positive beauty and eager generosity of his character we shall see displayed when he comes to make his great defence in chapters xxix.-xxxii. against the cruel insinuations and charges of his friends ; and we need not here anticipate, especially as the opening incidents of the story reveal the fine quality of his inner and outer life. But it is of the utmost importance for our appreciation of the later developments of the drama to bear steadily in mind this tribute deliberately paid in the opening verses to his unimpeachable integrity and piety. Job will later say violent and bitter things, which may astonish us as profoundly

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as they exasperated his friends ; but we dare not forget that he is and remains *a man blameless and upright, fearing God and shunning evil.*

Now it is the all but universal teaching of the Old Testament that men and nations of this moral and religious quality are honoured with material rewards. The earth was the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, and the Judge of all the earth was implicitly trusted to do right : which, in one of its aspects, meant to give men according to their deserts—goods to the good and evils to the evil. This is the view of Deuteronomy (cf. ch. xxviii.) and of Proverbs, it is the view of Job's friends who had been trained in the orthodoxy of Deuteronomy, it is—at least to begin with—the view of Job himself. Accordingly, it is natural that to so good a man “there were born seven sons and three daughters”—for a large family was a peculiarly convincing mark of the divine favour (Ps. cxxvii. 3-5)—and that “he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses, and a vast train of servants, so that he was the richest man in all the East.” These facts of his prosperity are not additional to his piety : they are the consequence and the reward of it—stable, so long as his piety remained stable. For the good man not only may, but must, fare well. So said orthodoxy.

We are next introduced to a happy family scene. “Now his sons used to hold feasts day about, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.” But this perpetual round of gaiety was not without its perils, and Job—whom

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we may think of as a man past middle life, as he has grown up sons with houses of their own—is fearful lest his happy children may be tempted to forget or ignore or defy the claims of religion. So “when the cycle of feasts was over, Job used to send for them, and prepare them for worship, rising early and offering burnt-offerings for them all.” May we detect in this any reflection of the criticism which seldom fails to be meted to the rising generation by their soberer elders? However that may be, it is plain that Job is a man of the most scrupulous piety. Like a good father who bears upon his conscience the burden of his children’s welfare, he individualizes them: not content with a single offering for all, he makes an offering for each. He is priest of his family not in name only, but in deed and in truth. He knows how easy it is for the young and light-hearted to go astray, especially when in jovial mood, and to trespass the bounds of religious decorum; and he will take no risks where his children are concerned, “for,” he said,

“Perchance my children have sinned
And cursed God in their heart.”

He does not know for certain, but *perhaps* they have; and that is enough. Behind the outward rite we see Job’s deep and earnest anxiety for the honour of his God and the spiritual welfare of his children, even after they are grown up and have homes of their own. Geniality and religion reigned in this ancient home. Of scrupulous piety and integrity, happy in his home and possessions—such was Job.

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From these happy family festivals of merry sons and daughters with their anxious and reverent father, we are swiftly transported to another scene,—this time in the world above, where “on a certain day the heavenly Beings came to present themselves before Jehovah, and among them came Satan” (more strictly, *the* Satan, or Adversary) ; for he too is one of the supernatural Beings who form the council of Jehovah, and perform the several tasks allotted to them. “Then Jehovah asked Satan where he had come from, and Satan answered Jehovah thus, ‘From ranging the earth and from walking up and down it.’” Satan, as some one has said, is the vagabond of the heavenly host: he makes it his business to go up and down the world, spying upon men, peering with sinister eyes into their motives, and throwing doubt upon their integrity. “Then Jehovah said unto Satan,

‘Hast thou noted my servant Job,
That on earth there is none like him—
A man blameless and upright,
Who fears God and shuns evil ? ’ ’

Here is praise indeed. The generous testimony given in the introduction to the nobility of Job is here confirmed upon the lips of Jehovah Himself in words which deliberately repeat the former statement, as if to suggest that heaven and earth, God and man, are alike agreed about the integrity and piety of Job. Nay, Jehovah goes even further than this: in calling him by the rare and honourable title *My servant*, He lifts him to a place of unique distinction and sets him beside those few but mighty servants who

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greatly interpret or accomplish His will. He is proud of His servant, He is sure of his inflexible loyalty, and He is not afraid to expose him to the scrutiny of the celestial Cynic. In view of the terrific blows which are so soon to smite Job's earthly happiness into dust and ashes, it is of the utmost importance to note that the initiative comes from Jehovah : it is He and not Satan who throws down the challenge. Perhaps the writer is here suggesting that human experience, and not least misfortune, may have its origin in some thought of God—it may even be in a thought which does the highest honour to the man who suffers. He suffers as *My servant*, who can be trusted with a cross.

To Jehovah's proud question, Satan made answer :

“ But is it for nothing that Job fears God ?
Hast Thou not Thyself fenced him and his house,
And all he possesses on every side ?
But put forth Thy hand and touch all he possesses,
And assuredly then to Thy face he will curse Thee.”

The problem of the book, on one of its sides, is succinctly stated in the very first words of Satan, *Is it for nothing that Job fears God ?* or, in modern language, Is there such a thing as disinterested religion ; or, at any rate, a religion whose only interest is God Himself ? In his wanderings across the world, Satan has apparently seen hypocrites enough to make him more than sceptical of the possibility of a religion which cost, but which did not pay. When it ceased to pay, it vanished—that was his simple theory, founded on a vast array of facts to which he could not believe that Job would

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prove any exception. The earthly cynic, like the heavenly, who is but his counterpart, is often flagrantly wrong in his estimate of character. Job was good—Satan freely admitted—but it was worth his while. Anyone might well be good on those terms: for his substance abounded in the land, and “hast Thou not Thyself fenced him and his house, and all he possesses on every side?” so that neither thief nor beast could break through or steal. His religion has never been put to the test. “Put forth Thy hand and touch all he possesses”: Satan could not conceive of a man who had a life beyond his possessions, a life which no blow could shatter. He imagined that, when the gift was withdrawn, the sufferer would recoil from the Giver with a curse; because he did not know that there were men—doubtless there are not many, and cynical eyes cannot see any—to whom the Giver is infinitely more precious than the gift. Thus, in casting doubt upon the sincerity of Job, Satan was also implicitly denying the loveliness of God: a man might love God for what He gave, but not conceivably for what He was. Thus God was on His trial, no less than Job. Each believes in the other; but both will be revealed for the shams that they are, when put to the test of fire. “Strip the man,” says Satan in effect, “of all that he *has*—*all* of it—and then we shall see what he *is*.” It is a terrible test, but Jehovah is not afraid: if His servant trusts Him, no less does He trust His servant. So “Jehovah said to Satan:

‘See! all he possesses is in thy power;
But lay not thy hand on the man himself.’”

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His health and his life were to be spared. "Then forth went Satan from the presence of Jehovah," to tear with cruel fingers the coverings from the innocent Job and to reveal the man in his essential quality; and we may suppose the heavenly council looking down, with eyes of strained and eager interest, while the terrible test goes on. The departure of Satan upon his dark errand recalls the departure of another upon an errand darker still. "Judas, having received the sop, went immediately out: and it was night"—night in the world and in his heart.

This fateful council in the sky makes a fine foil to the happy family scene below, and completely explains its swift and sorrowful transformation. For no sooner had Satan departed than the blows—directed by his evil genius—which were to shatter the earthly fortunes of Job, began to fall fast and furious. "Now on a certain day, as his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of their eldest brother, suddenly a messenger appeared before Job with the tidings:

'The oxen were hard at the plough,
And the asses were feeding beside them,
When Sabeans fell upon them and seized them:
The servants they slew with the sword—
Only I alone am escaped to tell thee.'

While *he* was still speaking, another came and said:

'The fire of God has fallen from heaven,
And burnt to a cinder the sheep and the servants—
Only I alone am escaped to tell thee.'

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While *he* was still speaking, another came and said :

‘ Chaldeans, formed into three bands,
Made a raid on the camels and seized them.
The servants they slew with the sword—
Only I alone am escaped to tell thee.’

While *he* was still speaking, another came and said :

‘ Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking
In the house of their eldest brother :
On a sudden a mighty wind
From the other side of the desert
Came and smote the four sides of the house,
That it fell on the young folk and killed them—
Only I alone am escaped to tell thee.’ ”

There is a certain breathlessness about the narrative which describes the cruel impetuosity of Satan’s assault upon the fortunes of Job, and the unrelenting thoroughness with which their overthrow was accomplished. “ While *he* was yet speaking, another came and said . . . ” Scarcely had one blow fallen, when another and more terrible is delivered. Satan is determined to strip Job without warning, without mercy, and without delay, of all that makes it worth his while to be good ; and, to ensure his ruin, the forces alike of heaven and earth are summoned—not only the robber tribes of the desert, but the very lightning, *the fire of God from heaven*, and the mighty rushing wind that comes up from the desert. These calamities may be natural in their kind, but they are supernatural in their intensity and in the rapidity of their succession : for was there ever lightning that consumed seven thousand sheep at one stroke ? It seemed as if the powers of the universe were leagued against Job, to tear from him not only all

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that he had, but all that he loved : for those happy sons and daughters, whom last we saw feasting in their elder brother's house, are now lying dead among its ruins. And the irony of it all is that this should have happened at the beginning of one of the cycles of the feasts, that is, just after Job had solemnly and scrupulously sought to purge his household from every shadow of guilt. But now, despite his faithfulness, all that was his is gone—oxen, asses, sheep, camels, servants, sons, daughters, all but his wife and the four servants who came with their tales of horror—vanished in one brief day. Verily, as another Hebrew poet wrote :

“It is but as a vapour that every man stands,
It is but in mere semblance man walks to and fro.”

(Ps. xxxix. 5f.)

Satan has had a free hand, and he has made the most unscrupulous use of the terrifying resources at his disposal. His test has lacked nothing of rigour ; it is his own test, applied in his own way. How does Job stand it ? At once the breathless narrative becomes calm, serene and dignified, as if to suggest by its very form the steadiness of this great soul against which the furious storm had hurled itself in vain. “ Then Job rose and rent his robe ; and, after shaving his head, he fell prostrate on the ground.” Job is not a Stoic : he is not unmoved, as who could be that in one short hour had lost all his beloved children ? He is wounded to the very heart of him, and he shows all the signs of Oriental mourning. But we are especially concerned with what he will say, for has not Satan insinuated that

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his first word would be a curse? Celestial eyes are watching, and celestial ears are listening, and this is what he says:

“ Naked came I from my mother’s womb,
And naked thither must I return:
Jehovah hath given, Jehovah hath taken;
The name of Jehovah for ever be blessed.”

It is infinitely noble. Job came to the earth with nothing, and he is content to leave it with nothing. The things that had crowded his life with interest and pleasure, and the children who had filled his home with glee, were strictly not his own; they were gifts—gifts from *the Lord*, and the Lord who gave has the right to take. See how this man’s whole life, all that he once enjoyed and all that he now is suffering, is overshadowed from end to end with a sense of the presence of God. Calamity might rob him of his possessions and his children, but it could not rob him of his God. The storm that rushed up from the wilderness might shatter the house of festivity, but it could not shatter Job. He stood firm, for he had built his life upon the everlasting Rock. With fine literary skill the writer reserves the crucial word for the last. “ The name of Jehovah be —,” and breathlessly we wait for the word which Satan had maintained and hoped would be “cursed;” but the mighty Satan, with those terrible resources of fire and storm at his disposal, had met his match in Job. “ The name of Jehovah be *blessed*.” So Satan is foiled, affronted before gods and men. Job had stood the test and Job’s God too; for He was worthy for whom Job should suffer this. “ In

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all this Job committed no sin, nor did he charge God with unseemly dealing."

How suggestive is all this! We learn, for one thing—and the writer's contemporaries had need of the lesson—that a good man, the best man in all the earth, one " blameless and upright, fearing God and shunning evil," could be hurled to the depths of sorrow and loss for no sin of his own—and in this the story is a fine preparation for Christianity; and we see, for another thing, how a good man behaves in such an hour. He bows humbly to the ground before the great Power, the great Person, who is above and behind and through all his experience; but his attitude is not merely resignation, it is praise. He can *bless* the unseen Hand that smote him, for he knows that it is God's. Nay, we say, but is it not Satan's? Job, of course, could not know this; but does not the story remind us that it was in the last analysis God who, fearlessly confiding in the loyalty of His servant, and for high reasons of His own, delivered Job over for a season to the Arch-sceptic and Tormentor?

Now all this is the more wonderful, when we consider that Job had been trained in the school which connected piety indissolubly with prosperity, and no one could have been more surprised than he at the grievous things which had befallen. The blow was all the more terrible that it struck at the faith by which Job lived. He is utterly alone: not only without a child to comfort him, but without an explanation or theory to reconcile him to his misery. Nay, he is left among the ruins of his happiness with

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a series of facts which, on his old theory of life, would seem—as they seemed to his friends—to point infallibly to some heinous hidden sin. But he can bear the loneliness, for he is alone with God: that portion not Satan himself could take from him.

The writer of this wonderful story was too great a man to suppose that he had any absolutely complete and satisfactory solution to offer of the mysterious ways of God: his whole book is a mighty protest against the inadequacy of contemporary theories of life and suffering. But there are brilliant flashes of insight which momentarily light up the mystery, and one or two of the most brilliant are in this opening chapter of the story. Why do good men suffer? One answer to that is this: that through their suffering a divine purpose—we do not yet say what purpose, but some purpose—is being worked out. To the thinking heart life would be intolerable and history a chaos, were their seeming confusions not redeemed and illuminated by a sense of purpose. This is the faith that reconciles us to the mystery, and this is the faith which shines through the story of the council in heaven. The blows that shatter to atoms the happiness of Job are not dealt by chance or accident or any random hand: they fall by permission. They come, because “Jehovah had said to Satan, ‘Hast thou considered my servant Job?’” That is, the sorrows below find their explanation in the world above.

Extraordinarily suggestive is the juxtaposition of these two scenes—the council of the gods in the world above, and the calamities that hurl themselves on

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Job in the world below. Both scenes must come into the picture, if the world below is to be approximately understood, or even tolerated. Something was said or purposed *there*, and something happens *here*. A scene in nature or in life without a sky is meaningless. If such a thing could be, it would drive men to despair ; but if such a thing cannot be, then there is hope and a gospel. "Heaven over-arches you and me" : to believe that makes all the difference. The ancient writer uses the beliefs of his own time or perhaps an older time to enforce, or at any rate, to suggest, his meaning ; but behind this ancient and long superseded conception of a council of gods in the heavens is the eternal truth that above us is One who cares for us, One whose plan requires and comprehends our little lives, One who has His purposes for us, One without whose knowledge and permission nothing that happens to us can happen. Job was ignorant of the details, as we are ; but his noble words show that he believed, as we may, in the Presence and the Purpose. Job did not know of Satan ; it would have been easier for him to say what he said had he known. But the presence of God in his life, and some more or less consciously apprehended sense of His purpose, kept him steady.

Can we define this purpose more closely ? Whether we can or not, it is, as we see, comforting and steadyng to believe it. But certain aspects of the purpose are subtly suggested by the story itself. It is, for example, a kindly purpose ; it is the purpose of a God who trusts us, who wishes us well, and expects us, so to speak, to play up to it. In the

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mind of God there is not a thought of punishing Job. "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents ; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Suffering is a privilege He confers upon Job, in order to defeat for ever the cynical view, urged by Satan, that man has no interest higher than his own profit, and that the only religion he can be persuaded to embrace is one that ministers to his comfort or prosperity. Suffering, from this point of view, is a test of the quality of a man's religion : if there is a point at which it will cease to stand the strain, then it is indeed the hollow thing which Satan maintained it to be. Religion, to be worth anything, must be worth everything : it is only worth while, if it enables a man to endure to the end. But if it does this, not only is the man glorified, but God no less, seeing that it is through faith in Him and His purpose that the man endures. Beyond the ruins of his earthly happiness and hope he sees a kindly Face, and he takes heart for the lonely days to come, which cannot fail to be cheered by the great Companion. As Paul Volz has finely said, "There breathes in the story a glorious optimism—faith in the victory of the good God and the good man. In this human life there is enacted the conflict between the good and the evil, and the good abides."

RUINED HEALTH (Job ii.)

Satan has been defeated ; but, though perplexed, he is not in despair. He simply assumes that the test to which he had subjected the piety of Job was not terrible enough ; and so, with cool effrontery and high hopes, he plans to return to the assault the very next time “ the heavenly Beings came to present themselves before Jehovah. Then Jehovah asked Satan where he had come from, and Satan answered Jehovah thus, ‘ From ranging the earth and from walking up and down it.’ Then Jehovah said to Satan :

‘ Hast thou noted my servant Job,
That on earth there is none like him—
A man blameless and upright,
Who fears God and shuns evil ? ’ ’

The scenery, the speaker, the statements, the questions, the answers, are precisely the same as in the first supernatural council. It is the fashion of ancient narratives to indulge in repetition, but it is impossible to miss in Jehovah’s second challenge to Satan the undertone of triumphant irony. He speaks as if nothing had happened, though they both know very well that much has happened : Satan’s cynicism has been utterly discredited, and Jehovah’s daring confidence in His loyal servant has been triumphantly justified. We can fancy Satan wincing under the

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innuendo, the more so as Jehovah, now pointedly reminding him of Job's immovable allegiance, goes on : " And still"—despite the bitter and unmerited sufferings which he owes to thy groundless suspicions and cruelty—

" And still he clings to his honour,:
In vain hast thou set me on to destroy him."

To this Satan made answer :

" Skin for skin—
All a man's goods will he give for his life."

Cynic before and cynic still ! He cannot now deny—for to his discomfiture he has seen it proved—that a man may lose and suffer much and yet retain his religion, but he is still deeply convinced that there is a point at which a strained faith will snap ; and it is one of the innumerable touches illustrative of the writer's insight that the strain which he regards as conceivably capable of snapping an otherwise inflexible faith is the strain of shattered health. The first blow, terrible as it had been, had at least left Job with his life—and nothing is more precious than life. " All that a man has"—his sheep and oxen and camels, yes, and his children too—" he will willingly give for his life " : a truly superficial estimate of human nature, disproved by a thousand noble lives, but thoroughly worthy of your professional cynic. Still, what is life without health ? Shatter that, and the faith will reel. So Satan requests Jehovah to

" Put forth Thy hand, touch his bone and his flesh,
And assuredly then to Thy face he will curse Thee."

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To slay him outright would, of course, have invalidated the whole test. "Whereupon Jehovah said to Satan :

' See ! he is in thy power,
But take heed that thou spare his life.'

Then forth Satan went from the presence of Jehovah" ; and, as before, at his departure the cruel tragedy recommences, only this time in fiercer form ; for "he smote Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head with boils." Again, as before, the calamity is natural—it is the awful scourge of leprosy : but again, as before, it is supernatural in its swiftness and intensity. Not gradually as upon other men, but instantly it falls upon Job ; and it seizes not upon one part of his body only, but upon all "from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head ;" and the eruptions are so grievous that, as he sat solitary and apart upon the ash-heap, outside the village, "he took a potsherd to scratch with," in order to ease him of his pain.

At this point his wife appears, whom the narrative has hitherto ignored ; and she said to him,

" Art thou clinging still to thine honour ?
Curse God and die."

As Edward Caird¹ has said, there are those who "think, like Job's wife, that the difficulties which try our faith are a sufficient reason for renouncing it altogether." Her first words are a witness to the indomitable integrity of Job's faith ; but if this is what it comes to, better dead : a curse from his lips—

¹ *Lay Sermons*, p. 298.

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this was what Satan had planned for and hoped for, and the wife unconsciously seconds the Tempter—a curse from his lips would evoke an avenging stroke from the God he had cursed, and so bring his intolerable misery to an end.

The instinctive assimilation of the woman's mind to the purpose of the Tempter suggestively recalls the story of Eve and the serpent, and is in line with some aspects of the Old Testament view of woman. It was Eve who ruined Adam, it was Sarah who laughed incredulously at the promise which Abraham was ready to believe, it was Lot's wife who turned back for a last look at the wicked Sodom. These facts have tempted the commentators into much humorous but rather unworthy cynicism. Cheyne,¹ for example, remarks that "his wife, by a touch of quiet humour, is spared" in the catastrophes which overthrew his family; and in the same strain Dillon²—the Adversary "spares his spouse, lest misery should harbour any possibilities unrealised." Far more worthy, and essentially far more penetrating, is Louise Houghton's comment³ that "the only woe which is to her intolerable is that in which she herself has no share." It takes a woman to understand a woman. But Job's wife serves the purpose of showing how ordinary people would act under a strain so awful, and her wild impulsive outburst throws into the bolder relief the

¹ *Job and Solomon*, p. 14.

² *The Sceptics of the Old Testament*, p. 73.

³ *Hebrew Life and Thought*, p. 267.

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marvellous patience of Job, who gently chides her in these immortal words :

“ Must thou too speak
As foolish women speak ?
We accept from God what is good,
Shall we not accept what is evil ? ”

We—he and she : in their happiness they had been together, and in misery they should not be divided. Now, as before, he recognises the great Figure moving behind all life's experience—permitting, bestowing it all ; and the sorrow, he gently maintains, should be as unmurmuringly welcomed as the joy. In the presence of an utterance so noble and a philosophy of life so sublime, it is a peculiarly touching under-statement that “ in all this Job sinned not with his lips.”

Now that the tale of his sufferings is fully told, we are more convinced than ever that a good man may suffer terribly : nay, the best of men may suffer the worst of all—here again the story of Job is a preparation for the story of Jesus. Orthodoxy of course, denied this : but the sheer nobility of Job, of his conduct and of his speech, as he lay there in his lonely misery, not only uncomplaining but reconciled, the victim of a loathsome and incurable disease, daily dying his living death, tempted to blasphemy by the wife he loved, yet retaining his mastery of himself and his devotion to his inscrutable God—this noble man was the living evidence of the inadequacy, not to say the falsehood, of orthodoxy. Already we begin to feel upon our faces the breath of the coming challenge.

The Prologue

But before the storm breaks, the blackness in which Job sits is pierced by a gleam of friendship. Three men, apparently great Edomite sheikhs like himself—Eliphaz older than he, Bildad probably about the same age, and Zophar younger, representing among them the chief aspects of life's experience and the combined wisdom of the contemporary world—came from their various districts to condole with their stricken friend. It was a grave and sorrowful business, they met to discuss it, and they “made a tryst together to condole with him and comfort him. But when they caught a glimpse of him at a distance, they did not recognise him”—so horribly disfigured was he. Like that other more famous Servant, “his visage was marred out of all human likeness.”¹ “Then every man of them wept aloud and tore his robe and scattered dust heavenward”—in token of the intensity of his grief—“upon his head.” Though they did not see the agony of his soul, they saw his misery, and they “sat down beside him upon the ground seven days and nights”—the time one mourns for the dead—“and no one said a word to him,” for they did not know what to say to a sorrow like this, and “they saw that his pain was very great.”

We shall have occasion enough to resent most bitterly, as Job did, many of the things they will say when their tongue is loosened; but we begin with a tribute of respect to the men who travelled far to offer their silent sympathy to their unhappy

¹ Isa. lii. 14.

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friend. "They do not write notes to him and go about their business as if nothing had happened. They are for ever, "as Mark Rutherford has said, "an example of what man once was and ought to be to man."

ACT I

(JOB iii-xiv.)

ACT I

JOB'S LAMENT AND LONGING FOR DEATH (Job iii.)

BEFORE the curtain rises and the great dramatic debate begins, it is well to remind ourselves that this discussion, like so many another, is carried on in ignorance of essential facts. The Prologue has put into our hands the key to the problem which is so hotly and in part fruitlessly debated by Job and his friends. We are in the secret, but they are not. They start from the misery which is before their eyes : they know nothing of the council in heaven to which we have been twice introduced, nothing of the pride God is taking in His servant, nothing of the high and friendly purpose which explains his misery. And therein lies much of the pathos of this discussion, as of many another, that it is conducted in the dark.

But after making every allowance, we are not prepared for the awful words with which Job's first soliloquy is introduced : "Then Job opened his mouth and *cursed*." It falls like a bolt from the blue. Is this the Job on whose lips were but lately the words of resignation and praise ? Has Satan triumphed after all ? Hardly. Job cursed, not indeed his God—Satan shall never have that satisfaction—but *his day*, that is, his birthday. Surprising and shocking as is such a curse from such a man, Job is but following in the footsteps of the great Jeremiah, that other suffering servant, whom

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later Israel delighted to honour. He too, had cursed his birthday in language as vehement, though less picturesque and elaborate (Jer. xx. 14-18).

Now this all but incredible revolution in Job's mood becomes psychologically intelligible, when we consider his intolerable bodily anguish, which the long unbroken silence of his friends had done nothing either to assuage or to explain, and when we further remember that, according to the view of life in which he had been nurtured and which had now had time to reassert itself, he had a right to expect from God some interposition on his behalf, some practical vindication of his innocence, which the contemporary world must otherwise inevitably construe as guilt. His soul no less than his body was quivering with pain. It is therefore no great wonder that the sorrow which he had formerly accepted when it was new, he now resents, and breaks into an imprecation of the day on which he was born. Let us hear his moving words :

“ Perish the day wherein I was born,
And the night which announced that a man-child was there.
Utter darkness let that night be,
Looking for light, but finding none.
May God in the heights above ask not after it,
And may no beam shine forth upon it.
May darkness and gloom claim it for their own,
And may the thick cloud rest upon it.
Black vapours of the day affright it!
And let the thick darkness snatch it away.
May it not be joined to the days of the year,
Or enter into the tale of the months.
As for that night, let it be barren:
May there never ring through it a cry of joy.
Accursed of sorcerers be that day—
Of those that are skilful to stir up Leviathan.

Job's Lament

Dark be the stars of its morning twilight,
And never the eye-lids of Dawn may it see;
Since it shut not the doors of my mother's womb,
And hid not trouble from mine eyes." (iii. 3-10.)

Job treats his birthday as a living thing, which had cruelly ushered him into a life of sorrow; and he prays that every year, as it takes its place afresh among the days, it may be blotted out or hurled back to the primeval darkness out of which it came, so that never again should child be born upon it, to share a fate like his.

The patient Job of the Prologue who had accepted his torture without murmur or question now rises to a mood of challenge. "Why? Wherefore?" (iii., 11, 12, 20). If this is life, then better never to have been born; or, if birth was inevitable, then better that death had swiftly followed—that would have been happiness indeed.

"Why died I not at my birth,
Breathe my last as I came from the womb,
Like a hidden untimely birth,
Like infants that never see light?
Why on the knees was I welcomed
And why were there breasts to suck?"
(iii. 11-16).

The wail involuntarily reminds us of the chorus in *Oedipus Coloneus*: "Not to be born is, past all prizing, best; but, when a man hath seen the light, this is next best by far, that with all speed he should go thither, whence he hath come" (1225 ff). Cruel were the parents who gave him birth and welcomed him; but once born, if only he had had the unspeakable joy of dying at once,

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“ Then had I lain down in quiet,
Then had I slept and had rest—
With kings of the earth and with counsellors,
Who built stately tombs for themselves,
Or with princes rich in gold
Who had filled their houses with silver.
There the wicked cease their tumult,
There the weary are at rest—
Prisoners at ease together,
Deaf to the taskmaster’s voice.
There the small and the great are alike,
And the servant is free from his master.” (iii. 13-19).

The agitated mood in which he began his imprecation, subsides as he contemplates with gentle satisfaction what it must be to dwell in peace among the dead ; but, welcome as death would be, he never for a moment dreams of attaining it by laying violent hands on himself. There is a little, but significant touch in the last line quoted, which reveals Job’s sympathy for the servant, a sympathy which often again finds striking expression, and which shows how kind was the heart that had been so deeply wounded. Indeed, profoundly as Job is absorbed in his own sorrow, he is ever disposed to “ look upon the things of others also,” and especially upon their misery. Out of the depths of his own misery he beholds a great brotherhood of sorrow, a host of wretched and embittered men who long for the death which refuses to come ; and again he asks “ Why ? ” If human life is foredoomed to such sorrow, why should it ever have been at all ? What meaning is there in a world which has nothing better than this to offer to those who are forced to enter it without their knowledge or their will ?

Job's Lament

“Why is light given to the wretched
And life to the bitter in soul ?
Such as long for death, but it comes not,
And dig for it, more than for treasure,
Who would joy o'er a mound of stones,
And rejoice, could they find a grave.
For my bread there comes to me sighing,
My groans are poured out like water.
For the evil I fear overtakes me,
The thing that I dread comes upon me.
Scarce have I ease or quiet
Or rest, when tumult cometh.” (iii. 20-26).

In this opening lament two things are remarkable : first, that Job says not a word about sin. The average Hebrew—Job's friends, for example, and many a psalmist—instinctively connected suffering with sin, believing that suffering pointed as infallibly to sin as sin to suffering. Nothing could more vividly suggest Job's conscious innocence than this tacit refusal to associate in any way his present misery with former sin. And the other point is the rising alienation which this monologue betrays. Job does not curse God : he does not challenge Him—at least directly : he hardly even names Him. But in the question “Why is light given to the wretched and life to the bitter in soul ?” we hear the first rumblings of that thunder of challenge which Job is to hurl at the Almighty. If we read, as we may, “Why giveth *He* light to the wretched ?” the challenge is just a little more audible and daring than in the traditional text. *He*—the unnamed cause of all the world's misery. But the meaning is the same in the end. And if Job is bitter and on the verge of defiance, we dare not forget that he had not

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the sublime consolations of the apostle,¹ who wrote : “ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

¹ Rom. viii. 35, 37.

ELIPHAZ'S COMFORTABLE EXHORTATION AND REVELATION (Job iv. and v.)

The friends, who represent in different ways the orthodoxy of the time, had come to condole with Job; but on their theory of life—that he who does well must fare well, and “ who ever perished, being innocent ? ”—they could not even at the first have regarded him as altogether innocent. And the suspicions which the sight of him must have awakened in them could not fail to be confirmed by his recent words, which were but a veiled challenge of God for creating so miserable a world. Nevertheless Eliphaz, the most venerable and dignified of the three, opens the debate with great courtesy :

“ May we lift up a word unto thee who art fainting ?
For who has the heart to restrain his speech ? ”

At the very outset he pays a tribute, which Job richly deserves, to the fine quality of his character in days gone by, significantly singling out his power to strengthen the despondent, and gently contrasting it with his own despondency now.

“ Behold ! thou hast instructed many,
And strengthened the drooping hands.
Thy words used to set up the stumbling,
And strengthen the tottering knees.
But now that it comes upon thee, thou art faint ;
Now that it reaches thyself, thou art terrified.”
(iv. 3-5).

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Here emerges for the first time a feature which prepares us for the growing exasperation of the debate and the rapidly widening estrangement between Job and his friends: namely, that the words which they sincerely mean to be a comfort act upon him as a provocation. If Job had so nobly strengthened the weak and the weary—so must he have thought within himself—“why has God rewarded me so?” Eliphaz continues:

“Is not thy religion thy confidence
And thy blameless life thy hope?
Bethink thee: has an innocent man ever perished?
Or when have the just been cut off?” (iv. 6f).

In support of this simple proposition, Eliphaz appeals to his own experience:

“It is those who plough wrong and sow trouble
That reap it:—for this I have seen.
By the breath of God they perish,
At the blast of His anger they vanish.” (iv. 8f).

In spite of this appeal, however, the truth rather is that Eliphaz is imposing his theory upon experience, interpreting experience by theory rather than constructing his theory out of the facts of experience. An innocent man cannot perish, he argues: therefore, if he perishes, he cannot have been innocent. It is all very simple, too simple to be true: as some one has said, “Eliphaz solves the problem by voting it out of existence;” and he clinches his argument by a rhetorical simile in which he pictures the sure destruction of the roaring lions—one of those rather heartless irrelevances into which the speakers are apt to fall, because they are thinking more of their

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theory than of the anguish of the innocent man before them.

But Eliphaz has, or he thinks he has, an appeal still more convincing even than the evidence of experience—he grounds his case on a special revelation; and this he presents in a passage which must ever rank as one of the weirdest in literature :

“ Now to me a word came stealing,
And mine ear caught a whisper thereof,
In thoughts from the visions of night,
When deep sleep falleth on men.
Fear came upon me and trembling,
That made my bones all quake.
Then a breath passed over my face,
The hair of my flesh bristled up.
There—it—stood.
I could not tell what it looked like—
This form before mine eyes.
In the silence I heard a voice say.” (iv. 12-16).

But how cold all this, how terrible, how different from the warm personal friendship which Job in later passages, as we shall see, claims to have enjoyed with God. Job's God is a Friend, Eliphaz's a Terror who makes his bones quake and his hair stand on end; whose presence is felt, not in the even tenor of life, but in abnormal experiences and in the dead of night. But let that pass: what does the weird voice say? It says :

“ Can mortal be just before God,
Or a man clean before his Creator?
See! He putteth no trust in His servants,
His angels He chargeth with folly.]
How much more those whose houses are clay,
Whose very foundation is dust,

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Who die before the moth,
Crushed between morning and evening,
Bruised without any regarding it,
Perished for evermore." (iv. 17-20.)

The message is worthy of the vision, both alike are appalling: indeed, the message, besides being appalling, is trivial. It hardly needed all this supernatural horror to justify so commonplace a truth as that no mortal can be just before God or pure in the sight of his Maker. Job himself, who never claims to be perfect, would have been the first to admit the general truth of this statement, but what he cannot and will not admit is that this adequately explains the special incidence of the catastrophes which have ruined his life. Eliphaz's "revelation," besides being appalling and trivial, is cruelly irrelevant. If the very angels, with their finer natures and opportunities, must stand convicted of folly before so stern a God, how much more certainly must men succumb who live in frail tenements of clay! Can a reasonable God expect from poor mortal men a standard of virtue which He does not find even in His holy angels? Here again the words which were meant to explain and comfort can only exasperate. From the God whom Eliphaz so blandly presents Job can only recoil as from an incarnate Injustice. Besides, Eliphaz's argument proves too much. If Job's "sin" consists in nothing worse than in sharing the inevitable frailty of human kind, why should he be singled out to suffer this exceptional and unutterable woe? If man is born to frailty, is that not all the more reason why a God worthy of

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human trust and worship should exercise His compassion? Eliphaz is at the other end of the world from the Psalmist who wrote:

"As a father pities his children,
So the Lord pities them that fear Him;
For well He knoweth our frame,
He remembers that we are dust." (Ps. ciii. 13f).

Eliphaz is vexed at the irritation which so good and wise a man as Job has displayed in his opening speech. He reminds him that no good can come of that: it is really the mark of the fool, and can but draw upon him the deadly stroke of God—the very thing that Job's wife, in her extremity, had desired for him (ii. 9).

"For vexation killeth the fool,
Indignation slayeth the simpleton." (v. 2).

Eliphaz's renewed appeal to experience and his frequent use of the personal pronoun *I* (which is more emphatic in the Hebrew text than in the English: "I have seen") show that he is a person of conscious dignity, who takes himself and his instruction very seriously: and this in turn explains and excuses the later irony of Job.

"I have seen a fool taking root,
But his branch became suddenly rotten.
His children were far from help,
Crushed beyond hope of deliverance.
The hungry eat up their harvest,
And the thirsty draw from their wells.
For not from the dust riseth ruin,
Nor out of the ground springeth trouble;
But man is born unto trouble,
While the sons of flame ¹ soar above it." (v. 3-7).

¹ Possibly the angels. The meaning of the verse is very obscure, and the ordinary translation ("as the sparks fly upward") is only just not impossible.

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All this again is commonplace and irrelevant, as addressed to an innocent man: but in addition, we feel here for the first time—and it will not be the last—how cruel are the wounds that can be dealt, almost half unconsciously, by those who care more for doctrines than for men. For, whether Eliphaz means it or not, his calm allusion to the children “far from help and crushed beyond hope of deliverance” brings before our minds, as it must have brought before Job’s, the vision of his happy sons and daughters lying dead beneath the ruins of their house. Another point of exasperation! Is it any wonder that Job flings his taunt at them, “Miserable comforters are ye all”?

Eliphaz now graciously condescends to show how he would act in Job’s position. “As for me”—again the note of conscious importance—“I would seek unto God”—the very thing that Job had twice done in the noblest imaginable way, when writhing under the terrific blows struck in the Prologue.

“ Were it I, I would seek unto God;
My cause I would bring unto God,
Who doeth great things and unsearchable,
Marvellous things without number,
Who bringeth rain over the earth,
And over the fields sendeth water—
Setting the lowly on high,
And lifting the mourners to safety,
Frustrating the plans of the crafty
And robbing their hands of success,
So taking the wise in their guile,
That their tortuous plans fail through rashness:
They feel in the day as in darkness,
At noon tide they grope as at night.

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So the needy He saves from the sword,
And the poor from the hands of the mighty.
Thus hope is born in the weak,
And iniquity stoppeth her mouth." (v. 8-16).

This is good poetry, and good preaching ; but it is not good consolation. It is the teacher here who speaks, not the comforter. It is all true enough, but it is in the air ; it is laden with no balm for the sick and sorrowful heart. But into these fine rhetorical commonplaces there shoots a gleam of real light.

" Happy, then, the mortal whom God correcteth ;
So spurn not thou the Almighty's chastening.
For He bindeth the wounds He hath made,
And His hands heal the hurt He hath dealt." (v. 17f).

In other words, suffering may be sent, not to punish, but to discipline the sufferer, and to promote his spiritual welfare. It is the same truth as is expressed by another of Israel's wise men :

" Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,
He afflicteth the son He delights in." (Prov. iii. 12).

Here is a valuable addition to the brilliant suggestions as to the meaning of suffering thrown out in the Prologue ; and we shall treasure it carefully, as there are not many gleams of light in the speeches of the orthodox friends. The only objection to it is that it does not apply to the case in hand : for—as we must never forget—the man to whom it is addressed has been described not only by the narrator but by God Himself as " blameless and upright, fearing God and shunning evil." Perhaps we may say that there is another and an even more

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fatal objection to it—that it springs from a heart dominated more by doctrine than by sympathy: for, the moment it is stated, the speaker moves airily off into an enumeration of calamities from which Job may, if he accepts the divine discipline, expect to be preserved, but with not one of which he is at the moment in the least concerned, except it may be “the scourge of the” thoughtless “tongue” by which he is being lashed and from which there is little chance of his being preserved. Famine, war, and the rest—what have they to do with the broken man upon the ash-heap?

“ He will save thee in six distresses,
In seven no evil shall touch thee.
In famine he frees thee from death,
And in war from the power of the sword.
From the scourge of the tongue thou art safe,
Thou shalt fear not the onslaught of ruin.
At ruin and dearth shalt thou laugh,
And the beasts of the field thou shalt fear not.
For the stones of the earth are thine allies,
The beasts of the field are thy friends.
Thou shalt know that thy tent is secure,
Thou shalt visit thy fold and miss nothing.”

(v. 19-24).

It is part of that thoughtlessness which, in certain circumstances, may amount to a cruelty and a crime: and it surely does become cruelty when he goes on to add:

“ Thy seed thou shalt know to be many,
Thine offspring as grass of the earth.” (v. 25).

But Job’s children are dead—a fact which Eliphaz, carried away by his eloquent homily, seems to have forgotten altogether. The whole speech is, in the

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intention of the writer, a fine satire on the impotence of a mechanical orthodoxy, and on the potential cruelty of its exponents, who will not look at facts.

For all his cutting, or at least careless, innuendo, Eliphaz is trying, at the end as at the beginning, to be gracious, and he ends upon a note of promise—a promise destined to be truer than he knew.

“ Thou shalt come to the grave in thy strength,
As a sheaf cometh in in its season.” (v. 26).

Or, to be more correct, he really ends upon the note of self-conscious importance which had run through the whole of his speech :

“ See ! this we have searched—so it is.
We have heard it—lay thou it to heart.” (v. 27).

He and his friends are clearly superior persons, possessed of truths resting on experience, investigation, and revelation, which it is of the highest importance for Job to lay to heart. To Job, in the tortures of an incurable disease, the rosy pictures of restoration painted by Eliphaz must have seemed a bitter mockery ; and this, coupled with Eliphaz's cool assumption of superiority, while he is really ignorant of the innocence of which Job is so sublimely sure, prepares us for the stern speech in which Job answers him.

JOB'S DENUNCIATION OF HOLLOW FRIENDSHIP.
HIS CHALLENGE OF GOD AND HIS LONGING TO BE
GONE (Job vi. and vii.)

Job, who always takes his stand on fact, at once concedes the irritation with which Eliphaz had charged him (v. 2), but maintains that it is more than explained by the misery with which he is weighted.

"O could my vexation be carefully weighed,
And my misery set in the balance against it !
For it is more heavy than sand of the sea,
And therefore it is that my words are wild."(vi. 2f).

And the Almighty, at whom he had darkly hinted before (iii. 23), he now names directly as the Archer whose deadly shafts of loss and pestilence have been hurled at him, keeping him in ceaseless turmoil of body and soul.

"For the arrows of God Almighty are in me,
My spirit drinketh their fiery poison." (vi. 4)."

It is this that constitutes Job's problem: not the physical tortures, terrible though they be, but that they have been let loose upon him by God's own hand. The once gracious Friend has armed Himself with terrors and become his relentless foe. He is in the mood of the Psalmist who said :

"This it is that grieves me,
That the hand of the Most High hath changed."
(Ps. lxxvii. 10).

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His sense of alienation is increasing, and it is aggravated still more by the odious and insipid counsel of the friend who has just spoken : for

“ Doth the wild ass bray as he nibbles the grass,
And over their fodder do oxen low ?
Can a man eat that which is tasteless and saltless ?
Is there any taste in the slime of the yolk ? ” (vi. 5f).

Eliphaz had pointed him to the possibility of secure and happy days yet in store ; but this, he feels, is not for him. As before, it is not life, but death, that he longs for ; he asks not for mercy, or even for justice, but only for death. That would be his comfort and his joy, and it cannot come too speedily.

“ O that I might have my request,
That God would grant me the thing that I long for !
O that God would consent to crush me,
To let His hand loose and cut me off !
So should I still have this for my comfort—
Leaping for joy amid torture unsparing—
That I had not concealed the words of the Holy One.”
(vi. 8-10).

He has no strength left to achieve or endure any more, least of all to endure the sting of those terrible darts hurled by an almighty Hand.

“ What is my strength, that I should endure ?
Or what is mine end, that I should be patient ?
Is my strength the strength of stones ?
Or was I created with flesh of brass ?
Behold ! I have no help in myself,
And the power to achieve is driven from me.” (vi. 11-13).

Then he turns from the inscrutable God to the friends who have failed him in his hour of deepest

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need, and expresses his disappointment at their "treachery" in one of those pictures which will live for ever. He compares them to the streams which are full and swollen, when no refreshing draught is needed, but which, when the thirsty caravans reach the spot, have vanished.

"To one who is fainting a friend should be kind,
Even though he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.
But my brethren have dealt like a treacherous torrent,
Like channels that overflow their banks,
Which are turbid because of the ice
And the snow that hides within them;
But, when they are scorched, they vanish:
In the heat they are quenched from their place.
The caravans bend their course thither,
Go up through the waste, and perish.
The caravans of Tema looked out for them,
The companies of Sheba kept hoping:
But their confidence brought them to shame;
When they came to the place, they blushed.
Such now have ye proved unto me:
When ye look on the terror, ye shudder." (vi. 14-21).

Few things are more touching than this thirst of Job for human friendship. Intellectually independent as he is, he needs men, all the more that God has wounded and forsaken him. He had hoped that they would pour upon his fevered spirit the cooling waters of their sympathy; instead, they regale him with the barren sands of dogma. How utterly alone he is, forsaken, as it seems, alike by God and man.

From bitterness he passes to irony. He could have understood their recoil from him, he tells them, had he asked them for a gift of money—to ransom him, for example, from captivity: that would

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indeed have been too heavy a tax to impose upon their generosity.

“Did I ask you to give me a present,
Or make me a gift of your substance,
To rescue me from the foe,
From the hands of the tyrant to free me ?” (vi. 22f).

But no such gift had he demanded: all he asks is some little light upon his problem, some true and simple word which will still the storm in his heart.

“Teach me, and I will be silent,
Show me wherein I have erred.
How sweet are words that are true !
But when *you* reprove, what is reproved ?” (vi. 24f).

The friends are unkind, in part because they are shallow: nothing impresses them but what they see and hear, the misery of the man and his desperate words of challenge: they cannot look behind either the facts or the words to the innocent life and the torn, bleeding heart. He accuses them of taking his wild words too seriously: and we must not ourselves forget this in our criticism of them, either now or later. The words of a man driven by misery to despair are not to be coolly dissected by those who stand outside his misery, nor are they to be taken as a revelation of his inmost heart: they are to be borne away by the winds beyond the range of such solemn cavil.

“Is it *words* that ye mean to reprove ?
But for winds are the words of despair.
Would ye throw yourselves on the innocent,
Or make an assault on your friend ?” (vi. 26f).

At this point the friends turn away in horror from his protestations, and again we see this strong man's

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craving for human sympathy. He cannot bear to think that they doubt him or will leave him, and it is infinitely touching to watch the almost naïve earnestness with which he urges upon those conventional men that, when he claims to be innocent, he is speaking the truth.

“ Now look upon me, I pray you :
I would surely not lie in your face.
O come back—let there be no injustice.
Come back, for the right is still mine.” (vi. 28f).

The magnificent breadth of Job’s character is seen not least in this that, intense as is his own pain and misery, he does not allow himself to be completely absorbed by it. As in his first lament he had been drawn beyond himself to the great brotherhood of sorrow (iii. 20ff), so here again from his own wretchedness he glides almost instinctively into the contemplation of the larger sorrow of the world. His own life, all human life—what is it but an unending, unrelenting warfare, from which there is no discharge but death ? What is it but the service of a hard Master, which is only rendered tolerable by the certainty that, however hard or long the day, the blessed shadows of evening must inevitably fall at last ?

“ Hath man on the earth not a warfare,
With days like the days of a hireling ?
Like a slave that pants for the shadow,
A hireling that longs for his wages,
So empty months are my portion,
And wearisome nights mine appointment.” (vii. 1-7).

Note here again the sympathy for the servant (cf. iii. 19). But again Job is swung back to the

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thought of his own unutterable misery, with its loathsome physical accompaniments.

“ I lie down, saying, ‘ When cometh day ? ’
When I rise, methinks ‘ When cometh even ? ’
Worms and clods clothe my flesh,
My skin grows hard and then runs.” (vii. 4f).

After his former cries for the speedy advent of death, it comes as a surprise that he now complains of the shortness of life :

“ My days are more swift than a shuttle,
They come to an end without hope.
O remember my life is but breath,
Mine eye shall see good nevermore.” (vii. 6f).

Perhaps his pain has for the moment eased a little : however that may be, we have here one of those swift changes of mood which invest with perennial interest the psychological situations of the great drama. The genius of the man for friendship is movingly suggested by the next words, which hint rather than plainly say that the bitterest drop in death’s cup is that he and his friends shall see each other no more ; and saddest of all is that his intimacy with the great Friend will be over for ever. This thought is expressed in language of pathetic beauty.

“ The eye that now sees me shall see me no more ;
Thine eyes shall look for me, but I shall be gone.”
(vii. 8).

God, after His inscrutable treatment of His faithful servant has brought him beneath the ground, will begin to think of him and look for him again. Here we see the beginning of that struggle between two thoughts of God—almost between two Gods—in the soul of Job : the God who has treated him

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with such inexplicable cruelty, and shot His poisoned arrows at him, and the God who beneath all the torture wishes him well and will miss him and yearn for him when he is gone. But then it will be too late, for the man who leaves this life leaves it for ever.

“ Like the cloud that is spent and that passeth away,
He that goes down to Sheol shall come up no more.
He shall never come back to his house again,
And the place that was his shall know him no more.”
(vii. 9f).

To understand the fierceness of the problem that tormented Job—or, if you like, the great soul who makes Job his mouthpiece—it is well to remember that it has to be fought out on this side the grave. For, broadly speaking, there is no Beyond, none at least that brings any comfort or hope to those who have been wronged here. Death is the end: in the world beyond, small and great, oppressed and oppressor, are all alike (iii. 19). Of punishment, reward, or restitution, there is meantime not a thought. So, if the gracious Face has to be seen at all, it must be here and now. That is for Job the tragedy that, if he does not see it here, he cannot hope to see it anywhere. But beneath the pathetic lines in which he dwells on the inexorableness of death we can detect, if not the faint whisper of a hope, at any rate the passionate yearning that it might be otherwise. The wistfulness with which he looks at the thought before he pushes it away, shows how much he was fascinated by it; and he returns to it again and again.

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Since, however, he is to die, and death is the end, he will at least speak his mind to God before he goes ; and the bitter anguish of his spirit drives him to an audacity even surpassing that of his first sorrowful monologue :

“ So my mouth I will not restrain,
I will utter mine anguish of spirit,
Pour out mine embittered soul.
Am I a sea or a sea-monster,
That upon me Thou settest a watch ? ” (vii. 11f).

The allusion is to the great mythological dragon which the God of Light had to fight and slay before He could proceed to His beneficent work of creation. Job is only too conscious of being nothing but a poor “ driven leaf ” (xiii. 25) ; and does God—he asks with savage irony—take him for another monster like that which He slew and ripped open before, a monster who, if he were not crushed, would threaten the peace and security of the universe ? If not, why does He watch him so ? It maddens him to think that he is being everlastinglly spied upon by those pitiless eyes that never slumber or sleep. His case is immeasurably worse than that of the servant who can rest at eventide. For, besides the perpetual torment which gnaws him to the bone by day, his nights are tormented with appalling dreams and visions. Better a thousand times that the horrible disease which is eating at his throat should suffocate him outright and end this living death.

“ When I look to my couch to comfort me,
To my bed for relief of my sorrow,
Then Thou scarest me with dreams,
And with visions dost so affright me

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That gladly would I be strangled :
Death itself I spurn in my pain.
I would not live for ever :
Let me go, for my days are but breath.”
(vii. 13-16).

Then follows one of the most sublimely daring passages of the book. In his happier days Job had many a time thought with quiet gladness of the gracious psalm which tells how the infinite God of the starry spaces comes daily with His condescending love into the little life of man :

“ When I look at Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which Thou hast set there,
What is mortal man, that Thou thinkest of him,
And the son of man, that Thou visitest him ? ” (Ps. viii. 3f).

Those words flash back upon him now, and he breaks out into a bitter parody of them, which falls little short of blasphemy :

“ What is man, that so great Thou dost count him
And settest Thine heart upon him—
Visiting him every morning
And testing him moment by moment ? ” (vii. 17f).

Instead of the God whom the psalmist saw coming in love, Job sees a God coming to torment him every morning with His tortures and every night with His terrors. Why should God count men so great as to be worthy of all this cruel attention ?

“ Why dost thou make me Thy target ?
Why burden Thyself with me ? ” (vii. 20).

How infinitely kinder just to leave him alone : that is all Job asks—that that great Presence, those

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terrible eyes, should be withdrawn. The sense of estrangement is deepening rapidly.

“O when wilt Thou turn Thine eyes from me,
And leave me, though but for a moment ?” (vii. 19).

Job ascribes his misery to God; the friends find the “root of the matter” in himself and in his sin. Job is too clear-sighted and honest to claim perfection; he acknowledges his sin, but none comparable to the misery which is crushing him. However, granting his sin—and here comes another very daring turn of thought—how does that affect God?

“If I sin, how does that harm Thee,
O Thou who art watcher of men ?” (vii. 20.)

—watching men indeed too pitilessly well. Is God nothing but a great incarnate Vindictiveness, that for sins inevitable to human frailty He should smite man to the dust with His omnipotent Hand? Surely, the true greatness and glory of God would be shown rather in forgiveness:

“Why not forgive my sin,
And pass mine iniquity by ?” (vii. 21).

Here is a flash of insight into the essential nature of God; and the thought of forgiveness, though it seems so remote as to be unattainable, wakes again in the poor tormented mind the old kindly thought of God as his Friend—and with that he characteristically ends:

“For now shall I lie in the dust :
Thou wilt search, but I shall not be.” (vii. 21).

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For all his wild words, he knows at the bottom of his heart that God loves him—loves him so dearly that, after he is gone, and when it is too late, He will search for him. He will not only miss him, but He will earnestly seek to recover His vanished friend. The man who could so think of God and His pursuing love must surely be found of Him in the end. As Duhm has said, this is “an anthropomorphism, such as could only spring from a living religion.”

BILDAD'S APPEAL TO THE TEACHING OF TRADITION (Job viii.)

The argument is now taken up by Bildad, a man probably about Job's own age. The irritation with which he had listened to Job's audacities wells up into his opening words :

“ How long wilt thou utter these things—
These thy blustering windy words ? ” (viii. 2).

Job's impetuous speeches had amounted to a practical impeachment of divine justice, and the reverent but commonplace Bildad can hardly believe his ears. Does Job really mean to say that God Almighty can be guilty of injustice ?

“ Is God a perverter of justice ?
The Almighty, subverter of right ? ” (viii. 3).

Nay, verily, the government of the world is in just hands. There is a moral order, which ordains that the sinner must suffer, and which pronounces no less surely that the sufferer has sinned. Nor is the proof of this far to seek. Has not Job already seen it exemplified in the fate of his own children ? —an experience which affects Bildad so little that he can incidentally throw it into a subordinate cause :

“ If thy children, for sinning against Him,
He has left to bear their transgression.” (viii. 4.)

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It is Eliphaz's easy dogma over again, "Who ever perished, being innocent?" The children are demonstrably sinners, because they are lying dead among the ruins of their house. Involuntarily there rises into our mind the word of Jesus about the Tower of Siloam (Luke xiii. 4f), and the solemn protest He hurled against this shallow, heartless, Pharisaic interpretation of human misfortune. Bildad does not scruple to begin his argument by stabbing the father's heart. Here again (cf. v. 4), the writer is letting us feel how cruel disputants can be who care more for doctrines than for men.

The children are dead, their time for repentance is past, but it is not yet too late for Job.

"Yet seek thou thyself unto God,
And supplicate the Almighty.
And if thou art pure and upright,
Thy righteous abode He will prosper;
And, though thy beginning be slender,
Thine end He shall greatly increase." (viii. 5-7).

Bildad's use of the word "seek" shows how deeply he has been provoked by the beautiful thought with which Job had closed his speech. His word is a stinging reminder of Job's. He would remind Job, who has had the incredible audacity to speak of God's seeking for him, that it is rather his business to seek for God: he is too shallow to feel that Job's wild words are nothing but a passionate groping after God. So he counsels him to return to the God who, as Job believes, has fled from him rather than he from God, and promises him on these terms

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a happiness far surpassing that which once was his—here speaking, like Eliphaz (v. 26) truer than he knew. With fine dramatic instinct, the writer often makes the friends say things prophetic of the end. In spite of the cruel allusion to the children, Bildad's opening words were intended to be conciliatory, as those of Eliphaz were courteous.

The friends are all representatives of orthodoxy, but each champions it in his own way. While all are saying essentially the same thing, their characters and temperaments are quite distinguishable and their appeals are different. Eliphaz had rested his case on revelation, Bildad rests his on tradition. The moral principles on which the world is governed he has learned from the fathers. He humbly recognises that the problem which is agitating all their minds is too stupendous for him to solve, even to attempt, but he comforts himself with the reflection that it has been solved long ago. The faith has been delivered once for all to the saints, and it is never to be challenged or even criticized any more. Bildad will not, like Job, employ his own mind upon the facts ; he is content to accept the results reached by the men of the olden time, who, strangely enough, are supposed to be wiser, though the world was younger and its experience necessarily more meagre. He forgets that there can be no results for the man who refuses, whether from modesty or indolence, to pass his mind through processes. He will not use his eyes, but only his ears—a much easier exercise—to listen to what other men have said who used their eyes.

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“ For inquire thou of past generations,
 Regard the research of the fathers :—
For *we* are but dullards of yesterday,
 Whose days on the earth are a shadow—
Shall *they* not give thee instruction,
 And bring forth words out of their heart ? ”

(viii. 8-10).

In these words your true traditionalist is pilloried for all time—his intellectual indolence, his smug humility which dispenses him from the obligation to do honest and independent work of his own, and not least the cool effrontery with which he sweeps all his contemporaries into the same category of mediocrity to which he himself so manifestly belongs : “ for *we* ”—not he only, but all his fellows also—“ *we* are but of yesterday, and know nothing.” To the searching question, “ Sayest thou this of thyself or did others tell it thee ? ” he would have replied without shame or hesitation, “ Who am I to presume to say this on the strength of my own intelligence ? Others told me of it.” At the bottom of this indolence and timidity lies an unworthy conception of God. Bildad believes in a God who was, but not in a God who is : in a God who once inspired and illumined the minds of men, but who does so no more. His is a mind without resiliency, and the God he worships and defends is a God of the dead only and not of the living also. His temper a little recalls that of the lines of Clough :

“ The souls of now two thousand years
 Have laid up here their toils and fears,
And all the earnings of their pain—
 Ah, yet consider it again !

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We ! what do we see ? each a space
Of some few yards before his face ;
Does that the whole wide plan explain ?
Ah, yet consider it again ! ”

No sane thinker despises the toil of the past ; on the contrary, he pays it a deep and humble tribute of respect : but he pays the truest respect to the thinkers of the past when he works in their independent and courageous spirit. Then, and then only, can he claim to be of their lineage. It is significant that the champions of the orthodoxy which Job so fiercely combats are men who will not think for themselves—men like Eliphaz, who appeal to revelation, or like Bildad, to tradition. Not much light upon the dark and awful problem is to be looked for from men like these.

But what is it, after all, that Bildad has so humbly and easily learned at the feet of the fathers ? It is a truth expressed in rather elaborate and difficult imagery—the text of the passage is obscure—but a truth as essentially commonplace as that which flowed from Eliphaz's awe-inspiring “ revelation.” It is simply that the hope of the hypocrite dies like the rush which is not fed by water.

“ Can the rush shoot high without swamp ?
Or the reed grow up without water ?
While yet in its freshness, unplucked,
Of all herbs it withers most quickly.
So end all who put God out of mind,
And the hope of the hypocrite dies.
His confidence is but a thread,
And his trust as the web of a spider.
He leans on his house, but it stands not ;
He grasps, but it cannot endure.

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Like a plant is he, fresh in the sunshine,
With suckers that shoot o'er the garden.
Its roots are entwined round the wall,
It lays hold of its stone habitation.
But when it is ruined, the spot
Denies having ever beheld it.
Thus its course ends in desolation,
And out of the dust springs another." (viii. 11-19).

"Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus." It is of sombre significance for the attitude of the friends to Job that the truth which Bildad thinks it worth his while to thrust upon him as embodying the garnered wisdom of the past, is that the doom of the hypocrite is sure and terrible. Clearly Job stands already condemned at the bar of their judgment: his misery, to say nothing of his blasphemy, has condemned him. And yet they would be kind. If he seeks God, there is hope. So Bildad ends, like Eliphaz, upon a note of comfort and with a vision of Job's restitution.

"See! God spurns not an innocent man,
But He will not uphold evil-doers.
He will yet fill thy mouth with laughter,
Thy lips with a shout of joy.
Thy foes shall be clothed with shame,
And the tent of the wicked shall vanish."

(viii. 20-22).

He does not know the grim point of his own prophecy, that he himself, in the end, will be among the foes to be clothed with shame (xlvi. 8). But in spite of his happy picture and his gracious words, his real mind about Job comes out in the warning with which he closes: "The tent of the wicked shall vanish."

JOB'S CHALLENGE OF IMMORAL OMNIPOTENCE
(Job ix. and x.)

Job replies in a speech of splendid power. Bildad had maintained it to be unthinkable that God could be other than just. "No doubt," says Job bitterly: "He is always in the right for the very sufficient reason that, being omnipotent, He can put anybody who dares to challenge Him in the wrong, by the simple process of crushing him." When he asks, "How can man be just with God?" he means something very different from Eliphaz when he had asked "Can mortal be just before God?" (iv. 17). Eliphaz meant that man cannot stand, because he is a sinner; Job means, because he is too weak to stand before a Being of such overwhelming power that He can topple the mountains over with a touch of His little finger. Before such a One, how can frail terrified man hope to plead his cause—to win his case and secure his right? All he can do in such a Presence is to lie stupefied before His avalanche of questions (cf. xxxviii.-xl.).

"Yes, truly; I know it is so:
But with God how can man urge his right?
Should *He* choose to contend against him,
He could answer not one in a thousand.
Wise-hearted and strong as He is,
Who hath ever successfully braved Him?
Mountains He moves without effort,
He turns them about in His anger.

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He shaketh the earth from her place,
And maketh her pillars shudder.
He speaks to the sun and it shines not,
He setteth a seal on the stars.
He stretcheth the heavens all alone,
He treadeth the heights of the sea.
He maketh the Bear and Orion,
The Pleiades and the southern chambers.
He doeth great things and unsearchable,
Marvellous things without number." (ix. 1-10).

Job repeats in the last couplet former words of Eliphaz (v. 9), but the difference in their outlook upon the universe is infinite. Eliphaz sees it as an arena of wonderful beneficence (cf. v. 10); Job, of wonderful and devastating omnipotence. The God he sees there is the terrible God of the earthquakes, volcanoes, eclipses, and storms. And more vexing even than the irresistibleness of this dark Power is its invisibility and elusiveness. Everywhere are subtle marks of the terrible Presence, but nowhere can you face it and call it to account; and if you could, it would make no difference, for it is irresponsible as well as irresistible—a savage, capricious, annihilating Force, sublimely indifferent to moral interests.

"Lo ! He passes me by all unseen ;
Sweeps past—but I cannot perceive Him.
He seizeth, and who can prevent Him ?
Who dare ask Him, 'What doest Thou ?'" (ix. 11f.).

If by some happy chance Job could secure the meeting for which he longed, it would not advance his cause one iota; for this omnipotent Judge cares so little for justice that He would not even deign to listen: and even if He would, Job would be too terrified to speak.

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" Were I right, I could give Him no answer,
 But must needs entreat my judge.
If I called, He would give me no answer ;
 I cannot believe He would listen.
For He crushes me in a tempest
 With many a wanton wound.
He suffers me not to take breath,
 But with bitterness He fills me.
Is it question of right ? There He is.
 Or of justice ? Then who will implead Him ?
Am I right ? Still mine own mouth condemns me.
 Innocent ? He proveth me perverse." (ix. 15-20).

How far the unhappy man is being driven by his pain and despair from his former thought of that persistent love which would seek him with diligence, even after he had gone (vii. 21). Now he thinks of God as a Tyrant who is determined to regard him, innocent though he be, as a reprobate, and to treat him as such ; but Job is equally determined to assert his innocence even in the face of Omnipotence. Lashed by pain and grief, he passes from defiance to recklessness and hurls at the Almighty a charge more appalling than any he has yet permitted himself to indulge in :

" Innocent I am—but I reck not,
 I spurn my life ; 'tis all one,
And therefore it is that I say,
 ' He destroyeth both guiltless and guilty.'
When the scourge bringeth sudden death,
 The despair of the blameless He mocketh.
He hath given up the earth to the wicked,
 He veileth the face of its judges.
If it be not He, who then ? " (ix. 21-24).

There is nothing in the universe but pitiless Power—no mercy, no justice, no moral order, nothing but the most cynical confusion of moral

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interests, and an order—if order it be—which is not only indifferent, but positively and unabashedly immoral. For the moment, it almost seems as if Satan's hope is to be fulfilled after all. “*He destroyeth*”—it is a direct challenge of God, though he does not name Him—“*He destroyeth innocent and guilty alike.*” He uses His almighty power to defy and destroy the interests which good men hold dear, and for which some are ready, like Job, to suffer and die. The writer of this book, as of Ecclesiastes (cf. iii. 16, iv. 1, v. 8) probably lived in sorrowful days when justice was flouted; and behind all the rampant injustice of earth Job sees a monster who not only tolerates, but ordains it; for “*if it be not He, who then?*” This is one of the most dramatically effective and moving passages in the book. For while we are in the secret, Job is not: we know that the immediate cause of his misery is Satan and that behind him is a God who reposes in Job a confidence so superb that He can defy Satan to do his worst. Job's fearful challenge is only possible, because he does not know all the facts.

After this passionate outburst, his strength is spent, and in gentler mood he turns from the great world-sorrow to his own, and laments the swiftness of his passing days. They are replete with tortures, the most awful of which is that God is resolved to ignore his innocence.

“*If I vow to forget my plaint
And to wear a bright face for a joyless,
I shudder at all my pains:
I know Thou wilt not hold me guiltless.*” (ix. 27f.)

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All the same, life is sweet and his days are numbered. Here again the swift fluctuations of his mood are traced with immense psychological power: one moment passionately praying for death, and the next bewailing the swiftness of its approach.

“ My days are more swift than a runner,
They flee unillumined by joy.
They glide like the ships of reed,
Like an eagle that darts on its prey.” (ix. 25f).

Bitterest of all is God’s incurable hostility and His determination to crush him as a reprobate :

“ I then am infallibly guilty,
So why should I labour in vain ?
For, though I wash me with snow,
And cleanse my hands with lye,
Thou wouldst plunge me then in the mire,
So that even my friends would abhor me.” (ix. 29-31).

Then across the black despair of his soul darts a flash of his old irrepressible faith in God, the real God.

“ Thou art not a man like myself,
That we come into judgment together.
O for an umpire between us,
To lay his hand on us both !
Let Him take His rod from off me,
And affright me no more with His terror,
And then I would speak unafraid,
For not such at heart am I.” (ix. 32-35).

There should be, there must be in the universe some One who in kindly human fashion would stand between him and his Tormentor, lay his hand upon them both and arbitrate between them. It is a sublime and daring intuition, “ an unconscious prophecy ”—as Professor Strahan has well said,

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—“of incarnation and atonement.” His Tormentor is now Judge ; but, if He were only plaintiff and some juster and diviner One were Judge, Job would plead his cause, even against so dreadful an antagonist, with confidence in the issue, for he has the courage of the pure in heart. As it is, however, the contest is so pitifully uneven : still, Job will face it, if his Tormentor but remove from him the painful stroke of leprosy, and affright him no more with those terrors which he has so magnificently described in the earlier part of his speech.

Again the bitter mood comes over him, and he “lets loose his complaint against God.” Mere omnipotence can never command respect, unless it be allied with justice : so Job demands to know the ground of God’s quarrel with him. “Show me why Thou contendest with me.” It is the challenge of the thinker who “would not make his judgment blind.” He demands that the universe, of which he is a part, shall answer to the deepest yearnings of his own mind and heart. Surely God is not blind to mistake little faults for damnable sins, and impatiently to crush to the dust a man whom He knows to be innocent.

“Hast Thou then eyes of flesh ?
Or seest Thou as man seeth,
That Thou shouldest seek out my guilt,
And make this search for my sin,
Though Thou knowest I am not guilty
And no treachery cleaves to my hand.” (x. 4, 6, 7.)

Here another brilliant thought leaps into that mind whose fertility no pain can destroy. It is the thought

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of the responsibility of the Creator. Must not the God who fashioned men so wonderfully care at least as much for His creature as the potter for the vessel which he has made ? The thought of the Persian poet comes into our minds :

Another said—" Why, ne'er a peevish Boy
Would break the bowl from which he drank in joy ;
Shall He that *made* the vessel in pure Love
And Fancy, in an after Rage destroy ? "

Every man was once a thought in the mind of God : is it conceivable that He made him only to torture and destroy him ? Or is the care which He expended on His handiwork not a guarantee of His interest in it and love for it ? Nay verily ! Job gives to his beautiful thought a turn of incredible bitterness and audacity. This cunning Potter did indeed make His creature so marvellous, only to treat him with marvellous cruelty. Wonderful alike in his origin and destiny ! How bitter, and how different in its application from the gentle thought that breathes through Psalm cxxxix. (cf. vv. 13-18).

" What dost Thou gain from oppressing
And spurning the work of Thy hands ?
Thy hands did fashion and mould me,
And now wilt Thou turn and destroy me ?
Remember Thou madest me like clay,
And back to the dust wilt Thou bring me ?
Didst Thou not pour me out like milk,
And curdle me after like cheese,
Clothe me with skin and flesh,
And knit me with bones and with sinews ?
Life Thou didst grant me and favour,
Thy providence guarded my spirit ;
While *this* was Thy secret heart,
And this was Thy purpose, I know." (x. 3, 8-13).

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It is easy to see that behind this amazing invective lies a passionate yearning for the friendship of God. It is because God and His love are everything to Job that he cannot bear to think of Him as his enemy. How intensely personal all this is, and how unlike the cold, remote "revelations" and visions of Eliphaz!

Again Job repeats and elaborates the charge that, whether innocent or guilty, God is equally determined to crush him, working fresh miracles of cruelty upon him and marshalling against him His hosts—the pains, the tortures, the terrors—out of the infinite resources at His disposal.

" Do I sin ? Then Thou dost observe me,
And refuse to acquit me of guilt.
Am I wicked ? Then woe is me.
Just ? I dare not lift up my head—
Full of shame and drunken with sorrow.
If I rise, like a lion Thou huntest me,
Working fresh marvels upon me.
Thine anger with me Thou increasest,
Thou musterest fresh hosts against me. " (x. 14-17).

Then he reverts to the old sad question which he had asked in his opening monologue : if it was to misery like this that God had ordained him, why should He ever have created him at all ? He asks now nothing more than that he be a little eased of his pain during the few short days that lie between him and the dark land from which he shall never return :

" O why from the womb didst Thou bring me ?
O why died I not all unseen ?
O to be as though I had not been,
Borne from the womb to the grave.

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Are the days of my life not few ?
O leave me to smile a little,
Ere I go, to return no more,
To the land of darkness and gloom,
To the land of murky darkness,
Of gloom and utter confusion,
Where the very light is as darkness. " (x. 18-22).

His friends had closed their speeches with a vista of hope and comfort, but Job knows better. He is dying : and the elaboration with which he lingers upon the inexorable end, beyond which there is nothing, shows how passionately he yearns for a something beyond, and prepares the way for the emergence of a belief in it.

ZOPHAR'S APPEAL TO THE UNSEARCHABLE WISDOM OF GOD (Job xi.)

A new champion of orthodoxy enters the lists—the young and insolent Zophar. He has been provoked by the length of Job's last speech, so he boldly begins :

“Should a voluble man go unanswered,
A man who but babbles be justified ? ” (xi. 2).

But he has been provoked no less by its temper—its frightful challenges of God which seemed to sound the deepest depths of presumption and irreverence, and its nearly as appalling assertions of Job's own innocence.

“Must men hold their peace at thy bragging ?
Thy mocking is no one to curb ?
Thou maintainest thy way to be pure,
And thyself to be clean in His sight.” (xi. 3f).

In point of fact Job had repeatedly and unflinchingly maintained his innocence (cf. ix. 21) : this alone, in the face of his calamity, would have been enough to condemn him in eyes like Zophar's, that were bleared by convention. Job had complained of the silence of God : when He does speak, says Zophar—and he prays that soon He may—it will be in condemnation of this self-righteous, blasphemous braggart ; he will then know that the God he has

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so bitterly impugned has been vastly kinder to him than he deserves.

“But oh that God would speak,
And open His lips against thee,
And show thee the secrets of wisdom—
How marvellous are her achievements :
For then thou shouldst know that thy guilt
God remembers not wholly against thee.”

(xi. 5f).

This wish of Zophar that God would speak is one of the most effective things in the book : when God does speak, in the sequel, it is he and not Job who is humiliated. “After Jehovah had spoken these words to Job, He said to Eliphaz, ‘My anger is hot against thee and thy two friends, for ye have not spoken the truth about Me, as My servant Job has done.’” (xlvi. 7).

How little Zophar really knows of the God whose mysterious ways he is defending with such shallow impetuosity : just as little as he does of the true quality of the man he is insulting. Indeed, with naïve inconsistency he goes on to admit his ignorance :

“Canst thou find out the deep things of God ?
Or come nigh the Almighty’s perfection ?
It is higher than heaven—what canst thou ?
Deeper than Sheol—what knowest thou ?
Longer than earth is its measure,
And broader it is than the sea.” (xi. 7-9).

Formally a rebuke of Job, who had had the presumption to challenge the infinite God, these words are essentially a comprehensive admission of the impotence of man to understand the divine nature. This sounds very humble : as a matter of fact, Zophar’s attitude to the problem, despite his pre-

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tence of humility, is immeasurably more arrogant than Job's. Zophar believes, or believes that he believes, in a God whose ways are unsearchable: nevertheless he himself can expound those ways quite glibly. The acknowledged mystery of the divine nature, the very thought of which—as Zophar urges—ought to silence Job's impious challenges, is apparently, for all that, pretty clearly understood by Zophar himself, who blandly proceeds to expound it. Often in religious debates a cloak of humility has covered a claim to something like omniscience. Zophar, however, has nothing to offer but the old and exasperating explanation which associates suffering with previous sin, and which is more cutting to Job than the calamity itself.

“For well He knoweth vain men,
He looks upon sin and He marks it.” (xi. 11).

It is significant that this friend makes no appeal to authority of any kind in support of his conventional statements. Eliphaz had rested his case on “revelation,” Bildad on “tradition”: if these fail to carry conviction—a direct message from heaven, and the matured wisdom of the fathers—what is left? The average man, with his common sense, is left: and on this Zophar is content to rest his case.

“Even a senseless man may be taught,
As a wild ass's colt may be caught.” (xi. 12).

Men, like colts, learn sense by suffering. It is a somewhat coarser version of the truth put forward by Eliphaz, that suffering is disciplinary (v. 17f).

Unsearchable Wisdom

Considering the unexplained misery of the older man before him, this saying and simile of Zophar's are stamped with a callousness, different indeed in kind, but similar in spirit to that of the other two friends (cf. v. 4, viii. 4). It is characteristic of the youthful and fiery Zophar that he thinks to dispose of a great and heart-breaking problem by a witty proverb. We begin to feel how bankrupt is the wisdom of the friends, and how little it can do for a bold and resolute thinker like Job.

In spite, however, of his flippancy and insolence, Zophar means well, and he, like his friends, closes with a gracious promise, expressed in language of much beauty: for the writer, though he has little sympathy with the friends, never seeks to win an easy victory over them by holding them up to ridicule. He lavishes upon the form of their argument the same wealth of genius as he expends upon his hero:

"Now if thou would'st prepare thy heart,
And stretch out thy hands unto Him,
And put away sin from thy hand,
And let wrong dwell no more in thy tent,
Then thy face thou would'st lift without blemish,
And thou would'st be steadfast and fearless.
Yea, thou would'st forget thy sorrow—
As floods that are passed would'st thou think of it.
Brighter than noon would thy life rise,
Thy darkness would be as the morning.
Secure would'st thou be in thy hope:
Thou could'st lie without trembling or care,
Lay thee down without one to affright thee,
And many would sue for thy favour." (xi. 13-19).

It is to be noted that the condition of Job's restoration is a penitent return to God. This is precisely

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what the other two friends had urged (v. 8, viii. 5). How it must have stabbed the heart of the man who all his life had feared God and shunned evil, and who even now was yearning for God to return to him.

Throughout the first cycle of speeches the friends, though they have said many irritating things, have had Job's welfare at heart, and have honestly sought to guide and comfort him. They have their suspicions of his integrity, and they have expressed them, but they have not accused him of heinous sin. Their real mind about him, however, comes out ominously in the last words of Zophar :

"But the eyes of the wicked shall fail,
The place of their refuge is perished.
Their hope is—to breathe their last."

Doubtless this utterance skilfully identifies the wicked with Job's enemies, and has the effect of an unconscious prophecy of the fate of the friends ; but beneath the words we cannot help feeling that a warning is intended for Job himself, especially as more than once he had uttered his desire for death.

JOB'S INDEPENDENT CRITICISM OF THIS WORLD AND HIS GLIMPSE BEYOND IT (Job xii.-xiv.)

The friends have all now spoken, and Job thinks very little of what they have had to say. He meets it with a sarcastic proverb to match the proverb with which Zophar had disposed of the great problem (xi. 12).

“Verily ye are the people
And wisdom shall die with *you*.” (xii. 2).

Woe betide the world when Zophar and his friends leave it, for only fools will then be left in it. But in sober truth their expositions are the veriest trivialities, familiar to everybody, familiar—he scornfully adds—to the very animals themselves.

“But, like *you*, I have understanding :
Who knoweth not things like these ?
Inquire of the beasts—they will teach thee ;
The birds of the air—they will show thee ;
The creatures that crawl—they will teach thee ;
The fish of the sea—they will tell thee.
For which of them all doth not know
That the hand of Jehovah hath wrought this—
In whose hand are all living souls,
And the breath of all human kind ? ” (xii. 3, 7-10).

Well might Job claim to have understanding as well as the friends ; all that they had said about the greatness and the mystery of deity, he too had maintained with equal, nay with superior power. Above all, he had read the facts with independence ;

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and, caring not how far his conclusions deviated from the findings of "revelation" or tradition, he had discovered that

"It is tents of robbers that prosper,
And those that vex God that are safe—
Those who say, 'Is not God in my hand?'"
(xii. 6).

Honesty was the ruinous policy : the road to success was made by trampling upon the rights of men and the laws of God.

His opinions may be right or they may be wrong ; but at any rate they are unconventional, and they are his own.

"Doth not the ear test words
As the palate tastes food for itself ?" (xii. 11).

This is one of the great emancipating words of the book. The true thinker must take the facts between his teeth, and taste the world for himself. He has no more right, and no more need, to accept on these points the verdict of another man than to accept his decision on the taste of food. Every palate has the power, the right, the duty, to decide for itself : and no man can taste by proxy. As with food, so with facts. Job will enslave his mind to no man. His ear will test for itself the words which enshrine the wisdom of the ancients and challenge them, if need be. He claims for himself the right which the fathers exercised, of using his own mind and reaching his own conclusions. Here again (cf. x. 2), the voice of the Protestant speaks, asserting alike the right and the duty of private judgment. Zophar had thought to silence Job by pointing him to the inscrutable

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wisdom of God (xi. 7-9). Job refuses to be silenced; he owes it to his own mind to demand an answer. His is the true scientific temper, which collects and investigates all facts, welcome and unwelcome, in the belief that they are ultimately coherent and intelligible. It is, as a biographer of Maeterlinck has said, "the spirit that does not seek, like the traditional religions, to create a reputation for itself of inflexibility and infallibility, certifying the uncertain and striving to adjust the facts or supposed facts to theories, but which plainly states difficulties and loyally constrains theories to bend humbly before the phenomena that prove them untenable or doubtful."¹ The power to read the facts does not depend upon age—

" Doth wisdom depend upon years,
Understanding on length of days ? "(xii. 12)—

but upon intellectual honesty and insight.

And what does Job see when he looks at the world ? Many a psalmist had seen it to be full of the goodness of God : " O taste and see that the Lord is good " (Ps. xxxiv. 8). Job tastes and sees—not this, but only that

" With Him is wisdom and might,
Understanding and counsel are His."(xii. 13).

Infinite might directed by infinite skill, but not a trace of morality, of goodness, of justice or love. The solemnity with which he delivers his report is indicated by the twice repeated *Behold !*

¹ From the French of Gérard Harry, by Alfred Allinson, *A Biographical Study of Maurice Maeterlinck*, p. 41.

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"See ! He breaketh down, and who buildeth ?
Imprisons, and none can set free.
See ! He holds back the floods, and they dry ;
Then He hurls them on earth and confounds it." (xii. 14f).

Through his own sombre experience he looks out upon the world, and he sees upon the arena of history what he had seen before in nature (cf. chap. ix.)—a great, capricious, devastating Omnipotence, which overturns peoples and mountains with equal ease.

"The wise men of earth He makes foolish,
The judges He turns into madmen.
The fetters kings rivet He loosens,
And binds their own loins with a chain.
He leadeth priests barefoot away,
Ancient families He overturneth.
He removeth the speech of the trusty,
The elders He robs of discretion.
He poureth contempt upon princes,
He looseth the belt of the strong.
He revealeth the deep things of darkness,
The gloom-wrapped He bringeth to light.
Earth's chiefs He bereaves of their judgment ;
They wander in trackless wastes,
Where they grope in the unlit darkness,
And stagger like drunken men." (xii. 17-25).

These glowing lines are doubtless a reflection of the sorrowful soul of Job, but no less of the misery of some period when ancient national landmarks were being removed, when the contemporary political order was being overthrown, and a confusion reigned similar to that which we are witnessing to-day. One of the most amazing and intellectually heroic things in the writer of the book is that, unlike some of his contemporaries, he refuses to seek refuge from the sorrows of the present in some future Kingdom of

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God, or to comfort his soul with apocalyptic visions. He looks the facts full in the face, and seeks his explanation among them, not beyond them in some area not amenable to the control of evidence.

Now the appalling facts which he has emphasised are indisputable : he has seen them with his own eyes and examined them with that independence which he has just been claiming as at once his right and his duty.

“ Lo ! all this mine eye hath seen,
Mine ear hath heard it and marked it.” (xiii. 1.).

He turns with scorn from the conventionalities of the friends who would seek to “ besmear ” the facts, to whitewash with their falsehoods the perplexing order of the world, and to heal with their inanities the deep wound of his heart. He reminds them that their only chance to pass for wise men will be to say nothing at all ; and he resolves to turn from them to God Almighty who alone can help, and argue his case before Him.

“ What *ye* know, that I know too :
I am not one whit behind you.
But I would addresss the Almighty—
‘ Tis with God I am longing to reason :
For *ye* are smearers of lies,
Good-for-nothing physicians, each man of *you*.”
(xiii. 2, 5).

Here again flashes out that irrepressible confidence in God and His reasonableness, which no accumulation of facts could slay. The bitter mood is passing, at least for the time, and the deeper thing in the soul of Job is coming to the surface. But before he appeals to the God in whom we feel he

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is trusting in spite of everything, he turns to the friends and discharges upon them a searching and solemn rebuke for their flimsy apologetics and their immoral defence of God ; for every defence must be not only inadequate but immoral, which ignores or explains away inconvenient but undeniable facts.

“ Now listen to this mine indictment,
Attend to the plea of my lips.
Is it God that ye utter your lies for ?
Do ye speak your deceit for *Him* ?
And to Him would ye show your favour ?
And God’s is the cause ye would plead ?
Were it well if He searched you out ?
Can ye mock Him as men are mocked ?
For He will punish you sore,
If ye secretly show Him your favour.
Shall His majesty not make you shudder ?
Shall the dread of Him not fall upon you ?
Your maxims are proverbs of ashes,
Your bulwarks are bulwarks of clay.” (xiii. 6-12).

These, as one has said, are truly “ golden words.” God needs no favouritism ; and Job assures his friends—so confident is he in His eternal justice—that God will not only decline to accept their defences of Himself and His ways, but that He will not even tolerate them : nay, He will summon all those terrors, which Job has already so vividly described, to strike down those self-constituted champions of His, who in reality are not defending Him at all, but rather their own narrow and bigoted conceptions of Him. He needs no defence but the truth, but it must be the whole truth. The friends have forgotten that God lives and *moves*. They have their settled views of the universe, resting on

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revelation, tradition, dogma, into which no new or disconcerting facts may be allowed to intrude ; or, if they do enter, they must be instantly accommodated to the scheme, instead of being allowed to modify it, if the scheme, as it stands, cannot find room for them. Their theology is a finished product, and, because finished, it is dead. But Job's is a living mind, alert and responsive to every new phenomenon : he believes in a living and a moving God, whose work is never done, and whose revelation is never over. The "maxims" with which the friends placidly settle the stupendous world-problem were once indeed glowing convictions in the minds of those who coined them, but the glow of the early vision has died in its passage across the generations and become cold ashes. The "bulwarks," defences, apologetics, as we call them, go down before the first serious attack of an honest mind alive to the facts of to-day. The writer's scorn for ancient defences which no longer meet modern needs could not be better indicated than by his threat of the divine terrors which await those who take shelter behind them. He is preparing us for the doom of the friends in the Epilogue (xlvi. 7). Every word of Job at this point thrills with the conviction that God is just—not merely wise and mighty, as he had formerly maintained—and will see justice done. His old confidence in God is not merely reviving, it is aglow ; and its re-emergence, after the bold and bitter challenges of the previous chapter, is peculiarly refreshing and significant of the fundamental security of Job's faith. His feet are on the rock.

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He feels that it is no longer with the friends that he has to do, but with God ; and, though his life is being gradually crushed out of him by the unendurable pains and horrors of a disease sent, as he believes, by God, he is desperately resolved to take all the risks of meeting Him face to face, in order to present his case and defend his character. His happiness and prosperity have vanished, His physical existence is being swiftly destroyed : but all that is as nothing if he can only vindicate his moral personality. And in the very thought that he dare thus venture to approach Him, he experiences a sudden access of comfort. This high resolve is itself a guarantee of his innocence, for no hypocrite would willingly approach so terrible a Presence. Behind the terror Job knows at the bottom of his soul that there is a Justice to which he may with confidence appeal, and he is prepared to die rather than have his innocence suspected.

“ Be still, let me be ; I will speak—
Then upon me come what may.
I will take my flesh in my teeth,
I will put my life in my hands.
See ! He slays me, I cannot endure ;
But my ways will I defend to His face.
And this also shall be my salvation,
That a hypocrite dare not approach Him.
Hear now my speech with attention,
As I declare in your ears.
Attend as I set forth my case,
I know that the right is with me ;
And if any disputeth against me,
Then I would be silent and die.” (xiii. 13-19).

He is preparing to meet his God, when the old sense of his helplessness comes over him again

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(cf. ix. 34). How can he, as he is, face God, as He is, with any hope of doing himself justice? —he, the poor, emaciated, tortured man face the terrible God of the earthquake, the eclipse, and the storm? The Judge and the defendant will meet on too pathetically unequal terms. So Job first asks that the awful leprosy be lifted from his body, and the terror of the divine majesty from his soul, and, thus emancipated from his disabilities, he professes himself willing to face the Almighty without flinching—ready to answer any charge that He may bring, or to make his own statement first, and calmly await the answer of the Almighty.

“But two things alone do not unto me,
Then I will not hide from Thy face.
Lift the weight of Thy hand from off me,
And let not Thy terrors appal me :
Then call Thou, and I will answer ;
Or let me speak, and answer Thou me.
How great is my guilt and transgression ?
Acquaint me with my sin.” (xiii. 20-23).

There is superb audacity in all this ; such an audacity as is only possible to conscious integrity of the Old Testament type. In the sequel, as we shall see, something very different happens. There is no debate : when God finally speaks, Job is dumb (xl. 4f). Still, his apostrophe here is nothing less than magnificent. With his good conscience he is ready to appear before God and speak to Him unafraid, as a man to his friend, leaving Him free to open or close the debate as He pleases. For all his sense of the sovereignty of the Presence he is

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willing to confront, Job uses language which daringly suggests something like equality; but behind the audacity lies an overwhelming faith in the personality, the reasonableness, the friendship of God, which is worth a thousand of Eliphaz's revelations or Bildad's traditions.

He calls, and with beating heart he listens for an answer; but no answer comes. Then "his unfriended and solitary spirit shrinks back into its tenement of pain,"¹ and he cries:

"O why dost Thou hide Thy face,
And count me as Thine enemy?
Wilt Thou harass a leaf that is tossed?
Wilt Thou chase the withered stubble,
That Thou passest a judgment so bitter,
Entailing upon me the sins of my youth?
Thou dost fasten a block on my feet,
And set watch over all my ways.
Round my roots Thou cuttest a line,
Setting bounds that they may not pass." (xiii. 24-27).

Job does not deny that he shares the sinfulness, as the frailty, of humanity: but he cannot believe that for common and inevitable sins God would impose upon him a penalty so dreadful, and he knows not how else to account for His pitiless vigilance and persistent hostility. So far is Job from being worthy of those fierce assaults, like the primeval monster whom it took the great God to slay (cf. vii. 12), he is only too conscious of being nothing but a driven leaf or withered stubble. Why should the Almighty harass the frail one so?

¹ G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on the Book of Job*, p. 116.

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From the sorrow of his own life Job now passes, as was natural to so generous a heart, to the contemplation of the pathos of all human life. Formerly he had dwelt upon its toil (vii. 1ff), now he is thinking of its transiency : and he wonders that God should bring to so stern an account a being whom He has made so frail, and exposed, by the very constitution of his nature, alike to the ravages of care and sin. In a spirit very different from Eliphaz (iv. 18ff), he argues that the frailty of man's moral nature is a reason why God should deal with him in clemency. Besides, his time is so short ; and all he asks is that, like an over-wrought servant, at the end of the day, he may be permitted to spend the brief evening of his life in peace, before the everlasting night descends upon him.

"Man that is born of a woman
Is of few days and filled with trouble.
He comes forth like a flower and he withers,
He flees like a shadow and stays not.
On *such* dost Thou open Thine eyes ?
And *him* would'st Thou bring to Thy judgment ?
Who can bring from the unclean the clean ?
Not one is free from sin.
Seeing, then, that his days are decreed,
And the tale of his months is with Thee,
Look away, and let him have peace,
To enjoy, like a hireling, his day." (xiv. 1-6).

Yes, the night is everlasting ; so that, if there is no hope here, there can be none there. But there is hope here—at least for a tree ; and here the great sufferer startles us with one of his most touching and beautiful thoughts :

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“ For hope there may be for a tree ;
Though cut down, it may sprout once more,
And the shoots therefrom need not fail.
Though its root in the earth wax old,
And its stem be dead in the ground,
It may bud at the scent of water,
And put forth boughs like a plant.” (xiv. 7-9).

Travellers tell us that it is still the custom, in the neighbourhood of Damascus, to cut down old and decaying trees near the roots, and that, when plentifully watered, they put forth shoots again. In happier days Job had watched this phenomenon with those clear and penetrating eyes of his : perhaps he sees it now, in an inspired moment, as a parable of the new life to which man shall awake, when Death has laid his axe to the roots of his present life—for how much better is a man than a tree!—and for one bright moment his bruised mortal body stands before his enraptured eyes, clothed with immortality, on the other side of death. But the next moment the vision has vanished.

“ But the strong man dies and lies prostrate :
Man breathes his last, and where is he ?
Like the floods of a vanished sea,
Like a river dry and withered—
Till the heavens be no more, he awakes not,
Nor ever is roused from his sleep.” (xiv. 10-12).

We see, as we have seen before (vii. 9f), how Job is fascinated by the thought of the Beyond. It is too good to be false, and nature points that way ; but the facts of human experience, those facts from which Job never flinches, are all against it ; and sadly, but deliberately, he puts the thought away.

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Yet he cannot put it away. May it not be true after all? He looks at it again spell-bound.

“ O wouldest Thou but hide me in Sheol,
Out of sight, till Thine anger be past,
And then call me to mind in Thine own set time,
If a dead man may live once again :
I could wait all the days of my warfare,
Until my release should come.
Thou shouldest call, and I would answer ;
Thou wouldest yearn for the work of Thy hands.”

(xiv. 13-15).

Here is one of his most splendidly daring thoughts—all the more wonderful that he had so recently longed for death. He is going down swiftly to Sheol; but perhaps the inexplicable anger of the God who is sending him there, will one day be spent; and He, the omnipotent One, He to whom nothing is impossible, will yearn for His faithful friend and in love summon him back again. It is the old kindly thought of God which he had for a moment cherished once before (vii. 21), but now he dwells upon it more wistfully. We see here the will to believe, the slow struggle of the soul towards a faith in immortality, and we shall see more of it. It is as touching as it is daring—this thought of the God who has hidden him in the dark under-world for a season, but who loves him still and will bring him up again in His own good time. If this gracious imagination be true, then Job will no longer ask even for a quiet even-tide: he will be content to endure his unendurable anguish, sustained by the thought of that ineffable meeting with his now reconciled God,

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who has been yearning for Job as passionately as Job for Him.

This is no doubt a bit of autobiography. It gives us a glimpse into the soul of the writer, as it struggled and swayed under its conflicting emotions towards a faith which meant peace. We see, too, the fertility of his mind, and its hospitality towards new ideas. Not only do such thoughts never occur to the conventional friends, but they do not even offer them a welcome: they do not give them a moment's consideration. This helps us to feel the loneliness of Job, who, in the hour of his supreme need, is left uncomforted by the religion of his day with its paraphernalia of revelations, traditions and maxims, but who takes his splendid leap across to Sheol, and finds God waiting for him there.

“ But now ”— after his daring flight he is forced back into his gloom by the stern realities of the present—

“ But now Thou countest my steps,
And passest not over my sin.
My transgression is sealed in a bag,
Thou hast fastened secure mine iniquity.”

(xiv. 16f).

God has been pitilessly watching his every sin, counting them carefully, hoarding them relentlessly to bring them forward now, in their totality, in justification of the penalty He is exacting. The friends had spoken of the future with hope, but what hope can there be for him or for any one in a world whose law is decay and death? Man crumbles to dust as surely as the mountains.

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"But the very hills crumble to pieces,
The rocks are moved out of their place.
Water wears stones to dust,
The floods wash the soil away :
So the hope of man Thou destroyest ;
He lieth, to rise up no more.
Thou dost worst him for ever ; he passeth,
Dismissed—with his face how changed !
Honour comes to his sons, but he knows not :
Or shame, but he doth not perceive it.
But the flesh upon him feels pain,
And the soul within him is sorrowful." (xiv. 18-22).

The whole chapter is of inexpressible beauty. Man passes from the misery of this present world to that dull listless life, which is no life, in Sheol, where his dearest matter not to him nor he to them ; and with this sorrowful picture the first great cycle of speeches closes.

The friends, leaning upon their rigid and conventional doctrines, have sincerely striven to bring Job to a better mind ; and, though they have said many things that wounded him to the quick, they have on the whole tried to be kindly and comforting, and they have always ended with a vision of happier days to come. But Job has stood before them as a wall of adamant : he has rejected with scorn their theories which he cannot reconcile with so many tragic facts. But while their minds have been stationary, his has been swiftly moving from point to point : now scorning life, now lamenting the speed of its passing ; now bewailing the finality of death, now venturing—if only for a moment—upon a faith in some sublime experience beyond it. Behind all his challenges we can detect the gentle

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undertone of a faith in God as his omnipotent Friend. Will this glimmering faith be smothered by his misery, or will it rise into increasing clearness and power? That is the question that rises to our minds, as we enter upon the second act of this great spiritual drama.

ACT II

(JOB xv.-xxi.)

ACT II

ELIPHAZ'S APPEAL TO THE UNADULTERATED DOCTRINE OF THE PAST (Job xv.)

THE friends have listened with something like consternation to the audacities and irreverences of Job, delivered, as we may well believe, with a passion that flashed from his very eyes.

“How fierce the emotions that sweep thee!
And how thou flashest thine eyes,
As thou turnest thy breath against God
Into words from thy rebel lips.” (xv. 12f).

Job stands before them guilty—condemned alike by his misery and by his own wild and impious speeches. Any lingering doubt they may have cherished as to his guilt is entirely removed by the arrogance of his demeanour towards God and themselves, His representatives.

“Thy guilt instructeth thy mouth,
And thou choosest the tongue of the crafty.
Thine own mouth condemns thee—not I,
And thine own lips are witness against thee.”
(xv. 5f).

The very first words of Eliphaz, who resumes the debate, betray a little temper. Job, he hints, is not quite the wise man he takes himself to be: his last long speech, flashing with thoughts too fair and subtle for mechanical minds, had only bored Eliphaz and stamped the speaker as a wind-bag. He begins by asking,

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"Would a wise man pour forth windy answers,
Or fill with the east wind his breast?
Would he reason with profitless words,
And with speech that is all unavailing?" (xv. 2f).

Worse, Job is not only unwise, but ungodly; by his outspoken impieties he is not only violating the reverent silence which is seemly in the presence of God, but he is assailing the very foundations of religion itself.

"See! thou art destroying religion,
Disturbing devout contemplation." (xv. 4).

Eliphaz is no doubt thinking partly of Job's (to him) extraordinary suggestion that God could lightly pass over sin (cf. vii. 21), but chiefly of his furious denials of the existence of a moral order, and of his assertion that the Power behind the world is cruelly indifferent to moral interests—"He destroyeth innocent and guilty alike" (ix. 22). But later words in this speech of Eliphaz lead us to believe that he is also thinking of Job's defiant repudiation of the theory of human suffering he himself had so carefully set forth in his first consolatory speech—as adequately explained by the inherent sinfulness of man (iv. 17ff), and as having a disciplinary purpose (v. 17f). It would be altogether in the spirit of the friends to confuse religion with orthodoxy, to identify it with their particular interpretation of it, and to condemn the man who rejected their views as if he had rejected religion itself—in other words, to consider the heretic as a practical atheist. It would be amusing if it were not so tragic; for there is more genuine religion, more passionate yearning for God, in one of

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Job's invectives than in all their orthodoxy put together.

But it is not surprising that the aged Eliphaz, conscious of being supported in his opinions by the mature wisdom of his time—for

“With us are the gray and the aged,
More mighty in years than thy father” (v. 10)—

should descend to the language of sarcasm, and ask Job whence he derives this marvellous wisdom of which he seems to claim a monopoly. Perhaps he was a member of the heavenly council, initiated into the divine secrets, in the distant days when the world was born ?

“Wast thou the first man to be born ?
Wast thou fashioned before the hills ?
Wast thou one of the heavenly council ?
Was wisdom revealed unto thee ?” (xv. 7f).

Eliphaz is thinking, with a sense of superiority, of the real revelation, trivial though it seemed to Job, which God had once vouchsafed to him in the dead of night (iv. 12ff). Job had scornfully rejected the friends' commonplaces, dressed up as revelations, with the words “Who knoweth not such things as these ?” (xii. 3), and he had summoned them to listen to his own daring and independent criticism of life (xii. 11, 14ff). Eliphaz is piqued and angry.

“What knowest thou that we know not ?
What insight is thine and not ours ?” (xv. 9).

He does not see the pointlessness of his question : he forgets that Job knows all that the friends can tell him—for he has himself been trained in the same

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school—and very much more. To their knowledge of the theory he adds his own experience of its inadequacy, he knows the touch of suffering upon his life, and that has sharpened his eyes to the vast sorrow of the world.

But the vanity of Eliphaz has been particularly wounded by Job's rejection of what he is pleased to call "the consolations of God," the "gentle" speech of comfort with which he had opened the debate and in which he had directed Job to his "revelation," and sought to teach him the disciplinary value as well as the origin of his sufferings.

"Dost thou spurn the divine consolations,
The word that dealt with thee so gently?" (xv. 11).

How bitterly Job would smile at this allusion to the "consolations." They were indeed the miserable consolations of an Eliphaz, but assuredly not "of God." For Job the tragedy is that God will not intervene at all, far less to console him: He will not break His inexplicable silence. But Eliphaz is not to be moved by Job's ridicule from his beloved "revelation." He repeats his comfortable doctrine of human depravity, and almost in the old words:

"What is man that he should be clean,
Or just—one of woman born?
See! He putteth no trust in His saints,
And the heavens are not clean in His sight;
How much less one abhorrent and tainted—
A man that drinks evil like water." (xv. 14-16).

This rather impotent reiteration, this inflexible adherence to an old formula, is psychologically very effective, suggesting as it does that Eliphaz, like his

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friends, is a man of ossified mind. His affection for the single idea he possesses closes his mind to other ideas, even when they are forced upon him by a tragedy. How unlike the flexibility of Job, who eagerly scans the whole range of fact, in nature, in life, in history. We feel here the writer's tacit condemnation of a wooden orthodoxy which refuses to expand or modify in the presence and under the pressure of new facts.

"Now listen," says Eliphaz. The debate grows exciting. Job (cf. xiii. 17) and his friends fling about their appeals for a hearing, each keenly conscious that he has something of real importance to say, which the other side is ignoring.

"Now listen to what I will show thee,
The thing I have seen I will tell—
Even tales that were told by the wise
And not hidden from them by their fathers,
Who had the land all to themselves,
When no stranger had yet come among them."

(xv. 17-19).

Eliphaz, after reminding Job of his wonderful revelation, here adopts a position not unlike that of Bildad in emphasizing tradition (ch. viii.). He begins by promising to tell Job of something he has *seen*, but it turns out to be, after all, only something he has *heard*. For one of his conventional religious type, that will do just as well. The doctrine with which he is about to regale Job has come down from the "wise" men of the olden time; and the wise men of to-day, like Eliphaz, accept it unquestioningly, as Job would, too, if he were the wise man he thinks he is. It is the "pure" doctrine cherished

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in the old days before there had been any infiltration of foreign influence. Again, an indirect testimony to the closed mind of orthodoxy ! No intellectual stimulus, nothing but mental and moral corruption, can be expected from circles or nations beyond its own. " He followeth not with us." What a small and hermetically sealed world the friends are living in, irresponsible to the innumerable fructifying influences beyond it, and blind to many of the most impressive facts. But let that go. What is, after all, the doctrine ushered in with this pompous and very flimsy and questionable guarantee of its truth ? It is this :

" All his days is the wicked in pain,
All the years for the tyrant appointed.
In his ears is the sound of terrors,
In peace comes the spoiler upon him.
He cannot escape from the darkness,
And he is reserved for the sword,
Appointed as food for the vulture—
He knows that his doom is at hand.
The day of darkness appals him,
Constraint and distress overpower him.
For he stretched out his hand against God,
Played the warrior against the Almighty,
Running against Him stiff-necked
With the thick of the boss of his bucklers,
Like a king prepared for the onset.
He covered his face with his fat,
He set thick folds of flesh on his loins ;
And he dwelt in desolate cities,
In houses that none should inhabit.
What *he* has won, others shall capture,
His substance shall not endure.
The fierce heat shall wither his branches,
His fruit shall the wind whirl away.
Let him not trust his plant when it shoots,
For the branch thereof shall be vanity.
It shall wither before its time,
Before its fronds become green.

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His grapes he shall shed like the vine,
And cast off like the olive his blossom.
For a barren tribe are the godless ;
Tents of bribery the fire shall consume." (xv. 20-24).

It is just the old doctrine of the certain doom of the wicked, expressed, of course, with the ingenious variety of its brilliant writer's mind. But there are two or three points of importance. One is the thoughtlessness and irrelevance of part of the speech. In the picture of the bloated, sensuous, corpulent sinner who rushes like a warrior against the Almighty —how unlike the bruised worn man whose misery started the whole problem!—we cannot help feeling that the speaker is wandering from the immediate facts and indulging his gift for rhetoric, as he had done before in his cruelly thoughtless allusion to the children (v. 4). It is further of importance that he dwells now upon the inward penalty of sin. The sinner is lashed by conscience as well as by misfortune —the sound of the coming destruction is in his ears. But most significant of all is it that the well-meaning Eliphaz should now entirely drop the *rôle* of comforter and hold before Job the divine terrors. He does not yet accuse him of heinous sins—that monstrous injustice is yet to come (xxii. 5ff); but he points with ominous elaboration to the fate of the obstinate and unrepentant sinner, and leaves Job this time without a word of hope. This has the natural effect of alienating Job still more from the friends and driving him back upon God.

JOB'S CRY TO THE WITNESS IN HEAVEN (Job xvi. and xvii.)

Eliphaz has made it very plain by implication that the time for consolation is past, and that his duty now is to operate upon his misguided friend with the gospel of fear. Job's sensitive soul instinctively feels the chill in the temperature. Far from refreshing his weary spirit, the friends have wearied him yet more with their voluble commonplaces, and with his customary candour he has not hesitated to tell them so.

“Many things such as these have I heard :
Ye are wearisome comforters—all of you.” (xvi. 2).

He feels that with disputants like these no progress is possible ; and, so far as the profit of the debate is concerned, it might be immediately brought to an end. With slight variations due to temperament, age, and mental predisposition, the friends persist in saying the same things over and over again ; and we have seen how Eliphaz harps for the second time upon his famous revelation, which was to reconcile Job to his lot. The friends repeat themselves and repeat each other ; there is an intellectual rigidity about them, which rendered further discussion useless. Their minds only mark time, they could not march ; and well might Job ask :

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“ Shall windy words have an end ?
What is it that provokes thee to answer ? ”
(xvi. 3).

Behind their intellectual rigidity there lay, as there always does in such cases, a certain lack of imagination. They had no eyes but for familiar facts, no minds but for established doctrines, no power to enter sympathetically into the unfamiliar, whether a new range of facts or another human experience. Their comfort is therefore of the rhetorical order, lacking heart and imagination—*lip-comfort*, as Job calls it—accompanied by an ominous shake of the head. But Job has imagination as well as intellect. “ Were your soul in my soul’s stead ”—Job could readily imagine that: but they could not imagine the reverse, and so they have nothing steadyng or uplifting to say.

“ I, too, could speak like you,
Were your soul in my soul’s stead.
I could weave words together about you,
And shake my head at you.
I could strengthen you with my mouth,
And encourage you with lip-comfort.” (xvi. 4f).

Yes, he could, but he never would: he has too profound a sense of human sorrow for that; and, on Eliphaz’s own confession (iv. 3f) what he had really done in such a case is what he afterwards claims to have done (xxix. 12-17)—he had “ strengthened the drooping hands: his words had set up the stumbling, and strengthened the tottering knees.”

Since, however, the friends with their cold comfort have only harrowed his soul and deepened

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his sense of loneliness, his only refuge is in God.
But what a God ! For

“ Now He hath wearied and dazed me,
 My misery seizes upon me,
It rises for witness against me,
 My grief testifies to my face.
In His wrath He hath flung me down torn,
 He hath gnashed upon me with His teeth.
My foes whet their eyes upon me,
 With open mouth they gape.
They insult me with blows on the cheek,
 Coming on in their masses against me.
To knaves God has given me up,
 Into wicked hands He has hurled me.
I was happy, when He took and shattered me,
 Grasped my neck, and then dashed me to pieces.
He set me up for His target,
 On all sides His archers beset me.
He cleaves through my veins unrelenting,
 He pours out my gall on the ground.
One breach after another He makes on me,
 Rushing at me like a warrior.
Sackcloth I sewed on my skin,
 And my horn I have laid in the dust.
My face is red with weeping,
 And over mine eyelids is darkness—
Though wrong there is none in my hands,
 And though my prayer be pure ” (xvi. 7-17).

One or two of the touches graphically suggest the horror of the disease—the face inflamed, the spasmotic weeping ; but the deepest horror is that behind this inscrutable thing is God. The verses are alive with the strong sense of God's personal hostility. He is there in the gloomy background, though He is only once named. It is *He* that hath done this : and what He has done is described in a succession of similes, as if no single picture was adequate to describe the fury of the inexhaustible

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wrath which was being hurled upon him. First, in language palpitating with an energy in which the fierceness of the assault becomes almost audible, God is likened to a wild beast which seizes him by the neck with its claws, crushes and tears him to pieces, and then flings him down bleeding on the ground. Then He is compared to an archer (cf. vi. 4.) who hurls his pitiless shafts at his poor human target, piercing him through and through ; and finally to a warrior, storming the wall of an enemy city. Two circumstances conspire to render these assaults all the more pathetic : one is that, before they came, Job had been so strangely happy ; and the other, that he had led a blameless life. And now this is the end ! He, an innocent man, is being hurried into the grave with every circumstance of cruelty by the God whom he had served so well. He goes down with his reputation besmirched and unvindicated.

But no ! It cannot be. At this point Job's spirit takes one of its magnificently daring flights.

“ O earth ! cover not my blood ;
No rest let there be to my crying.
Behold, in heaven is my Witness,
And I have a Sponsor on high.
My friends pour their scorn upon me,
But my tear-stained eyes look unto God,
That He plead for a man with God,
And for son of man with his Friend.” (xvi. 18-21).

He is being murdered, he is dying : but his blood, like the murdered Abel's (Gen. iv. 10), can cry from the ground to the God of justice in heaven, for the universe is on the side of justice. There is one there who will hear. In the dazzling light which

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momentarily illumines the gloom of Job's spirit, he sees Him up yonder. *Behold!* he is sure of Him, not merely of His presence, but of His goodwill, of His support, of His advocacy, of His power and His yearning to testify on his behalf and to establish his innocence before an unbelieving world. He prays no more for a little ease or comfort before he dies ; for before his soul there hovers the glorious vision of his heavenly Friend, his Witness and Sponsor on high.

What a passion for character, what a soul of honour, breathes through words like these ! He has not yet risen to the wonderful conviction which he later attains that he will himself see his Vindicator and his vindication (xix. 25-27) ; but he goes down to his grave happy in the sublime faith that, though he will not be there to see it, his character will be triumphantly cleared ; and that is infinitely more to such a man than health or happiness or life itself. Here we see him grasping more firmly thoughts which had visited him before but which he had not been able to hold—thoughts of the indefeasible justice and friendship of God—and he now has the courage to carry them into the world beyond. He has now far transcended the sorrowful mood in which he had said, “ Thou shalt seek me, but I shall not be ” (vii. 21). He has a deeper assurance of the future than when he threw out the tentative hope that God might hide him for a season in Sheol, till His wrath be overpast (xiv. 13). He is now convinced that the justice to which he had so confidently appealed (xiii. 7, 16) persists beyond death.

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His earthly friends may pour their scorn upon him, but his heavenly Friend is for him, and that is enough.

At this point Job touches again, only more firmly, the singular thought he had expressed before, of an arbiter between himself and God (ix. 33-35). Then he had lamented that there was no such one, no one to stand between, laying one hand on God's shoulder and the other on his, and decide between them both. But now in this moment of illumination he sees that in the contest between himself and God, God Himself must be the arbiter. It is a subtle thought which reveals two conceptions of God contending in the soul of Job. He appeals away from the unintelligible God who torments him to the Judge of all the earth, who will do right by the faithful, even after they are dead. There is no refuge from God but God, but He will be Refuge indeed.

It is characteristic of the swiftly moving mind of Job that he can pass immediately from the shining heights to the blackest depths. He is too sternly compassed about by the sorrowful facts of the present to tarry long in the high places to which he has been swept in a moment of rapture. Like the prophets who preface many a glorious vision of the future with "It shall come to pass in the latter days," he sees only too plainly the misery and the bitterness of the days that now are.

"For when but a few years come,
I shall go whence I shall not return.
His anger hath ruined my days,
And for me is left nought but the grave.
Delusion is surely my portion,
On bitterness tarries mine eye." (xvi. 22, xvii. 1f).

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Vindication will come—he is now sure of that—but not here, at least not as long as he lives. And then he gives utterance to that curious sense, which we have observed before, of dichotomy in God, that strange conflict between the inscrutable God who torments him, and the God who will in the end deliver or at least vindicate him. It is as if God were divided against Himself.

“ Lay a pledge for me—Thou with Thyself :
For who else would strike hands with me ? ”

(xvii. 3).

The thought is much the same as that which he had uttered but a moment before, that God would plead for him with God—the God of grace, in whom he trusts in spite of everything, with the God of wrath, whose poisoned arrows quiver in his palpitating flesh. The thought here is the same, but it takes a slightly different turn. He prays for a pledge of victory in that day of trial to which he looks forward with expectation, but which he does not believe he is destined with his bodily eyes to see. But who can give such a pledge ? Who can provide a surety that will satisfy the God whom for the moment he is compelled to regard as his enemy ? Who but God Himself ? for none but God can satisfy God. His words here reveal the unutterable loneliness of his soul, forsaken as he is alike by man and God—by the well-meaning friends who lacerate him with their platitudes, and by the God who abuses His omnipotence to crush him ; but they reveal no less his indefeasible confidence in a love behind and beyond

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the present distress, in a God who by His ultimate intervention will justify alike Himself and Job. With nothing else to sustain him, he sustains himself completely upon the confidence that the Judge Himself—no other and no less—will be his surety.

But again from this lofty height he sinks back into the depths of the unredeemed misery which besets him behind and before. The sorrows which surge around him like a sea, the blackness of spirit in which he dwells, the tortures which rack his poor emaciated body, reveal him as a marked man—marked by the anger of God, and marked for the scorn of conventional men, who believe with only too painful facility that, as God is just, so men are not thus tormented for nothing. The hypocrite has been unmasked at last. His story has travelled from tribe to tribe and now he is the wonder and derision of the world.

“Thou hast made me the by-word of nations,
They look upon me as a monster.
Mine eye is grown dim for vexation,
My members are all as a shadow.
My days pass away without hope,
The desires of my heart are extinguished.
The night I turn into day,
And the light is before me as darkness.”
(xvii. 6f, 11f).

Infinite loneliness, hopelessness and sorrow breathe through the words that follow :

¹ The noble words of verses 8-10, especially verse 9, which A. B. Davidson describes as “ perhaps the most surprising and lofty in the Book,” hardly seem consonant with the mood of Job at this point, and should probably be transferred, with many scholars, to the speech of Bildad, between xviii. 3 and 4.

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“ If I hope, then the grave is my home,
And my couch I have spread in the darkness.
I call to the pit, ‘ My mother,’
And unto the worm, ‘ My sister.’ ” (xvii. 13f).

Hope is hard to slay, and gleams of it fitfully illumine his anguish. But how can hope be cherished by such a man as Job, whom a cruel and incurable disease is relentlessly dragging down to the grave, and whom God and man alike seem resolved to torment to the end—the one by His power, and the other by his platitudes ? If he timidly ventures to hope, at once he is mocked by the spectre of the grave which already is yawning for him. Nevermore can there be for him real fellowship in the bright world above where once, with wife and children and friends, he was so happy, but only in the blackness of the grave, where his fellows will be the ugly creeping things that harbour there. What is the good, then, of cherishing hope or speaking of happiness ? and why add this delusion to the others that embitter his soul ?

“ Where, then, were that hope of mine ?
And my happiness who can espy ? ” (xvii. 15).

But he does not rest there. He closes with one of those astonishing words which, however dark be the mood in which they were spoken, begin to disclose new and nobler vistas :

“ Will it go with me down to the grave ?
Shall we sink to the dust together ? ” (xvii. 16).

The words which lead up to this leave little doubt that the mood in which it was spoken was one of almost, if not altogether, utter hopelessness. And

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yet, as so often happens with the great words of the Old Testament, it points to something beyond itself. Job asks a question to which he gives no answer. The answer he would give in that moment is as good as certain ; and yet, as the question remains unanswered, the other alternative is left open. Besides, in other moods, Job had answered his question in another and more daring way. He had looked at the possibility and cherished the hope (xiv. 13-15) that God would hide him in the dust until His wrath was overpast ; that, overcome with yearning for the work of His hands, He would call His servant back from the nether gloom : and he had felt in anticipation the thrill of unutterable joy with which he would respond to that trumpet call. And deep down in his soul, almost extinguished by the crushing weight of his sorrows, this hope is glimmering still. It is, or at least it may be, as it certainly once was : whether the spark will ever again be fanned into a flame only the sequel can show.

BILDAD'S PICTURE OF THE SURE AND TERRIBLE DOOM OF THE WICKED (Job xviii.)

One of the most striking things in the speeches of the friends—and here the writer is drawing from the life—is their incapacity to be impressed by the arguments of Job or by the movements of his mind. His sublimest appeals they simply ignore. As the drama unfolds, they show more temper and less sympathy—less for the man and none for his argument; they move more and more deliberately away from the fire of his challenges to the shelter of their tedious and comfortless orthodoxy. His fairest thoughts breed in them nothing but impatience, and for answer they have nothing to offer but truisms and ill-concealed invective. The writer is subtly suggesting how little of imaginative response, how little of human sympathy, may be looked for from men whose minds have been tied by a system, and who are more concerned to defend conventional opinions than to face new truth and to alleviate human suffering.

Bildad's second speech well illustrates this intellectual and moral callousness. His first words reveal the impatience and the irritation with which he had listened to Job's moving appeal to his Witness in the heavens and his sorrowful lament touching the hope which is likely to be buried with

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him in the dust. The one is too sublime, and the other too tender, for the pedestrian soul of Bildad. Like all who care more for orthodoxy than for men, his chief concern is to present his own case. So he brusquely begins :

“ When wilt thou end thy words ?
Now consider, and *we* will speak.” (v. 2.)

He is mortally offended at the slight that Job had more than once put upon his intelligence and that of his friends—all the more that they are so conscious of possessing the truth, the ancient truth believed by the fathers (viii. 8) and piously handed on to their succeeding race, the truth which had actually been disclosed to Eliphaz in a special revelation (iv. 12ff.)—while the misery of Job is proof enough of how far he has swerved from it. Honest men like Bildad will not be deflected from it by Job’s captious criticisms : they will be more than ever convinced of the justice of their own opinions.

“ Why are we counted as beasts,
And deemed by thee to be dullards ?
Honest men thrill with horror at this ;
A pure man is roused by such godlessness.
But the righteous holds on his way
And the man of clean hands waxes stronger.”
(xviii. 3, xvii. 8f.)

Job has been candid enough to count them as beasts : why, it is not they, but he, who is behaving like a beast, like a veritable wild beast—“ thou that tearest thyself in thine anger.” He pointedly recalls the word which Job, in his last speech, had had the hardihood to apply to God’s treatment of him : he cannot rise to the height of Job’s great argument,

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but he can fasten, in his petty way, on single words. Job had complained that God in His anger had "torn" him with his teeth (xvi. 9). "Nay, verily," retorts Bildad, "it is thou that tearest thyself;" and what he means he at once makes plain, characteristically enough, in the language of exaggeration.

"For *thy* sake shall earth be made desert,
Or rock be moved out of its place?" (xviii. 4).

Job seems to imagine that the whole order of the universe is to be turned upside down, simply to accommodate his necessities. We are reminded of the more modern taunt, "Shall gravitation cease when you pass by?" But Job had never really made any such desperate claim: it is a nobler thought that inspires his challenges. Doubtless he feels the world-sorrow most keenly where it impinges upon himself, for every heart must know its own bitterness more directly and completely than it can know that of any other heart. But, as we have seen, more than once (chaps. vii. and xiv.), it is really a world-sorrow that Job is voicing in his own laments; and the burden of his complaint is that the power which is so manifest in the world is not manifestly, or rather not at all, on the side of justice. "He destroyeth innocent and guilty alike" (ix. 22).

Then Bildad begins to paint his comfortless picture of the sure doom of the wicked—a doom of darkness unillumined. Job had dreamt of a future in which, though he himself would be dead, his heavenly Witness would make his righteousness shine clear as the noon-day: but let him not deceive himself.

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God is not mocked. The real truth Job had himself proclaimed in the saner words with which he had closed his last speech, and in which he had recognized that the grave would be his everlasting home, and he and his hope alike would go down to the eternal darkness together.

“Nay, the light of the wicked is quenched,
And the flame of his fire shall not shine.
The light in his tent shall be dark,
And the lamp o'er his head shall go out.”

(xviii. 5f).

This, urges Bildad in a curious passage, is the inevitable doom of those who ignore or defy the moral constitution of the world. In truth it can neither be ignored nor defied. The man who tries to run athwart it will find himself caught in inextricable toils.

“ His great swinging strides become shortened,
His own counsel maketh him stumble.
His foot is thrust into a net,
So that over the net-work he sprawleth.
A snare shall take hold of his heel,
And a trap shall close tightly upon him.
A noose lies concealed on the ground,
And a trap on his path doth await him.”

(xviii. 7-10).

This view of the moral universe is true, and there is something powerful and eerie in the deliberate accumulation of grim synonyms—something perhaps, too, significant of the harsh quality of the mind of Bildad in this view of the world as a gigantic trap. It is all true ; but, like so much of the truth urged by the friends, it happens not to be relevant to the case

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in hand. Hell-hounds may pursue "the wicked" (v. 5) from one disaster to another; but Job, whatever his disasters, we know and God knows to be a man "blameless and upright." Yet

"On all sides are terrors appalling,
Pursuing him close at his heels.
For him shall misfortune be hungry,
Disaster is ready to throw him." (xviii. 11f).

The inexorable Bildad, however, is not content with generalizations: in a cruel passage, redeemed by two immortal phrases, he proceeds to sketch the doom of the wicked in details so vividly and pointedly suggestive of the sufferings of Job that his rebuke could not be plainer, had he said outright, "Thou art the man."

"The pestilence gnaws at his skin,
And the first-born of death at his members.
Then, dragged from his tent in despair,
He is marched to the King of Terrors.
His house shall be haunted by ghosts;
On his homestead shall brimstone be scattered.
His roots shall be dried up beneath,
And above shall his branches be withered.
From earth shall his memory perish;
No name shall be his on the streets.
From the light he is thrust into darkness,
And chased right out of the world." (xviii. 13-18).

Job was the living, or shall we say the dying, proof that Bildad's doctrine was true. "The first-born of death," the terrible leprosy, was that very moment gnawing at his skin—not more cruelly than the words of his "comforter" were lacerating his soul. Plucked from the tent where he had had such

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happy fellowship with his God and his children, and driven, under the ban of his disease, to a place on the ash-heap outside the village, he was even then, slowly but surely, making his way to the King of Terrors. In the brimstone to be scattered on the homestead of the godless Job could not fail to read an allusion to the "fire of God" that had fallen upon his flocks from heaven (i. 16) ; while in the tree with its dry roots and withered branches he could not fail to see, as he was intended to see, his own wasted, blasted life ; and the passing of his name from the streets, of his memory from the earth, of his kith and kin from human habitation, is a bitter reminder of the fate that had swept away his sons and daughters. It is all unspeakably cruel. In the first cycle of speeches the friends had been drifted by their own rhetoric into thoughtless and half unconscious allusions to these things ; but this is a piece of studied and calculated callousness, which is sharpened to an even keener edge by the speaker's closing words :

"The west is appalled at his doom,
And the east is stricken with horror.
Yea, such are the homes of the wicked,
Of those who care nothing for God." (xviii. 20f).

The doom, well merited though it be, will be so terrible that the world, from end to end, will shudder at it. Yes, *such* will be the doom ; and all the particulars enumerated are reflected to the last iota in the experience of the unhappy man before whose mournful eyes the picture is held up. Job sees himself deliberately thrown by his friend among "those who care nothing for God."

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We must do Bildad the justice of admitting that he spoke his real mind undisguisedly. He can cherish no hope for his friend, and he extends to him none : he wraps him in the gloom which he predicted for him. How will this fresh injustice react upon the soul of Job ?

JOB'S SUBLIME FAITH IN HIS FUTURE VINDICATION (Job xix.)

The transparent insinuations of Bildad's speech create in Job a tumult of emotions upon which he is eventually lifted to higher heights than any he elsewhere attains throughout the whole course of the drama. But he reaches them out of the depths. It is—in part at least—the despair to which his human friends have driven him that throw him at last into the arms of the great Friend. But the fierceness of the soul-struggle on which Job is about to enter already trembles through his opening words :

“ How long will ye vex my soul,
And crush me to pieces with words ?
These ten times ye have put me to shame,
And set upon me unabashedly.
Well, be it that I have erred—
Mine error abides with myself.” (xix. 2-4).

He does not mean by this to admit that he has erred—certainly not in any degree which would explain his present misery ; but if the concession be made for the sake of argument, at any rate that is his affair, not theirs. The real explanation, however, lay not in sin, but in God. Here, as everywhere, Job and the friends are diametrically opposed, he finding the “ root of the matter ” (v. 28) in God, and what he can only think of as His mysterious and cruel caprice, they finding it in Job himself

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and his sin. Bildad, in his first speech, had recoiled in horror from the thought that God could "pervert justice" (viii. 3); but this, Job maintains—using the same word—is precisely what He has done:

"Know then, it is God that hath wronged me,
And compassed me round with His net." (xix. 6).

Bildad had had much to say about the net in which the sinner must inevitably be caught (xviii. 8); but Job, who is writhing in its toils, maintains that it is God who has thrown it round him, an innocent man.

"Behold! I cry 'Wrong'—but no answer;
I call—but justice is none." (xix. 7).

Then he goes on, with an expressive variety of metaphor, to describe the inexplicable alienation and hostility of God:

"My way He hath fenced round impassably,
Darkness He sets on my path.
He hath stripped my glory from off me,
And taken the crown from my head" (xix. 8f)—

not only his prosperity, but still more perhaps, as xxix. 14 suggests, and infinitely more precious to Job, his reputation for righteousness.

"He hath torn me clean down—I am gone:
He hath plucked up my hope like a tree.
He hath kindled His anger against me,
And counted me one of His enemies.
On come His troops together,
They throw up a rampart against me."
(xix. 10-12).

He feels himself assaulted—as if he were some mighty fortress, instead of being a broken, emaciated,

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anguished man—by those terrible hosts of God, disease, bereavement, pain, sorrow, despair.

So much for the alienation of God which, to a man of Job's passion for the divine fellowship and favour, was the bitterest loss of all. But very terrible also to one with his generosity of nature and his instinct for friendship was the alienation of men ; and this, too, he had to bear—the estrangement, the mockery, even the loathing, of some whom he had loved and of others whom he had served. His misfortunes, his miseries, and, above all, his disease, had stamped him as a man “ smitten of God and afflicted,” whom it was a sacred duty to shun ; and the frightful physical accompaniments of the disease filled even his dearest with aversion and horror. The peculiar sting of his servant's treatment of him can only be fully understood when we bear in mind Job's own amazingly gracious treatment of his servants, as set forth in his concluding speech (xxxi. 13-15).

“ My brethren are gone far from me,
My friends have estranged themselves from me ;
My neighbours have ceased to acknowledge me,
Guests of my house have forgotten me.
Maids of mine count me a stranger,
An alien am I in their sight.
To my servant I call, but he answers not,
Till with my mouth I entreat him.
My breath is strange to my wife,
And my stench to mine own very children.
Yea, even young boys despise me,
And mock when I try to rise.
All mine intimate friends abhor me ;
The man whom I love turns against me.
My skin clings to my bones,
I escape with my flesh in my teeth.” (xix. 13-20).

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These mournful words could only have been uttered by a man with a genius for kindness and friendship. He had none of that self-sufficiency which enables an arrogant man to dispense with his fellows, and the loss of his friends left him with a feeling of desolation second only to that which he suffered through the seeming withdrawal of God. This helps us to understand the vehement appeal to his three friends which follows :

" Have pity, have pity, my friends,
For the hand of God hath touched me."

(xix 21).

It is unexpected and almost bewildering that Job should turn in his despair for pity to the very men upon whose arguments he had showered such sarcasm, irony, and scorn, and whose friendship he had compared to the waters which vanish when the thirsty traveller needs them most. But it shows us two things—his infinite need of friendship, and his awful sense of the hostility of God. As more than once he has been driven from the friends to seek refuge in God, so here he seeks refuge with the friends from the terrible unseen " Hand that has touched " him.

Unutterably tragic is the wail which follows, for no kindly response gleams from those sullen eyes or frigid faces :

" Why do *ye* persecute me like—God,
And devour my flesh insatiably ? "

It is as if he said, " Well ye know that God is using the resources of omnipotence to torture me : will ye be as cruel as God ? " In this at least the friends are

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all too godlike. For Job it is a moment of indescribable tension and unutterable loneliness: in the heavens above and the earth beneath there is nothing but rampant injustice and cruelty. To whom can he go? To whom can he make his appeal? God has forsaken him, his friends have forsaken him, he has nothing to support him in all the universe but his own bare word. Well, let that be written down—this testimony of a good and stainless conscience—as an everlasting witness. If God will not witness for him, he will confidently trust his honour to this imperishable record inscribed upon the everlasting rock.

“O that my words were now written,
That they were inscribed in a book,
That, with iron pen and with lead,
On a rock they were graven for ever.”
(xix. 23f.)

He appeals away from the friends who misunderstand, suspect, denounce him, to posterity—that later world which, with this record before its eyes, will do him the justice he cannot find among his contemporaries.

It is a daring and glorious appeal; but, after all, it is not enough to satisfy the wronged and lacerated heart: and after a pause Job, recognizing its inadequacy, goes back upon it. It is something more intimate and personal for which his heart is yearning. Then, by one of those marvellous revulsions of feeling which reflect so vividly the tempest of his soul, he rises at one bound out of the depths of the blackest despair to the sublimest confidence in the God whom he cannot and will not

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let go, and he expresses this confidence in language of unshakable conviction. Unhappily, at this point both the text and the meaning are unusually obscure. This is not the place to enter upon a minute discussion of textual difficulties : yet we cannot rightly understand the speaker's attitude of mind until we have at least some approximate idea of what he actually said. How difficult it is to reach certainty on this point will be readily seen by a comparison of the three best known English versions. The Authorized Version reads :

v. 25. "For I know *that* my redeemer liveth,
And *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth :
v. 26. And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*,
Yet in my flesh shall I see God :
v. 27. Whom I shall see for myself,
And mine eyes shall behold, and not another ;
Though my reins be consumed within me."

(xix. 25-27).

The Revised Version :

"But I know that my redeemer liveth,
And that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth :
And after my skin hath been thus destroyed,
Yet from my flesh shall I see God :
Whom I shall see for myself,
And mine eyes shall behold, and not another.
My reins are consumed within me."

And the American Revised Version :

"But as for me I know that my Redeemer liveth,
And at last he will stand up upon the earth :
And after my skin, *even* this *body*, is destroyed,
Then without my flesh shall I see God ;
Whom I, even I, shall see, on my side,
And mine eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger,
My heart is consumed within me."

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The obscurity of the original is seen in the intrusion of very important and conceivably misleading words, italicized in the Authorized Version—for example, “at the latter *day*,” “*though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*”—for which there is no warrant whatever in the original. Apart from this, there is at least one great phrase about whose meaning there is among translators not only no unanimity, but positively conflicting and diametrically contradictory interpretations. One rendering represents Job as anticipating a vision of God *in* his flesh, another *from* his flesh, another *without* his flesh. The Hebrew preposition means simply *from*, which two of the versions have taken to mean *from within* and the other *apart from*. Both meanings are justified by Hebrew usage, and only the immediate and the larger context has the right to decide.

But even when the translation is decided, the meaning is still uncertain: for each of these renderings is capable of two interpretations, one descriptive of Job's condition before death, the other after. (i) “*In* his flesh” has been taken, for example, not very naturally perhaps, to mean “reduced to a mass of flesh”—the skin having disappeared under the ravages of the disease; but the living man, though thus disfigured, is still blessed with a vision of God. (ii) It has also been taken to mean “clothed in a resurrection body.” It is easy to see how far-reaching the consequences of this rendering would be; and though there are no thoughts too daring for the brilliant mind behind this book, the conscientious interpreter will be reluctant to accept this view

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without the amplest proofs of its probability. But again, the other rendering "*without* my flesh" may mean either (i) "in a disembodied state" after death—which would yield an idea the very opposite of that which we were last considering; or (ii) "in a fleshless state," that is, reduced to a skeleton—a view which would approximate to the first we considered.

All these possibilities are daring and dramatic, and thoroughly worthy of the context. The picture of the sufferer, now but a shadow of his former self, looking out from his bruised and emaciated frame upon the face of God, is hardly less wonderful than the picture of him on the other side of death gazing, whether in some strange new resurrection body or as a disembodied spirit, upon that Face which had so long been hidden here. Our decision will partly depend upon whether we regard Job as thinking with despair or with kindliness and hope of the world beyond death; and, as we have seen, his attitude on this point fluctuates. It is prevailingly one of gloom: Sheol is the world of impenetrable darkness, from which no traveller returns (vii. 10, xiv. 10): but in rapt moments he had seen the darkness illumined by a flash. He had thought of the love of God as searching for him after he was gone (vii. 21), as hiding him in Sheol till the divine wrath was overpast, only to remember him and bring him up again (xiv. 13ff.); and if there is anywhere a sublime moment in the drama, it is surely at the point which we have reached. This consideration inclines us very decidedly towards the view that Job is thinking

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of the world beyond. Swiftly descending, as he is, to the grave in humiliation and agony, he comforts himself with the great and beautiful thought that he will see God on the other side.

There are other phrases, however, in our translations, either ambiguous or misleading. Take the most famous—"my Redeemer." At once the word suggests to our minds redemption from *sin*, whereas nothing could be further from the mind of Job at this moment, when he is looking forward to a future in which his *innocence* will be established. The word here rendered *Redeemer* is used in Hebrew to denote the next of kin, whose duty was to deliver a kinsman from bondage or debt, or to avenge his blood. What Job longs for is One who will clear his reputation, and some such word as *Vindicator* or *Champion* is needed to bring this out. Parallel to this is the word rendered in the Authorized Version by "at the latter *day*," in the Revised Version by "at the last," in the American Revised Version by "at last." It is not so strong in colour as these renderings suggest, it simply means "an after-one," that is, one coming after to establish his innocence when he is dead. There are other minor points on which we need not here touch.

It has been instinctively felt by every generation of readers that the faith of Job utters itself here in the sublimest form: and it is more than probable that the fascination of the passage has influenced the present text, as it has unquestionably influenced the later versions. The Latin version, for example, of v. 25b reads *in novissimo die de terra surrecturus*

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sum, "on the last day I shall arise from the earth"—which is wrong and misleading in nearly every particular, most of all in its totally unwarranted substitution of *I* for *he*; and our own Authorized Version shows similar, though not so fatal, tendencies. In the light of these facts, the present text demands the most scrupulous examination; and, though this cannot be done fully here, or anywhere adequately, without a discussion of the Hebrew original, one or two points are obvious, and may carry more or less conviction even to the reader who cares nothing for the *minutiæ* of criticism.

The most obvious fact is that *v. 27* consists of three lines, whereas practically throughout the whole book—at any rate in indubitably authentic passages¹—there are only two lines in each verse.² Probably therefore, one of these lines is not original. It is further obvious that the three lines *26b*, *27ab*, ring the changes on the same thought in a way rather alien to the masculine style of Job with its infinite variety. It might indeed be argued that this lingering upon the thought is psychologically motived by the dazzling power of the vision, as Job sees it with the eye of faith; but when the first two lines (*i.e.*, *26b*, *27a*,) are written in Hebrew,³ one beneath the other, they are seen to be composed of almost identical consonants. For example, the word for

¹ The triplets in chapter *xxiv.* (13-24) and *xxx.* (2-8) are believed to be a later intrusion.

² The last clause of the last verse of the chapter we are discussing is suspected for good reasons.

³ *26b* *mbsr 'chth 'lh.*

27a *'shr 'n 'chth l.*

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flesh in *v. 26b* (*bshr*) differs by only a single consonant from the word for *whom* (*'shr*) in *v. 27a*; besides, the relative (*whom*) is so clumsy and unusual at the beginning of a line of Hebrew poetry as to be altogether improbable in this place; and this so strongly tends to confirm the suspicion of the line, arising in our minds out of its virtual repetition of the preceding line, that we may with reasonable probability assume that it is not original.

Further, in *v. 26a*, though it is not impossible to extricate some kind of meaning from the phrase *after my skin*, it cannot be said to be a natural phrase. Now, as it happens, the outlines of the words for "after" and "another" are the same in Hebrew (*'chr*) and for "skin (*r*) and "witness" (*d*) they are very similar.¹ In this context, where everything turns upon the divine vindication and testimony, it is surely highly probable that the original reference is to that "Other" who was to be in the after-time Job's "Witness." Now in the similar passage (xvi. 19) the "Witness in heaven" has for its parallel the "Sponsor on high." There is indeed no such parallel in the text here as we have it; but it is important to observe that the corresponding word *from my flesh*, which, as we saw, is so capable of various interpretations, was not read by the Greek version at all, which had, on the contrary, a word whose consonants² are closely akin to those of the word translated *sponsor* in xvi. 19. It does not seem prudent, however tempting it may be, to build much

¹ The consonants *d* and *r* in Hebrew differ only by a "tittle."

² *mshd*.

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upon a word like *flesh*, which has not the support of our oldest foreign witness to the text, viz., the Greek version ; and it seems, on the other hand, very probable that we have here an echo of the words used before in a similar, though less exalted, moment of rapture. Probably, therefore, the whole passage originally ran thus :

“I know that there liveth a Champion,
Who will one day stand over my dust ;
Yea, Another shall rise as my Witness,
And, as Sponsor, shall I behold—God,
Whom’ mine eyes shall behold, and no stranger’s.
My heart is faint in my bosom.” (xix. 25-27).

It may seem at first sight a pity that attention should have been drawn away from this great experience of Job upon a critical discussion. But no discussion can be irrelevant which helps us to enter the soul of a writer or speaker ; and the words of Job, thus recovered from later modifications and accretions, shine out more gloriously than ever. Every word is alive with passion. “*I know.*” The *I* is here in the Hebrew emphatic as well as the *know* : the American version is right with its “As for me I know.” It is his own conviction that Job is about to utter—his own and not another’s, just as later it is through his own eyes and not those of another that he sees his dazzling vision of God. Bildad may be content to appeal to tradition (viii. 8), but Job must know for himself—know with his own mind, and see with his own eyes. “*I know.*” He utters here the deep and settled assurance of his soul. Tossed upon

¹ *Whom*, not in the Hebrew, but inserted here for the sake of the connection in English.

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a sea of doubt, he anchors here at last. He does not think his ultimate vindication merely possible, or highly probable ; it is certain : he knows. The spark of faith which had been all but smothered by his sufferings and by the rhetorical "consolations" and orthodoxies of his friends, leaps into flame. He passes from a mere presentiment of his coming justification (xiv. 14) through a prayer (xvi. 21) to the assurance of it. He goes on from strength to strength till in the end he sees beyond the darkness to the shining face of God (cf. Ps. lxxxiv. 7).

It is no abstract or formal vindication with which he is concerned, no vindication even by the just voice of posterity. That is good, but it is not enough : his religion is too warm and personal to be satisfied with that. He longs for his Vindicator even more than for his vindication : he yearns for Another, for One like unto himself, only infinitely greater, who will speak to him on the other side of death the mighty word which will establish his innocence for ever.

"I know that my Vindicator *liveth.*" He may seem to be inert and dead : Job, borne away by his passion, may have maintained that there is not a trace of discriminating justice in all the world (ix. 22) ; but now he is sure that, in spite of appearances, God is alive. It is the *living* God of Job, not the dead God of contemporary theology, that quickens his mind to this living thought of Himself. There is perhaps here, too, a contrast between the living God and the dead Job. Job must die and that speedily ; but what matters that, if he trust his fortunes and his soul to a God who cannot die, but

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who lives and works in the interests of righteousness for evermore? The postponement of the word *God* to the end of v. 26 comes with overwhelming dramatic power. When Job speaks of the Champion who will one day stand over his dust, it is still open to the friends to believe that he has in view some human champion, especially as minds so conventional as theirs would be little prepared for so startlingly bold a claim as Job here makes. How the last words would sound upon their ears as the utterest blasphemy—"And as Sponsor shall I behold—God!"

The vision of God as Witness to Job's innocence after he is dead and gone, and of himself alive again, face to face with that God, and hearing from His own lips the blessed words of justification, so overpowers him that he swoons away in rapture—"My heart is faint in my bosom ;" and when he returns to himself, it is to warn his friends of the awful doom in store for them, if they persist in their attempt to find the root of the matter in *him*, that is, to account for his sufferings by his sins :

"But if ye are determined to hunt me,
And in *me* find the root of the matter,
Then dread ye the sword for yourselves ;
For wrath will destroy the ungodly." (xxi. 28f).

There is an inexhaustible suggestiveness about this scene. But we must be careful not to be drawn by the spell of it into inferences which are not justified by the facts. We have here one of those flashes of inspired insight which reappear in later and less original days as doctrines and dogmas ;

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but there is nothing here that in any way implies any developed doctrine of the resurrection. Job is not contemplating for himself a state of everlasting blessedness in the world beyond. He is interested in the other world primarily as the arena of his vindication, and he concentrates his gaze upon the sublime moment when he and his Vindicator shall stand face to face. That is all: but that is much, it is almost everything; for if—though but for a moment—the dead can live again, then the bar between this world and the other is not insurmountable, the veil has been rent in twain; and if life for a moment beyond it is possible, it will not be long till men will learn to believe in the life that shall never end.

The germ of the doctrine of immortality is here; and it is profoundly significant of the passionately ethical and religious quality of the Hebrew genius that this belief in a life beyond is not reached by any consideration of the animistic nature of the soul. It is struck like a spark out of the clash of a great spiritual experience by a passion for the victory of justice and for fellowship with God. It is felt that even the last great enemy Death must not and cannot offer a permanent obstacle to the realization of those two yearnings of the human heart.

It is strange and sad that Job is not able to hold the splendid heights to which he has soared. Under the lash of his friends and the strain of the great world-sorrow together, he falls back again into his mood of challenge. But it is something to have touched those heights, if only for a moment. The man who falls from them can only fall into the arms of God.

ZOPHAR'S WARNING AND INNUENDO THAT HEAVEN
AND EARTH HAVE ALREADY WITNESSED AGAINST
JOB (Job xx.)

It is the unhappy lot of Zophar, the coarsest and the noisiest of the friends, to reply to this noble speech of Job. He replies to it—as the friends for the most part do when their turn comes—by ignoring it, launching breezily off instead upon the sea of truisms and platitudes. The exquisite pathos of Job's last utterance, the vision which had thrown him into a transport of rapture and made him faint for very joy, had left not an iota of impression upon the prosaic soul of Zophar: at most it had provoked him—as much of it as he had understood. The broad arguments, the swift and beautiful intuitions, are nothing to him: he can only fasten upon single words, upon warnings and threats that move more upon the level of his comprehension, upon obvious exhibitions of temper whose real source and depth he was incompetent to understand. Job had ended his speech with a threat of the divine judgment which would assuredly overtake those who persisted in finding the root of the matter in him instead of in God. That Zophar had understood; and the resentment which it had kindled within him inspires his opening words:

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“ Nay, not so do my thoughts make answer ;
And therefore my heart is uproused.
Must I hear thine insulting reproof,
While mere breath without sense is thine answer ? ”
(xx. 2f).

Then he proceeds with the now painfully familiar homily upon the doom of the wicked : that is all the friends have now to say. Eliphaz and Bildad had both descanted eloquently upon this theme, leaving the man whom they had come to comfort without a ray of hope. Now Zophar joins the chorus. He begins rather pompously by inviting Job to contemplate the great sweep of history which illustrates so abundantly the thesis he is about to develop, that the happiness of the wicked is short.

“ Knowest thou not this from of old,
From the time there were men on the earth,
That the song of the wicked is short,
And the hypocrite's joy but a moment ?
Though his majesty mount to the heavens,
And his head reach unto the clouds,
He shall utterly perish like dung ;
Those that knew him shall ask, ‘ Where is he ? ’ ”
(xx. 4-7).

Zophar, whose speeches proclaim him as a hasty man, not unnaturally believes in a hasty God, a God who cannot wait, but must show His hand at every turn and smite the wicked by a swift and sudden blow in the middle of his career. If this is Zophar's interpretation of history, it only shows either how little he is acquainted with the facts, or how shallow is his appreciation of them. He is kin to the man who sang :

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“ Be not kindled to wrath at the wicked,
Nor envious at those that work wrong ;
For, like grass, they shall *speedily* wither,
And fade like the green of young grass.”

(Ps. xxxvii. 1f)

Or :

“ Yet but a little, and the wicked vanish :
Look at his place—he is there no more.” (verse 10).

But the profounder thinkers of Israel, the great psalmists and prophets, whose eyes were opened by a sorrowful experience of their own or their nation, never spoke thus. What impressed them was not God’s swift interventions, but rather His mysterious delays. “ How long,” asks one,

“ How long, O God, is the foe to insult ?
Shall the enemy spurn Thy name for ever ?
Why, O Lord, dost Thou hold back Thy hand,
And restrain Thy right hand within Thy bosom ?
Arise, O God, and defend Thy cause :
Remember how fools all the day insult Thee.
Forget not Thou the uproar of Thine enemies,
The din of Thy foes that ascends evermore.”

(Ps. lxxiv. 10f, 22f).

And a prophet, astonished that God should watch in silence the devastating progress of a pitiless enemy, thus delivers his soul : “ Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look upon perverseness, wherefore lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest Thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he ? Is he to draw his sword for ever and to slay the nations pitilessly evermore ? ” (Hab. i. 13, 17). And for answer he is told that the intervention, though sure, may tarry, and that one must with patience wait for it (ii. 3).

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But the duty of patience forms no part of the gospel of Zophar. He has a simple mechanical creed, because he fancies himself to be living in a simple mechanical world. As we saw in his first speech, the creed which he professes recognizes worthily enough the mystery that attaches to the divine nature: it asserts that no investigation can ever explore that nature to its recesses (xi. 7). But in truth he only believed that he believed this: his working creed is very different. After his protestation of humility, he immediately makes it clear that to him the universe is not so very mysterious after all. He really believed that the divine action was an essentially simple thing, entirely within the limits of his comprehension. Hence the glib exposition which he offers Job of the ways of providence—an exposition all the more irrefutable as it is illustrated by the very fate of the man to whom it is addressed. It is Job himself who has been soaring and who is soon to vanish—to vanish in his prime:

"Like a dream he shall fly beyond finding,
 Dispelled like a vision of night;
No more shall the eye see that saw him,
 His place shall behold him no more.
His sons shall be crushed by privation;
 His wealth shall his children restore.
The vigour of youth filled his bones,
 But with him it shall be in the dust." (xx. 8-11).

In the passage which follows Zophar offers a very realistic description of the wicked man's love of sin, which he elaborately compares to a dainty morsel that an epicure rolls under his tongue, but which is destined at the last to turn to poison within him:

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“ Though evil be sweet in his mouth,
As he keeps it hid under his tongue ;
Though he spare it and let it not go,
But still holdeth it back in his mouth ;
Yet his food in his stomach is turned,
It is poison of asps within him.
The wealth that he swallows he vomits ;
God casteth it forth from his belly.
The poison of asps he has sucked,
And the tongue of the viper shall slay him.”
(xx. 12-16).

It is all very true and vivid, but grotesquely irrelevant as applied to Job who, as the Prologue reminds us, not only hated sin, but regularly made atonement even for the bare possibility of it in his children. But, besides being irrelevant, it is coarse, —faithful reflection of a mind as indelicate as it was shallow. The finer instincts of one of the Greek translators modified the last word of the line “ God casteth it forth from his belly ” to *house*. But this is to obliterate a characteristic trait and to do Zophar too much justice. The picture ought not to be robbed of touches like these, which help us to understand what sort of man it sometimes is who sets himself in opposition to a man of the type of Job. Not then for the last time did the opponents of theological progress show themselves coarse and abusive.

It would be amusing, were it not so pathetic, to find Job described by implication as an arch-oppressor. He who has repeatedly shown the most tender regard for the lot of the servant, and who has expressed with such intimate sympathy the servant’s longing for the evening shadow (iii. 19, vii. 2), is held up to execration as a monster who robbed the poor of their just gains and who is consequently

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doomed by God to pay a terrible penalty—not only the negative penalty of disgorging what he has swallowed, but the positive penalty of assault from the terrors of the divine wrath.

"No rivers of oil shall he see,
No torrents of honey and butter.
His increasing gain brings him no gladness,
His trafficking yields him no joy.
For he crushed down the gains of the poor,
And he plundered the house that he built not.
His treasures have brought him no peace,
And his precious things cannot deliver.
And since none has escaped his devouring,
His own fortune shall not endure.
Brought to straits in the fulness of plenty,
The fell force of trouble assails him.
God shall let loose His hot wrath against him,
And terrors shall rain down upon him.
As he tees from the weapon of iron,
The bronze bow pierces him through.
The missile comes out at his back,
And the glittering point from his gall.
Terrors keep coming upon him;
Deep darkness is stored up for him.
A mysterious fire shall devour him
And ravage those left in his tent." (xx. 17-26).

As Job had once described his own experience of the divine assault in the imagery and almost in the very language of *v.* 25 (xvi. 13) it is abundantly evident that Zophar, though he may seem to be indulging in innocent generalizations, is really hurling venomous shafts at Job himself. If any confirmation were needed of a truth which is luminous in every line of Zophar's speech, it would be furnished beyond a peradventure by the conclusion, which runs thus :

"The heavens shall reveal his guilt,
And the earth shall rise up against him.

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His house shall be swept by destruction,
Accursed in the day of His wrath.
Such the wicked man's portion from God,
God's heritage unto the rebel." (xx. 27-29).

Job had appealed to the earth to transmit his cry to God, and to the heavens to witness for him (xvi. 18f). They will, says Zophar: the earth will rise up against him, and the heavens will be witness to his guilt. Nay, have not earth and heaven already conspired to proclaim that guilt? It is impossible in these concluding words not to think of the Prologue, where the successive catastrophes of Job seemed to prove that heaven and earth were in league against him as a guilty sinner. The Sabeans and Chaldeans on earth, on the one hand; and on the other, the wind that rushed up from the wilderness, smiting the house that held his children, and the fire of God that fell from heaven: are not these things the incontrovertible proof that Zophar is speaking the truth? "*Such* is the wicked man's portion from God"—and such, only too obviously, was the portion of Job: the inference to Job's depravity was inescapable.

It is not without interest that this conclusion closely resembles the conclusion of Bildad's last speech (xviii. 21); as if the writer were deliberately suggesting the imitative quality of conventional minds. They are echoes, not voices. Eliphaz and Bildad frankly admit that they but reproduce the fathers (xv. 18, viii. 8). Men of this type have little that is fresh or helpful to say, and much of that little they borrow from one another.

JOB'S FIERCE INDICTMENT OF THE EXISTING ORDER (Job xxi.)

The friends have now all spoken for the second time. Their personal allusions to the fortunes of Job have been gradually growing more pointed and exasperating. But more exasperating even than those innuendoes is the false or at least inadequate theory from which they spring, that the world is governed on principles of a mathematically exact retribution ; and this is the theory which Job sets himself to attack with all the energy of his outraged intelligence : for the case, as stated by the friends, is a travesty of the facts. His opening words are already heavy with the burden of the coming assault : they disclose a soul charged with the solemnity of the challenge it has undertaken in the interests of truth.

“ Hear now my word with attention :
Your consolation be this.
Suffer me, for I would speak also :
Then, when I have spoken, mock on.
Is it man that I would complain of ?
And why should I not be impatient ? ” (xxi. 2-4).

With an ironical allusion to the “ divine consolations ” Eliphaz had administered to him in vain (xv. 11), he declares that the only consolation he asks of them is that they listen in silence to the terrible truth about the government of the world which

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he is about to unfold. The most terrible truth of all is that behind that government is God Himself. Were human conduct all that Job had to complain of, he could comfort himself with God : but, when it is God Himself who, whether from indifference or caprice, has created the problem, why should he not be " impatient " almost unto fury ?

At the same time the speech which follows is not delivered primarily with the idea of indicting God for His government of the world : its aim is rather to demolish the retributive theory of the friends, which alleged that every sufferer was a sinner, by pointing to an order of facts which they had conveniently ignored. But they are not to be ignored, urges Job ; they are clear enough to honest eyes ; the very thought of them, to say nothing of the sight of them, makes him shudder. And even the friends, unless their eyes are blinded and their hearts irredeemably hardened by their orthodoxy, must listen with horror to a recital so terrible.

" Now listen to me ; and, in horror,
Lay ye your hand on your mouth.
When I think of it, I am confounded,
And shuddering seizeth my flesh." (xxi. 5f).

These words prepare us for an unusually fierce attack upon the conventionalities of the friends and a merciless exposure of some of the facts that make faith hard. He begins with the old Protestant challenge that had characterized his very first speech. — " Why ? " The reason within him demands to find its counterpart in the world without, and it is the failure to find this correspondence that staggers

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faith. The expectation is mocked by the facts. At any rate Job's expectation has been mocked by facts which have thrust themselves upon him, and which he now proceeds to set forth with a remorseless detail which shows that he is not moving in the region of generalizations. He had claimed to be a man of observation and of independent judgment (xii. 11) —to have a palate with which he tasted for himself: he did not trust without verification the verdict of others. He therefore confronts the eloquent commonplaces of his friends with the more than disconcerting results of his own independent observation:

“Why are wicked men suffered to live,
To grow old and wax mighty in power ?
Their seed is established before them,
And their offspring in sight of their eyes.
Their homes are strangers to terror,
No rod of God is on *them*.
Their bull doth unfailingly gender,
Their cow never loses her calf.
Like a flock they send forth their young children ;
Their boys and their girls dance.
They sing to the timbrel and lyre ;
At the sound of the pipe they make merry.
They finish their days in prosperity,
And go down to Sheol in peace—
Though they said unto God, ‘ O leave us,
We desire not to know Thy ways.
Why should we serve the Almighty ?
And what is the good of prayer ?’
See ! their fortune is in their own hand :
Nought He cares for the schemes of the wicked.”
(xxi. 7-16).

The bitterness of the description lies in this, that every detail of it is contradicted by Job's own experience. “ Blameless and upright, fearing God

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and shunning evil," the blessings enumerated ought to have been his—happiness at home, prosperity abroad, a long life, a peaceful death: instead, they fell to atheists who cared nothing for prayer or worship, and who openly flouted God and His will. As for him, though he had served God continually with the most scrupulous piety, he had been condemned to every conceivable torture of mind and body, the rod of God had smitten him with many stripes, he was going down in agony to a premature grave. But the contrast reaches its climax of pathos in the allusion to the band of children who go forth like a flock, and who merrily dance to the sound of music, while Job's own children are lying dead beneath the ruins of their house.

Such, then, is Job's reading of the world—in flattest contradiction to the verdict of the friends. He gives the lie direct to their very words as well as to their thoughts. With an evident allusion to Bildad's easy dictum that "the light of the wicked is put out" (xviii. 5)—apparently a favourite statement of orthodox Israel, as it occurs twice again in the Book of Proverbs (xiii. 9, xxiv. 20)—Job scornfully asks,

"How oft is the lamp of the wicked put out?
How oft does disaster assail them,
Or the pains of His anger lay hold of them?"
(xxi. 17).

He does not maintain that this never happens, but he knows too well that it does not always or even often happen, as on the theory of the friends it should. A prevalent belief in Israel, which finds

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pictorial expression in the first Psalm, is that the wicked are like the chaff which the wind driveth away ; and at this statement, too, is hurled the scornful challenge,

“ How often are they as the straw before wind,
Or like chaff that is stolen by the storm ? ” (xxi. 18).

Here we can imagine the friends, overcome by the vehemence of the speaker and the inexorable logic of his facts, sullenly conceding his contention that the wicked man may fare brilliantly. But their faith in the moral order is in no way disconcerted by this circumstance ; for, if the sinner escapes, they can still affirm that his children suffer ; and this satisfied ancient conceptions of solidarity, such as are suggested in the appendix to the second commandment, that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, and such as are illustrated by the story of Achan, where the children suffer, if not instead of, at any rate, as well as, the guilty father (Josh. vii. 24f).

But such beliefs and practices are revolting to Job :

“ God stores up his guilt for his children,”
 (“ Nay,” I reply) ; “ let Him punish
 The man himself, that *he* feel it.
 Let his own eyes behold his disaster,
 Let *him* drink the wrath of Almighty.
 For what doth *he* care for his house,
 When his own tale of months is cut short ? ”
(xxi. 19-21).

He is, as we have seen, the sworn champion of the sacred rights of personality ; and, just as he maintains that every man must face the facts and “ taste ” the flavour of the world for himself, so he maintains the right of every man to be protected

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from punishment for sins of which he was not guilty. He lifts up the same sort of protest against current conceptions as is raised by Deuteronomy (xxiv. 16), “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, *neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers*”; and still more pointedly by Ezekiel (xviii. 4), “The soul that sinneth, *it*”—it, and no other soul—“shall die.” Men cannot be saved, and should not be punished, by proxy, and Job’s righteous soul is just as much incensed by the penalization of the innocent as by the escape of the guilty. This new fact, to which they appeal in support of the moral order, is only another proof that there is no such thing as a moral order at all. This thought Job now proceeds to elaborate in lines of astonishing pathos :

“One dies with his strength unimpaired,
In the heyday of ease and prosperity ;
Filled are his buckets with milk,
His bones at the marrow are moistened.
And one dies with soul embittered,
With never a taste of good.
In the dust they lie down together,
The worm covers them both.” (xxi. 23-26).

Job is not here saying that the wicked live in ease and die in peace, while noble souls like himself go down to their grave embittered. What he says is subtler and sadder even than that : it is that in the distribution of human fortunes, merit plays simply no part at all. Moral considerations are not even paid the respect of being defied, they are simply ignored. There is no moral order, there is not even a definitely immoral order ; there is simply no order

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at all. We are living in a world in which anything may happen to anybody ; and in the world beyond—to which one might look with humble hope for the rectification of anomalies, and to which not long before Job himself had looked forward with a delirium of joy—there is no difference : “ In the dust they lie down together, the worm covers them both.” It is the same pessimistic protest against the indifference of things as we find in the later Hebrew thinker who lamented that “ all things come alike to all ; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked ; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean ; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not ” (Eccl. ix. 2).

From this contemplation of the pathos and seemingly utter meaninglessness of all human destiny, Job returns, as is his wont, to the immediate facts. He had been deeply pained by the innuendoes of the friends. They had not yet directly accused him of heinous sin—that crowning insolence is soon to follow : but, after describing his misery to the letter, they had blandly asserted that such was the fate of the wicked. It did not need the quick intelligence of Job to discover that their generalizations were really meant for him.

“ Behold ! I know your thoughts,
And your cruel devices against me,
In asking, ‘ Where lives now the tyrant ?
Where now does the godless dwell ? ’ ” (xxi. 27f).

He knows very well that he himself is the godless tyrant, at whom, cruel as God (xix. 22) they have been aiming their poisoned shafts. But it is only

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their inexperience of the great world, he now reminds them, that leads them to statements so unqualified and to doctrine so inept. Every traveller knows how false their position is. The whole course of the debate has revealed their native incapacity to enter sympathetically into another mind, and they have not had their individual and national limitations corrected by such an experience as travel gives. They have never been beyond the borders of Edom, nor have they taken the trouble to consult those who have. Even had they done this, it would have made little difference, for minds enthralled by the doctrines to which they have been trained are not hospitable to uncongenial truth.

“They take the rustic murmur of their bourg
For the great wave that echoes round the world.”

But men who have travelled up and down the world, as the writer of this book appears to have done, know very well that many a tyrant has been happy in his life-time and publicly honoured in his death :

“Have ye never asked those that travel ?
Have ye never noted their proofs
That the wicked is kept from disaster,
Is saved in the day of wrath ?
Who tells him his way to his face,
Or requites him for what he hath done ?
And yet he is borne to the grave,
And men keep watch over his tomb.
Sweet for him are the clods of the valley,
And after him all men draw.” (xxi. 29-33).

The vividness of these lines strongly suggests that they portray an actual scene—of some mighty monarch, it may be, who had wronged countries,

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burned temples, desolated homes, and broken innumerable hearts, borne amid acclamation to his tomb in the valley, where he sleeps his sweet sleep for ever.

These are the facts, and no true comfort can be offered by those who deny them. Nay, those who deny them are traitors and fools ; and this trenchant word, which so scathingly summarizes the friends' contribution to the debate, brings the second act of the great drama to an end :

“Why then offer your idle comfort ?
Your answers leave nothing but falsehood.”

(xxi. 34.)

One cannot resist the impression that, in his sombre indictment of facts, Job has been guilty of that very one-sidedness for which he had condemned the friends. He sees, as they do, only some of the truth, not the whole of it. Still, his attitude is an immeasurably greater contribution to the progress of thought than theirs. Or it would be more correct to say that their attitude renders progress impossible : the truth is already fixed and formulated, and all that the pious have to do is gratefully and reverently to cling to it. But a man with the attitude of Job is disposed to travel (*v. 29*) beyond conventional pronouncements, to keep his mind open for fresh facts, however disconcerting they may be to accepted theories, and to find, if he can, an explanation which will cover *all* the facts, and not some of them only : for if it does not cover them all, it does not adequately cover any of them. But in no case must inconvenient facts be ignored

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in the interests of a theory, however buttressed by "tradition" or "revelation," or coerced within an artificial scheme.

The course of the debate in the first two cycles of speeches shows that Job's hospitality of mind is rewarded by ever deeper glimpses of truth. While the friends stand still, he is moving on. Always profuse and not seldom brilliant, they grow less dignified, less just, more bitter; but intellectually they remain where they were. Job, however, moves from insight to insight. In his earlier moods (cf. ch. iii.) he had thought of death as the end, and of vindication he had not even dreamt; then he passed to a faith in the certainty of his vindication at the hands of his Witness in the heavens, the God of ultimate justice, though he would no longer be alive to enjoy the ineffable comfort of it (xvi. 19); and finally, there had flashed upon him the great conviction that not only would he be vindicated after death, but that he himself would hear the word pronounced and see his Vindicator face to face, the God in whom the ancient folk believed as "merciful and gracious," but who is now seen to extend His mercy and His grace to His faithful servant in the world beyond the grave. Job lives in a world of thought and emotion into which the friends cannot follow him.

ACT III

(Job xxii.-xxxi.)

ELIPHAZ'S CRUEL AND BASELESS CHARGES (Job xxii.)

There are unexhausted resources in the living mind of Job ; but the friends, who mistake formulas for truth, have reached the end of their wisdom. They have stated and illustrated their theory, they have scattered their insinuations very liberally abroad, they have done all that from their standpoint could be done, except accuse Job to his face of specific sins ; and this, in resuming the debate, Eliphaz calmly proceeds to do. But first he reminds Job of the wisdom and profitableness of piety. It is good to be good—so he argues—good, that is, for the man himself : not of course, for God : what can it matter to Him whether a man is good or not ?

“ Can a man bring profit to God ?
Nay, the wise man but profits himself.
Doth Almighty God care for thy righteousness ?
Hath He gain from thy blameless ways ? ” (xxii. 2f).

There is something peculiarly repellent about this position of Eliphaz, whether we consider its commercial view of religion or its loveless conception of God. It is as if the writer were never weary of satirizing the conventional religious type incarnate in the friends. It would be worth Job’s while to be godly, urges Eliphaz ; for godliness pays, it is profitable for this life—of any other he has not a glimmering. He does not know, what the Prologue makes

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so clear, that Job's sufferings have come upon him just because he is a man of pre-eminent godliness—"none like him in all the earth." He does not know that there are men like Job, whose goodness is not stained by the thought of earthly reward, but who would continue to be good, though they should die for it. In short, he adopts precisely the attitude of the sneering Satan of the Prologue, who imagines that men do not serve God for what He is but for what they get, not for the love of Him and of goodness, but only for the substantial returns He sends them. The religion of Eliphaz could not be more sternly pilloried than in this implicit comparison.

And his conception of God is on the same mean level. He worships a God who stands aloof from men and their struggles, showering upon them from afar His rewards and penalties, but not really caring, as He does not need to care, whether they are good or not. It is they, and not He, who will suffer for their folly. What a loveless God! wide as the poles asunder from the great Friend for whom Job so passionately yearned. The Bible from end to end might be regarded as a protest against this dishonouring fiction of Eliphaz. Historian, psalmist, prophet, evangelist, apostle, rise up in indignant repudiation of such a travesty.

"As a father pities his children,
So the Lord pities them that fear Him;
For well He knoweth our frame,
He remembers that we are but dust." (Ps. ciii. 13f).

"As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride,
Even so shall thy God rejoice over thee." (Isa. lxii. 5).

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"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xiv. 10).

It is no surprise that the man who thinks so meanly of God should be cruelly unjust to his own suffering friend. With his wooden view of the world, Eliphaz can only interpret Job's suffering as punishment, and, as it is obvious that a just God could never punish a man for his piety, the inference is inevitable that Job must be guilty of colossal sin.

"For thy piety would He chastise thee,
Or enter with thee into judgment?
Is not thy wickedness great?
Are not thine iniquities endless?" (xxii. 4f).

But not content with generalities, the old man, with incredible effrontery, launches forth upon a detailed catalogue of sins, which his theory obliges him to believe Job must have committed and therefore did commit:

"Thou hast wrongly taken pledge of thy brother,
And stripped from the naked their clothing.
No water thou gavest the weary,
And bread thou hast held from the hungry.
Thou hast sent widows empty away;
Orphan arms thou hast broken in pieces." (xxii. 6f, 9).

The sins alleged are all of that detestable order denounced so ceaselessly and unsparingly by the prophets, sins against the rights of the weaker members of society—the poor, the hungry, the naked, the widow, the orphan—the refusal of help to the helpless, the keeping in pledge overnight of the garment the poor man requires for sleeping in (Exod. xxii. 26f), and so on. We know already from the Prologue that there is not a word of truth

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in all this charge. Job was and remains "a man blameless and upright, fearing God and shunning evil ;" and later we shall find him repudiating the monstrous charge in detail (xxix. 12ff., xxxi). Even Eliphaz himself had testified in his opening speech to Job's benevolence. This is therefore a melancholy exhibition of the frightful injustice to which the exigencies of controversy may drive even a good man like Eliphaz. There are no facts in Job's career to support his theory, but it is easier to believe that Job is a hypocrite than that the theory is false or inadequate ; and so facts must be invented —facts of the most damning kind. Devotion to a doctrine blazes forth into the cruellest injustice to the man who cannot be fitted into the doctrine : his reputation is tortured till it does fit. All this seems to suggest incorrigible depravity of soul ; but in reality, though inexcusable, it becomes intelligible, when we see that it has its roots in a sort of intellectual depravity, or in a timidity as fatal as depravity, that is, in a deliberate subjection of the mind to an inelastic theory which restricts its free exercise and forbids its appreciation of fresh facts. In this cruel and baseless calumny we see an anticipation of the havoc wrought all down the ages by acrimonious theological debate.

Job's sad fortunes, then, are explained by his grievous sins :

" And therefore are snares round about thee,
And fear on a sudden confronts thee.
Thy light is vanished in darkness,
And floods of water are over thee." (xxii. 10f).

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Eliphaz immediately follows up one piece of injustice by another. To the wrong of calumny he adds the wrong of misinterpretation :

“ Is not God in the heights of heaven ?
And the tops of the high stars He seeth.
Yet thou sayest, ‘ What doth God know ?
Can He judge aright through the thick darkness ?
The clouds hide Him, so that He sees not ;
He walketh the vault of the heavens.’ ” (xxii. 12-14).

Job, of course, had never said anything of the kind, though there were no doubt many in Israel who did make use of such arguments, like the wicked who created the problem for the writer of Psalm lxxiii;

“ How doth God know ? ” they say,
“ And hath the Most High any knowledge ? ”
(verse 11).

The height of Job’s offence was his reiterated complaint that the fortunes of men showed no trace of being determined by divine justice. Eliphaz perverted this criticism into the statement that God had no knowledge of what happened on earth : with the implied inference that Job was free to sin as he pleased.

Eliphaz now does Job the dubious honour of associating him with the ante-diluvian rebels :

“ Wilt thou keep to the ancient way,
Which men of sin have trodden,
Who untimely were snatched away,
While the ground beneath ran like a stream ? ”
(xxii. 15f).

Job and they are alike in that neither would believe in the judgments of God ; and unless he change his

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rebellious mind, he will as surely be swept away as they. But for him there is yet hope ; and here follows a noble passage, gracious and almost tender, in which it is hardly fanciful to see the reflection of a penitent mood in Eliphaz himself. It almost seems as if, ashamed of the baseless charges with which he had begun, he was determined to atone by ending on a note of comfort and hope—a note which is all the more striking, when we consider the almost unrelieved harshness of his last speech (ch. xv.).

“ Now be friendly with Him and submissive,
For this is the way to happiness.
Accept from His mouth instruction,
And lay up His words in thy heart.
If thou humbly turn to Almighty,
And put away sin from thy tent,
And lay in the dust thy treasure,
Ophir gold among stones of the brook,
That the Almighty become thy treasure,
And His instruction thy silver,
Then the Almighty shall be thy delight,
Thou shall lift up thy face unto God.
He will hearken unto thy petition,
And so shalt thou pay thy vows.
The thing thou decreest shall stand,
And light shall shine on thy ways.
For He humbles the high and the proud,
But whose eyes are lowly He saveth.
The innocent man He delivers
And saves, for his cleanness of hands.” (xxii. 21-30).

Eliphaz is obliged, of course, by this theory to believe in the guilt of Job ; but if Job is willing to listen to such disciplinary truths as he had sought to put before him (v. 17, xv. 11) and to make his peace with God, he assures him that all will yet be well. Here, as elsewhere, the poet skilfully

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introduces an anticipation of the end, especially in the promise to Job that his prayer would be heard (v. 27). Eliphaz could not know that the prayer which was to be offered and heard was a prayer for himself and his two misguided friends (xlii. 8-10).

JOB'S SECOND SUSTAINED INDICTMENT OF THE EXISTING ORDER (Job xxiii. and xxiv.)

The speech of Eliphaz must have cut deeply into the sensitive soul of Job—hardly less the call to penitence with which it ended than the unjust accusations with which it had begun; for the one was as irrelevant as the other. Its assumptions were little calculated to soothe the rebellious mood in which Job had hurled his last indictment at the constitution of the world. Earlier speeches were uttered “in the bitterness of his soul” (vii. 11, x. 1): it is only too natural that he is bitter and rebellious still:

“This day also my plaint must be bitter,
His hand on my groaning lies heavy.” (xxiii. 2).

But he does not immediately reply to the reproaches: he does that later in detail, but not now. There are speeches to which the only dignified answer is silence. More than ever now, after the cruelty of his oldest and wisest friend, he feels his infinite need of God, and of a meeting with Him:

“O that I knew where to find Him,
That I might come unto His throne.” (xxiii. 3).

Such an utterance never rises to the lips of any of his friends, for no such need and no such passion lodges in their hearts. They do not need to find Him, for they have found Him already: at any rate

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the fathers have found Him (viii. 8-10) and told them what they have discovered of Him ; and for men of this shallow and conventional type that is good enough. They are content to hear about Him. Job must see Him—nothing else and nothing less will do. They can define His attributes and describe His ways, but Job must meet Him face to face. They have theology, he has religion. It is a very touching cry, “ O that I *knew*.” Not so long ago, in a moment of illumination, he had been able to say,

“ *I know that my Champion liveth,*
 Whom mine eyes shall behold, and no stranger's ;
 And, as Sponsor, shall I behold—God.” (xix. 25-27).

In that moment he had been sublimely sure that he would find in the other world Him whom he sought ; but alas ! he cannot find Him in this. This sorrowful cry of the Old Testament “ O that I knew where I might find Him ” is never completely answered until One came who could say to all who laboured and were heavy laden, “ Come unto *Me*, and *I* will give you rest ” (Matt. xi. 28). Job was calling for a God whom “ no man hath seen at any time : but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him ” (John i. 18). He has to solve his riddle without the solace of Him who knew what was in man, who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and tempted as we, yet without sin. He longs for a sight of the unseen God, in order that he may set before His just and sympathetic mind that case of his, which is so tragically misunderstood by his earthly friends :

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"O that I knew where to find Him,
That I might come unto His throne,
And set forth my cause before Him,
With arguments filling my mouth.
I would know with what words He would answer,
And understand what He would say to me."

(xxiii. 3-5).

He believes that the God who made man's mind will listen to the questions which that mind is compelled, by the facts of the world in which it finds itself, to raise, and for which in some sense surely God is responsible. Here we see another gleam of that sweet confidence in God, which again and again had broken through Job's darkness. There had been times when he believed that all his effort to vindicate himself would be in vain, that God was unscrupulous as He was omnipotent, that, be he never so clean, God would plunge him in the mire, and use His awful power to crush him (ix. 30f). But those times are past for ever. Not in vain has he stood upon the peaks of vision. In the white heat of an earlier struggle he had been able to say,

"This also shall be my salvation,
That a hypocrite dare not approach Him" (xiii. 16) ;

and later, in his greatest hour, he had been very sure of God and of His will to vindicate him, if not here, then hereafter (xix. 25ff). That is where he stands now, with his kindlier thought of God. Should the meeting come for which he passionately longs,

"Would He use His great power in the contest ?
Nay, He would give heed unto me ;
There the upright might argue with Him,
And my right I should rescue for ever." (xxiii. 6f).

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Job worships a reasonable God who, he knows, will listen to His poor afflicted servant, if only He can anywhere be found. But where is He ?

"Behold, I go east, but He is not ;
And west, but I cannot perceive Him.
I seek in the north, but in vain :
I turn south, but I cannot behold Him." (xxiii. 8f).

There, then, is the tragedy, that the God who is working everywhere, is visible nowhere. If only He would let Himself be seen, Job would appear before Him, not only without fear, but with unspeakable joy, whether to plead his case or to answer the Almighty's questions. Job is as sure of God's justice as of his own, as sure of his own as of God's ; and this meeting of the two just ones would be but the meeting of friends—the omnipotent God and His disfigured, wasted servant. Nothing could better evidence the stainless integrity of Job than this longing for a meeting with Him whom no disguise can deceive :

"He knoweth the way that is mine ;
I would come forth as gold, should He try me.
My foot hath held fast to His steps,
And His way have I kept without swerving.
Not once have I strayed from His precepts ;
His words have I hid in my bosom." (xxiii. 10-12).

It is a bold claim to make, but, scanning his past, Job makes it deliberately.

It is difficult, however, to maintain the soul in its noblest moods, when the facts which confront it at every turn are either neutral or hostile. The God to whom he has appealed so passionately refuses to appear, and His place is taken by the old spectre of a capricious Omnipotence.

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"But when *He* hath resolved, who can turn *Him* ?
And what *He* desireth, *He* doeth." (xxiii. 13).

As Job looks round upon the world, a great revulsion of feeling comes over him and he shudders with horror. He is afraid, not because God judges, but because He does not judge :

"For this cause His presence confounds me,
The thought of *Him* fills me with terror ;
For God hath weakened my heart,
And the Almighty confounded me clean.
I am utterly lost in the darkness,
And gloom enwrappeth my face.
Why doth God not fix seasons for judgment,
And His friends never see His great day ?"
(xxiii. 15-xxiv. 1).

Now it was exactly a mood of this kind that introduced Job's vehement challenge of the existing order of things in his last speech. There, after summoning his friends to listen in awe-struck silence, he begins his indictment of the world with the words,

"When I think of it I am confounded,
And shuddering seizeth my flesh." (xxi. 6).

What follows is an exhibition of one side of the injustice that runs through the fortunes of men—the prosperity of the wicked : those who laugh at God and prayer and goodness enjoy a happy life and a peaceful death. It is perfectly certain from the concluding words of ch. xxiv.,

"And if not, who will prove me a liar,
And reduce mine indictment to nothing ?"

that Job had immediately before been hurling a similarly audacious challenge at the moral govern-

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ment of the world. The chapter, as it stands, is striking but not terrible. It consists of a series of brief but vivid sketches of various sorts of evildoers or outcasts from society: first, of wealthy land-owners who, for some small debt, deprive poor tenants of their means of sustenance, snatching from the widow, for example, her solitary cow.

“The wicked remove the landmarks,
They plunder the flock with the shepherd.
They drive off the ass of the fatherless,
Take the ox of the widow in pledge.
The poor they turn out of the way,
And the needy must huddle together.” (xxiv. 2-4).

This is followed by a peculiarly graphic description of some wretched folk, driven off the land by some stronger race, to find a miserable subsistence in the desert, where they are obliged to live by plunder, exposed to biting winds and drenching rains, with no shelter but the clefts of the rocks.

“ See ! like the wild ass in the desert,
They roam forth in search of prey :
Their children eat bread of the jungle.
They reap the fields in the night-time,
They plunder the vines of the wealthy.
All night they lie bare, without clothing,
With nothing to keep out the cold.
They are wet with the showers of the hills,
And the rocks they embrace for a shelter.
The fatherless they tear from the breast,
And the babe of the poor take in pledge.
They go about bare, without clothing,
And, hungry, they pilfer the sheaves.
They press out the oil 'twixt the olive-rows,
The wine-vats they tread and then drain.
From cities and homes they are driven ;
Their little ones cry out for hunger,
But God takes no heed of the wrong.” (xxiv. 5-12).

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Then comes a description of night-hawks—murderers, adulterers, and house-breakers—who, haters of the light, prowl stealthily about and do their wicked deeds under the shelter of the darkness which they love.

“ There are those who rebel against light,
Who recognize not His ways,
But refuse to abide in His paths.
In the evening the murderer rises
To butcher the poor and the needy,
The thief stalks abroad in the night.
With face muffled up in a veil,
The adulterer watches for twilight,
Assured that no eye can behold him.
In the darkness they break into houses,
They shut themselves up in the day-time ;
For all of them hate the light.
Familiar with gloomy ways,
They seek for themselves the deep darkness,
And swiftly they glide on the waters.” (xxiv. 13-18a).

It will be noticed that, unlike the rest of the book which has two lines to the verse, this little fragment has three. So also has the following fragment—much of it almost hopelessly unintelligible—which describes in interesting terms but in a thoroughly conventional spirit the heartless conduct of some notorious sinner, who is hurled to a well-deserved doom.

“ His portion of land shall be cursed,
Consumed by the drought and the heat,
And flooded away by snow-water.
The streets of his place shall forget him,
Shall think of his greatness no more :
Like a dead tree shall he be uprooted.
For he did not good to the widow,
No pity he showed to her babe ;
And his power swept the hopeless away.

Job's Second Indictment

Vengeance falls : he expects not to live.
He is hurled beyond hope of recovery ;
The tormentor is on his way.
His greatness is brief—he is gone :
Like the mallow he bends, he shrivels—
Cut down like the top ears of corn." (xxiv. 18b-24).

This little piece is conceived entirely in the spirit of the friends, and could certainly never have been adduced by Job as one of the supreme illustrations of the mismanagement of the world. Indeed, it is very doubtful whether even the earlier sketches, significant enough as they are of the disorders that infect society, are sufficiently appalling to justify either the horror that creeps over Job as he enters upon the recital, or the abrupt and telling challenge with which he concludes it—

" And, if not, who will prove me a liar,
And reduce mine indictment to nothing ? "

—a challenge peculiarly inapplicable in relation to the last of the sketches which, so far from denying, any one of the friends might have rejoiced to claim as his own.

The description as a whole forcibly recalls that in *Sartor Resartus* : " That stifled hum of Midnight, when Traffic has lain down to rest ; and the chariot-wheels of Vanity, still rolling here and there through distant streets, are bearing her to Halls roofed-in, and lighted to the due pitch for her ; and only Vice and Misery, to prowl or to moan like nightbirds, are abroad ; that hum, I say, like the stertorous, unquiet slumber of sick Life, is heard in Heaven ! Oh, under that hideous coverlet of vapours, and putrefactions, and unimaginable gases, what a Fermenting-

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vat lies simmering and hid! The joyful and the sorrowful are there; men are dying there, men are being born; men are praying,—on the other side of a brick partition, men are cursing; and around them all is the vast, void Night. The proud Grandee still lingers in his perfumed saloons, or reposes within damask curtains; Wretchedness cowers into truckle-beds, or shivers hunger-stricken into its lair of straw. . . . The Lover whispers his mistress that the coach is ready; and she, full of hope and fear, glides down, to fly with him over the borders: the Thief, still more silently, sets-to his picklocks and crowbars, or lurks in wait till the watchmen first snore in their boxes.”¹ Like the world which Teufelsdröckh saw from the pinnacle of Weissnichtwo, the world reflected in these sketches is immoral and miserable enough. But considering their general tone, the divergence into an alien metre, and the obvious irrelevance of the last description, many scholars are inclined to believe that the present chapter was substituted by pious hands for a challenge far more terrible, so terrible as hardly to bear transcription in a sacred book in which the later Church was wont to seek its edification. They believe that, as Job’s last speech had powerfully challenged the moral order by a lurid exhibition of the prosperity of the wicked, so this speech which is similarly introduced, and whose conclusion suggests that its contents were appalling, was a possibly even more audacious indictment by reason of its revelation of the unmerited sufferings of the righteous.

¹ Book 1., ch. iii.

Job's Second Indictment

Dillon¹ puts it tellingly thus: "There is obviously a sudden break in the text just when heterodoxy merges into blasphemy."

This, of course, can never be more than a conjecture, though it is a probable one, as we have already seen that there are scarcely any limits to the intellectual audacity of Job. If the conjecture be correct, it is a thousand pities that we have for ever lost a speech which so shocked the later copyists that they could not bring themselves to transcribe it. Its contents, we may imagine, would move along the lines of the immortal sketch in Isaiah liii. It would be folly to attempt to reconstruct a speech, of which *ex hypothesi* not a fragment is extant. But for the sake of giving body to the void, we may, with our eye on the companion picture, in ch. xxi., assume that in essence it was something like this:

"Why are righteous men suffered to perish,
To die, cut off in their prime?
Their seed is destroyed before them,
Their children in sight of their eyes.
Their homes are haunted by terror,
The rod of God is upon them,
Like a flock they send forth their young children,
But their boys and their girls are crushed.
They finish their days in disaster,
And in anguish go down to the grave,
Though they said unto God, 'We praise Thee,
All the day we delight in Thy ways.'"

Of two things we may be sure—that whatever Job said in his reply to Eliphaz, it was terrible, and it was true, however incomplete: and he ends by hurling his unanswerable challenge.

¹ *The Sceptics of the Old Testament*, p. 55.

BILDAD'S DECLARATION OF GOD'S WISDOM AND POWER (Job xxv. and xxvi.)

The friends are by this time sufficiently accustomed to the shock of Job's heresies, or blasphemies, as they seemed to them to be. But those utterances had been, for the most, incidental, thrown out in the heat of an overpowering emotion. His last two challenges, however, had been of a peculiarly sustained and deliberate nature, and Bildad instinctively feels that in effect they are an impeachment of the wisdom and the power with which God rules the world. They seem to him to suggest that, in His distribution of prosperity to the wicked and of calamity to the righteous, God is either unintelligent or unjust, or, if just and intelligent, then unable to give effect to His will. To Bildad either alternative is unthinkable. In his very first speech, he had contended that God, being Almighty, could not conceivably "pervert justice" (viii. 3). He therefore now addresses himself to the task of convincing Job of the wisdom and the power of the Creator, and he does this by showing, in terms largely borrowed from mythology, that the universe is replete with evidence that God is limited neither in the one attribute nor in the other. But both in the argument and in the development of it, one cannot resist the impression that the friends are coming perilously near the end of their dialectic resources. The writer still lets them clothe their arguments in language

God's Wisdom and Power

which, for varied splendour, has no parallel in the world, but the arguments themselves are increasingly tenuous. Bildad begins in an ironical vein :¹

“ How well thou hast aided the weak,
And supported the arm of the strengthless !
How well thou hast counselled the foolish,
And shown thine abundance of wisdom !
Who inspired thee to utter such words,
And whose spirit is it that comes forth from thee ? ”
(xxvi. 2-4).

God is the weak and foolish One, who forsooth will be glad to be reinforced by the wisdom and might of Job—an irony all the more stinging, when we look at the unhappy man to whom it is addressed, lying worn and crushed upon his ash-heap, a man whose sinful folly, as Bildad supposes, has brought him to the pass in which he is, and who is impotent to deliver himself from its consequences. Bildad mockingly asks him to declare the source of the inspiration of his blasphemous speech, meaning thereby to suggest the wicked folly of attempting to criticize the government of one so wise and mighty as God. He naturally then proceeds to expiate upon the divine power :

“ Dominion and fear are with *Him*,
On His high places He maketh peace.
His hosts—are they not beyond counting ?
Whom doth not His ambush surprise ? ” (xxv. 2f).

¹ In view of the contents of chap. xxvi., which is spoken from the standpoint of the friends—had Job uttered it, he would hardly have needed the rebuke of xxxviiif—and in view of the fresh introduction to chap. xxvii. (“ and Job took up his parable again and said ”) which would be wholly unnecessary if chap. xxvii. were really a continuation of chap. xxvi., it seems natural to assign chap. xxvi. (as well as chap. xxv.) to Bildad. That xxvi. 2-4 should be transposed to the beginning of Bildad's speech, where it is very natural and effective, is a highly probable conjecture.

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God is the Lord of the universe, and His dominion is such as to fill mortal man with awe instead of inspiring him to audacious criticism. The universe is far vaster than Job has any idea of. Not only on earth, upon whose problems Job's gaze is concentrated so fiercely, but in the spacious halls of heaven and among rebellious angels, His mighty rule is manifest. Who is Job to criticize such a God? For he, like other men—as Bildad long ago reminded him—is but of yesterday, and knows nothing (viii. 9). Also who is he to hurl these long-winded challenges of which Bildad has twice before complained (viii. 2, xviii. 2), but never with such astonishment as now? Job has been indignantly asking why innocent men suffer; but in language strongly reminiscent of Eliphaz (iv. 17ff, xv. 14), and intended perhaps to suggest the timid and unoriginal quality of Bildad's mind, he contends that there is no such thing as *innocent* suffering: there is not an innocent man in all the world. Every man is unclean, and we have to do with an all-seeing God whom the tiniest speck of impurity cannot elude.

“How can man then be just before God?
How can one born of woman be pure?
See! the moon herself is not clear,
And the stars are not pure in His sight.
How much less is man—a mere maggot,
And the son of man—but a worm?” (xxv. 4-6).

This depreciatory estimate of man is characteristic. There is nothing here of “how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty!” From Bildad's mighty but unloving God it is an easy inference to his degrading view of man. He has nothing of that sense of the

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gracious condescension of the infinite One which glows in the eighth Psalm, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?" If Job, in his despair, had seen in those gentle words nothing but a mockery of the visitation wherewith it had pleased God to visit him (vii. 17f), Bildad had seen in them nothing at all. Job's savage application of the words springs from his passionate longing for the love of such a God as they describe, while such a God is not in all Bildad's thoughts. He is more concerned for God's attributes than for His friendship.

The text of Bildad's homily, then, is the wisdom and especially the power of God; and on this congenial theme he descants with a truly noble eloquence, drawing his illustrations from the heavens above and the earth beneath, from the waters beneath the earth and from Sheol beneath the waters.

"Before Him in pain writhe the giants,
Whose home is beneath the waters.
Sheol is naked before Him,
Uncovered lieth Abaddon.
He stretcheth the north o'er the void,
And He hangeth the earth over nothing.
In His thick clouds He tieth the waters,
Yet the clouds are not torn with the weight.
He closeth the face of His throne,
And over it spreadeth His cloud.
A circle He drew on the deep
To the confines of light and of darkness.
The pillars of heaven fell a-rocking,
Astonished at His rebuke.
By His power He stirred up the sea;
By His wisdom He smote clean through Rahab.
His breath made the heavens fair;
His hand pierced the serpent that fleeth.

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See ! these are the fringe of His ways ;
Yea, 'tis only a whisper we hear :
Who can tell how mighty His thunder ? " (xxvi. 5-14)

In His contest with the great primeval monsters God displayed His victorious might ; and scarcely less wonderful than the might attested by the universe is the mystery which pervades it—how the earth, for all its unthinkable weight, remains suspended over nothing ; how the thin clouds do not burst with the mighty burden of waters tied up in them ; how the breath of God chases away the clouds from the sky, leaving it clear and fair. And all this that we can see and hear is as nothing to the vaster things than can neither be seen nor heard : they are as the whisper to the thunder. What a God then must He be, who is behind and above the immeasurable universe ! and this is the God, implies Bildad, whom Job has been so wantonly blaspheming.

There is not the faintest possibility that this argument, though urged so earnestly and eloquently, will make the least impression upon Job ; for the very simple reason that he is already as fully convinced as Bildad, and with that more intimate knowledge which comes from personal experience, of the mysterious power of God. Indeed, in his very first answer to Bildad (ch. ix.) he had described that power in colours as vivid and more terrible. Job is only too deeply convinced of the power that pervades the universe ; but is there anywhere in it a Justice and a Love ? That is his question, and Bildad cannot help him there.

THE LAST CLASH—BETWEEN JOB AND ZOPHAR (Job xxvii.)

In the great debate which is drawing to a close, the intellectual bankruptcy of the friends is becoming very evident. It is seen in the increasing irrelevance of what they have to say, in their tendency to borrow from another, in their proffering of arguments which have been already used more powerfully by Job to pulverize their position. But if the traditional text be accepted, the crowning proof of their bankruptcy would lie in the simple fact that Zophar, the third speaker in the first two cycles, has vanished from the debate altogether. According to the present text, none of the friends speaks again after Bildad has spoken in ch. xxv. : Job has the field entirely to himself from ch. xxvi. (or at any rate ch. xxvii.) to ch. xxxi.

It must be confessed that this is rather improbable. The intellectual exhaustion of the friends could have been just as fittingly indicated by another and a last conventional speech from Zophar as by his complete disappearance from the scene. Besides, the actual contents of a large part of ch. xxvii.—practically all of it from *v.* 7 to the end, with the exception of *v.* 12—constitute a faithful reproduction of the spirit and teaching of the friends ; while most of it is unsuitable, and much of it simply impossible, upon

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the lips of Job. For example, "when the wicked man's children grow up, it is for the sword, and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread" (v. 14) : Job could not conceivably have said that ; indeed, in one of his recent impeachments of the existing order of things, he had said the very reverse—that they went merrily forth like a flock, singing and dancing to the sound of music (xxi. 11f.). But this is precisely the doctrine of the friends, expressed with that curious callousness which we have more than once seen to characterize their allusions to children, in contexts which must recall to Job's mind the fate of his own (v. 4, Eliphaz ; viii. 4, Bildad).

One scholar explains this by assuming that Job "forgets himself sufficiently in ch. xxvii. to deliver a discourse which would have been suitable in the mouth of one of the friends." But surely this is absurd and impossible. Job may lose his temper, but never his point of view, and nothing but a fit of temporary insanity, which there is not the smallest reason for ascribing to him, could ever have induced him for a moment to adopt a position which again and again he had combatted with all the strength of his ironical eloquence. But we can even go further and, with tolerable confidence, definitely assign the passage (vv. 7-23) to Zophar. The speaker introduces his account of the fate of the wicked in the words :

" The wicked man's portion from God is this,
And the lot the Almighty bestows on the tyrant."
(xxvii. 13).

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But this bears an unmistakable resemblance to the words with which, in the last cycle, Zophar had ended a very similar description (xx. 29) ; and this raises the presumption to a practical certainty that it is Zophar who speaks in this passage—for the third and last time.

We are therefore left with the first six verses of ch. xxvii. and *v.* 12, which is all that remains of Job's reply to the speech in which Bildad, with an abundance of mythological allusion, had expatiated upon the power of God. Here, as in Job's last utterance, it is difficult to believe that something has not been suppressed. Bildad's emphasis upon the divine power, which Job had never doubted, leaves him unconvinced of the wisdom and the justice in which he is longing to believe, but for which he can find no evidence in the world as he knows it ; and it is easy to believe that Job launched forth once more upon some superb audacity which later transcribers hesitated to copy ; though of course there is always the possibility that it was dropped accidentally. But two or three points are reasonably clear : first, that Job must have said more than is contained in the five or six verses here assigned to him ; secondly, that he spoke as a wronged and embittered man—his opening words (*v.* 2) leave no doubt about that ; and lastly, that what he said was terrible and undeniable—the words of *v.* 12, which presumably once formed the close of his speech, make this practically certain :

“ Ye have all, with your own eyes, seen it :
Wherefore then this idle folly ?

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We are irresistibly reminded of the very similar conclusion to the sustained and impassioned challenge which he had hurled at the moral order in ch. xxi.

“ Why, then, offer your idle comfort ?
Your answers leave nothing but falsehood.”
(xxi. 34).

Let us look then at this last collision between Job and his friends. The debate now hardly wears even the semblance of an argument : each speaker goes his own way, harping upon his favourite thought — Job on his innocence, Zophar on the doom of the wicked. Unimpressed by Bildad's eloquent exposition of the divine power, Job sweeps past his mythology and on to the only thing that now matters to him—his own innocence. This he begins by solemnly asserting, prefacing his assertion with the most extraordinary oath in the whole range of Scripture :

“ As God Almighty liveth,
Who hath wronged and embittered my soul—
For within me my life is yet whole,
And the spirit of God in my nostrils—
I swear that my lips speak no falsehood,
My tongue doth not utter deceit.” (xxvii. 2-4).

His body is wasted, but he is still in full possession of all his faculties, as his glorious speeches show ; and thus, though the oath may seem that of a madman, he swears—with his mental energy, as he asserts, unimpaired—“ by the God who has robbed him of his right,” swears that the charge he has deliberately brought against the order of the world which crushes innocent men like himself—or, if

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you like, against the God who ordains such a doom—is no impiety, it is the truth: witness be God Himself who has wronged him. Job's assertion of innocence in the face of the God who, as he believes, has outraged him, and of the men who accuse and denounce him, is sublime: the one thing he will not abandon is the testimony of his own conscience:

“God forbid I should grant ye were right;
I will cling to mine innocence till I die.
I maintain to the end I am guiltless;
Not an hour of my life do I blush for.” (xxvii. 9f.)

Robbed as he is of everything, of health and home and friends, of happiness and honour and reputation, this abides his inalienable possession, which neither man nor devil nor God Himself can take from him. At this point the sense of the injustice which has been meted out to him seems to have driven him to another and a last vehement challenge of that inexplicable Providence which dooms the innocent to disaster—a challenge which, resting upon facts which the friends themselves cannot fail to have observed, they are helpless to refute. Why, then, continue their idle discussions any longer?

“Ye have all with your own eyes seen it;
Wherefore, then, this idle folly?” (xxvii. 12).

In point of fact these “idle discussions” are at last concluded by a few gorgeous truisms from Zophar. It is long since he has abandoned the hope of converting Job, but he will at least clear his conscience by reminding him for the last time of the doom of the godless:

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“ Perish my foe like the wicked,
Mine enemy as the unrighteous.
For what is the hope of the godless,
When God requireth his soul ?
Will God give ear to his cry
In the day when distress comes upon him ? ”
(xxvii. 7-9).

Eliphaz had promised Job that, in the event of penitence, he would once more delight himself in the Almighty (xxii. 23-26), but for the obstinate and impenitent Job that prospect exists no more :

“ Will the Almighty be then his delight ?
When he calleth, will God be entreated ? ”
(xxvii. 10).

Zophar now assumes the *rôle* of the teacher and proceeds to expound, in the conventional way now so familiar to us, what the sinner has to look for in life and in death :

“ I will teach you how God wields His arm,
And not hide the Almighty’s behaviour.
The wicked man’s portion from God is this,
And the lot the Almighty bestows on the tyrant.
If his children grow up, the sword claims them ;
His offspring are stinted for bread.
By death shall his remnant be buried ;
Their widows shall make no lament.
Though silver he heap up like dust,
And prepare (costly) raiment like clay,
Yet the just shall put on what he stored,
And the silver shall fall to the innocent.
Like a spider’s the house which he builded,
Like booth which the vine-keeper maketh.
He lieth down rich, but he wakes not ;
He openeth his eyes, and he is not.
He is caught in a flood of terrors ;
In the night he is stolen by a tempest.
The east wind bears him away,
It sweepeth him out of his place.

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God hurleth at him without mercy;
Fain would he escape from His hand.
His hands He clappeth at him,
And He hisseth at him from His place.”
(xxvii. 11, 13-23).

With this picture of an unlovely God, clapping His hands in derision, like a malicious man, over the impenitent sinner, and hissing him out of the world, the contribution of the friends to the solution of the great world-problem is brought to an end. The God they believe in is a fitting counterpart of the men who represent Him and defend His ways.

JOB'S GREAT DEFENCE AND HIS LAST APPEAL (Job xxix.-xxxi.)

The debate is now over¹. The loneliness of Job is complete—forsaken as he is, or thinks himself to be, by God, by man, by all save his good conscience. Having no one else to speak to, he speaks to his own heart. He passes his life in review, his former happiness and his present misery, before he makes his one last appeal to the God who has hitherto, with such inexplicable consistency, refused to appear in answer to his most desperate calls. A melancholy beauty pervades his whole retrospect. The vivid contrasts suggest the infinite sorrow of the man who had passed so mysteriously from the one to the other: but the old bitter polemic has vanished; for, whether the friends have departed or not, Job is no longer conscious of their presence—he speaks not to them but to himself.

His opening words are as characteristic of his piety as of his misery.

“O to be as in months long gone,
As in days when God used to keep me.” (xxix. 2).

The first thing he mentions about the happy days now vanished is that they were days “when God used to watch over him.” He had lived in the Presence, and there was no loss like that loss: that

¹ For ch. xxviii. see p. 273.

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is why he puts it first. The touch of that vanished Hand, and the sound of that Voice which had been so strangely still—to lose these things was to lose that loving-kindness which, for such a man as Job, was better than life. The fearfulness of the change his misery had wrought in his conception of God is vividly suggested by a comparison of this with other passages in which the thought of those watchful eyes had filled him with terror, and his most earnest prayer had been that God would be gracious enough to look away from him, and leave him alone; for now He was watching him only too cruelly well (vii. 17-19), setting a "watch" over him (vii. 12)—it is the noun of the verb which he now uses to describe God's former vigilant care of him—as if he were some mighty monster endangering the peace of the universe. Then He had watched over him, now He watches him. Wistfully he turns to the days "when His lamp shone over my head," as it shines now no more. How Bildad would find in this confession, if he heard it, the confirmation of his prophecy that the lamp would one day be put out in the tent of ungodliness (xviii. 5f). But in those days when Job had the light, he had walked in it:

"His lamp shone over my head,
And I walked by His light through the darkness."

(xxix. 3).

If only he could be once again

"As I was in the days of mine autumn,
When God protected my tent,
While still the Almighty was with me,
And my children were round about me;
When my steps were bathed in milk,
And the rock poured me rivers of oil." (xxix. 4-6)

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Too deep for tears or comment are the exquisitely simple words, "when my children"—those children who are now lying dead—"were round about me." It is a moving testimony to the joy and beauty of Job's home life that in the opening verses which describe the happy past and are filled with the presence of God, the only other presence alluded to is that of his children. His God and his home, the Almighty and his children—these are placed side by side as the most precious things in all the world to Job.

From these he turns to the thought of the honour and the influence which had once been his, but which now are gone for ever—how, alike on street and market-place, old and young, high and low, did him reverence: how in the council-chamber his words were listened to with grateful and admiring silence, falling upon the ear like refreshing rain upon the thirsty land:

"When I went to the city gate,
Or took up my place in the open,
The youths, when they saw me, hid,
The old men rose and stood.
Princes refrained from speech,
And laid their hand on their mouth.
The voice of the nobles was hushed,
And their tongue would cleave to their palate.
They hearkened to me and they waited,
Kept silence till I should give counsel;
After I spoke, they spake not again,
My speech fell like rain-drops upon them.
They waited for me as for rain—
Open-mouthed, as for latter rain." (xxix. 7-10, 21-23)

—an exquisite touch, when we remember the welcome that men give in drought-cursed lands to rain.

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" When I smiled upon them, they were strengthened ;
 The light of my face cheered the sorrowing.
I chose out their way and sat chief,
 Enthroned like a king in his army." (xxix. 24f).

But Job had been expert in action no less than in speech, he had been benefactor as well as counsellor. He had cared more for opportunity than for honour—for the opportunity of helping those who could not help themselves, especially those whom it was in the East the fashion of the mighty to exploit and oppress.

" I was blessed by the ear that heard me,
 The eye bore me witness that saw me ;
For I rescued the poor when he cried,
 The fatherless and the helpless.
The wretched gave me their blessing ;
 The widow's heart I made sing.
I put on the garment of righteousness,
 A robe and a turban of justice.
Eyes was I to the blind,
 Feet to the lame was I ;
A father was I to the poor,
 And I searched out the cause of the stranger.
I shattered the jaws of the wicked,
 And hurled the prey from his teeth." (xxix. 11-17).

Job was not one of those who are " too proud to fight." The passion with which throughout the debate he had defended his own case, because the high interests of eternal justice were involved, he had been equally willing to expend on behalf of any one, be he friend or unknown stranger, whose rights were being ignored or trampled upon. Behind the last two lines quoted we can see a mighty struggle waged by the indignant Job with some incarnate fiend, from whose greedy jaws he had snatched the prey. The splendour of the picture is only fully appreciated when we remember that the ideal Job

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here claims to have fulfilled is just the ideal to which prophet after prophet had summoned Israel with such passion and persistence. To the last detail he fulfils the prophetic programme. "Let justice roll down like water, and righteousness like a perennial stream" (Amos v. 24); "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Hosea vi. 6); and still more aptly, "Seek justice, restrain the violent, do right by the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isa. i. 17). Job is the man, come at last, for whom the prophet heart had yearned.

But the relevance of this picture to the discussion is only completely grasped when we consider it in the light of the cruel charges which Eliphaz had invented in order to support his shallow contentions. He had accused Job of stripping the naked of their clothing, of refusing drink to the weary and bread to the hungry, of sending widows empty away, of breaking the arms of the fatherless (xxii. 6-9); and point for point Job dissipates those wicked and baseless calumnies by a simple statement of the facts. "I put on the garment of righteousness, a robe and a turban of justice." Fearlessly he stands forth before God and men as righteousness incarnate. So he thought, as well he might—trained as he had been in the faith that goodness guaranteed a long and happy life—that all would go well with him till the end and in the end :

"So I thought, 'I shall die with my nest;
As the sand my days shall be many."

' A reference to the legendary phoenix, a bird which was said to live five hundred years, when it burnt itself in its nest and rose to a new life from the ashes.

Job's Great Defence

My root is spread out to the waters,
All night lies the dew on my branches.
Within me my glory is fresh,
And my bow is renewed in my hand.''" (xxix. 18-20)

"But now"—abruptly comes the startling contrast between the happy then and the dreadful now. He had hoped for length of days with strength unimpaired and undiminished glory: instead, he is going down to the grave before his time as a leper accursed of God and abhorred of men, his body covered with sores and gnawed with pain, his soul pierced with sorrow, and clothed in darkness. There is little observable order here in the enumeration of his miseries. His heart is hot and seething, as he tells us later, with the tumult of them. Body, mind, and spirit are all alike shattered in a common ruin—now it is the heat of fever or the lacerating pains, now it is the alienation and the unbroken silence of God; but it is perhaps not without significance that he puts here first the scorn and loathing of men, which comes with all the more force after his gracious picture of the reverence with which, in happier days, he had been everywhere received:

"But now am I become their song,
Yea, I am a by-word among them.
In horror they stand far aloof,
And they spare not to spit at the sight of me." (xxx. 9f.)

There are hints throughout the book which go to show how deeply the writer had been impressed by the fickleness of human friendship: this may explain the passion with which he makes his hero yearn for the heavenly Friend. Job's sketch of the past,

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crowded with deeds of kindness, shows how he had loved men, and how intimately he had been touched with the feeling of their infirmities : all the more bitter therefore to him must have been the ingratitude of those whom he had shielded from the consequences of poverty and injustice. It was sad enough to be scorned and shunned by men for the leper that he was, but sadder still was the hostility of God, who stormed upon him, as if he was some fortified city, with all the terrors of His infinite resources :

“ He hath slackened my bow-string and humbled me,
Flung down my banner before me.
Against me His hosts stand up ;
They raise deadly ramparts against me.
My path they tear up clean,
My tracks they destroy altogether.
His archers ring me around,
As through a wide breach they come in,
Rolling on in the midst of the ruin.
Terrors are turned upon me ;
My weal is the sport of the winds,
And my welfare is passed like a cloud.” (xxx. 11-15).

Then he comes back to the thought of his physical misery—his pain, his emaciation.

“ And now is my soul poured out,
The terrors of misery seize me.
The night boreth into my bones,
And the pains that gnaw never slumber.
From sore wasting my garment is shrunk ;
It clingeth to me like my vest.” (xxx. 16-18).

But it is God who is responsible for his misery : he therefore turns upon Him with bitter reproaches for the cruelty of a silence which He refuses to break

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or breaks only with another lash of His scourge,
or another roar of His pitiless storm :

“ God hath plunged me into the mire,
So that I am like dust and ashes.
I cry, but Thou givest no answer ;
Thou standest and heedest me not.
Cruel to me art Thou turned,
With the might of Thy hand Thou dost scourge me.
Thou settest me to ride on the wind,
And I melt in the roar of the storm.
For I know Thou wilt bring me to death,
To the house where all living assemble.” (xxx. 19-23).

He knows that he must die, but he is dying before his time, and in tumult, not in peace—for this, he had once said, is the privilege of the wicked (xxi. 13)—he is riding to death on the wings of the storm. Tortured as he is by pain and grief, and hastening to the grave uncomforted, is there anything to wonder at in his strong crying and tears ? Has he not at least the right of the mourner to weep or of the drowning man to cry aloud for help ? If his plaintive wails make him a fit companion for the wolf and the ostrich, at least those wails are wrung from a body tortured unto agony and from a soul grieved well nigh unto despair.

“ Yet sinking men stretch out their hand,
And cry for help as they perish.
He whose days are hard—does he weep not ?
Is the soul of the needy not grieved ?
For instead of the good I had hoped for came evil,
Instead of the light I awaited came darkness.
My heart is hot and restless,
And misery daily confronts me.
I go with my sorrow uncomforted,
Standing where jackals are gathered.

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Brother am I to the wolves,
And of ostriches the companion.
All blackened my skin peels from off me ;
My bones are burned with the heat." (xxx. 24-30)."

The contrast between the happy past and the sorrowful present he gathers up in the expressive words :

"So my lyre is turned into mourning,
My pipe to the voice of lament." (xxx. 31).

But Job's ambition is not to indulge in the luxury of grief : it is to assert and defend his innocence—if possible, in the presence of Almighty God. He therefore proceeds to draw a detailed portrait of himself, in which he lets us see not only the nature of his conduct but the quality of his inner life. This description is of supreme value, revealing as it does the noble heights to which ancient Hebrew piety could soar. It embodies indeed the noblest ideal in the Old Testament, and one of the noblest in the world. It fills in the vague outlines in which Job was sketched at the beginning of the book as "a man blameless and upright, fearing God and shunning evil." It shows us what these large and simple words meant, when translated into the details of daily intercourse with men and women of every kind, and it is the final and crushing answer to the baseless charges which Eliphaz, under the stress of his rigid theory, was obliged to invent, in order to defend his indefensible position (ch. xxii.). Let us look now at the features which go to make up this immortal picture of a good man.

He begins, as we might expect, by asserting that

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he had practised the presence of God. His whole life had been controlled by the thought that God's eyes were upon him—not only upon its general drift, but upon its every detail. His faith had been not only that God is, but that He was actively interested in all that he did ; that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and the punisher of those who ignore Him and defy His moral will :

“A tryst I made with mine eyes
To give no heed unto folly.¹
For how doth the high God reward it—
The Almighty in heaven requite it ?
Is not for the wicked misfortune,
Disaster for workers of wrong ?
Doth *He* not see my ways,
And number my steps every one ?” (xxxi. 1-4).

It is strange and almost startling to find Job here asserting misfortune for the wicked and disaster for the workers of wrong. Is not this precisely the doctrine of the friends which Job throughout the whole course of the debate has been denying with all the vehemence of his soul ? Some scholars have fastened upon the fact that these verses are not found in the original text of the Greek version, to prove that they did not form, as it is held they could not have formed, any part of Job's original speech. But it is fairer to interpret them as a statement of his ancient faith, of the faith by which he had lived before the blows fell which shattered it, at least in that form, to pieces.

After this assertion of his governing sense of the presence of God, he proceeds formally to disclaim

¹ A general term for *sin*, peculiarly appropriate at the beginning. Dr. Peake's highly probable emendation for the *virgin* of the text.

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the practice and the temper of covetousness, and of that falsehood by which the covetous disposition too often seeks to secure its ends :

“ If ever I walked with falsehood,
Or my foot hath made haste unto fraud—
Let God only weigh with just balance,
Mine innocence He must acknowledge—
If my step ever swerved from the way,
Or my heart hath gone after mine eyes,
Then what *I* sow may others enjoy,
And all produce of mine be uprooted.” (xxxi. 5-8).

Not content with rightness of conduct, Job has preserved his rightness of heart. The stream of his life is pure, because the hidden source from which it flows is pure. He is not afraid to lay it bare before the eyes of God, and to challenge the verdict of Him whom no bribe can purchase. The fine courage of this challenge reminds us of the similar challenge of the Psalmist,

“Search me, O God, know my heart:
Try me, and know my thoughts,” (Ps. cxxxix. 23)

—a challenge which was possible to him, as to Job, only because he, too, was conscious of living in the Presence :

“ O Lord, Thou searchest and knowest me;
When I sit, when I rise—Thou knowest it,
Thou perceivest my thoughts from afar.
When I walk, when I lie—Thou siftest it,
Familiar with all my ways.
There is not a word on my tongue,
But see! Lord, Thou knowest it all.
Behind and before Thou besettest me;
Upon me Thou layest Thy hand.” (Ps. cxxxix. 1-5).

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The noble audacities of Job and of the Psalmist are a fine testimony to the cleansing power of the presence of God.

But a man's relation to women tests the quality of his life even more severely than his attitude to the property of others, and here again Job claims for himself the most stainless purity, alike of heart and of conduct :

"If my heart hath been lured by a woman,
 If I lurked at my neighbour's door,
May my own wife grind to another,
 And let others bow down upon *her*.
For that were an infamous crime,
 An iniquity calling for judgment,
A fire that devours to Abaddon
 And would all mine increase consume." (xxxi. 9-12).

Adultery is a crime punishable by the law of man, but far more terrible to Job is the thought of the inextinguishable fire which it kindles in the conscience and which brings a man's home and happiness down in red ruin. With all the nobility of this speech, it is interesting to note how, in not unimportant ways, Job is entangled in the thought of his time. The wife of the guilty man, who would herself be the most deeply wronged, was to be, according to Job's imprecation, subjected to the further indignity of being reduced to the most menial bondage (cf. Exod. xi. 5). This is only possible because the wife is not regarded as a wholly independent personality, but to some extent as the property of her husband, to be disposed of according to his pleasure.

The claim that follows is perhaps the most wonderful of all :

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"Never spurned I the cause of my servant—
Of man or of maid—when we strove :
Did not He that made me make him,
Did not One fashion us in the womb ?" (xxxi. 13, 15).

Here is the brotherhood of man indeed, in its sublimest form: not the brotherhood of social equals—a sentiment which is hard enough even yet to compass—but of master and servant, an idea which, with our implacable modern war between labour and capital, seems hardly even yet more than a wild and all but impossible dream. What slave-owner in the ancient or modern world could have said or conceived such a thing? To the most comprehensive of all Greek intellects, the slave was nothing but the tool of his master; and that has been, for the most part, the modern practice, whatever the theory may have been. But note the theory underlying Job's practice. Here, as everywhere, his conduct is rooted in his conception of God. The God who made him made the slave as well. They are brethren, because One is the Creator and Father of them both. He does not name the Father here, though he hints at this relationship (as does the writer of Psalm ciii. 13) a little further on; but that is essentially his meaning. And in this he soars far above the thought of Malachi when he asks, "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?" (ii. 10). The prophet is thinking of a brotherhood within the Jewish family, a brotherhood which his whole prophecy shows that he does not dream of extending beyond the confines of his people; but Job's profound and searching words leap across all national barriers and class distinctions,

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resting as they do the relationship of men to one another upon their indefeasible relationship to a common Creator. There is a noble pathos, too, about this argument of Job, when we remember the grim use he had made in an earlier passage of this very thought of God. The Almighty, he had then argued (x. 8ff), might have been expected to care at least as much for His creatures as a potter for the vessel he has so cunningly made ; but God's hands had made him only to destroy him. Here he maintains that he had treated the humblest of his fellow-creatures with that kindly thoughtfulness which he himself had looked for—it would seem in vain—at the hands of God Himself.

From the humble within his home he turns to the weak and defenceless beyond it, the poor and the needy, the widow and the orphan, the naked and the hungry, and he claims, in words which would have made the heart of the prophets sing for joy, to have helped them in every way opened to him by the abundance of the resources with which God had blessed him :

"Ne'er denied I the wish of the poor,
Nor brought grief to the eyes of the widow.
Never ate I my morsel alone,
Without sharing thereof with the orphan.
Else what should I do, when God rose?
When He visited, what should I answer?
For, father-like, *He* brought me up from my youth,
And my Guide has *He* been from my mother's womb.
Never saw I one naked and perishing—
Needy, with nothing to cover him—
But I warmed him with fleece from my lambs,
And his loins gave me their blessing."

(xxxi. 14, 16-20).

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Here again his morality is determined by his religion—the motive of his conduct is rooted and grounded in God. He thinks of the God he worships as a God of justice, to whom the interests of the defenceless are specially dear—as a God who will one day rise up to make inquisition: and what would he answer in that dread day, if he had crushed or even neglected God's poor? He feels himself to be debtor to all whom he can help, because his own debt to God is so heavy. Gratitude to the God who “like a Father, had brought him up from his youth, and guided him even from the womb of his mother”—immortal words—must express itself in playing the part of father to God's needy children.

And as Job has always used his power to help the helpless, so he had never abused it by smiting the innocent (whom we may suppose to be a rival) even when he could count securely on plenty of support. He is willing that his arm, if ever lifted in such a cause, should be broken :

“If, because I saw help in the gate,
I ever set hand on the innocent,
Let my shoulder fall from its blade,
And mine arm from the socket be broken.”

(xxxi. 21f).

Job was prompted to the beneficence which he has just described, and the hospitality he is yet to describe, by his own noble heart: but without his wealth it would have been impossible for him to exercise it on so extensive a scale; and there was the danger that he should make of the means an end. The love of money is a root of evil of all kinds, and

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no one ever emphasized the peril of it more than our Lord Himself, and its fatal power to shut men out of the Kingdom. But Job is as free from the love of his own gold as of another man's ; he put his trust in the Giver and not in His shining gifts. He had learned the lesson so eloquently urged by Deuteronomy (viii. 17f)—or rather it was the impulse of his own unspoiled nature—to remember that it is “Jehovah thy God who giveth thee power to get wealth,” and he had never been tempted to say, “My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth.”

“Never set I my trust upon gold,
Nor called the fine gold my confidence.
Mine abundant wealth never elated me,
Nor all that my hands had gotten.” (xxxi. 24f).

Nothing in the universe claimed the homage of Job but God Himself. As God was the Giver of the wealth which some men are tempted to worship, so He was the Creator of those glorious bodies which hung in the firmament, “fretted with golden fire,” which tempted the homage of others : but Job was as little allured by the one as by the other. The very intelligible worship of the heavenly bodies was wide-spread in the East, and even the less imaginative West feels the spell of them. It was against this worship that the writer of the great prose-poem with which the Old Testament opens wrote the words, “God made the two great lights ; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night : He made the stars also ; and God set them in the firmament” (Gen. i. 16f). *God* made them

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and set them there, not to be worshipped as though they were independent beings, but to do His bidding, to rule and shine for Him. Job had given his heart to the Creator, and not to any of His creatures however splendid :

"Never, watching the shining lights,
Or the moon as she walked in her splendour,
Did my heart feel their subtle allurement,
Or my hand throw a kiss to my mouth."

(xxxi. 26-28).

Through his noble disclaimer we cannot help feeling how his poetic heart was thrilled by the glories of the midnight sky ; but for him idolatry was as repellent as adultery (*v. II*).

"This, too, were a crime for the judges,
For to God above I had lied." (xxxi. 28).

At this point he makes one of his most wonderful claims, one which lifts him to a lonely eminence among the saints of his people. The average pious Israelite welcomed the downfall of his enemy—for this, apart from any personal reason—as a visible vindication of the moral order in which he believed. There are psalmists who look forward with joy to the day when they shall wash their feet in the blood of the wicked (Ps. lviii. 10). But Job scorned such a thought :

"Ne'er rejoiced I at enemy's fall,
Nor triumphed when evil befel him,
Nor suffered my mouth to sin
By demanding his life in a curse." (xxxi. 29f).

How little he would have cared for, how thoroughly he must have despised, Bildad's promise that " those

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that hated him would be clothed with shame" (viii. 22) ; and how impossible it is that he could have uttered the wish which the traditional text ascribes to him, " Perish my foe like the wicked, mine enemy as the unrighteous" (xxvii. 7). His enemy was God's creature ; and of him he would have said, as he said of his servant, " Did not He that made me make him, did not One fashion us in the womb ?" (xxxi. 15). One great scholar has said, " If ch. xxxi. is the crown of all ethical development in the Old Testament, v. 29 is the pearl in this crown."

The kindness Job had showered upon the poor showed itself as generosity to his dependants, and as hospitality to strangers and travellers :

" The men of my tent will declare
None has ever been stinted of food.
Not a stranger e'er lodged in the street,
For I opened my doors to the wayfarer." (xxxi. 31f).

Further the justice and the pity which he exercised towards men, he exhibited no less in his relation to the soil : the earth was the Lord's, and he treated it as such, respecting its rights no less than the rights of the men who owned it.

" If my land ever cried out against me,
Her furrows all weeping together ;
If her strength I have drained without cost,
Or have poured out the life of her owner ;
Let thorns take the place of wheat,
And foul-smelling weeds—of barley." (xxxi. 38-40).

This man of the stainless life knew no fear but the fear of God. He had nothing to conceal, and he concealed nothing. His life was naked and open in

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the eyes of his clansmen as well as of his Creator : he could bring it out into the open and stand before them without fear and without shame.

“ No fear of the crowd ever led me
To hide my sin among men.
No contempt of the clans ever scared me
To stay behind closed doors in silence.” (xxx. 33f).

What an ideal and what an achievement ! Infinitely transcending in its inner purity and its positive beneficence the merely negative demands of the Decalogue and even the more or less external demands of most of the prophets. How much nobler and ampler than the life described in the fifteenth and twenty-fourth Psalms, and how much more winsome than the high-minded man of Aristotle,¹ who “ claims much and deserves much,” and whose loftiness comes perilously close to haughtiness. There is much indeed in Job which reminds us of Jesus. It is an altogether glorious description of a great ethical personality ; yet, though it is a self-vindication from end to end, with the greatest skill every suspicion of self-praise is avoided. Mark Rutherford has truly said, “ In discernment of the real breadth and depth of social duty, nothing has gone beyond the book of Job.” Many traits are omitted, because they go without saying—his love for his friends, his affection for his wife whom we may be sure he loved as dearly as Ezekiel did her who was “ the desire of his eyes ” (xxiv. 16). But how rich this man was in social relationships : as governor, as counsellor, as

¹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, iv. 3.

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employer, as landowner, as host, as benefactor, he stands continually in kindly and helpful relations to all sorts and conditions of men. Profoundly significant of the whole tenor of his life is the simple claim that he "ate not his morsel *alone*." As the one word suggests his frugality, the other suggests his delight in men and in doing good. He does not live either to himself or by himself: in a world so full of need and wrong, he cannot bear to dwell, like a star, apart. Though not of the world, he is in it.

And this is the man, so pure and so good, who has suffered so mysteriously—living like a saint and perishing like a felon. The hour has struck for his last great appeal to God, and it excels in majestic audacity everything that has gone before :

" O for One who would listen to me.
Behold ! there is my cross !
Let Almighty God give me His answer.
O would that I had the indictment
Mine Adversary hath written.
For, bearing it high on my shoulder,
And winding it round like a crown,
Every step of my life I would tell Him ;
Like a prince I would enter His presence."
(xxxi. 35-37).

If only God Almighty would appear, Job, in the proud consciousness of his integrity, would face Him with unspeakable joy, whether to hear what answer God had to give to the assertion of innocence to which he affixes his signature, or to hear what indictment God had to bring against him in justification of the awful suffering to which He had subjected him. God Himself is the Adversary: but

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Job is not afraid—so conscious is he of the rectitude of his life as he has just revealed it, and of the essential justice of the invisible God he is so eager to meet. And what a meeting ! The poor, disfigured, emaciated leper, rising up from his ash-heap—wasted in body, but a Titan in spirit—to face the terrible God of the eclipse, the earthquake, and the storm ; and facing Him not cringingly like a suppliant, but proudly like a prince, and wearing his indictment like a garland. Could anything be more sublime than this ? It is not Christian ; but it is magnificent.

ACT IV

(Job xxxviii., xxxix., xl. 2-14, xlii. 2-6)

ACT IV

THE ANSWER OF THE ALMIGHTY¹ (Job xxxviii., xxxix., xl. 2, 8-14)

Then Jehovah answered Job—at long last the answer! But *out of the whirlwind*—the very sort of answer that Job had from his first appeal feared and deprecated (ix. 34, xiii. 20f). But, however strange and at first sight irrelevant it may seem, let us not forget that it is an answer, God's own answer. It is expressed with a wealth of eloquence and imagination which, even after all we have seen of the writer's literary genius, is nothing less than astonishing. “No one,” as Kautzsch has truly said: “would be surprised if, after the composition of nineteen speeches, the creative power of the poet should gradually flag: but precisely the contrary is the case. The speeches of God surpass in energy and sublimity everything that has gone before.” The divine appeal to Job to “gird up his loins like a man” is, as has been said, an echo of the demand the poet must have made upon himself. But the tone of the opening words is more than surprising:

“Who is this that darkeneth counsel
By words that are empty of knowledge?
Gird up thy loins like a man:
I will ask of thee—do thou enlighten Me.”
(xxxviii. 2f).

¹ In this chapter I have drawn freely from my *The City with Foundations*, pp. 147-153.

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The weary Job, who has just emerged from one long struggle with the friends, is now invited to prepare for another—this time with the omnipotent God to whom he has made his appeal ; and, instead of the gracious answer to which he had looked so confidently forward, he is buried beneath an avalanche of questions. There is a touch of something that must have sounded to Job like mockery in the words “Who is this ?”—this man, who in his impotence and ignorance, has presumed to challenge Omniscience and Omnipotence. It does not promise well. Yet from this first seemingly scornful question flashes the gleam of a gospel for Job. He has been only too thoroughly convinced by his sorrowful experience of the *power* of God : but the word “counsel” suggests His *wisdom*. The system at which Job has railed, not only evidences irresistible power, it is subtly interfused with a sense of purpose : and, on the very threshold, he, and we, are by implication invited to look out for evidences of that purpose in the splendid panorama of Creation which is about to be unrolled.

And first there pass before us the wonders of the inanimate world. The Almighty begins with the wonder of the world itself, which is compared to a Building of mighty proportions, constructed with infinite architectural genius to the music of the spheres.

“Where wast thou, when I founded the earth ?
Declare out of the depths of thine insight.
Dost thou know who appointed her measures,
Or who stretched upon her the line ?

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Whereupon were her pedestals sunk,
Or who laid her corner-stone,
When the morning-stars sang together,
And the sons of God shouted in chorus?"
(xxxviii. 4-7).

No haphazard construction this: it is built according to "measures and lines," evidence of the law and order, the purpose and plan, by which it is inspired. But what had Job to do with the making of it, and where was he then? His indignant "whys" and "wherefores" are answered by the question, "Where wast thou?" And this is only the first of many. The next picture is an inimitable description of the sea, that turbulent child of chaos, likened to a giant baby, with swaddling-band of clouds:

"Who shut up the sea with doors,
When it burst its way out of the womb?—
When I gave it its robe of cloud,
And its swaddling-band of the dark cloud;
When I broke off its border for it,
And set on it bars and doors,
Declaring 'Thus far, but no further,
And here shall thy proud waves be stayed.'"
(xxxviii. 8-11).

Here, too, is evidence of power instinct with order. Once the ocean monster had threatened to overwhelm God's wonderful building of a world; but on it, too, His authority was imposed: it has bars and doors, and a border which it dare not pass. Then, in fine contrast to its blustering, comes the quiet, gracious miracle of the dawn, when the world stands forth in sudden brightness:

"Didst thou ever give charge to the morning,
Or appoint to the day-star her place,
To take hold of the skirts of the earth,
And to shake out the wicked from off it?

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It is changed as clay under the seal,
And the world stands forth (bright) as a garment.'
(xxxviii. 12-14).

Then are disclosed the sources of the sea, the mystery of the world of the dead, with the grim porters who guard its gates, and the breadth of the earth. But of sources and breadth and depth Job knows nothing at all. The power and the order everywhere manifest reigned countless ages before him, and are sustained independently of him :

“ Hast thou entered the springs of the ocean,
Or walked in the depths of the sea ?
Have the gate-ways of Death been unveiled to thee ?
Hast thou looked on the porters of Hades ?
The breadth of the earth hast thou noted ?
How great is it ? Tell, if thou knowest.”
(xxxviii. 16-18).

Then comes the marvel of the light, which is regarded as having a home of its own in some corner of God's universe :

“ Which way leads to the home of the light ?
And where is the place of the darkness ?
Canst thou fetch it out unto its border,
Or lead it back home to its house ?
Thou wast born then, so doubtless thou knowest—
The tale of thy years is so great.” (xxxviii. 19-21).

In the last two lines the irony is particularly keen. The universe is a great store-house where the God of battles keeps His treasures of snow and especially of hail, ready to hurl—as did indeed happen in some of Israel's historic battles (cf. Josh. x. 11)—against His adversaries: but has Job ever visited the arsenal where those weapons are stored ?

The Answer of the Almighty

“ Hast thou entered the store-house of snow ?
Hast thou looked on the guardians of hail,
Which I hoard for the time of distress,
For the day of assault and of battle ?” (xxxviii. 22f).

Then follows the miracle of the rain, which God has so strangely tied up in the thick clouds (xxvi. 8), and which nevertheless falls so finely, each drop along its appointed line, as the lightning flash along the path appointed for it :

“ Which way are the vapours divided,
That scatter on earth the cool water ?
Who cleft for the torrents a channel,
A path for the flash of the lightning—
Sending rain on the desolate land,
On the uninhabited desert,
Thus gladdening the wilderness waste,
And the thirsty land clothing with verdure ?”
(xxxviii. 24-27).

In a sense, as we shall see, the last four lines hold the key to the riddle of the universe, suggesting as they do that even the uninhabited desert is not beyond God’s care. His love extends to every part of the world which He made, and is showered in refreshing rain even upon the waste and desolate land “ where no man is.” Then comes the wonder of the dew and the frost and the ice. How is it that running water can harden ? Does Job know ?

“ Say, hath the rain a father ?
Or who hath begotten the dew-drops ?
Out of whose womb issued the ice ?
And the hoar-frost of heaven—who hath borne it ?
The waters are frozen like stone,
And the face of the deep remains hidden.”
(xxxviii. 28-30).

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From the earth Job's eyes are lifted to heaven to behold the mighty miracles being perpetually enacted there :

“ Dost thou fasten the chain of the dog-star,
Or loosen the bonds of Orion ?
Dost thou bring out the stars in their season ?
The Bear with her young dost thou lead ?
Dost thou lay down the law to the heavens,
Or establish their rule in the earth ? ” (xxxviii. 31-33).

There is no confusion there : it is surely no helpless or witless God that rules there. The heavens above, no less than the earth beneath and the waters round about the earth, are within the reign of law—a law which it is very certain Job did not impose upon them. Note again the irony, which is still further enhanced by the following questions touching the wonder of the clouds :

“ Dost thou lift up thy voice to the clouds,
That abundance of waters obey thee ?
Dost thou send on their mission the lightnings ?
To thee do they say, ‘ Here we are ’ ?
Who hath set in the fleecy clouds wisdom,
Or given to the meteor insight ?
Who spreadeth the clouds out in wisdom ?
Who tilteth the pitchers of heaven,
When the dust runneth into a mass
And the clouds cleave firmly together ? ”
(xxxviii. 34-38).

Only a poet who loved the world could have written this glorious chapter, and it is no surprise that he loved the living creatures upon it as well, “ all things both great and small.” From the wonders of the inanimate creation the great Questioner now passes to the wonders of the animal world ; and here, as there, it is not the exceptional

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things, but everything, that is wonderful—the ox, the ass, the goat, the horse, the hawk, the lion, and behind them all the wonderful love of God. Never surely were more living pictures than these. First comes the lion, king of beasts :

The poet means that God cares and provides for the wild beasts : for it is assuredly not Job who procures for the lion his food. Man would rather destroy such creatures : but the God who made them provides food for their young ones, when they cry unto Him—a touch which reminds us of the generous outlook of some of the Psalmists (civ. 14, 28, cxlv. 16, cxlvi. 9). Then come the wild goats, with the miracle of their speedy parturition :

"Dost thou fix the birth-times of the wild goats
Or watch o'er the calving of hinds?
Dost thou number the months they fulfil
Or determine the time of their bearing?
They cower and bring forth their young,
Swiftly ridding themselves of their birth-pangs.
Their young ones grow strong in the open,
Go forth and come back not again." (xxxix. 1-4).

What an appreciation of the wild life of the open breathes through these last two lines; and still more in the amazingly vivid picture of the wild ass, which abhors the city (as perhaps the poet did) and rejoices in the free life of the wilderness.

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“ Who let out the wild ass free ?
Who loosened the bonds of the wild ass,
Whose home I have made the steppe,
And the salt land the place of his dwelling ?
He laughs at the din of the city,
No driver roars in his ears.
The mountains he scours as his pasture,
And every green thing is his quest.” (xxxix. 5-8).

Wonder upon wonder ! The irony reaches its climax in the astonishing picture of the wild ox which will never be bent to the service of Job or of any man :

“ Will the wild ox be willing to serve thee,
Or spend the night in thy crib ?
Wilt thou fasten a rope on his neck ?
Will he harrow thy furrows behind thee ?
Wilt thou trust his magnificent strength,
Or put him in charge of thy labour,
Expect him to come again,
And gather thy seed to thy threshing-floor.”
(xxxix. 9-12).

The rather obscure and difficult passage which follows describes the curious habits of the ostrich :

“ The wing of the ostrich beats joyously,
But her pinions and feathers are cruel,
For she trusteth her eggs to the ground,
And she setteth them down in the dust,
Forgetting that foot may crush them,
Or beast of the field tread upon them.
Her young she treats harshly, as strangers,
Unmoved though her toil be in vain.
For God hath not dealt to her wisdom,
Nor allotted to her understanding.
She scuddeth along in her flight,
At the horse and his rider she laugheth.”
(xxxix. 13-18).

But of all the astonishing pictures in this astonishing panorama of animal life, surely none can compare

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with that of the war-horse with his wild delight in battle :

“ Dost thou give to the war-horse his strength,
Clothe his neck with the quivering mane ?
Dost thou make him to leap like a locust
With snort that is splendid and terrible ?
He paweth the valley exulting,
As forth to the fight he fares.
He laughs undismayed at the terror,
He turneth not back from the sword.
Against him the quiver may rattle,
The glittering spear or the dart ;
He devoureth the ground in wild rage,
Without turning to right hand or left.
At the trumpet alarm he saith ‘ Ha ! ’
For he scenteth the battle afar,
The thunder of captains, the shouting.” (xxxix. 19-25).

No comment is possible upon lines like these. The wonderful description closes with a sketch of the hawk and the keen-eyed eagle, whose home is on the heights :

“ Doth the hawk soar aloft by thy wisdom,
And spread out her wings to the south ?
Doth the eagle mount up at thy bidding,
And make her nest high on the mountains ?
The cliff is her home where she lodges—
The peak of the cliff and the fortress.
She spieth her prey from the heights
With those eyes which see from afar.
Her young ones suck up blood :
Where the slain are, there is she.” (xxxix. 26-30).

After passing before the eyes of Job this glorious panorama of animate and inanimate creation, replete with evidences of the divine wisdom and love, the Almighty now turns to him with the severe and humbling words :

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“Shall a caviller strive with the Almighty ?
He that argues with God—let him answer.
Wilt thou disallow My right,
And condemn Me that thou mayest be justified ? ”
(xl. 2, 8).

Job has repeatedly and vehemently criticized the existing order of things : now that he has seen it as God has revealed it, in all its immensity, depth, and implications, what has he to say to it now ? What does he think of it ? of his criticism of it ? of himself ? “ Why,” as Schmidt puts it, “ does he presume to censure God who has created all things, and in His wisdom directs and provides for His world ? ” Job had not only maintained that he himself was right, he had implied that God was wrong ; and he has to learn that his own reputation is not to be secured at the expense of God’s ; that the divine righteousness and his own are not incompatible.

The speech of the Almighty closes with a magnificently ironical invitation to Job to sit upon the throne of the universe and assume the reins of government :

“ Hast thou an arm like God ?
With a voice like His canst thou thunder ?
Now deck thee with pride and with majesty,
Clothe thee with glory and splendour.
Pour forth the floods of thine anger,
And all that is lofty abase.
Every proud one lay low whom thou seest,
And crush thou the wicked beneath thee.
Hide them together in dust,
And bind up their faces in darkness.
And I then will render thee praise
That thy right hand hath won thee the victory.”
(xl. 9-14).

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The invitation is couched in a form which implies that there is a great gulf fixed between man's ways of governing and God's. Man in general, Job in particular, if elevated to the throne, would immediately play the petty tyrant, treating the rebellious with all the unconsidered and short-sighted indignation which he had vainly expected God to display, and annihilating them on the spot. But God, who not only spares the wild animals but loves them and feeds them, does not habitually drive the wicked instantly into the outer darkness, but shows upon them something of that mercy which is over all His works, something of that large patience which is natural to One to whom a thousand years are but as a day. The very quality in God which provokes and perplexes Job is only another of His glorious attributes, and in no way incompatible with His hatred of wrong. But when Job has shown how much better he can conduct the universe with his methods of blood and iron, God will be ready to render him the praise which normally man renders to God. Could irony any further go ?

This whole speech of Jehovah is no less astonishing than many of Job's own—astonishing alike in its irony and in its seeming irrelevance. With the exception of its suggestive conclusion, it seems at first a totally unethical answer to an intensely ethical problem. Indeed, in spite of the claim of the words which introduce it (xxxviii. 1), many have maintained that it is not an answer at all, but simply a majestic reiteration of much that had already been

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well said by the friends, and brilliantly by Job himself. All the disputants were agreed about the wonder of the universe and of the power behind it ; and those who see in the speech no more than that, rightly refuse to regard it as a satisfactory or even as a relevant answer to a man in the case of Job.

From any point of view, it can scarcely be maintained that its relevance is immediately obvious. It contains not a syllable about Job or his sorrow, not a word that acknowledges his integrity or commends his endurance, not a ray of light upon the particular grief that is breaking his indignant heart, not a solitary allusion to the problems of the moral world that have been discussed with such vehemence by him and his friends, not a hint of another world in which the wrongs of this will be righted and its sorrows comforted for evermore. The speech offers no theory—such as the friends have incidentally offered—of suffering, whether as punitive, disciplinary, educative, or redemptive. It says simply nothing at all about human life and its problems : which has led some scholars to the conclusion that the writer had nothing to say. Instead of the consolation and the vindication with which Job had dreamed his heavenly Friend would soothe his wounded heart, there is hurled out of the whirlwind a volley of ironical questions, which have nothing to do with him or his grief, or even with human life at all, but which gather round the mysterious processes of nature—the steadiness of the earth, the movement of the sea, the marvel of the heavens with their stars and clouds, the invisible sources of the

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snow, the rain, the hail, followed by inimitable sketches of animal life. Where was Job, the Voice asks, when these wonderful processes were inaugurated, and what has he to do with the sustaining of them? It seems cruel of the great Friend thus to overwhelm the broken-hearted man who had appealed to Him so confidently. His spiritual cravings are simply ignored. It would seem as if the Creator had more interest in His stars and in His wild beasts than in the most wonderful creature in His whole creation. The case which Job had hoped to present to a sympathetic ear, he has now no opportunity even of stating: he is simply struck dumb. God does not even express the remotest approval of the servant who had served Him so well. The speech seems to suggest the same sort of bankruptcy within the sphere of ethical interpretation as had so often provoked Job to ridicule in the friends: so much so that some interpret it as indicating the impotence of man to solve the world enigma, and the certainty—since this is all the Almighty has to say—that no solution is possible.

As against this, it has to be noted, at the outset, that the speech is, at the very least, a noble appeal to fact—to the secrets of nature which are open to every observant and reverent eye. The passion for fact which has characterized Job's every statement and demand is here, if not satisfied—of this more hereafter—at least met. Job had cried out in his loneliness, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him" (xxiii. 3). The wonders of the world in

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which Job lives and moves and has his being, pass in majestic procession before him, and the Voice says, "Behold ! He is *there*." How infinitely more impressive is this revelation than Eliphaz's fantastic and abnormal vision of the night (iv. 12ff).

Again, it is truly wonderful to find this great poet-thinker resolutely refusing to find his final solution on the other side of Death, that is, in a region beyond the control of evidence. Intuitions, no doubt, may be as valuable as evidence—may even, in their own place, be evidence ; and we have already found that, in a moment of exaltation, Job leaps to the great thought of the Beyond, and clasps to his torn heart the comfort of it (xix. 25). That is part of his solution, a part which we believe he could never again let go ; but he will not stake the whole of his case on that. The other world must be the refuge of faith and not of despair : the possession of God there must be the issue of the discovery of Him here. The future must be the happy consummation, not the negation, of experiences enjoyed in this present world ; and though the writer, like his hero, believes in the rectification, on the other side, of injustices and anomalies on this, he never allows the thought of the future to dominate his discussion ; and here, in the divine speeches—where, if anywhere, we may fairly look for a solution of the riddle—he does not allow it to emerge at all. He has faced the problem at its very hardest, and deliberately rejected its easiest solution ; and nothing could be more indicative of his immense intellectual courage and candour than this stern repudiation of the tempta-

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tion to cut the knot of his problem by placing its solution in the world beyond.

But in what sense is the speech of Jehovah an answer? What effect might it reasonably be expected to produce upon Job or upon us? For one thing, it suggests that, in perplexity or sorrow, it is good for us to get away from ourselves—"to forget ourselves," as one has said, "in the glorious creation of which we form a part." When those who look in learn to look out, there will be at least the possibility of depression merging into self-forgetfulness, it may be even into illumination and exaltation. Job desperately appeals to God for a revelation of Himself and for light upon his misery; and, for answer, God passes before Him the glorious panorama of Creation—of earth and sky and sea, with the wild and happy things that are therein. To a broken heart, such an answer may seem a mockery; but it is God's own answer, and it means, at the least, that so long as we have eyes for nothing but our problems, the problems will remain. If we do not solve them, we can at least for a while forget them, by looking away to the wonders of the immeasurable universe. Job was made to feel that God had purposes that extend to creatures other than man and to worlds other than ours.

The first feeling that comes over us, as we look, is a sense of overwhelming mystery. Job has no answer to give to any of the questions that fall upon his terrified ears. He does not know where the light dwells. He does not know where God keeps His treasures of snow and hail. He does not really know

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anything of the wonderful world about him. Nor do we. We have watched the great processes, and given them names, and spoken of cause and effect, of the conservation of force, and the transformation of energy ; but, in the last resort, we are as ignorant as Job. "Behold, we know not anything." We are not in the secret counsels of the Almighty any more than he.

The world is a mystery which we have to accept without being able to explain : and this was doubtless one of the lessons which the panorama of nature was designed to bring home to the desolate soul of Job. Mystery, mystery, on the right hand and on the left ! If he could not answer the simplest questions that could be asked about the familiar phenomena of the natural world, how could he hope to understand the infinitely more intricate problems that gather about the moral world and human life ? Our problem, frightful as it is when looked at by itself, shrivels almost into insignificance, when seen against that background of infinite mystery. Ours is but a little bit of the mystery in which the whole universe is enwrapped, and before which it is wisdom to bow in silence.

This were, however, after all but a melancholy consolation—resignation rather than consolation ; and the glorious vision of nature can do more for the sorrowful heart than that. The majestic speech of the Almighty, which suggests that the universe is a mystery, suggests also that it is an orderly mystery. Behind it is Mind. Its phenomena do not happen in *any* order, they happen in a particular order ;

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their sequence can be depended upon. Its God is a God of order, not of confusion. Through the centuries this order has run inexorably on—seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night—and this, we believe, will continue while the earth remaineth. It is surely no unwisdom to trust the Being who “made all that.”

In spite of the mystery that baffles and besets us behind and before, the world of which we form a part is a world in which things are in their places. The stars in their courses obey His laws. The earth has its “measures and lines.” Sea and land have each their bounds assigned them.

“Who shut up the sea with doors,
Declaring, ‘Thus far, but no further,
And here shall thy proud waves be stayed’?”

The sea is not allowed to overwhelm and devastate the land. In the physical world things are where they should be, and will it not also be so in the world of human life? Sorrow has its place, like the sea, but no more than the sea will it be allowed to work wreck and ruin. “Thus far shalt thou come, but no further.” A mighty Intelligence pervades the whole universe, and lifts up, we may be sure, into its comprehensive purpose the things that men call evil. This is the real answer to Renan’s charge that “instead of explaining the universe to man, God contents Himself with showing the smallness of the place man occupies in the universe.” It is, in short, a *universe* in which we live and of which we form a part. “The earth is the Lord’s, and all that fills it,” including ourselves. Job is no outcast from intelli-

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gible law. He and we find our places within the system, not beyond it ; and the sufferings of this present time, alike for Job and for us, are woven into the fine web of God's mighty purpose.

The world we live in is a world whose order we have a right to trust. It is full of meaning and purpose. And as we watch the unfailing regularity with which its great processes go on ; as we think of the Mind by which they are directed, and the unwearied everlasting arms upon which they are sustained, we too shall find something of that quiet order which pervades the universe, enter and take possession of our own souls, as we begin to trust that infinite Mind and to lean with all our weight upon those mighty arms.

But in the mystery by which we are surrounded there is more than order ; there is love. As Mr. Chesterton has put it, the secret " is a bright and not a sad one." The system of things is not cruel or indifferent ; it is an order at the heart of which is love. Surely this thought was never expressed with more tenderness or beauty than in the lines :

" He sends rain on the land where no man is,
 On the wilderness, where there is no man,
 To gladden the waste and the wilderness,
 And to clothe the parched land with green."

This thought also shines through the lines which describe God's care for the young lions. The God who is kind to His wild creatures can be no less than kind to the noblest of all His creatures. The God who lavishes His love upon the waste and desolate ground, will surely not forget His men and women

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with their wasted and desolate hearts. The great poet who gave us this immortal book does not actually say so, indeed he deliberately avoids saying so—for in these speeches he persistently keeps our eyes turned away from human life and its problems—but that is what he means. If God cares for the wilderness and for the young lion, will He not also care for the man? If He pours His love even upon the place *where no man is*, He can surely be trusted to remember the places where the men are. It is the Old Testament anticipation of the words of Jesus: “If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall He not much more clothe you?” As has been well said, the solution offered here is one “which does not solve the perplexity, but buries it under the tide of a fuller life and joy in God.”

The impression made by the whole speech recalls words spoken by Carlyle, when an old man, in his Rectorial address to the students of Edinburgh University: “No nation that did not contemplate this wonderful universe with an awe-struck and reverential feeling that there was a great, unknown, omnipotent, all-wise, and all-virtuous Being, superintending all men in it and all interests in it—no nation ever came to much, nor did any man either, who forgot that.” The universe, as interpreted by this solemn and wonderful speech of Jehovah, is seen to be governed by the same God of order and of grace as the Hebrew historians find in the great expanses of history.

In the Book of Job, as throughout the Bible, the essence and climax of revelation is the thought of

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God as Love. With all his passion for facts, this is a fact which Job had only spasmodically grasped. It is indeed *the* fact, which makes all other facts endurable, even when they are not completely intelligible: the fact which has uplifted men to sing songs in the night and to rejoice in all things evermore. Often Job had sternly summoned the attention of his friends to facts which they were disposed to ignore or explain away: now his own attention is summoned by the Almighty to a fact which he had often doubted and sometimes denied, but which turns out to be the most pervasive, as it is the most exhilarating, fact in all the world. Nature which, in words that bordered on impiety, he had denounced as terrible, is now for him transfigured by the presence of the love revealed within it. The thought of God as mere power, which had driven him to rebellion, is now reinforced by the thought of Him as love, which brings him peace. He might have said with Rabbi ben Ezra :

“Praise be Thine !
I see the whole design,
I, who saw power, see now love perfect too :
Perfect I call Thy plan :
Thanks that I was a man !
Maker, remake, complete—I trust what Thou shalt do !”

So, though clothed in the garb of irony and severity, the answer to which Job had looked forward with such wild expectation, turns out to be a gracious answer after all. It is a tacit rebuke of the merely retributive theory of the universe which the friends had so stubbornly defended and which Job himself had been reluctantly forced by the logic of facts to

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deny. It presents us with a God who loves the whole world which His own fingers framed, who "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth His rain on the just and the unjust," and even upon the thirsty desert land, where there are neither just nor unjust.

Even this ancient poet, who very keenly felt the mystery that lies about the world, and human life, yet learned from nature that it was not an unilluminated mystery—that it was lit up by the love of God. He saw that love shining in the most unlikely places and he had faith to believe that it shines always and everywhere, whether men have eyes to see it, or not. We do not always see it plainly; but we, who have looked upon Jesus, know Him and what He is; and we believe that the mind that is behind the universe is the same mind that was in Him. As we can trust Him, no less surely may we trust It. The mystery of life is not thereby abolished, but it is illuminated. It can be faced with quietness and confidence by those who believe that behind it is that Love "which is showered upon the wilderness where no man is, to satisfy the waste and desolate ground."

JOB'S HUMBLE AND PENITENT REPLY (Job xl. 3-5,
xlii. 2f, 5f.).¹

It is part of the writer's greatness that he does not involve God in the sort of discussion with Job that the latter had desiderated. He lets Him appear in His glory—the glory of His power, His wisdom, His pity ; and Job, who could assail the friends with such eloquent vehemence, is dumb or all but dumb in this glorious Presence—much like the prophet Isaiah after he had seen the Lord God of hosts whose glory filled the whole earth (ch. vi.). It is not that he is crushed ; nay, he is transfigured, standing as he does within a universe itself transfigured by the all-pervasive presence of a glorious God of grace. But before this immensity he feels himself to be infinitely insignificant, and his criticism of it to be pathetically inept ; never again will he make so foolish a venture.

“ Then Job answered Jehovah and said :
Ah, how small am I ! What can I answer ?
I lay my hand on my mouth.
Once indeed have I spoken—enough :
Yea twice—but not ever again.” (xl. 3-5).

¹ The vivid but somewhat grandiloquent descriptions of *behemoth* (the hippopotamus, xl. 15-24) and *leviathan* (the crocodile, chap. xli.) are generally believed to be additions of later writers, who imagined these huge animals to be more impressive witnesses of Jehovah's might than the ordinary animals mentioned in chap. xxxix.

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After all his doubts and denials, his protests and challenges, he returns to the simple humility he had displayed in the Prologue when the first blows fell (i. 21). His intellectual doubts have not been solved, not at least by intellectual methods ; but they have been absorbed in the great certainties that have swept over his soul as he contemplated the vision—the certainties of God and of His love ; and his heart fills alike with peace and rapture too deep for many words. He is not merely resigned, he is at rest ; he is not merely at rest, but a flood of silent joy wells up within him. The wonderful thing that has happened to transform his protests into submission and his passion into peace, is just his new experience of God. He sees his little life included within an infinitely transcendent and kindly purpose, by the glory of which the sufferings of this present time are transfigured. “ From the dark and narrow field of personal experience he is led into a vast cosmos which is luminous with God.”¹ Formerly he had been sure of himself, of his own innocence and integrity ; now he is sure of God and His love, as he sees it “ writ large ” upon the pages of the world of which he forms a part : it is the combination of these two assurances, and most of all the latter, that brings him peace. The good man has tasted and seen that God, too, is good ; and so with quiet heart he can lie down upon his bed of anguish or face the death he believes to be impending, inspired by the assurance that the God who sustains the universe is sustaining him as well. There falls upon his heart

¹ J. Strahan, *The Book of Job*, p. 345.

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" that peace which follows upon the right understanding of all great experiences."¹

" I acknowledge that Thou hast prevailed,
There is nothing too hard for Thee.
Therefore spake I without understanding,
Of wonders beyond my knowledge.
I had heard of Thee but by hear-say,
But now with mine eyes I have seen Thee ;
And therefore I spurn (my words)
And repent in dust and in ashes." (xlvi. 2f, 5f).

Job's criticism of the existing order was not illegitimate: the God who has given men a " palate " cannot be angry with them when they present their independent report of the " taste " of the world (xii. 11). But, however legitimate, it was inept, as all criticism must be which is exercised in ignorance of essential facts. It is the breadth and the depth of the vision that have convinced him of the grotesque inadequacy of his criticism, and of the shallowness of his protests. He had been speaking, as critics not uncommonly do, of things " beyond his knowledge," with the result that his new experience of God has brought him to a better knowledge of himself, and he spurns his former hasty words, sincere though they had been. His earlier criticisms, he now discovers, had been far more dominated by tradition than he could ever have been willing to believe. He had flung them forth with all the ingenuous passion of an utterly sincere soul: nevertheless they really rested on the theory of mechanical retribution which he had denounced with scorn when it had been presented

¹ John Bailey, *Milton*, p. 249.

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by his friends. His soul had been agitated to its depths, just because he had brought to his criticism of the world the retributive theory in which he had been trained and which he found did not uniformly or even frequently correspond to the facts either of his own experience, or of the world which his own sorrow had taught him to observe so keenly. He was, as he confessed, far more of a traditionalist than he knew: not indeed of Bildad's sort, who clung to the pronouncements of the fathers (viii. 8), even after they had been discredited by innumerable facts; but in the sense that he brought traditional standards to the interpretation of life, and was exasperated when the tradition was not supported by the facts. That is what he means when he says, "I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear." But now he has seen the world with "larger, other eyes"; he has a sense of that gracious Presence interfused through all things: more simply, he has seen God. "But now"—after the marvellous panorama has been unrolled—"mine eye hath seen Thee." It is the difference between the rumour of God and the vision of God. Confused by the inadequate interpretations he had heard, he was steadied, strengthened, comforted, inspired, by the sight which he had seen of God upon the throne of the universe, wielding His sceptre of love.

The real force of these simple words, "But now mine eye hath seen Thee," is only fully appreciated when we recall the similar words uttered by Job in one of his most exalted moments under the spell

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of an earlier vision, less elaborate but hardly less fascinating. As with the eye of faith he had rapturously contemplated the Almighty attesting his integrity on the other side of Death, the assurance had risen within his heart that this blessed experience would one day be vouchsafed to his bodily eyes.

“As Sponsor shall I behold—God,
Whom mine eyes shall behold, and no stranger’s.”
(xix. 26f).

The words here and there are the same. The book is throughout pervaded by such intense dramatic quality and all its parts are so compact and fitly joined together that we cannot but believe these widely separated words to have been written with each other in view. A pessimist might maintain that the later use of the words is designed as a gentle, but deliberate, rebuke of the earlier ; that the daring hope of a vision and a meeting in the world beyond was not to be fulfilled : and that the only vision of God Job need ever hope to receive was such as had already been vouchsafed in the wonders of the universe that had moved in stately procession through the divine speech. “*Now* mine eye hath seen Thee”—as if the writer meant to imply that the old hope which Job had cherished was a delusion and a snare. But surely this interpretation is unnecessarily austere. There is no incompatibility at all between the two visions : rather is the one the fruition of the other. The God of this side is also the God of that. The speech of the Almighty has done little for us if it has not taught us how great

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God is, and how mindful of His creatures. The God whom Job will one day see is the God whom he has already seen. What is to hinder the kind and omnipotent Creator, who has revealed Himself already, from revealing Himself again and otherwise to the man whom He honoured as His servant and His friend?

The effect of the vision of God is very striking—the more so as with that the poem ends. It leads Job, not to modify his criticism, but to abandon it altogether. There is nothing here of Henley's defiance:

"Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed."

Whether that had ever been Job's mood or not, it certainly is not now. It is not chance, but God with whom now, as always, he knows himself to be dealing; and his head is bowed "in dust and ashes." Face to face with the immensity and complexity of the universe which he now sees to be luminous with a Presence as gracious as it is strong, he recognizes again the inevitable and pathetic inadequacy of his own criticism of it. His wild challenges were sincere, but they were shallow—as oblivious of one order of facts, and indeed of the spirit of the whole, as the friends had been of the other. So he repents in dust and ashes.

But we must beware of reading too much into this confession. It does not mean that Job at last regards himself as a miserable sinner: he is not making the confession for which the friends have been long and patiently waiting. He is not admit-

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ting, and never will admit, that he is a sinner at all in their sense: he does not ask for forgiveness. One of the most interesting features in the demeanour of Job throughout the whole discussion is his deliberate refusal to regard sin as the key to the present order of the world, or to the differences observable in the fortunes of men. This is the friends' contention, but never Job's; and that the writer is expressing his own mind through the words of his hero is confirmed by the same significant absence of sin from the speech of the Almighty. Nor is Job's phrase intended to imply that discussion and criticism are in themselves sinful: this great thinker-poet sympathizes too profoundly with his hero to believe that. But he means that discussion, to be adequate, must be informed, and a criticism that is ignorant of essentials must for ever remain inept. It is no moral obliquity that Job is here confessing, but an intellectual incompetence—which expressed itself no doubt at times in hasty and shallow protests—to "grasp this scheme of things entire."

There is a tribute of discussion and a tribute of silence; and when the soul that has wrestled with its doubts has been rewarded by the vision which brings peace, in penitent shame for its unworthy doubts and foolish challenges it humbly bows in grateful and adoring silence before the Lord of all. "The conclusion of the whole matter is that, when we have uttered all our arguments and registered all our protests, we are driven back on those inspirations of the soul which nothing can destroy."¹

¹ B. J. Snell, *The Value of the Old Testament*, p. 99.

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And thus the mighty drama ends—with Job bowed upon his ash-heap prostrate before the Lord God Almighty, wasted in body, but with his mind filled with a strange peace marred only by the memory of its former presumption, and with a quiet rapture in his heart.

THE EPILOGUE

(Job xlii. 7-17)

THE EPILOGUE

THE RESTORATION OF JOB (Job xlii. 7-17)

THE tragedy has ended in the repose of reconciliation. Job now knows that, whether living or dying, he is the Lord's. We have been powerfully reminded by the speech of Jehovah of "the connection of the limited world of ordinary experience with the vaster life of which it is but a partial appearance."¹ Even if Job were to die, we should part from him with the impression, as Professor Bradley² has nobly said in another connection, that this "heroic being, though in one sense and outwardly he has failed, is yet in another sense superior to the world in which he appears: is, in some way which we do not seek to define, untouched by the doom that overtakes him; and is rather set free from life than deprived of it. . . . The tragic world, if taken as it is presented, with all its error, guilt, failure, woe and waste, is no final reality but only a part of reality taken for the whole, and, when so taken, illusive; and . . . if we could see the whole, and the tragic facts in their true place in it, we should find them, not abolished, of course, but so transmuted that they had ceased to be strictly tragic—find, perhaps, the suffering and death

¹ A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 174.

² *Op. cit.* p. 324.

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counting for little or nothing, the greatness of the soul for much or all, and the heroic spirit, in spite of failure, nearer to the heart of things than the smaller, more circumspect, and perhaps even 'better' beings who survived the catastrophe." The function of the speech of the Almighty is to enable us to "see the whole."

But the natural human instinct, and still more the old Hebrew instinct, for a happy ending could not let the story end there. Mark Rutherford has said toward the close of his fine comments on the book: "God is great, we know not His ways. He takes from us all we have, but yet, if we possess our souls in patience, we *may* pass the valley of the shadow and come out in sunlight again. We *may* or we *may not*." But for the old Hebrew-story-teller, we not only *may*, but we *must*; so he rounds off his tale with the complete material restitution of his sorely-tried hero. Whether this sketch could have come from the hand of the great writer who has already brought the story to so noble a conclusion, it is not the province of this volume to discuss, though there is really no adequate reason for doubting it; it is enough to say that, as far back as we can trace it, it has formed part of the book we are considering; and the conclusion, so full of suggestion, is such that on deeper consideration, so far from resenting it, we receive it with the most cordial welcome.

"So, after Jehovah had spoken these words to Job, He said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'My anger is hot against thee and thy two friends; because

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unlike My servant Job, ye have not spoken the truth about Me.' " The sublime speeches of Job (xxix.-xxxii.) and the Almighty (xxxviii.f) have long ago pushed the friends out of our mind. But God has not forgotten them. He is angry with them ; and His first words, addressed to their chief spokesman, are very stern. Zophar (xi. 5) had prayed long ago that God would speak and open His lips against Job ; and lo ! when He does open His lips, it is to speak against himself and his friends. He tells them very plainly that they have not spoken the truth about Him, " as My servant Job " hath done.

Here, then, is one element, and far from an unimportant one, in the restitution of Job. The friends had defended the Almighty with every argument, honourable or dishonourable, known to controversy ; and for their pains they are rewarded with His fiery indignation. Job had been the great heretic, challenging their truisms with a vehemence that savoured often of impiety and bordered once or twice upon blasphemy ; yet it is he, and not they, who comes out of the conflict with the seal of the divine approval. It is easy to see where the sympathies of the writer lie. He is saying as plainly as words can put it, that the God in whom he believes, the God of his hero, is on the side of honest, fearless, even daring inquiry ; that the frankly critical discussion of beliefs universally held by the contemporary church is no crime ; that the challenge of the most venerable religious opinions is no impiety. Nay, more, he is saying that these discussions and challenges may themselves even be brilliant con-

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tributions to a larger truth ; may do the world an infinitely deeper religious service than blind adherence to an orthodoxy, which only remains orthodoxy so long as it is not effectively challenged ; and that, if uttered by a man like Job, with his passion for God and for truth, they are peculiarly well-pleasing to God, who is honoured by the active and not by the stagnant mind.

Job was right and the friends were wrong. Job was wrong in many particular things he said, and, as we have seen, he humbly takes to his heart the rebuke of the vision ; but he was right in his intellectual temper, in the drift, the impulse, the sheer intrepid honesty of his thought. The friends were right in many particular things they said ; but they were wrong—how painfully wrong we see in the kindling of the divine anger—in their intellectual torpor and inhospitality, in their timidity, in their stubborn adherence to the past and the present, to the opinions of the fathers and the brethren, in their refusal to face the uncongenial and the unfamiliar, in their preference for dogmas and doctrines to facts, in their scorn of experiences they did not understand, in their readiness to imagine any hypocrisy and invent any calumny rather than face the simple truth. Out of all the welter of the discussion, Job stands forth as the champion of intellectual and religious freedom, with the seal of the God of truth stamped upon his disfigured brow. As he believes in God, so he believes in the right and still more in the duty of private judgment, however clamorous and overwhelming the opposition ; and, for so believing,

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God lifts him to the highest honour. Again and again—four times over within two verses—He calls him “ My servant Job.”

Here, in this high title deliberately repeated, is another element in Job’s restitution. Servant before, when all went well (i. 8), he is “ my servant ” still. “ But now go to *My servant Job* with seven bullocks and seven rams ”—great offering for a great crime—“ and offer them as a burnt offering for yourselves, and *My servant Job* shall pray for you ; for, out of regard for him, I will not put you to confusion for your failure to speak the truth about me, as *My servant Job* has done.” The Greek version puts this with engaging candour : “ For, but for him, I would have destroyed you.” Notice how deliberately the contrast is again emphasized between the truth of Job and the falsehoods of the friends : the writer is clearly putting himself into this.

Once more Job stands forth in radiant light. We know him already as a man of superbly courageous intellect : here we see him as a man of prayer. But this, after all, is no surprise ; for one of our first glimpses of him was in intercession for his children. Here is yet another element in the restitution of Job, that he is privileged to be an intercessor whom the Lord will hear : he takes his place with Abraham (Gen. xx. 7) and the prophets (cf. Amos vii. 3) and the great Servant of Isaiah liii. who made intercession for the transgressors ; and he is worthy thus to mediate between God and man, because of the things which he suffered. The fate of his friends, whose theology had almost turned

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them into enemies, will be nothing less than terrible, unless Job stands between them and God ; and he does. Whatever reparation may ultimately be made to Job for his shattered health and ruined fortunes, we feel that nothing can surpass these spiritual tokens of the divine favour, and we are more than grateful to the Epilogue for recording them. Even if nothing else should happen, Job is now reinstated in deed and in truth ; and the peace that was already gathering upon us at the close of the tragedy is being confirmed by every fresh sentence of the Epilogue. " So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as Jehovah told them, and Jehovah had regard unto Job. So when Job prayed for his friends, Jehovah changed his fortunes, giving him double of all he had before." *Jehovah had regard unto Job.* How simple, how sweet, how comforting, after all the storm ! Jehovah regarded Job first of all by hearing his prayer for his friends. It is good that this should come first, before the story of his material restitution. But this follows very quickly—follows indeed as the consequence of the other. It was when Job was praying for his friends that his own fortunes were transformed. How much spiritual insight lies in words like these.

This transformation is now described with picturesque detail. He received from the hand of the Lord, whose love for His creatures has already been so nobly illustrated in the vision of Creation, twice as much as he had before. Seven sons and three daughters—the fairest women in all the world—

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were born to him, to take, so far as that was possible, the place of the dead ; and friends came with presents to rejoice and feast with him in the old home to which he had now returned. " Then his brothers and sisters and old friends came—every one of them—and dined with him at his home ; and they condoled with him, and comforted him for all the misery that Jehovah had brought upon him. Besides, each of them made him a present of a piece of money and a gold ring." It is hard not to see in all this a gentle satire on the fickleness of human friendship, which recalls Job's mournfully beautiful words uttered in the first sorrow of his abandonment. The friends who had been to him as " a treacherous brook " (vi. 15), who had stood afar off and forgotten him in the hour of his adversity (xix. 14), now that he does not need them so sorely—though Job is a lover of men (ch. xxxi.) and will gratefully welcome them—come flocking with their presents " to comfort him for all the misery that Jehovah had brought upon him." This writer knows the human heart to its depths.

But most strange of all is it to see trooping into the picture " fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand she-asses." What, we ask, have these creatures now to do with the blessedness of Job ? Is it not just a little disappointing—something of the nature of an anti-climax—after the magnificent conclusion of the drama, which leaves Job bowed with submission and at peace with the glorious God, and after seeing him crowned, in the earlier part of the

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Epilogue, once and again with the glory and honour of the divine approval? So some have thought: nay, this very material compensation has seemed to some to be a blow struck, all unconsciously it may be, at the whole teaching of the drama, which is that a good man is willing to serve God for nought—a reversion indeed to the position of Satan in the Prologue. Cheyne, for example, has characterized it as “a sad concession to a low view of providential dealings.” But this is to make too much of what is, after all, only a minor trait. The material reward is, in any case, not much more than a sort of poetic justice. It is indeed an outward and visible sign of the relation subsisting between Job and his God; but it is hard to believe that the genius who fought his way to such a solution as appears in chs. xxxviiif. would himself have laid much, if any, stress upon it. Yet it is not inappropriate or irrelevant. Job's sufferings had their origin in Satan's denial of his integrity; and now that Satan has been convinced—for Job has clung in the deepest darkness to the God of his conscience—it is only just that Job should be restored to his former state. Besides, no earthly possessions or prosperity have any power to injure the soul of this man who has been through the furnace seven times heated, and come forth as gold.

“After this Job lived a hundred and forty years. Thus he was spared to see not only his children but his grandchildren—four generations.” Then comes the inevitable end—“Job died, old and full of days.” Yet the Greek version refuses to consider

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this the end, and makes the extraordinarily interesting addition, "And it is written that Job will rise again with those whom the Lord doth raise." Who shall say that this addition was unjustified? It was made at a time when men were more fully and clearly persuaded of immortality than in the days when the book was written; besides, there were daring expressions of this very hope and faith in the book itself—though found upon no other lips than Job's. The addition is in strict line with his loftiest aspirations. The writer of it could not let Job end in death. He carried him beyond it through the resurrection to that world in which, face to face, he was destined to behold his Redeemer and his heavenly Friend.

ELIHU'S INTERPRETATION OF SUFFERING

(Job xxxii.-xxxvii.)

ELIHU'S INTERPRETATION OF SUFFERING (Job xxxii.-xxxvii.)

EVERY generation has felt the spell of this wonderful book, and already in very early times this fascination kindled the imagination of thoughtful readers to make supplementary contributions to the text. Of these the most elaborate is the section devoted to the speeches of Elihu (xxxii.-xxxvii.),¹ added by some one who felt that Job's audacity needed rebuke, and who, dissatisfied equally with the arguments of his friends and the speech of the Almighty, was eager to illuminate the problem of suffering from a somewhat different angle. His contribution which, though not without interest and value, is diffuse, and in places very obscure, has not much to offer that is really new: his leading ideas and sometimes even his language are obviously suggested by the speeches of the original book, notably those of Eliphaz and Jehovah.

Broadly speaking, while the friends regard suffering as penal, Elihu regards it as corrective, disciplinary, educative. But let us look at the speeches themselves :

¹ This section violently interrupts the fine transition from the appeal of Job (xxxii.) to the reply of Jehovah (xxxviii.). Besides, Elihu is not mentioned in the Prologue, nor yet in the Epilogue. For reasons against the authenticity of this section, see my *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 272-274.

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“ I am but young in years,
While ye are aged men :
So I was timid and feared
To set mine opinion before you.
I felt that days ought to speak,
And that years gave the right to teach wisdom.
But the spirit enlighteneth men,
The Almighty inspires them with insight.
It is not the old men that are wise,
Nor the aged that understand truth ;
And so, I pray, listen to me—
I, too, would set forth mine opinion.” (xxxii. 6-10).

Though young, Elihu is conscious of divine illumination, and believes that what he has to say will bring to Job’s mind the conviction which the friends have failed to bring.

“ I awaited what you had to say,
I lent mine ear to your reasons ;
Yea, I gave heed unto you,
While ye searched out what to say.
But see ! none brought conviction to Job,
Not a man of you answered his words.
Say not, ‘ Here we have come upon wisdom :
‘Tis God must confound him, not man.’ ”
(xxxii. 11-13).

These last two lines mean that he does not agree with the original writer in thinking a theophany to have been necessary to convince and convict Job. He is conscious of the power to present incontrovertible arguments, and this he promises to do with absolute impartiality :

“ He has not yet debated with me,
Nor will I give him answer like yours.
I, too, will answer my share :
I too will set forth mine opinion.
For filled with words am I ;
The breath in my body distresses me.

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Like wine without vent is my belly,
Like new wine-skins ready to burst.
I must speak and so find me relief,
I must open my lips and make answer.
I would show my favour to none,
And give flattering titles to no man.
Of flattery I know nothing—
Else soon would my Maker remove me."

(xxxii. 14, 17-22).

Of the last two lines one critic facetiously remarks,
"It is not quite so tragic as all that."

This rather bombastic exordium would no doubt be less amusing to an Oriental audience than to us : at the same time it is difficult to believe that a very lofty solution of the burning problem is to come from a young man who maintains that he is ready to burst, if he is not to have the opportunity to deliver himself of his speech. He proceeds with the same conceit and diffuseness, promising not to overawe Job as the theophany had done—another indirect polemic against the divine speech in chs. xxxviiif. :

"But listen, Job, pray, to my words,
And give ear unto all that I say.
Behold ! I have opened my mouth,
My tongue in my palate hath spoken.
My heart poureth forth words of knowledge,
Unfeigned is the speech of my lips.
Then answer me this, if thou canst :
Stand up and debate with me.
See ! I am in God's sight as thou ;
I, too, was fashioned of clay.
The spirit of God hath created me ;
My life is the breath of Almighty.
See ! no terrors of mine need appal thee,
Nor shall *my* hand lie heavy upon thee."

(xxxiii. 1-7)

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He then proceeds, in a manner not unknown to controversialists, to build his case upon misrepresentation :

“Thou hast certainly said in my hearing,
Thy voice I heard thus maintaining,
‘Pure and sinless am I,
I am clean, there is no guilt in me.
But *He* findeth pretexts against me,
He counteth me as His foe.
He setteth my feet in the stocks,
Keepeth watch over all my ways.
Behold ! when I cry, comes no answer ;
God hideth himself from men.’” (xxxiii. 8-12).

Job, of course, had said nothing of the kind. In spite of the noble record which he claims in his great speech of vindication (xxxv.) he had frankly admitted his “transgression” (vii. 21), and “youthful sins” (xiii. 26) ; but he had refused to admit that these venial and inevitable failings were sufficient to explain and justify the colossal disaster by which he had been overwhelmed. Job—Elihu alleges—had maintained that God is silent. Nay, answers Elihu : He speaks loudly enough, especially in two clear and notable ways ; and it is at this point that Elihu’s contribution to the discussion is most distinctive.

The first way is by means of dreams and visions :

“Now why dost thou plead against Him,
That He giveth thy words no answer ?
For God hath one manner of speech,
Yea, two—and He doth not revoke it.
In a dream, in a vision of night,
‘When deep sleep falleth on men,’
In slumbers upon the bed,
Then He opens the ears of men,
And sendeth them fearful warnings,

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To turn men aside from wrong,
And to bring human pride to an end—
To keep back man's soul from the pit
And his life from descending to Sheol." (xxxiii. 13-18).

Just at this point where Elihu promises to be original, his debt is most obvious. He draws heavily upon the mysterious apparition of Eliphaz, whose words he even quotes (iv. 12ff.)—the chief difference being that, whereas Eliphaz regards his vision as exceptional, Elihu considers such visitations as normal experiences with men whom God is seeking to wean from their sin. His allusion to the dreams in which God visits men rests on words of Job's own (vii. 14). But how Job would have scorned these edifying exhortations of Elihu!

"Thou scarest me with dreams,
And with visions dost so affright me,
That gladly would I be strangled:
Death itself I spurn in my pain." (vii. 14f).

The dreams which Elihu maintained were sent by a gracious God to instruct him and to save him from himself, only filled Job with terrors so appalling that death would have been an infinitely welcome release.

But God speaks to men through pain and sickness as well as through visions and dreams:

"Or on bed of pain he is chastened,
And all his bones are benumbed.
His soul has a loathing of bread,
And the daintiest food he abhorreth.
His flesh is lean and wasted;
His bones are all but bare.
His soul draweth nigh to the pit,
And his life to the angels of death." (xxxiii. 19-22).

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In those hours of weakness and loneliness God sends His angel to interpret to the sufferer his chastisement and to win him through contrition and penitence from the angel of death who has laid his icy hand upon him ; and the man who accepts this discipline and visitation in humility will assuredly be restored and live to sing his grateful song of praise before the congregation :

“Then over him there is an angel
Interpreter, one of a thousand,
Who expounds unto man his chastisement,
Takes pity on him and says :
'Let him not go down to the pit ;
I have found for his soul a ransom.'
Then his flesh becomes fresher than child's,
He returns to the days of his youth.
He prays unto God with acceptance,
He looks on His face with joy,
Tells the story of his salvation,
And sings before men this song ;
'I have sinned and perverted the right,
Yet He hath not requited my sin.
He hath ransomed my soul from the pit,
That alive I behold the light.'
See ! all these things God doeth,
Twice, yea thrice, with a man,
To bring back his soul from the pit,
With the light of life's sunshine upon him.”
(xxxiii. 23-30).

Though this is but the elaboration of a hint in the first speech of Eliphaz (“Happy is the man whom God correcteth,” v. 17), there is much here that is beautiful and true and nobly said. It is really spoken from the inside ; it grasps very firmly the great truth of the love of God adumbrated in the speech of Jehovah, and applies it in a more intimate and personal way than that speech had done.

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Strictly, of course, it does not meet the case of Job who, we must never forget, both at the beginning and the end of the book is described as " My servant," " a man, blameless and upright, fearing God and shunning evil." *He* at least does not need those terrible visitations to purify him ; but it is nevertheless a profoundly suggestive interpretation of the place of suffering in human life generally, " protecting a man by a shield of pain from the greater evil of sin "—a gift whereby character is deepened, strengthened, purified, and lifted Godwards. As Cornill has finely said, " If a man recognizes the educative character of suffering and takes it to heart, the suffering becomes for him a source of infinite blessing, the highest manifestation of divine love." Has Job any answer to offer to this ?

" Be attentive, Job, listen to me,
Be thou silent, and I will speak.
If aught thou canst say, then answer me :
Speak, for my wish is to clear thee.
But if not, listen thou unto me :
Be silent, while I teach thee wisdom." (xxxiii. 31-33).

Again Elihu returns to the attack on Job in a passage marked this time by misunderstanding as well as misrepresentation :

" Listen, ye wise, to my words,
And give ear to me, ye that have knowledge.
For the ear is the tester of words
As the palate the taster of food.
Let us choose for ourselves what is right,
Recognize by ourselves what is good.

¹ W. B. Macleod, *The Afflictions of the Righteous*, p. 241.

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For Job claimeth to be in the right :
' God,' he says, ' hath deprived me of justice.
Though right, I am counted a liar ;
And though sinless, He wounds me past healing.'
Where is the man like Job,
That drinketh up scorning like water,
That leagues with the workers of wrong,
And that walketh with wicked men ?
For he saith that a man hath no profit
From being the friend of God." (xxxiv. 2-9).

True disciple of Eliphaz here as before, Elihu does not scruple to invent wicked calumnies in support of his doctrine. Job's stainless record is the proof that he had never "leagued with the workers of wrong or walked with wicked men." Besides, in accusing Job of mockery, of "drinking up scorning like water," he shows his complete inability to understand the man. The last two lines may be an allusion to the probably suppressed speech of Job in ch. xxiv., in which he had maintained that the friends of God were rewarded with disaster. But Eliphaz does not see that what he took for scepticism and impiety in the utterances of Job was really the obverse of his passionate yearning for God.

In the baldest possible fashion Elihu now lays down the old and, in Job's eyes, completely discredited doctrine of exact retribution ; but he gives it a new and extraordinarily interesting turn. It is simply inconceivable, he argues, that the great Ruler of the universe can be other than just. It is His spirit that unceasingly sustains all things : the withdrawal of it would mean universal collapse. He is supreme and His dominion unchallengeable ; what temptation could He have to injustice ? what

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interest of His could be served by it ? The whole of history, crowded as it is with evidence that wrong is punished in high and low alike, confirms his contention that there is One above who watches over nations and men in the interests of the moral order :

“So, ye men of intelligence, listen.
Far be it from God to do evil,
And from the Almighty to err.
For the work of each man He requiteth,
He bringeth His way back upon him.
God assuredly cannot do wrong,
The Almighty would not pervert justice.
Who entrusted the earth to His charge ?
And who watcheth over the universe ?
If He should recall His spirit
And gather His breath to Himself,
All flesh together would perish,
And man would return to the dust.

If thou art wise, listen to this,
And give ear to the sound of my words.
Could One rule to whom justice were odious ?
Condemn'st Thou the Just and the Mighty One
Who saith to a king, ‘Thou villain !’
To nobles, ‘Ye infamous men !’—
Who showeth no favour to princes,
Regardeth not rich more than poor ?
For the work of His hands are they all ;
In a moment they die—at midnight.
The rich are convulsed, they pass :
He mysteriously removeth the mighty.
For His eyes are over man’s ways,
Every one of his steps He beholdeth.
No darkness is there and no gloom
Where the workers of wrong may be hidden.
No time doth He set for man
To appear before God in judgment :
He shatters the strong without trial,
And others He sets in their place.
For He giveth heed to their works ;
In the night He doth overturn them.

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Beneath their crimes they are crushed;
He smites them in presence of witnesses;
For they turned from following Him,
And they gave no heed to His ways.
So the crushed were driven to cry to Him,
And the call of the wretched He heard." (xxxiv. 10-28).

In the light, then, of all this incontestable proof of the justice of the Omnipotent One, will it not be common prudence in the rebellious Job to abandon alike his criticism and his wickedness, and turn to God with penitence and confession of sin?

"Say to God, 'I have borne my sin,
I will not offend any more.
Now I see it: O teach me Thyself.
Have I sinned? I will do so no more.'
Must He recompense after *thy* wishes,
That thou hast rejected (His ways)?
'Tis for thee to decide—not for me;
Then utter the thing that thou knowest.
Men of intellect will admit—
Men of wisdom who listen to me—
That Job hath not spoken with knowledge,
His words are not marked by insight.
O that Job might be tried to the end
For the wickedness of his answers;
For he addeth rebellion to sin,
And multiplies words against God." (xxxiv. 31-37).

Job, Elihu alleges, had maintained that religion was unprofitable (xxxiv. 9). This he now proceeds to controvert, showing himself once more an apt pupil of Eliphaz. He repeats his master's awful doctrine that God is too exalted to be interested in or affected by the conduct of His creatures (xxii. 2f). He sits upon his distant, lonely throne in the heavens, unmoved alike by their sin and their righteousness. It is true that Job's religion, if he were religious, could bring no profit to God:

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but he would find that it would be immensely profitable to himself. One hardly knows whether to abhor more this utilitarian conception of religion or this heartless conception of God—a conception, by the way, essentially at variance with the better things Elihu had not long before said about the immanence of God (xxxiv. 14f). Elihu's philosophy is as poor as his theology :

“ Thinkest thou this to be just,
Dost thou call it thy right before God,
To ask, ‘ What advantage is mine ? ’
What the better am I, if I sin not ? ’
Well, I will give thee an answer,
And thy three friends as well.
Look to the heavens and see,
And observe the clouds high overhead.
What effect hath thy sin upon Him ?
What cares He for thy many transgressions ?
What gain comes to Him from thy righteousness ?
What receives He from thy hand ?
‘ Tis to men like thyself thy sin matters,
‘ Tis mortals thy righteousness touches.”

(xxxv. 2-8).

These shallow contentions are followed by a really fine and searching passage which shows how easily the true inward meaning of adversity is missed. The cry which rises from the depths is too seldom a genuine yearning for God, it is for the most part only an animal cry for deliverance. It is relief, and not God, that men want, and that is why the discipline so often ends in nothing.

“ Under sore oppression men cry
For help from the tyrannous arm ;
But none saith, ‘ Where is God my Creator ? ’—
The Giver of songs in the night,
Who grants us more knowledge than beasts,
And more wisdom than birds of the air.

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Then they cry, but receive no answer,
Because of their impious pride.
For to idle cries God will not listen,
Nor will the Almighty regard them.
But when He seems not to regard thee,
Be still and wait patiently for Him." (xxxv. 9-14).

Elihu, who is full of matter, begins again to "justify his Creator" with all the comprehensive knowledge and presumptuous self-importance of youth.

"Wait, I pray, but a while ; I will show thee :
I have yet to say somewhat for God.
With knowledge fetched from afar
I will justify my Creator.
For truly my words are no lie,
One in knowledge complete stands before thee."

(xxxvi. 2-4).

His defence of the Almighty moves along two lines of evidence—history and nature—each of which is elaborated with a fulness intended to justify his claim to "knowledge fetched from afar." First, then, history abundantly illustrates the saving power of suffering.

"Behold, God spurneth the stubborn,
The wicked He spareth not :
But He granteth the rights of the wretched,
Withdraws not their due from the just.
It has happened to kings on the throne,
Seated in pride and glory,
That prisoners in chains they became,
Held fast in the cords of misery :
Then He set forth before them their doings,
Their proud and rebellious behaviour ;
He opened their ears to instruction
And bade them turn back from sin.
If they hearken and do Him homage,
They finish their days in prosperity.

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But if stubborn, they pass to Sheol;
They die without coming to knowledge.
For, godless at heart, they grow sullen;
They cry not for help when He binds them.
They die in the days of their youth,
Like sodomites they perish.
The sufferer He saveth through suffering;
Adversity opens his ear." (xxxvi. 5-15).

In the last two lines there is real insight, noble truth pointedly expressed. "God delivers the afflicted," as Professor Strahan finely comments, "not only in, but through, their affliction, saving them by that from which they would fain be saved."

The moral for Job is obvious: the penalty for sin has fallen, and the price of restoration will have to be paid: it is paid in a willing unmurmuring submission to the Hand that has justly smitten him:

" But thou hast been lured by thy freedom,
By ease at the jaws of distress,
By the fat on thy well-filled table,
And the absence of trouble to haunt thee.
The full fate of the wicked is thine,
Thou art held in the grasp of His judgment;
Let not chastisement make thee resentful,
Nor let the high ransom deflect thee.
Wouldst thou marshal thy plaint against Him,
And all the resource of thy might?
Beware, and incline not to sin,
Nor make choice of sin rather than suffering." (xxxvi. 16-19, 21.)

The second and concluding argument is drawn from the evidence afforded by nature. There God's incomparable wisdom and majesty are so plain to the open eye that criticism becomes a sort of blasphemy; and Job's duty is to join the mighty

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chorus of praise which rises evermore from the lips of reverent men :

“ See ! God by His power doeth loftily—
Who is a teacher like Him ?
Who hath enjoined Him His way ?
Or who hath said, ‘ Thou doest wrongly ’ ?
Remember to magnify Him
For His work whereof men have sung.
All men look with pleasure thereon,
Though man seeth it but from afar.” (xxxvi. 22-25).

The phenomena which illustrate the power and the wonder of God are then enumerated in a way that is vivid and striking enough, but marred somewhat by the prolixity which runs through all Elihu’s utterances. This passage has been clearly suggested by the speeches of the Almighty, but it is to them as the whisper to the thunder (xxvi. 14). With a later age’s somewhat more scientific knowledge of nature, Elihu discourses to Job—whom he bids to “ stand still and consider the wonders of God”—of the clouds and the rain, the thunder and the lightning, the snow and the ice and the hail, the wind and the sky.

“ Behold ! God is great beyond knowledge,
The tale of His years beyond search.
For He draweth up drops from the sea,
Which He poureth in rain from His vapour,
Wherewith, as the clouds distil,
They drop down in showers upon men.
Who can tell how the clouds are spread out,
How He thunders from His pavilion ?
He spreadeth His vapour around Him ;
He covers the tops of the mountains.
Therewith He sustaineth the nations,
And food in abundance He giveth.
He wrappeth His hands in the lightning,
And biddeth it fly to its mark.
His thunder announces His coming ;
His anger is kindled at wrong.

Elihu's Interpretation of Suffering

At this doth thy heart not tremble,
And leap right out of its place ?
Hark, hark to His voice tempestuous,
To the roar that goes forth from His mouth.
'Neath the whole sky He letteth it loose,
And His flash to the fringe of the world ;
In the wake of it roareth His voice,
With His voice majestic He thunders ;
Nor holds He the lightnings back,
Whosoever His voice is heard.

God letteth us see His wonders ;
Great things beyond knowledge He doeth.
For He saith to the snow, ' Fall earthwards ' ;
Likewise to His strong rushing rain.
He sealeth up all mankind,
That His work may be known of them all.
The beasts go into their lairs,
And within their dens remain.
The tempest comes out of its chamber,
And out of its store-house the cold.
By the breath of God ice is given,
The broad waters lie in constraint.
Yea, He loadeth the thick cloud with hail,
And the cloud doth scatter His lightning.
This way and that it darteth,
Turning about by His guidance,
Doing whate'er He commands it
Over the face of His world,
Whether for curse and correction
Or in mercy He sendeth it forth.

Hearken to this, Job ; stand still,
And consider the wonders of God.
Dost thou know how God doeth His work ;
How He flashes the light of His cloud ?
Dost thou know how the thick clouds are poised ;
How He pours down a flood when it thunders,
What time thy garments grow hot
From the south wind which laps earth in silence ?
Like Him canst thou spread out the sky,
Which is strong as a molten mirror ? "

(xxxvi. 26-xxxvii. 18).

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Much of this is very fine; but it lags behind the great speeches of the Almighty in xxxviiif. as much in penetration as in literary power. There are none of those inimitable glimpses¹ into the benevolence which is there seen to irradiate the world. It is the power and the splendour of God that attract Elihu—a splendour more dazzling than the most dazzling light. How foolish, then, and how wicked to challenge, as Job had done, the mighty system controlled by such a One:

“ How then shall we speak of Him ? Tell me ;
For helpless we are in our darkness.
Shall one cavil at Him when He speaketh ?
Or shall a man say that He errs ?
Now no man can look on the light,
So dazzling bright in the sky,
When the wind has passed over and cleared it,
And radiance comes out of the north :
But the splendour of God—how terrible !
The Almighty we cannot find out.” (xxxvii. 19-23).

It is significant that Elihu concludes this elaborate demonstration of the divine power, with a meagre but pointed allusion to the divine justice. The All-powerful is the All-just, and therefore men must fear Him :

“ Powerful He is and all-righteous,
And justice He will not pervert.
For this cause ought mortals to fear Him :
But the heart of conceit He despiseth.” (xxxvii. 23f).

There is Power and there is Justice ; but where is Love ? Elihu had seen it upon the sick-bed (xxxiii. 19ff), but he does not see it, as the speeches of the Almighty reveal it, in the universe. There

¹ The solitary equivalent is xxxvii. 13b.

Elihu's Interpretation of Suffering

is here the same philosophical failure as we noted before in his inability to combine the transcendent and the immanent—the failure to see the world as one. And this is only part of his failure to understand Job and the writer of the original book: for while that great genius accords to Job the honour of a theophany, Elihu can only end with the ominous warning that God gives no heed to those who, like Job, are wise in their own conceit and dare to criticize the system under which they live. God will ignore such, says Elihu: “God in His glory will appear”—says the older and greater poet. It is the difference between mediocrity and originality, between convention and inspiration.

**THE MYSTERY OF THE DIVINE
WISDOM**

(Job xxviii.)

THE MYSTERY OF THE DIVINE WISDOM (Job xxviii.)

THE fine poem which constitutes ch. xxviii. is very generally believed by scholars to be a later addition to the book. "It does not connect well either with the preceding or the following chapter. The serenity that breathes through ch. xxviii. would not naturally be followed by the renewed lamentations of ch. xxix., and it would further be dramatically inappropriate for a man in agony to speak thus didactically. It is a sort of companion piece to Proverbs viii. ; it is too abstract for its context, and lacks its almost fierce emotion."¹ But it has a deep interest and beauty of its own, and is valuable as a specimen of later Jewish thought, apparently after that had begun to be influenced by the philosophy of Greece. Its theme is Wisdom —by which, as the later verses (23-27) show, is meant the Divine Reason inherent in the created world—and its unattainability by man or any other created thing. The various stanzas gather round a refrain, with which the poem seems originally to have begun.

Metals can by skill and dangerous effort be extracted from mines—here follows a remarkable description of ancient mining operations—but no skill or effort can bore a way to Wisdom :

¹ See my *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 277.

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*“As for wisdom—whence cometh she?
Understanding—where hath she her home?
For a mine there is for the silver,
And a place where the gold is refined.
Iron is taken from dust,
And copper is smelted from stone.
Man explores the dark to its limits,
Seeks stones from the blackest gloom.
He breaketh a shaft through the ground:
Forgotten, they hang without foothold,
They swing to and fro far from men.
From the surface of earth cometh bread,
While, beneath, it is raked as by fire.
Her stones are the home of the sapphire,
The dust thereof is gold.
He puts forth his hand on the rock;
At their roots he o’erturneth the mountains.
Channels he cuts in the rocks,
And he bindeth the streams that they weep not.
Each precious thing his eye seeth;
He bringeth the secret to light.” (xxviii. 1-6, 9-11).*

No bird or beast or man has ever been to the haunts of Wisdom, nor is there any mart in which she can be purchased even at the costliest price :

*“But Wisdom—whence cometh she?
Understanding—where hath she her home?
The pathway is strange to the vulture,
Unseen by the eye of the hawk,
By the sons of pride untrodden,
Nor ever by fierce lion skirted.
The way to her no man knoweth;
In the land of the living none finds her.
The deep saith, ‘She is not in me;’
And the sea saith, ‘She is not in me.’
No fine gold for her can be given,
Nor silver be paid as her price.
Not in Ophir gold can she be valued,
In precious onyx or sapphire.
Gold and clear glass are no match for her,
Jewels of gold no exchange for her.*

The Mystery of the Divine Wisdom

Speak not of coral or crystal;
More precious than rubies is Wisdom.
The topaz of Cush is no match for her;
In pure gold she cannot be valued."
(xxviii. 7f, 12-19).

This Wisdom is hidden from all but God. She is the Idea which He employed and expressed in His creation of the world :

"But Wisdom—whence cometh she?
Understanding—where hath she her home?
She is hid from the eyes of the living,
Concealed from the birds of the air.
Abaddon and Death declare,
'A rumour of her we have heard.'
But the way to her God understandeth,
And He alone knoweth her home.
For He looks to the end of the earth
And all things under heaven He beholds.
When He settled the weight of the wind
And meted the waters by measure,
Created a law for the rain,
And a path for the flash of the lightning,
Even then did He see and declare her,
Establish and search her out." (xxviii. 20-27).

The main idea of the poem—that Wisdom is unattainable by man and known to God alone—receives another turn in the triplet with which it closes :

"And He said unto man, 'Behold!
The fear of me—that is Wisdom,
And turning from wrong—Understanding.'"
(xxviii. 28).

The Wisdom here commended is a piety expressing itself in morality, or a morality rooted in religion. This is the dominant ideal of the Old Testament (cf. Mic. vi. 8), completely incarnate, for example,

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*“As for wisdom—whence cometh she?
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For a mine there is for the silver,
And a place where the gold is refined.
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And copper is smelted from stone.
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Seeks stones from the blackest gloom.
He breaketh a shaft through the ground:
Forgotten, they hang without foothold,
They swing to and fro far from men.
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While, beneath, it is raked as by fire.
Her stones are the home of the sapphire,
The dust thereof is gold.
He puts forth his hand on the rock;
At their roots he o’erturneth the mountains.
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in the person of Job, as we learn from the Prologue (i. 1), where the words are identical. This is the wisdom attainable by man, and to be striven after by him: the other is God's own unattainable secret.

This charming poem contributes nothing to the solution of the problem which agitates the whole discussion.

**THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE
MATTER**

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER

Now that we have traversed the whole book and made ourselves familiar with the drift and progress of its thought, it will be well to ask ourselves what, if any, is its specific contribution to the ever present and ever urgent problem of suffering. The discussion presented by the book is not in any case exhaustive, as it curiously ignores the profound solution embodied in the immortal picture of Isaiah lii., that suffering may be vicarious. The Hebrew genius, which was not speculative, deals with its problems in the concrete; in the book of Job, therefore, not so much with suffering as with a sufferer. The book throbs with life; it is warm with the glow of a real human experience. Its hero is the writer's other self; it is his own doubts and fears and struggles that he has thrown into imperishable literary form: and it is living men, of narrow conventional outlook, who debate the high theme with him and who, by contrast, in the clash of the debate reveal him to us in all his lonely grandeur. This is one of the many qualities that give the book its strange power over the human heart and its indefeasible place in the literature of the world.

Whatever solution it has to offer—and to that we shall come presently—it was felt by its very earliest readers that the original book at any rate

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had not completely solved the mystery with which it deals. Scholars are all but universally agreed that the speeches of Elihu form no part of that book: they are—we need not say a protest—but at any rate an attempt to supplement its teaching, and to present an aspect of truth which seemed to a later age to have been insufficiently presented in the book itself; and it is not improbable that it is to this later addition, conceived in the spirit of orthodoxy, that we owe the preservation of the older book which hurled its mighty challenge against the easy and comfortable tenets of the time. Whether Elihu's own contribution is adequate or exhaustive is another matter; but at any rate all this goes to show how keenly every thoughtful age has felt the mystery, and how the fascination of it has ever urged men on to new solutions of that which, after all is said, must ever remain in large measure shrouded in mystery. As Illingworth¹ has remarked, "Suffering is not a subject on which anything new can be said. It has long ago been probed, to the utmost limit of our capacity, and remains a mystery still."

But we can make no headway at all, until we have learned the first lesson of the Epilogue, that God loves an independent thinker. It has been said that, where God has left off teaching, man should leave off learning. But God is a Teacher who never leaves off. Evermore He is presenting to us, as to Job (xxxviiif), His wonderful world, and He invites and expects us to open our eyes, to look at it and learn from it—reverently indeed, but

¹ *Lux Mundi*, p. 113.

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honestly, fearlessly, incessantly. This is the soul alike of science and religion—to keep the eye and the heart ever open to the wonder of God. Intellectual integrity is a part of true religion. There is more genuine religion in an intelligent and even a passionate challenge than in a wooden, passive, languid acquiescence. We are not bound, and we are not likely, to solve the riddle of the world ; but as brave, intelligent, and reverent men, we are bound to try. It was not the friends who said the correct things, but the man who said the terrible things in the desperate honesty of his soul, that won from the Lord the “ Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” “ Ye have not spoken the truth about Me as My servant Job hath done. Him will I accept ” (xlii. 8). The attitude of the friends is always thoroughly conventional ; in their defence of the Almighty and His ways they remind us of Matthew Arnold’s bishops and their effort “ to do something,” as they said, “ for the honour of Our Lord’s Godhead.” Job is original and emancipating.

This, then, is the temper in which the great writer attacks his problem. What does he make of it ? It is one of the many proofs of his greatness that he does not claim to have completely solved it. He is too great a man to think that he can expound the universe.

“ Ah, how small am I ! What can I answer ?
I lay my hand on my mouth.” (xl. 4).

It is difficult to resist the impression that he intended his ultimate solution to lie in the speeches which he attributes to the Almighty : but the first

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impression they make—and it remains with us to the end in overwhelming force—is that the universe is an infinite mystery. To the questions which are hurled out of the whirlwind, Job has no answer at all: all he can do is to lay his hand on his mouth. He stands in the presence of something, of some One, that transcends him infinitely; and it would be the sheerest insanity in him, who holds so utterly insignificant a place in the immeasurable scheme of things, to suppose that he completely understands it or the mighty Power that created and controls it. He cannot accept the ironical challenge to ascend the throne of the world (xl. 10-14), for who and what is he? Clearly it is no philosopher with a full-blown system who writes these glorious speeches; it is some reverent, adoring soul, smitten into wonder and silence by the vast system within which he lives. Suffering is a feature of the world as we know it; and, if we cannot adequately explain the simpler part, to say nothing of the whole, is it matter for wonder that we cannot explain the more intricate part? The poet is reading to us as plainly as he can the lesson of reverent agnosticism.

But the fact that we cannot know completely is no proof that we cannot know at all, and no reason why we should not try to know; and though the writer has no system, he has inspirations and intuitions which are worth a thousand systems, and they flash from many points of the book. So far from being a philosophical discussion, it is hardly a discussion at all; for, though the psychological interest of the situation is heightened by every

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speech, there is practically no development in the argument. The friends grow more excited and unfair, Job grows more calm and dignified: but, so far as argument is concerned, neither he nor they affect each other. The drama is, what Renan aptly calls it, "a shower of sparks," and even the severely handled friends are not without their measure of illumination. They are men of average intelligence and of conventional religious type. They represent the truth that has descended from the fathers and that is cherished by the contemporary church; and this can never be the complete illusion which Job so mercilessly anathematized. His denunciations were justified in so far as it was truth which they believed without examination, accepted without really assimilating. But some of the things they said were true all the same.

We do not speak here of their penal conception of suffering. The book is a fierce attack upon that view, and the writer must have abhorred it as a ludicrously inadequate explanation of human misery. His own experience and observation rose up to testify against it. He saw no mechanical adaptation of human fortunes to desert, but a totally undiscriminating distribution of the goods and the evils of life. He saw the sun of prosperity rise upon the unjust, and he saw the tower fall upon innocent men and bury them beneath the ruins. True, in the Epilogue, everything moves according to the traditional scheme: the "wicked" friends would have been destroyed but for the intercessory prayer of Job, and the righteous Job is rewarded not only

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with spiritual privileges, but also with those material things dear to ancient Israel's heart. But the poem, in which the writer utters himself most distinctively, is a sustained and passionate protest against the penal view of suffering. The amazing courage of this protest is only fully appreciated when we remember that this conception was held not only by ancient Israel, and by the conventional spirits of every age, but by the historians and even by the prophets themselves—at any rate in its application to the nation. But Job will have none of it. One would have liked to see the friends argue their case, as the punitive conception of suffering has never been without its defenders: but men who take their opinions from ancient or contemporary authority find it easier to state their case than to defend it elaborately or convincingly. It is almost too much, perhaps, to expect that the friends should argue it, for to them there is no problem. God is just, men get what they deserve—and there is an end of the matter. "Who ever perished, being innocent?" The man who is innocent will not perish, and the man who perishes is not innocent. What more is there to be said?

But there is real illumination in these words of Eliphaz: "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. For He maketh sore, and bindeth up; He woundeth, and His hands make whole" (v. 17). The fact that the admonition was not strictly relevant to Job's case does not affect its essential truth. Suffering, in the providence of

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God, may have a disciplinary value. If resented, it will harden and embitter the man whom it visits ; but, when borne with meekness and uncomplaining faith, it has been recognized by many a sufferer to be a veritable gift of God, cleansing the character of its dross, developing in it unfamiliar graces and virtues—tenderness, patience, humility, sympathy, refinement, strength, beauty—and bringing with it a revelation of God, of His presence and sustaining power, which without it would have been in that degree impossible. The unremoved thorn will be accompanied by an experience of that abounding grace of God which is always sufficient for those who expectantly wait for it ; so that what begins as pain ends as power, and the weeping that tarries for the night is transformed into the joy of the morning. The wound is bound up and healed by hands that the sufferer learns to confess as none other than God's own, and the discipline of pain and sorrow is seen in the end, though seldom at the beginning, to be one of His most blessed gifts. This is the truth more fully elaborated by Elihu in the passage where he describes sickness and pain as one of the ways in which God speaks to men (xxxiii. 19-28) in order to teach, to cleanse, and redeem them. The soul is let down to the depths that it may be lifted up again and set upon the rock, ransomed and rejoicing. Then “ they are glad, because it is quiet ; they are brought to the haven they long for ” (Ps. cvii. 30) ; and with chastened heart the sufferer can sing,

“ He hath ransomed my soul from the pit,
That alive I behold the light.” (Job xxxiii. 28).

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Another aspect of suffering is suggested by the Prologue. It is a test. It reveals to a man how weak or how firm is his grasp of the eternal things ; it tests the motives of his goodness. Satan maintains that if only a heavy enough hand be laid upon Job, the faith that is in him will be crushed. He is good, because it is worth his while ; but if his faith be subjected to the strain of adversity, there is a point at which it will snap. There is a real truth in this view, cynical as are the assumptions which underlie it. Adversity is a searching test, alike of a man's character and of his religion. Terrible things can come upon individual lives, colossal tragedies can be enacted upon the broad stage of international life and history ; but the faith which suffers itself to be shattered by these things is not the mighty faith kindled by the vision of chs. xxxviiif., of a world sustained evermore upon gracious and mighty arms. The faith which is to be truly adequate at any point must be adequate at every point. It must be for ever insufficient, unless it have an all-sufficient God. It must be able to face every possible contingency and terror from which the natural man recoils, with the triumphant words of Paul, " In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us : for I am persuaded that neither life nor death nor angels nor principalities nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord " (Rom. viii. 38f.).

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The love of God *which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. Therein lies the difference between the Old Testament and the New. The love of God, so precious to the saints of the older covenant, was not yet so persuasively revealed as it is in the face of Jesus Christ. The cry of the older time was "O that I knew where I might find Him" (xxiii. 3); and not till long afterwards did the Word become flesh and dwell among us, full of grace and truth. But even so, there were men in the olden time who could endure, as seeing Him who is invisible. The words, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (xiii. 15)—it is pretty generally agreed—do not represent what Job said or could have said in that particular context; but they do represent the whole attitude of the man. Job had often called for a revelation: he is himself a revelation. Deep down below all the protests and challenges wrung from his agony of body and soul is the simple trust so finely expressed in the Prologue: "Jehovah gave, Jehovah took: the name of Jehovah be blessed" (i. 21). The man who, after losing his all, can still say that, has stood the test. Suffering tests.

Another fine thought of the Prologue is that suffering is woven into the heavenly plan of human life. It is not only not unknown to God, it is actually drawn within His purpose. The one intolerable thing is that what we are called to suffer should have no meaning—no high origin and no fruitful issue. It is a comfort to know, as we have already seen, that, if we let it do its work upon us, it has an issue—

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cleansing, refining, strengthening. This alone is enough to suggest that it has a purpose, *that* purpose. But the fact of the purpose is made clear beyond cavil in the wonderful opening scenes where, for the highest ends—to prove the power of religion and the lovable ness of God—what is to happen on earth is decreed in the councils of heaven. On the earth, the fierce sorrows and the fiercer discussions: and above, the explanation of it all. It is part of God's purpose and plan that Job is permitted, nay privileged, to suffer. When the divine decree has been issued and the heavenly council dispersed, the blows begin to fall thick and fast. Job does not know why, but God knows. He means him well, the very best. He is trusting His own reputation, as it were, into the hands of His servant. He is conferring upon him the unspeakable honour of refuting in his own person, once for all, by his fidelity, the cynical estimate of human nature and the utilitarian conception of religion.

How different this sorrowful earth would seem, if we could see it over-arched by the purposeful heavens. As a modern thinker has said, "Every special incoming of God into human experience is prepared in the unseen, before it appears in the seen." The sense that all the vicissitudes of our life are elements in God's individual plan for us ought to lift us into a peace which chances and changes cannot mar. How calmly life might be lived and sorrow borne, if we believed that some great purpose lay behind it all, and was through it to be fulfilled. Nay, not so much a purpose as a Person. Above our little lives

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is One upon the throne who has prepared a place for us in His universe, and designed for us experiences through which He is calling us to honour Him by unflinching fidelity. The picture in the Prologue is but the application to the experience of sorrow, of the great thought which sustained the prophet Jeremiah throughout his tempestuous career—the thought that, before he was born, he had been in the mind of God. “ Before thou camest forth out of the womb, I set thee apart and appointed thee” (Jer. i. 4).

As the Prologue suggests that there is a purpose behind life’s seeming accidents, so the speeches of the Almighty reveal the character of that purpose as Wisdom and Love, and the extent of it as comprehending the universe. It stimulates at once our trust, our affection, and our imagination. The suffering inevitable to human life is an element in a world created by wisdom and sustained by love. It may be true that no explanation of it can ever be adequate, but it is equally true that every explanation of it must be wholly inadequate which ignores these facts. In an order which testifies at every point to one supreme Intelligence, nothing can be unmeaning or unrelated; and the infinite Heart that cares for all created things and provides for their needs, must care most deeply for the highest creature of them all, and it provides for his sorest need by a revelation of Itself. To trust such a Person, such a purpose, so wise, so kind, so comprehensive, is to be at rest. In experiences of suffering and sorrow the man who knows this trust may say with the Psalmist :

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“ I laid me down and slept :
I awoke, for the Lord did sustain me.” (iii. 5).

The darkness and the light are both alike to God and to those who put their trust in Him.

There is yet another ray of light cast by the book upon the problem of suffering—this time from the world beyond. Nowhere is the tragedy, the darkness, the finality of death expressed more powerfully than in some of the gloomier utterances of Job :

“ Like the cloud that is spent and that passeth away,
He that goes down to Sheol shall come up no more.
He shall never come back to his house again,
And the place that was his shall know him no more.”
(vii. 9f).

That other country is

“ The land of darkness and gloom,
The land of murky darkness,
Of gloom and utter confusion,
Where the very light is as darkness.” (x. 21f).

There is hope for a tree that is cut down, but none for the man whom death has laid low (xiv. 7ff). Yet it is nothing less than wonderful to see how Job simply refuses to believe in death's finality. He looks wistfully at the hope suggested by the analogy of the tree. He begins to cherish the faith that God may one day yearn for him and summon him back from the dark world in which for a time He has hidden him. And in the atmosphere of this hope and faith he soars, in one magnificent moment, to the sublime assurance that, one day in the world beyond, he will stand before the living God, face to face, and hear at last from those lips the solemn vindication for which in this world he had so long

Conclusion

and patiently waited, but in vain (xix. 25ff.). It is a mighty triumph of faith, worthy of the mighty hero whose struggles the book immortalizes.

The Epilogue ends by assuring us that all was well in the end. This is true, in a far deeper sense than the Epilogue intends. "Great is your reward *in heaven.*" The full reward is never here, but there. It is fortunate for the discussion that the writer does not operate much with this conception, for that would have been to take his problem too lightly. But it is even more fortunate that he does not ignore it, for that would have been to take it too meanly. Not upon the narrow stage of this life can the great drama of the soul be completely enacted. Spirits of finer mould have always felt that the experiences of this present world—the wrongs unexpiated, the sufferings unjustly inflicted and patiently borne, the yearnings incompletely satisfied, the fellowship with men and with God which to mortal eyes is sundered by death—that these experiences point beyond themselves. "On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round." Even Jesus, we are told, endured the cross and despised the shame for the joy that was set before Him; and His greatest servant bore with joy his innumerable toils and hardships, his stripes and stonings, his exposure to the assaults of calumny and hatred, his multitudinous perils by land and on the sea—sustained by the assurance that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed."

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