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THE BOOK OF JOB.

III.—THE FIRST COLLOQUY. (CHAPTERS IV.—XIV.)

(I) ELIPHAZ TO JOB. (CHAPTERS IV. AND V.)

At this point we pass into the Poem proper. It opens with three colloquies between Job and his Friends. In form these colloquies closely resemble each other. Each of the three Friends speaks in each of them ; Eliphaz first, then Bildad, then Zophar—save in the last colloquy, when Zophar, having nothing more to say, wisely holds his peace: and each of the three is separately answered by Job. But while similar in form, in spirit they differ widely. At the outset the Friends are content to hint their doubts of Job, their suspicion that he has fallen into some secret and heinous sin, in general or ambiguous terms ; but, as the argument rolls on, they are irritated by the boldness with which he rebuts their charges and asserts his integrity, and grow ever more candid, and harsh, and angry in their denunciation of his guilt. With fine truth to nature the Poet depicts Job as passing through an entirely opposite process. At first, while they content themselves with hints and “ambiguous givings-out,” with insinuating in general terms that he must have sinned, and set themselves to win him to confession and repentance, he is exasperated beyond all endur-

ance, and challenges the justice both of man and of God ; for it is these general charges, these covert and undefined insinuations of some “occulted guilt,” which, because it is impossible to meet them, most of all vex and perturb the soul. But as, in their rising anger, they exchange ambiguous hints for open definite charges, by a fine natural revulsion Job grows even more calm and reasonable : for definite charges can be definitely met : why, then, should he any longer vex and distress his spirit ? More and more he turns away from the loud foolish outcries of his Friends, and addresses himself to God even when he seems to speak to them. So often as we listen to him, indeed, we must remember that the great controversy is not between him and them, but between him and God. God is even more in his thoughts than they are ; and even while answering them he is really expostulating with God.

There is more logic in his replies to his three interlocutors than we commonly suppose ; but a logical refutation of their arguments is by no means Job's first aim. What really dominates and engrosses him is the desire to see “the end of the Lord” in so terribly mishandling him. If we would do justice to Job we must stedfastly bear in mind, then, that behind the three antagonists whom he could see and hear, and who were only too ready to speak, there stood an invisible Opponent who remained obstinately dumb to his most impassioned expostulations and outcries, and from whom he was throughout seeking to compel a response. And, on the other hand, if we would do justice to the Friends, we must remember that, in declaring the doom of

the wicked—and on this point they ring an endless series of changes—they had Job in their eye even when they did not choose to name him ; that, on the whole and in the main, what they affirm of the retributions which dog the steps of guilt is true ; their mistake being that, in the teeth of all the facts of the case, they assume the guilt of Job, having indeed no other basis for their assumption than the logical fallacy, that since the wicked suffer, therefore all who suffer are wicked.

The dogmatic prepossessions of the three Friends, which shape and penetrate all they say, may be reduced to three. First and chiefly, God is just : and therefore the good and ill of human life must be exactly apportioned to demerit and desert—good coming to the good, and evil to the evil. Secondly —and this is a mere corollary of the first : the extraordinary evils which have accumulated on you, Job, prove that *you* must have been guilty of some exceptional and enormous sin, hidden from men perhaps, but known to and avenged by God. Thirdly—and this was the conclusion to which they were fain to lead him : if you will confess your sin and humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, He will forgive your sin, cleanse you from all unrighteousness, and restore to you the open marks of his goodwill.

In the First Colloquy these dogmas are stated with a certain gentleness and consideration. The Friends disappoint us, indeed, by their lack of sympathy in the sorrows of Job ; we find little of that tenderness in them which we have a right to

expect from his chosen friends, friends, too, who have travelled far in order to "condole with him and to comfort him;" but we must remember that they too had been grievously disappointed, shocked even. If, when Job opened his mouth, instead of cursing his day and reproaching God with having hidden his path, he had broken out into a penitent confession of sin, or even into a passionate lamentation over his sorrows, his Friends might have been touched to the quick ; they might have "quoted him" with better heed and judgment, and have spent themselves in endeavours to console him. But when, instead of acting up to their conception of him and of what was becoming in him, he seemed to brave the wrath of Heaven, and to accuse God Himself of injustice in afflicting him, we can understand how they would feel it to be their first duty to bring him to himself, to convince him of his sin, to win him to repentance. This is what they attempt to do even in the First Colloquy. Some human pity they cannot but feel for a friend maddened with loss and grief ; nevertheless they are true to their pious convictions, and let him know that, so far as they can see, he must have sinned before God afflicted him,—as very certainly he had done since, in charging God foolishly,—and beg him to acknowledge his sin. They all sing the same song, though with characteristic variations. Eliphaz begins with, "Who ever perished, being innocent ? and where have the righteous been cut off ? It is only those who plough iniquity and sow mischief that reap it." (Chap. iv. 7, 8.) Bildad follows with, "God does not spurn the perfect, nor take

evildoers by the hand. If thou art pure and upright, then will he wake up in thy behalf, and restore the habitation of thy righteousness." (Chap. viii. 20, 6.) And Zophar winds up with the assertion, "God knoweth evil men, and seeth iniquity when he seemeth not to regard it"—so that when men see only the punishment, God sees the sin that caused it,—and with an exhortation to him to put away "the iniquity that is in his hand." (Chap. xi. 13, 14.) How Job meets these insinuations and remonstrances, and gains a true logical victory over his Friends in this first encounter, we shall see as we pursue our study. For the present we must confine ourselves to the speech of Eliphaz.

CHAPTERS IV. AND V.

- CHAP. IV. 1.—*Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite and said :*
2. *Wilt thou joint should one venture a word with thee ?*
But who can refrain from speaking ?
3. *Lo, thou hast admonished many,*
And hast strengthened many languid hands ;
4. *Thy words have upholden him that stumbled,*
And reknit the sinking knees :
5. *But now it has come upon thee, and thou faintest ;*
It toucheth thee home, and thou art dismayed.
6. *Should not thy piety be thy confidence,*
And as for thy hope, should it not be in the uprightness of thy ways ?
7. *Bethink thee, now : who ever perished, being innocent,*
And where have the upright been cut off ?
8. *As I have seen, they who plow iniquity*
And sow mischief, reap it ;
9. *At the breath of God they perish,*
At the blast of his nostrils are they consumed :
10. *The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the swarthy lion,*
And the teeth of the young lion, are broken ;
11. *The strong lion roameth for lack of prey,*
And the whelps of the lioness are scattered abroad.

12. Now an oracle stole on me in secret,
And mine ear caught its whisper.
13. Amid thoughts, from visions of the night,
When deep sleep falleth on men,
14. A fear came on me, and trembling
Which made all my bones to quake.
15. Then a wind swept over my face,
The hair of my head bristled up.
16. There it stood; but its form I could not discern:
A Shape was before mine eyes:
17. A gentle murmur—and I heard a voice!—
'Shall mortal man be more just than God?'
18. Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?
Behold, He trusteth not his ministers,
19. And chargeth his angels with frailty:
How much more those who dwell in houses of clay,
- Whose origin is in the dust,
Who are sooner crushed than the moth?
20. From dawn to dusk are they cut off,
They are ever perishing unheeded,
21. They die, but not in wisdom!'

CHAP. V. 1—Plead now: is there any who will respond to thee?
And to which of the Holy Ones wilt thou turn?

2. Nay, passion will slay the impious,
And indignation destroy the foolish.
3. I myself have seen a fool taking root,
But on the instant I cursed his habitation:—
4. 'His children shall be far from succour;
They shall crush each other in the gate,
With none to deliver:
5. While the starveling shall eat his harvest,
And snatch it even from within a hedge of thorns,
And the snare shall gape for their substance.'
6. For calamity cometh not forth from the dust,
Nor doth trouble spring out of the ground;
7. But man is born to trouble
As the sparks fly upward.
8. But I, I would have recourse unto God,
And to God would I make my appeal,
Who doeth great things past finding out,
And wonders that cannot be numbered;

10. Who giveth rain upon the face of the earth,
And causeth water-springs to flow over the fields :
11. Setting those that be low on high,
And lifting up them that are cast down ;
12. Frustrating the devices of the crafty,
So that their hands do nothing to purpose ;
13. Catching the crafty in their craft,
So that the counsel of the subtle becometh foolhardy,
14. And in the daytime they fumble in darkness,
And in the blaze of noon they grope as if it were night :--
15. Thus He saveth the poor from the sword of their mouth,
And the needy from the hand of their violence,
16. So that hope ariseth on the feeble,
And iniquity closeth her mouth.
17. Lo, happy is the man whom God correcteth !
Therefore spurn not thou the chastening of the Almighty :
18. For He maketh sore, yet bindeth up,
He bruiseth, but his hands make whole ;
19. In six troubles will He deliver thee,
Nor in seven shall evil touch thee ;
20. In famine He will ransom thee from death,
And in war from the stroke of the sword ,
21. When the tongue scourgeth thou shalt be hid,
Nor shalt thou fear when destruction cometh ;
22. Thou shalt laugh at destruction and famine,
Nor fear the wild beasts of the field ;
23. For even with the stones of the field shalt thou be in league,
And the wild beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee,
24. So that thou shalt know that it is well with thy tent,
And shalt muster thy cattle and miss none :
25. Thou shalt know also that thy seed will be many,
And thine offspring like the grass of the land :
26. Thou shalt go to the grave in a ripe old age,
As the shock of corn is carried in in its season.
27. Lo, this we have sought out ; it is even thus :
Hear it, and know it, for thy good.

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As the oldest and wisest of the Three, Eliphaz speaks first. He gives by far the noblest, gentlest, and most artistic expression to the convictions

and sentiments which were common to them all. Admitting the sincere piety of Job (Chap. iv. 2-6), he nevertheless affirms that the good and ill of life are proportioned to the deserts of men (Chap. iv. 7-11), and intimates that, even if Job has fallen into no conscious sin, he inherits a sinful and imperfect nature (Chap. iv. 12-21); and that, therefore, instead of yielding to anger and passion (Chap. v. 1-5), since all calamity proceeds from the hand of God, and all deliverance, he should humble himself under that Hand, confess his sin, and sue for mercy (Chap. v. 6-16). Should he take his chastening in that spirit, it will prove to be but a correction designed to conduct him to a more confirmed piety and a larger happiness (Chap. v. 17-27).

Some commentators find much that is harsh and unfeeling in the opening address of Eliphaz; they describe it as "haughty, cold, and heartless;" but I confess I do not see how the theology of that age—a theology, be it remembered, in which Job himself believed as devoutly as his Friends—could well have been stated and applied with more delicacy and consideration. It is not of anything in the speech, I think, that we can fairly complain, but of that which is not in it. In the presence of so great a misery, a little sympathy would have been worth a good deal of theology. Had Eliphaz, seeing how terribly Job was changed by his great "fight of affliction," insomuch that

"nor the exterior nor the inward man
Resembled that it was ;"

had he, when he found him even more sadly and terribly changed than it had entered his heart to

conceive, insomuch that, when he looked on him, "he knew him not," given free expression to his dismay and grief; had he cried out,

"I would not take this from report; it *is*,
And my heart breaks at it;"

had he even, when he heard Job invoke curses on the day that gave him birth, paused to consider what it was that put his friend so much from the understanding of himself, his thoughtful and tender sympathy might have saved Job from many a pang. It was not friendly of him to fall at once to *moralizing* on Job's condition instead of seeking to assuage his grief; nor was it friendly of him to pass by, without a word of recognition, the piety, the heroic resignation, which Job had shewn under his earlier afflictions in order that he might rebuke the impatience and despair of "the curse" which had at last been wrung from his anguish. But, with this exception, there is little to censure, in the speech of Eliphaz, much to commend and admire; if he *must* moralize rather than sympathize, it is hard to see how his moralizing could have been more gently done.

He opens (Chap. iv. 2) with an apology for so much as speaking at all to one in such violent and overwhelming distress of spirit. Nothing but a sense of duty to God—nay, even to Job himself—induced him to venture on admonishing him.

But (verses 3–5), if he may venture to speak, he cannot but express his wonder and regret that a man so wise, of such admirable self-control, who has himself comforted so many stricken souls, and given strength to so many that were weak, should lose his

composure and be dismayed now that he himself has to bear chastisement.

It is very unjust to Eliphaz to assume a tone of sarcasm in his words ; to conceive of him as implying, “ It was much easier for you to speak patience than it is to shew it,” as though he thought Job one of those who

“ Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief
Which they themselves not feel ; but, tasting it,
Their counsel turns to passion.”

It is more reasonable, as well as more just, to assume that he was honestly surprised and concerned to find one who had habitually shewn so much insight into the purpose and function of suffering, who had been able so to bring out the sweet uses of adversity as to carry consolation and strength to many fainting hearts, unable any longer to “ make a push at chance and sufferance” for himself.

It is equally unreasonable and unfair to import a sinister meaning into the argument of Verses 6–9 ; to take them as conveying, “ The innocent never perish; you are perishing : and therefore you are not innocent.” The aim of Eliphaz is to rebuke the impatience of Job, to win him to submission. And, therefore, his argument here is :—The pious and upright are never cut off ; you are pious and upright: why so downcast and despairing, then? why do you not make your piety your confidence ? and as for your hope, for which you think you no longer have any ground, here is solid ground for it—in the uprightness of your ways. To strengthen his argument (1) he states it both in a positive and in a negative form, and (2) both appeals to Job’s experi-

ence and adduces his own. (1) The upright do *not* perish; the wicked *do* perish. (2) Have *you* ever seen an upright man perish? As for me, *I* have often seen the wicked perish.

The phrase “they who plow iniquity” (in verse 8) is an abbreviated and incomplete expression for “they who plow in the field of unrighteousness;” and the whole verse expresses the inevitable result of an evil life in a proverbial and picturesque form which is of frequent recurrence in Holy Writ.¹ Verse 9 is exegetical of verse 8. It defines *what* they reap who plough in the field of iniquity and sow mischief in it, viz. destruction: “they perish,” “they are consumed;” and it affirms that this connection of destruction with iniquity is not only a law enacted by God, but also a law executed by God:

“They perish at the breath of God,
At the blast of his nostrils are they consumed.”

Verses 10 and 11, which often perplex the simple, who cannot see by what law of association the “lions” are brought in here, are a new and elaborate illustration of the sentiment expressed in Verses 8 and 9. The lion is frequently used in the Old Testament, and notably in the Hebrew poetry of this period (Psas. xxii. 14; xxxiv. 11; xxxv. 17), as an image of the sinner, especially when the sinner is in great power and abuses it. He is so used here. Under this familiar and carefully wrought out figure, Eliphaz asserts that wickedness, in every stage of its development, and markedly when it is cruel and despotic, conducts to ruin and destruction. Even

¹ Comp. Prov. xxii. 8; Hosea viii. 7; and Galatians vi. 7, 8.

the greatest and most potent sinners, here represented by the most formidable of beasts, perish before the Divine anger.

The Verses are still more remarkable on another ground. In the Original five different words are used for the lion, indicative of the several stages of his growth, which we are obliged to render with such epithets as "*young* lion," "*swarthy* lion," &c., in order to convey the meaning of the Hebrew substantives. Obviously the Poet has set himself the task of including all these five names in his verse, just as some of the Psalmists set themselves the more difficult task of using the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet as the initial letters of the successive verses in their psalms. And this is but the first example of many similar artistic feats which our Poet took delight in accomplishing. As we proceed, we shall meet them again and again.

In Verses 12–21 we have the most ancient, the finest and most impressive, description of a spiritual apparition ever penned. We can well believe that Eliphaz recited it "with solemn tone and sinking voice." The details of the scene are marvellously selected and combined with a view to produce in the reader that profound sense of awe and terror occasioned by immediate contact with the invisible world. It was in the dead hour of midnight, when the wakeful and reflective soul turns to the loftiest themes of meditation, that Eliphaz was brooding over the apparent inequalities of human life, and searching for a vindication of them. He had slept and dreamed; deep "thoughts"—"dubitatiōns"—had been excited in him by visions of the night;

and as his mind wandered "in endless mazes lost," that vague terror fell on him, that shuddering presentiment of a more than mortal presence near or at hand, which most of us have felt at times, and which is the most thrilling and paralyzing experience known to men. Then "a wind swept over his face," that terrible chill which turns even the firmest strength to utter weakness;¹ "each particular hair" of his head shivered, "stiffened," bristled up as though recognizing an unearthly visitant; and he became aware, as he lay trembling on his couch, of a spiritual Presence. The terms in which he describes it are the most vague and indefinite, the impersonal touches of the description being wonderfully impressive :

"There *It* stood : but its form I could not define ;
A Shape was before mine eyes ;
A gentle murmur : a lull : and I heard a Voice."

Nothing could be finer than this Form which yet form had none, which remained shapeless and undistinguishable, not to be resolved into distinct features by any straining of the eye or the mind, and this small still voice, audible indeed, but audible only to the inner sense. And, no doubt, it suggested one of the finest passages in Milton's description of Death :

"If shape it could be called that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb ;
Or substance might be called that shadow seemed."

The Spirit so grandly described brings an answer to the question which had kept the soul of Eliphaz waking, viz., What mean the inequalities of human

¹ Among the ancients, a cold wind was a recognized adjunct of a supernatural visitation.

life? and, especially, why do the good suffer like other men? But the only answer It has to give is, that every man is sinful by nature, has evil in him, however it may be veiled and controlled and subdued; so that no man can be just and pure before his Maker. Much less can he be *more* just than God, although he affects to be so when he arraigns the providence of God, and assumes that *he* would have made a more equal distribution of the good and ill of human life. Even the angels are not wholly free from frailty;² God, who alone is absolutely pure, can see possibilities of imperfection even in them, so that He cannot commit Himself to them. How much less, then, can men be pure and perfect in his sight—men who “dwell in houses of clay,” who are related to the dust from which they spring, and who, by their “clay” are laid open to all the evils of flesh and earth? These poor *ephemeræ*, whose life is but a day, or a few hours of the day, who perish momentarily in the stream from which they rise, and who yet sport out their brief span as though they were to live for ever, what are these as compared with the almighty and eternal Lord?

The last sentence (verse 21) of this oracular utterance has been variously interpreted. Conant, Davidson, and many more, render it,—

“Is not their *excellency* taken away?”

but Gesenius, Delitzsch, with other great critics, prefer the rendering,—

“Is not their *tent-cord* taken away?”

² “Frailty,” that is, the liability to err. The Hebrew word is used nowhere else, and, as Dillmann has shewn, is probably derived from an Æthiopic root.

Read thus, the thought seems to be that when the soul, which holds up and sustains the body, as the cord holds up the tent, is required of men, they perish ; but "not in wisdom," since, like the ephemerids, they have taken no thought of the frailty and perishableness of their nature, the brevity of their span.

On the whole we may say of this graphically described vision that "Eliphaz seems to represent himself, and doubtless with truth, as having been once beset by doubts which were cleared up by a revelation so dim and mysterious in its form as to be scarcely distinguishable from the inner movements of his consciousness." And, doubtless, he cited this oracle, not simply because it was one of the most memorable and impressive facts in his experience, but partly because he was a man of the prophetic order, to whom visions and revelations from Heaven were a surer testimony than any discourse of reason ; and, still more, because he thought that, in his assumption of integrity, Job was forgetting how frail and sinful he was by nature, and wished to put him in remembrance of it. At the same time there is an obvious delicacy in the manner and spirit of his admonition. Instead of launching a direct admonition against Job, he recounts the vision in which the frailty of universal man had been so solemnly impressed on his mind, and implies that even if Job had fallen into some secret sin, he had but shewn a weakness common to all who "wear flesh about them."

Like one who was conversant with the secrets

of the spiritual world, Eliphaz follows up the words of the oracle (in Chap. v. 1) by adjuring Job to appeal to any of the spirits, or angels, around the throne of God, and see for himself whether they will respond to his appeal and espouse his cause.

It may be feared that Job was not so profoundly impressed by the oracle, or vision, as Eliphaz expected him to be. For here (at verse 2) something in his manner seems to arrest the attention of Eliphaz,—to change and irritate the current of his thoughts. It may be that Job indulged himself in some passionate despairing gesture at this point. It may be that he meant nothing more by his gesture than to express his entire agreement with the affirmation that none of the angels would be at all likely to take his part against God; or to intimate that he was by no means craving an impossible victory over God, but to understand Him and be reconciled to Him. Whatever he meant, Eliphaz seems to have misconceived him, and to have taken the interruption in dudgeon; for, with a sudden break in the sequence of his thoughts, he exclaims: “Nay, do not give way to passion and indignation, as the wicked do, for I have seen them, and marked both their course and their end.” And then (in verses 3–5) he proceeds to depict a fool, a moral fool, *i.e.* the sort of fool who says in his heart, “There is no God”—a fool whom he once saw; and to describe how, the moment he apprehended what the man was, he was able to predict his fate. Verses 4 and 5 probably give the *ipsissima verba* of this prediction or curse. What Eliphaz foresaw was that the fool though for the moment in great prosperity

and spreading himself like a green bay-tree, would come to sudden and utter ruin ; his children, unsuccoured by friend or kinsman, would “*crush each other in the gate*,” i.e., ruin one another by feuds and suits brought before the judges who sat in the gate of the city ; his homestead would be deserted, his property unprotected, so that the famished starvelings who prowled about it, emboldened by so many signs of neglect and ruin, would venture to break through the hedge of thorns that defended the stacks, and carry off whatever they cared to take. All the wealth of the fool and his family would suddenly disappear, as though some huge trap, which had long gaped for it, had swallowed it in an instant.¹

At Verse 6 Eliphaz resumes, and in a milder tone, the general course of his argument, working up into it, however, the little episode of Verses 2-5. He had been arguing that man is by nature frail and sinful, and that therefore Job should humble himself before God, instead of proudly asserting his integrity. And, now, he once more affirms that there is that “born” in man which exposes him to the “trouble” which is the invariable result of sin, the appointed discipline of a weak and sinful nature. But he does not forget and drop the fool whom, and whose end, he once saw. All that sudden

¹ Verse 5, “And *the snare* shall gape for their substance.” Umbreit and Ewald prefer the rendering of the Ancient Version, “*The thirsty* shall snatch at their substance.” And “the thirsty” makes so good an apposition with “the starveling” of the previous line, that one would like to retain it. It is impossible, however, to do so without substituting mere conjecture for criticism, without altering the pointing of the Hebrew, without what Professor Davidson calls “violent vocalic changes” in the teeth of all authority.

ruin which befell him was to have been expected, implies Eliphaz ; for trouble is the consequence of sin, and if men will sin they must take the consequence. So that both his lines of thought coalesce in this Verse, which throws one of the common and Divine facts of life into a proverbial form. Misfortune, he says, is not a weed springing at haphazard from the soil of life ; it is part of the Divine order of the world. It is just as truly in the natural order of things (verse 7) as that sparks—literally, “*the sons of fire*”—should spring upward. Again we may note the apologetic tone of this pious Temanite. He believes that Job’s sufferings spring from his sins, conscious or unconscious ; but he admits the universal tendency of human nature to such sins, its universal liability, therefore, to such sufferings. So far from wishing, at least for the present, to make Job out a sinner above other men, he endeavours so to set forth the sinfulness of all other men as to make it easy for Job to confess his sins and seek the Divine forgiveness.

This is the course which he himself would take were his soul in the stead of Job’s, as he tells us in Verses 8–16. Job’s only direct reference to God had been a complaint (Chap. iii. 23) that God had fenced him in so that he could find no outlet for his thoughts or his activities. “*That*,” responds Eliphaz, “is not the right attitude for the sufferer to assume toward God ; it is not the course that I myself would take.” God is not only just, but kind ; and therefore, instead of impugning his justice, the afflicted should appeal to his compassion. The character of God is to be inferred from all forms

of his activity, and, notably, from his doings in the inanimate world of nature and in the world of animate and reasonable men. In the natural world He doeth things great and inscrutable, wonders past finding out : sending rain, for example —rain being the chief of blessings, and the type of all other blessings to an Oriental mind. In this material sphere his way is manifold, complex, mysterious ; but it all tends to a single end, viz., "to set up on high them that be low and to lift up them that are cast down" (verses 9-11). In the human world the energy of God has to contend with the passions, the cunning devices, the follies and foolhardy oppositions of men ; but here also his various lines of action converge on one point, viz., to bring help to the feeble and to stop the mouth of iniquity (verses 12-16).

The right attitude of the sufferer toward God (verses 17-27) is, therefore, one of grateful acquiescence. Since the whole course of his providence is designed to save the poor and the afflicted, since, moreover, the design of affliction itself is to quicken in them a sense of sins of which they were before unconscious, and to lead them to a more complete fellowship with Him, "happy is the man whom God correcteth." God has no pleasure in afflicting the children of men. He only wounds that He may heal, only exposes them to dangers which they cannot confront alone that, feeling their need of Him, they may run into Him and be safe. The man who is at one with Him—and suffering tends to bring us to Him and unite us with Him—will find all things working together for his good, all the

forces of Nature enlisted on his side, even to the stones of the field which obstruct the plough, and the wild beasts which harry the flocks and herds.¹ If Job will but take this attitude toward God, all his outward and painful conditions will be reversed ; instead of lying homeless, childless, stripped, dying, on the *mezbele*, he shall abide securely in his tent, with flocks undiminished, his offspring numerous and flourishing as the grass of the land, and shall only go to his grave in a ripe old age, “frosty, but kindly.”

There is only one allusion in these Verses which calls for explanation. In Verse 26, “the shock of corn carried *in*,” is, literally, “the shock of corn carried *up* ;” the Hebrew verb points to the *raising* of the sheaves on to the lofty threshing-floor, which marks the close of harvest. On this verse Canon Cook quotes for comparison the noble lines from “Paradise Lost” (xi.) :

“ So mayest thou live, till, like ripe fruits, thou drop
Into thy mother’s lap ; or be with ease
Gathered, not harshly plucked ; for death mature.”

These, then, are the general truths and convictions which Eliphaz would have Job apply to his

¹ The sentiment of verse 23 sounds like an extravagant hyperbole to many readers. How natural it nevertheless is, and consonant even to the reason of man, may be seen by a careful study of any of our greater poets. It is to be found, for example, in one of our most recent poems,—Mr. Swinburne’s “Erechtheus.” In the fine lines put into the lips of the goddess Athene, we read :

Time and change,
Masters and lords of all men, shall be made
To thee that knowest no master and no lord
Servants ; *the days that lighten heaven and nights*
That darken shall be ministers of thine,
To attend upon thy glory.”

own case. And when we have carefully considered them we shall find in them, I think, no coldness, no sarcasm, no heartless attempt to censure and condemn Job, but a genuine endeavour to "admonish" him, as he himself had admonished many (Chap. iv. 3, 4), to strengthen his languid hands and to reknit his sinking knees.

S. COX.

THE SIXTEENTH PSALM.

THIS Psalm has several very difficult and disputed passages, which cannot be exhaustively discussed without the use of a learned apparatus more proper to a critical commentary than to the pages of this magazine. I confine myself, therefore, in the main, to an attempt to trace out the train of thought, and to illustrate the Psalmist's argument by comparison and contrast with other views set forth in the Old Testament. In points of grammar, I must ask the reader to take some things for granted, or to verify them for himself.

The title of the Psalm is too obscure and of too little authority to be taken as the starting-point of our exegesis. The word *michtam* is probably a musical term; and, at any rate, all such interpretations as "a golden psalm," "an inscription, epitaph, or epigrammatic poem," "an unpublished poem," are devoid of proof and probability. The words "of David" are also no sure guide. They perhaps imply that the collectors of the Psalter derived this psalm from an earlier collection of "Psalms of David and other Poems;" but they certainly cannot