

that, notwithstanding all his greatness, the least in the kingdom was greater than he, He was merely repeating the same thought in a different form of words. In either case it was not disparagement or censure of John that was intended; but proclamation of the priceless worth of that whereof he and so many others stood in doubt. To be pitied is he whose prepossessions and prejudices are such that he cannot appreciate the characteristics of the new era; to be congratulated is he, however insignificant otherwise, who can appreciate these and experience a thrill of joy as he witnesses their manifestation. Such, we take it, is the simple import of the words, "blessed is he who is not offended in me."

ALEX. B. BRUCE.

THE BOOK OF *JOB*.

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

(3) BILDAD TO *JOB*. (CHAPTER VIII.)

BILDAD restates the argument of Eliphaz; but he both gives it a new edge and clearness and puts it on another basis. Like Eliphaz, he affirms the law of the Divine Providence to be that it renders good to the good and evil to the evil,—*malis male, bonis bene*; but he enunciates this law with more force and in a harsher tone. Eliphaz, whom we have conceived as a man of the prophetic order and spirit, in entire accordance with that conception of him had based his conclusion on oracles and visions; but now Bildad—the sage, who leaned much on the ancient and proverbial wisdom of the East, in entire accordance with that conception of his character and

bent bases the same conclusion on the traditions of the fathers. In Verses 2-7 he states this law of the Divine Providence, and applies it to the case of Job; and in Verses 8-19 he confirms his statement of it by an appeal to the wisdom of the ancients, a wisdom leisurely gathered from their long experience and verified by the experience of subsequent generations. Thus to the voice of divine oracles, cited by Eliphaz, he adds the voice of universal human experience; so that once more Job finds both Heaven and earth arrayed against him.

CHAPTER VIII.

- 1.—*Then answered Bildad the Shuchite and said :*
2. *How long wilt thou speak thus,*
And how long shall the words of thy mouth be a boisterous storm ?
3. *Doth God wrest judgment ?*
 Doth the Almighty wrest justice ?
4. *Though thy sons have sinned against Him,*
And He hath given them over to their own offences,
5. *If thou wouldest seek unto God,*
And make supplication unto the Almighty,—
6. *If thou art pure and upright,*
 Then will He wake up in thy behalf
And restore the habitation of thy righteousness,
7. *So that, though thy beginning be small,*
 Thy end shall be very great.
8. *For ask now of the former generation,*
And apply to the wisdom of their forefathers ;—
9. *For we are but of yesterday and know nothing,*
Because our days on earth are but a shadow :—
10. *Shall not they teach thee, speak to thee,*
 And well forth proverbs out of their hearts ?
11. *Can the papyrus grow where there is no marsh,*
Or the rush wax large where there is no water ?
12. *While yet in its greenness, and though it be uncut,*
 It withereth before any other herb :
13. *So fareth it with all that forget God,*
And thus shall the hope of the impious perish.

14. *His hope is cut in sunder ;
 His trust—a spider's web ;*
15. *Though he lean on his house, it will not stand ;
 Though he grasp it, it will not endure.*
16. *He swelleth with sap in the sunshine,
 And his suckers shoot forth over the garden ;*
17. *His roots twist through the mould,
 He looks down on a house of stones.*
18. *But when God destroyeth him from his place,
 Then it denieth him [saying], " I never saw thee."*
19. *Behold, this is the joy of his course,
 And out of his dust shall others spring up.'*
20. *Behold, God will not spurn the perfect,
 Nor take evil-doers by the hand.*
21. *When He filleth thy mouth with laughter,
 And thy lips with song,*
22. *They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame,
 And the tent of the wicked shall perish.*

He commences, as Eliphaz had done before him, by rebuking the wild passionate outcries of Job (*Verse 2*), and declares his words to be empty as the wind and vehement as a boisterous storm,—noisy, irrational, injurious. He quite understands, however (*Verse 3*), that by his wild vehement words Job intends to impugn the justice of God, and that he has impugned it unreasonably and intemperately; and therefore he declares the utter impossibility of any departure from justice in the almighty Ruler of the world. The Judge of all the earth *must* do right; for *Him* to do wrong is and must be impossible: or how should the earth have endured so long? As he cannot for a moment admit that Job's misery springs from the iniquity of God, he can only attribute it to the iniquity of man. And hence (in *Verses 4-7*) he restates the law, that it is well with the righteous and ill with the wicked, with that

incisiveness and harshness to which I have just referred. He has no ground but conjecture and dogmatic inference for charging the children of Job with a guilt that deserved destruction ; but he forgets that simply

to vouch this is no proof
Without more certain and more overt test
Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods

do prefer against them. He confidently assumes and bluntly affirms their guilt ; the argument in his mind seeming to be, " All who die a sudden and dreadful death are great sinners ; thy sons have died a sudden and dreadful death : therefore they were great sinners." So confident is he in his assumption that (in *Verse 4*) he set forth their doom in a singularly energetic and expressive phrase,—

Thy sons have sinned against Him,
And He hath given them over to their own offences ;

or, literally, "*He hath delivered them up into the hands of their guilt,*" making, that is, their very sin their punishment, judgment treading on the very heels of offence. It is but another application of the same providential law which we have in *Verses 5-7*. Here Bildad frames two hypotheses about Job : " If you have sinned, as well as your sons, yet by seeking unto God, by confessing your sins to Him and supplicating his mercy, He will yet forgive and bless you ;" and, on the other hand, " If, as you affirm, you are pure and upright, God will soon wake up in your behalf, and not only restore the habitation in which your righteous life has been passed, but will also bless your latter end far more than your beginning."

The point Bildad labours at throughout is to uphold the conclusion that, as God is just, good must come to the good and ill to the evil. And he states and applies this conclusion honestly, harshly even, bearing in mind perhaps Job's declared respect for frank and "honest rebukes" (Chap. vi. 25). No doubt, as has been pleaded in his behalf, he states his conviction of the guilt of Job and his sons hypothetically, and, so far as his mere words go, might be assuming it only for the sake of his argument; but neither is there any doubt that he did assume their guilt in his own mind, and meant to imply that they had received nothing more than their due. And we may say of him, I suppose, (1) that, if he was honestly convinced that their calamities were only the due reward of their guilt, it was friendly, not unfriendly, of him to say so; and (2) that it would have been still more friendly of him to say so frankly than to insinuate it in hypothetical forms of speech.

To sustain his conclusion, to bear him out in upholding the equity of the Divine Providence, he calls in the aid of Tradition; he appeals not simply to the ancestors of living men, but to *their* ancestors: he gets back as near to the original fountains of thought as he can, believing apparently that wisdom, like good wine, is the better the longer it has been kept. He quotes (*Verses 11-18*) three antique sayings or proverbs—that of the papyrus, that of the spider's web, and that of the gourd; and all these are probably derived from a traditional literature of the extremest antiquity. At the same time I cannot but think that these proverbs have passed through

the Poet's own mind and have been embellished by it; for they bear the mark of his characteristic elaboration and finish. So many of the words in this passage, moreover, are Egyptian, or of Egyptian derivation, that probably we shall not err in inferring that the ancients whom Bildad is made to quote were Egyptian sages who flourished before Moses floated on the Nile, or perchance even before Abraham went down into Egypt. Assuredly the Poet shews, throughout his work, an intimate and singular familiarity with the customs and arts of Egypt; assuredly also there are now in the libraries of Europe many Egyptian *papyri* of the remotest antiquity on which ethical sayings and picturesque proverbs are inscribed. And, therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume, from the free use of Egyptian words in this passage, that here too we have ethical and pictorial sayings culled from the experience of ancient Egyptian sages.

To these Bildad appeals—alleging (*Verse 9*) that the men of his own time had so brief a span and were so far removed from the origin of things, that they “knew nothing” compared with the leisurely ancients, whose days on earth were so much longer and who stood so much nearer to the original fountains of wisdom. They, he says (*Verse 10*), will give us words “*out of their hearts,*” *i.e.* words tested and elaborated by the meditation of many years, words summing up their whole observation and experience of human life, and not mere windy nothings, like those of Job, thrown out at the mere impulse of the passing moment.

The first proverb, that of the papyrus (*Cyperus*

papyrus), is elaborated in *Verses* 11–13. This water-rush, or reed, the Arabs still call by its old name “*Babeer*,” of which *papyrus* is the Latin and *paper* the English form. The papyrus springs up in marshes and in the borders of streams and canals, where the water soon dries up in the fierce summer heats; the finest of grasses, it often withers away in its first beauty. Side by side with it grows “the rush”—or, as Job calls it, the *âchu*, an Egyptian, not a Hebrew, word—probably the edible rush (*Cyperus esculentus*), since the same word is used in Genesis xli. 2, where cattle are described as feeding on it.¹ The moral of the proverb is multiiform. As the various kinds of *Cyperus* depend on the water they suck up, so the life of man depends on the favour of God. While that endures, he flourishes and luxuriates. When it is withdrawn—and it always is withdrawn from the wicked—he withers away; there is no need to cut him down or strike him down: it is enough that he is no longer cherished and sustained by the Divine grace.

The second proverb, that of the spider’s web, is elaborated in *Verses* 14 and 15; where the hope, the self-confidence, of the wicked is compared to a web cut in sunder, or cut asunder from its main support. In vain the spider flings his weight in this direction or that to balance it; in vain he grasps it with his claws to steady or guide it as it trembles in the wind; his struggles are useless and desperate; his shattered domicile falls into ruin and decay, and he partakes

¹ In Verse 11 no less than three words in the Original—the words for “papyrus,” “grass,” and “rush”—are Egyptian, and countenance the hypothesis of the Egyptian origin of these proverbs or parables.

its fate. The spider's web, though it be so flimsy, is here called a house; so is it also in the Coran (Sura xxix. 40), where we find this singular passage: "The likeness of those who take to themselves guardians instead of God is the likeness of *the spider* who buildeth her *a house*; but, verily, frailest of all houses is the house of the spider. Would that they knew this!" Possibly the inspired Poet had the same thought in his mind as Mohammed, and meant to suggest that, however solid and spacious the abode of unrighteousness may look, it is flimsy and fragile as the web of the spider.

The third proverb, that of the gourd, is elaborated in *Verses* 16-18. We infer that some kind of creeper, bine, or gourd, such as springs up with the most astonishing rapidity and luxuriance in the East, is here described from the very terms of the description. But it should be observed that the Poet never names it. The fact is that, in this last proverb, the moral breaks through the simile, or fable, all the way along; from the very first the inner spiritual sense is blended with the figure in which it was to be conveyed. The "he," the nominative of the passage, is not the gourd, or creeping plant, but the wicked man who is compared to it; it is *his* course which is described in terms suitable to that of the gourd. If we take the pains to disentangle the fable from the moral, what it comes to is this: The unrighteous man is like a quick-springing luxuriant bine or weed, which grows green with sap in the sunshine, shoots out its suckers on every side, strikes down its roots into the fertile mould, and regards with special pride the fact that it has "a house of stones," *i.e.* that its roots are twisted

round stones and its soft easily broken stem protected by them; in short that it has been lucky enough to spring up amid and under a pile of stones which shelter and guard it, and even feed and cherish it by retaining and reflecting the heat. But when it is plucked up, it leaves no trace behind it; the very spot in which the worthless parasite shot up is ashamed of it, and denies all knowledge of it. So the bad bold man builds up his fortunes rapidly, thrives in the warm stimulating rays of prosperity, flatters himself especially on the solid reality and stability of his possessions; but when his good fortune suddenly vanishes, when the blow falls that impoverishes and exposes him, the very society which cherished him and contributed to his success grows ashamed of him and denies all complicity with his frauds and crimes.

“This,” says Bildad (*Verse 19*), with keen sarcasm, “is *the joy* of his course,”—so base, so evanescent, conducting to so shameful an end; his lusty growth is but for a moment, and dies away to make room for fairer and more fruitful growths; the sinner’s place is soon filled up and his very name forgotten.

And then, in the closing verses of the Chapter (*Verses 20-22*), he turns to Job, and applies these parables of ancient wisdom to his case. Not by complaining of the law of Divine Providence, but by complying with it; not by vainly craving that it were other than it is, but by accommodating himself to it and availing himself of it, will he regain health, wealth, and peace. God will neither spurn him if he does well, nor grasp him by the hand—to sustain him—if he does ill; but if he be or become perfect, *i.e.* of

a single and obedient heart, then God will yet fill his mouth with laughter and his lips with song, so that all who hate him shall be covered with shame.

On the whole what Bildad says is true enough. Where he errs is in supposing that he holds the whole truth, in assuming that there were not more things in heaven and earth than he had even dreamed of in his narrow philosophy. It is true that good comes to the good and evil to the evil; but it is also true that what is terribly evil in itself comes to the good, in order that it may conduct them to a larger and diviner good; and that what is most graciously and undeservedly good comes to the evil, in order that they may be persuaded to renounce that which is evil and cleave to that which is good. Had he known this, Bildad would not have so hastily and harshly concluded either that the affliction of Job was the punishment of some unknown sin, or that the death of his children was the natural and inevitable result of some secret and untraceable guilt.

At the same time it is difficult to escape the impression that Bildad was a little disingenuous throughout his speech. In considering Verses 4-7 we saw that he veiled his entire conviction of the guilt of Job and of his children under hypothetical forms of speech; and in Verses 20-22 we find him hiding his conviction of Job's guilt under similar forms. There can be no doubt that he was inwardly and entirely persuaded that the calamities which had fallen on Job were the consequence and the punishment of his sins; that he entertained little hope, no hope, for him until those sins were confessed and removed, for to that conclusion the whole drift of his argument steadily

points; but he assumes a hope he does not really feel, and in a somewhat jaunty and insincere tone promises the afflicted patriarch a happy issue out of all his trials.

(4) JOB TO BILDAD. (CHAPTERS IX. AND X.)

Bildad had given new weight and edge to the accepted dogma of his time, that, in all the vicissitudes of their earthly lot, men receive the due reward of their deeds. Thinking, in Shakespeare's expressive language, to "patch grief with proverbs" he had adduced in proof of his thesis the sayings received by tradition from the sages of the antique world,— "with a little hoard of maxims preaching down a sufferer's heart." But Job resents this attempt to array against him the wisdom of antiquity. He refuses to be "proverbed with grandsire phrases." He flames out with the keenest indignation against the dogma which Bildad had supported with ancient saws, of which he finds in Job a modern instance. He will have none of it. There is no comfort in it, and no truth.

In form, his reply to Bildad closely resembles his reply to Eliphaz: in both he first meets the argument of the Friends, and then, breaking away from the narrow round of thought in which they revolved, he pours out his very soul in impassioned expostulation and appeal to God, his real, though unseen, Antagonist. His answer to the argument of Bildad is twofold: first (Chap. ix. 2-21), he affirms that, even if it were true that the providence of God is strictly retributive, *that* would bring no comfort to him, since, however righteous he may be, it is impos-

sible for man to prove and maintain his righteousness as against the Almighty: and, second (Chap. ix. 22–35), he affirms that this assumed law of Providence is not its true, or at least that it is not its sole, law, since experience shews that the guiltless and the guilty are destroyed alike. Chapter x. contains the passionate expostulation with God, which Job founds on the premises he has laid down in Chapter ix.

CHAPTERS IX. AND X.

- CHAP. IX. I.—*Then answered Job and said :*
2. *Of a truth I know it is thus :*
 But how shall man be just with God ?
 3. *Should he choose to contend with Him,*
 He cannot answer Him one charge of a thousand.
 4. *Wise of heart and mighty in strength,*
 Who hath braved Him and been safe,
 5. *Who removeth the mountains or ever they be aware,*
 Who overturneth them in his fury ;
 6. *Who shaketh the earth out of her place,*
 So that her pillars rock ;
 7. *Who commandeth the sun and it doth not shine,*
 And setteth his seal on the stars :
 8. *Who alone boweth down the heavens,*
 And strideth on the heights of the sea :
 9. *Maker of the Bear, the Giant, and the Cluster,*
 And the Chambers of the South :
 10. *Doer of great things past finding out,*
 And wonders that cannot be numbered.
 11. *Lo, He crosseth me, but I see Him not,*
 And sweepeth past, but I do not discern Him.
 12. *Lo, He snatcheth away ; who can withstand Him ?*
 Who shall say to Him, ‘ What doest Thou ? ’
 13. *God restraineth not his fury,*
 Even the haughtiest bow beneath it ;
 14. *How much less can I answer Him,*
 And choose out my words with Him
 15. *To whom, though innocent, I would not reply ,*
 I could but make supplication to my Adversary.

16. *Were I to call on Him, and He to answer me,
I could not believe that He had hearkened to my voice ;*
17. *For He breaketh me with tempest,
And multiplieth my bruises without cause :*
18. *He will not suffer me to fetch my breath,
But surfeiteth me with bitterness.*
19. *'Is it a trial of strength? Here am I then!
Is it a trial of right? Who then will impeach me?'*
20. *Should I justify myself, my own mouth would condemn me
Should I say, 'I am perfect,' it would wrest my plea.*
21. *Were I perfect, I should not know it,
I should despise myself.*
22. *It is all one ; therefore will I say it :
The guiltless and the guilty He destroyeth alike.*
23. *When the scourge slayeth suddenly,
He laughs at the temptation of the innocent.*
24. *The earth is given into the hand of the wicked ;
He veileth the face of its judges :
If not He, who then is it ?*
25. *And my days are swifter than a courier ;
They flit away ; they see no good :*
26. *They shoot past like skiffs of reed,
Like an eagle swooping on its prey !*
27. *If I say, 'I will forget my care,
Leave my sad faces and look brightly,'*
28. *I think with terror of all my woes :
I know Thou wilt not clear me.*
29. *If I must be guilty before Thee,
Why should I weary myself in vain ?*
30. *Were I to wash myself in snow-water
And cleanse my hands with potash,*
31. *Thou wouldst still plunge me into a ditch,
So that my very garments should abhor me.*
32. *For He is not a man as I am, whom I might answer,
That we should come together in judgment ;*
33. *There is no arbiter between us,
To lay his hand on us both,*
34. *Who would remove his rod from me,
So that the dread of Him should not overawe me :*
35. *If there were, I would speak and not fear Him,
For I know no cause to fear.*

- CHAP. X. 1. *I loathe my life !
I will give loose to my complaint ;
In the bitterness of my soul will I speak :*
2. *I will say unto God, 'Do not condemn me ;
Shew me wherefore Thou contendest with me :*
3. *Is it meet that Thou shouldest oppress,
That Thou shouldest despise, the work of thy hands,
And shine on the council of the wicked ?*
4. *Hast Thou eyes of flesh,
Or seest Thou as man seeth ?*
5. *Are thy days as the days of man
And thy years as his years,*
6. *That Thou searchest after my fault
And makest inquisition for my sin,*
7. *Though Thou knowest I am not guilty,
And that none can deliver me out of thine hand ?*
8. *Thy hands have wholly fashioned and formed me,
Yet dost Thou swallow me up !*
9. *O remember that Thou hast moulded me like clay ;
And wilt Thou bring me to dust again ?*
10. *Didst not Thou pour me out like milk,
And curdle me like whey,*
11. *Clothe me with skin and flesh,
And with bones and sinews knit me together ?*
12. *Thou hast granted me life and favour,
And thy care hath guarded my breath :*
13. *But Thou wast hiding these evils in thine heart ;
That this was thy purpose I know.*
14. *Had I sinned, Thou wouldest have marked it
And not have absolved me from my guilt.*
15. *Had I done wickedly, alas for me !
Or were I righteous, I would not lift my head,
Sated with shame and conscious of my misery ;*
16. *For should I uplift it, Thou wouldest hunt me like a lion,
And once more shew Thyself mighty upon me ;*
17. *Thou wouldest bring fresh witnesses against me,
And redouble thine anger at me,
[Charging] with host on host against me.*
18. *Why didst Thou bring me forth from the womb ?
Would that I had breathed my last and no eye had seen me !*
19. *O to have been as though I had not been,
To have been carried from the womb to the grave !*

20. *Are not my days few? Forbear then,
And turn from me, that I may know some little comfort*
21. *Before I go, to return no more,
Into the land of darkness and of the blackness of death.*
22. *A land of gloom, black as the blackness of death,
Where there is no order, and the light is darkness?*

He commences his argument (Chap. ix. 2-4) with an ironical admission of the law, or principle, for which Bildad has contended. "God is just? Of course He is! And favours the just? Of course He does! But if it were not so, how should any man prove himself in the right against an omnipotent Adversary? If, aggrieved by apparent injustice, he should wish to call God to account, he cannot answer one in a thousand of the subtle charges which infinite Wisdom might invent against him, or stand for a moment against the oppressions with which infinite Power might assail him."

As the thought of the power of his Divine Adversary rises before his mind, Job is fascinated by it; he cannot detach his mind from it, but passes into a description of the majesty of God, both in the natural and in the human world, which seems to have no bearing on his immediate purpose until we remember that in the resistless power of God he finds a proof of the utter helplessness of any attempt to vindicate himself when God chooses to contend with him. As he glances round the universe, looking for succour or for some suggestion of hope, he sees on every side the operations of a boundless and inscrutable Force, and this force that of Him who is turned to be his foe. How can he hope to stand against One who (*Verse 5*), instantly, unexpectedly, without note of warning, removes and overturns

even the solid mountains from their very base ; who (*Verse 6*) convulses the trembling earth so that she leaps out of her place, and the very pillars on which she is built rock to and fro ; who (*Verse 7*) intercepts the light of the sun with disastrous eclipse, so that it can no longer scatter its beams on the craving earth, and seals up the stars with dark rolling clouds, so that they no longer shine ; who (*Verse 8*) blends sky and sea together in the wild tumult of the storm : and who afflicts the affrighted universe with the terrors of earthquake, eclipse, and tempest, not according to any steadfast and calculable law, nor for any beneficent purpose that men can trace, but simply because (*Verse 8*) He strides through the universe in a causeless and capricious (*Verse 6*) "fury" ? How can he, a frail and burdened man, hope to contend with, to exact justice from, the Great Maker of the starry constellations (*Verse 9*) which burn in the high vault of heaven ? And here he singles out for special notice the constellations known to the Hebrews as *âsh*, *kesîl*, *kimâh*, to us as the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades—the Bear a constellation of the northern, Orion of the southern, and the Pleiades of the eastern sky ; and "the Chambers of the South," *i.e.* the vast spaces and starry groups of the unseen southern hemisphere, of which, as he has not seen them, he cannot speak more particularly.

In *Verse 10* he winds up his description of the Divine Majesty with a sentence taken from the lips of Eliphaz (Chap. v. 9),—

Doer of great things past finding out,
And wonders that cannot be numbered ;

but, whereas Eliphaz had used the boundless and

inscrutable power of God as an argument for his justice and beneficence, Job uses it to vindicate the utter hopelessness of withstanding Him, whether He be just or unjust, gracious or furious.

In *Verse 11*¹ Job passes from nature to man, he himself, with his pains and wrongs, being the link of connection, and proceeds to argue that in the human, as in the natural, world God is irresistible, inexplicable, at times even despotic.² It is impossible to strive with Him on fair and equal terms, impossible therefore to win a suit against Him, whatever the goodness of one's cause. Whether God be the appellant and take the initiative (Verses 12-15), or man (Verses 16-21), the issue is the same; by his mere power, apart from all questions of right, God must and does prevail: man has no chance against Him.

What Job feels in his own case (*Verse 11*) is that God makes his presence felt in the human lot, in his own lot, in precisely the same sudden, vague, and incomprehensible, the same capricious and destructive, way as in the physical universe. He is aware that God has been with him only by the traces of his anger, only by the cold obscuring shadows that attend Him, only by the calamities and miseries He leaves behind Him. He cannot see *Him*, nor discern the meaning of what He does. God *sweeps past* like the Spirit described by

¹ Verse 11.—“Lo, he *crosseth* me.” The Hebrew verb is ambiguous. Ewald translates it, “He *goes by* me;” Gesenius by “He *assails* me:” and it has long been debated whether the word should be taken in a general or in a hostile sense. By rendering the phrase, “He *crosseth* me,” I have tried to preserve the ambiguity of the Original.

² Note especially verse 13, and compare it with verse 5.

Eliphaz,¹ and produces the same profound impression of fear and mystery. Eliphaz may see a dim Shape and hear an oracular Voice ; but for his part no such favour is accorded *him*, no form melts into and out of the air, no oracular hum or whisper is heard. Who can grapple and contend with an Opponent at once so impalpable and so mighty ?

This impossibility, the impossibility of getting justice when the Almighty is one of the litigants, he elaborates in two brief dramatic scenes in which the Almighty is alternatively appellant and defendant. First, he takes God as the assailant, and complains that if the Almighty opens the attack, if He "snatches away" from man aught that is his, no resistance is possible, no remonstrance even, and all help is vain ; his fury is not to be restrained or recalled : it sweeps on like a storm, or an overflowing torrent which bears down all before it, and carries desolation in its track.

Verse 13.—"Even the haughtiest bow beneath it" is but a poor rendering, a pale reflexion, of the Original. In the Hebrew there is either an historical or a mythological allusion which has not as yet been clearly recovered. Many expositors render the phrase by "*Egypt and its allies*," or "*the allies of Egypt*," bow under it ; for the literal rendering of the disputed phrase is "*the helpers of Rahab*"—Rahab being a Biblical and typical name for Egypt. And if that rendering be adopted, the allusion would be either to the discomfiture of Egypt and its political allies when the wrath of Jehovah was kindled against Pharaoh for refusing to let

¹ The same Hebrew word is used here and in Chap. iv. 13.

his people go; or to the powers of evil summoned to the help of Egypt by the enchantments of the magicians. But such an allusion to an historical event, and especially to an event of the Hebrew story, is alien to the spirit and manner of this Poem, which touches only on pre-Israelite events, only on the primeval and universal traditions of the race. It is better, therefore, to read "*the proud helpers,*" or "*the helpers of pride,*" or "*the haughtiest;*" in short, to adopt some general form of expression which conveys the thought that all who, in the pride and haughtiness of their hearts, interpose between the Almighty and the objects of his displeasure court an assured overthrow. Even this reading, however, rests in all probability on an obscure allusion, the exact force of which we cannot yet determine, to a primeval tradition which obtained throughout the ancient East. The germ of it is found in all Oriental literatures, and is fully developed both in the Hindoo and the Egyptian mythologies. In substance it is to the effect that some arch-rebel, some personified principle of evil, some such personage, in short, as the Satan of the Prologue, aided by a great company of "helpers," or "allies"—what we call "the devil and his angels," broke out into mutiny against God, or the gods; that these powers and principalities of darkness long maintained their warfare against the Powers of light and righteousness, but either were, or are yet to be, finally and irrevocably overthrown. It is pretty generally admitted by the latest and most learned expositors that there is an allusion in Job's words to these "spiritual wickednesses in

high places;" but to convey that allusion in any sufficiently terse and pregnant phrase, which shall not mislead the reader, is a feat not yet accomplished.¹

Verses 14, 15.—But if these mighty and monstrous powers of darkness could not cope with the Maker of the stars, how shall Job contend with Him? how confute his arguments and rebut his pleas? However innocent he may be, and however conscious of his innocence, he could not argue with *Him* as with an equal; he could only hope to move so powerful an Adversary by humbling himself before Him, by asking grace, not by claiming rights.

In *Verses 16–20* Job works out his second conception of God as *defendant* in a suit. He assumes, not that God advances some claim on him, but that he asserts a claim on God. "If," he says, "strong in the conviction of the righteousness of my claim, I should venture to enforce it, if I were to cite Him into court, and He were to come, I could not believe that He had come at my summons, or that He would listen calmly to my pleas. No; enraged by my audacity, He would come in a whirlwind, come to multiply my bruises till I could not fetch my breath, come to riot and exult in the consciousness of irresistible irresponsible power—as who should say, 'Aha, aha; you have challenged me! Is it to a trial of strength? Here I am! Is

¹ If any of my readers fancy they have solved this difficult problem I shall be glad to hear from them. And perhaps I may be permitted to add that, as this Commentary on Job has already occupied me, at intervals, for the last twelve years, and is likely to be the chief task of my life, *I shall be very thankful* for corrections or helpful suggestions on any part of it.

it on a question of right? Who will dare impeach *Me!*—so that, confused and overborne, my own mouth would stammer out my condemnation, and, knowing myself to be guiltless, I should nevertheless confess myself to be guilty.”

Verse 21 is so abrupt and broken an utterance that it is difficult to determine its meaning and connection of thought. Literally rendered it runs: “*I perfect; I know not my soul; I loathe my life.*” Some interpret these sighs thus: “I am perfect or guiltless; it may cost me my life to assert my innocence, but I do not know,” *i.e.* do not value, “my soul” or life,—I do not set my life at a pin’s fee, as Hamlet phrases it: “nay, I loathe my life, and reckon not how soon I lose it. Therefore I *will* assert my innocence, come what may.” Others, and as I think with more reason, regard this *Verse* as an expansion of *Verse 20*, and read it as meaning: “Were I never so innocent, I should not care to assert my innocence, since God with his infinite subtlety would be able to wrest from my very plea charges that I could not refute, so that I should stand in doubt of myself. Therefore, I loathe my very life, and would fain be quit of it.”

But whatever may be the sense of *Verse 21*, there can be no doubt that in *Verse 22* Job shifts his ground. Hitherto he has been arguing that even if Bildad’s doctrine of retributive Providence were true, it would yield him no comfort; now he argues that the doctrine itself is questionable and even untrue. Of what use was it for him to stand up for his innocence when the guilty and the guiltless were

alike destroyed by the very Providence of whose equity Bildad had boasted? Obviously the sense of his own impotence when contrasted with the omnipotence of God has driven him desperate for the moment. He is even conscious of his own recklessness, as we may see from the opening words of the verse: "It is all one," *i.e.* "It is all one to me whether I live or die; and therefore I will say out openly that, so far from preserving the good and punishing the wicked, God strikes indiscriminately at good and bad alike, both equally fall before the fury of his power." A terrible saying; and yet is it not true to those who cannot see beyond the verge of the grave? Is it not true that, as God causeth his rain to fall and his sun to shine on the just and on the unjust, so also "the same fate befallerh the righteous and the wicked?"¹ A terrible saying; and yet it is followed by sayings still more terrible. For, in *Verse 23*, Job affirms that when any indiscriminating scourge—as famine, or pestilence, or war—falls alike on bad and good, God is not simply indifferent; He "laughs," laughs scornfully and derisively, at "the temptation" to distrust and despair which this grave injustice quickens in the heart of the righteous. Nay, more; in *Verse 24* he affirms that God puts the righteous at an absolute disadvantage as compared with the unrighteous, giving over the earth into the hand of the wicked, committing the administration of public justice to men whose faces He has veiled so that they cannot discern between good and evil, so that they aggravate the misery of an inequitable Providence by legalizing oppression and

¹ Ecclesiastes ix. 2.

wrong, "framing mischief *by a law*." There may be an afterthrob of misgiving in the final clause of the verse: "If not he, who then is it?" as if Job, looking on the universal scene of injustice with baffled intellect and bewildered eyes, and feeling that the fact of injustice was undeniable, suddenly demanded of himself whether it could be traced to any other source, whether any one but God could be made responsible for it; but most commentators are agreed that the clause is to be taken simply as an assertion that only God could be answerable for the prevalence of wrong and misery, since only He could possibly have produced or permitted it on so large a scale.

And this conclusion seems confirmed by the Verses which follow. For now Job once more singles himself out from the throng of men and adduces himself as an instance and proof of the moral disorder and inequity of human life. In *Verses* 25 and 26 he compares his life to that which is swiftest on land, on water, and in the air; to the courier posting with his despatches in breathless haste, to the light papyrus skiff¹ skimming over the surface of the stream, and to the eagle swooping on its prey. Yet, brief as his life is, it has been cut short, it has been withered in its prime, so that he is both hopeless of any future

¹ The Hebrew word for "swift *ships*," or "*skiffs* of reed," occurs only in this passage. It is probably a foreign word with which our Poet enriched his language. A kindred word (*abatu*), which also means ships or boats, is found on the Deluge tablets and elsewhere in the Assyrian inscriptions; but probably, as a kindred word in Arabic indicates, it means light boats constructed of papyrus reeds, such canoes as were made on the Nile, and so made as to fold together that they might be the more easily carried past the cataracts.

happiness and denied even a moment's respite from his misery.

Bildad (Chap. viii. 21 and 22) had suggested that brighter days, days of mirth and prosperity, might yet compensate him for his sufferings. But Job despairingly replies to these suggestions of hope, that he dare not yield to them. If (*Verses 27-29*) he does cherish such bright gleams for an instant, they darken and die away in a new access of agony. A moment's reflection suffices to convince him that, since God has determined to hold him guilty, his mourning will never be exchanged for joy. Why, then, should he weary himself with vain endeavours to alter the unalterable, because causeless, determination of God? Why "trouble deaf heaven with his bootless cries?" If he *must* be guilty before Him, to what end shall he seek to purge himself of his unknown offence, or even to refute a baseless allegation? His feeling is,—

It will help me nothing
To plead mine innocence ; for that dye is on me
Which makes my whitest part black :

and in *Verses 30 and 31* he expresses this feeling under the most homely but emphatic figures. "A stronger cleansing effect is attributed to snow than to ordinary water. In Lockman's fable the black man rubs his body with snow in order to make it white."¹ "Potash," again, is a vegetable lye, or alkali, still used in the East. Palgrave, in "Central Arabia," says: "After dinner we washed our hands with potash, or *kalee* (whence our own 'alkali') the ordinary cleanser of Nejed." But Job is per-

¹ Umbreit *in loco*.

suaded that even should he wash with snow-water and potash, even, that is, should he betake himself to the most extreme and effective method of self-purification, he shall never be pure in God's sight,—not because of any extraordinary guilt on his part, but because of the strange inexplicable determination of God to hold him guilty. However he might seek to cleanse himself, God would instantly plunge him into some filthy ditch, so that his very clothes would conceive a disgust of him and shrink from contact with one so vile.

Even in this extremity of his misery, then, Job holds fast his integrity; but, in order that he may hold it fast, he is driven to an open impeachment of the integrity of God. A great gulf has opened between him and his Divine Friend; and though he still craves it and searches for it, he can find no bridge by which he may cross that gulf. It is when he is thus reduced to despair that, not a prophetic hope, but an aspiration hardly less prophetic rises within his soul for a mediator between God and man, a bridge, or ladder, between earth and heaven. Borne down by that "bosom weight which no philosophy can lift," he cries for an aid beyond the reach of reason and speculation; he craves a distinct disclosure of the will of God, a revelation, if not an incarnation, of the Divine righteousness and love: he yearns for an "Arbiter" who can lay his hands on both God and man, who shall have a human face, so that Job may speak to him unabashed, but also a Divine face, so that he may speak to God for Job without fear or partiality. It is this aspiration

which gives its immense value to the famous passage contained in *Verses* 32-35. Job feels himself to be

a thing perplexed
Beyond self-explication.

He can neither interpret himself, nor can the Friends, although among the wisest men of the East, interpret him to himself. God—for surely it can be no one else?—has “struck him past all hope of comfort,” struck him from “the top of happy hours” on which he lately stood, to the very depths of misery and despair. And yet he is conscious of no offence in himself which should have provoked so dreadful a doom. Like Lear, a “poor, infirm, and despised old man,” he can say,

I am a man
More sinned against than sinning.

How is he to reconcile his consciousness of integrity with his undeserved misery? To what quarter is he to look for light on this dark problem? We have already seen in part how his eager intellect had gone sounding on through words and things, a dim and perilous way, seeking some solution of the problem till, in moments of intense passion and excitement, it seemed to land him in the conclusion that God must be unjust, hostile to the good and friendly to evil men. But what comfort can there be in that conclusion to any good, or even to any thoughtful, man? If God be unjust, life is a curse, not a blessing, and he is happiest who can soonest escape from it. And therefore Job cannot *rest* in this conclusion, though he sinks into it again and again. Even when he is most vehement and reckless in his denunciation of

the injustice of God and the consequent worthlessness of human life, some sudden turn of thought, a few calmer words, prove that this is not his final conclusion, that he feels it to be untrue even while he most hotly affirms its truth.

Here, for example, in the closing verses of this Chapter, though he has just portrayed a God who is a mere irrational and despotic Force, slaying guiltless and guilty alike in his capricious fury, mocking at the trials of the innocent, handing over the world into the power of wicked judges who tyrannize over the righteous, we are made to feel that this blind malignant Power is not really Job's God at all, but a mere phantom projected by his diseased and inflamed imagination against the dark background of his Friends' dogmatic prepossessions: for he is still sure that *his* God, if he could but get at Him, would not prove to be unjust but just, not a blind Force or a capricious Despot, but a righteous and gracious Friend. Hence he longs (*Verse 32*) to have God humanized, to see Him in a human form, and is evidently persuaded that, could he see God in man, he and God might "come together in judgment." If that may not be, if God cannot stoop to the human level, he craves (*Verse 33*) for an Arbiter, or Mediator, who should be able to "lay his hand on both" God and man,—not touch them both simply, that is, but be able to compel whichever of the two he thought in the wrong to do the other right; who should have authority to enforce his decision whatever it might be. But how shall any being have authority with God unless he be a partaker of the Divine Nature? What Job really craves, therefore, is a Mediator who

shall be "partaker of God," since he is to have power with and over God, and "partaker of man," that man may speak to him without fear.

So much, indeed, he himself tells us in *Verse 34* ; for the Umpire, or Mediator, for whose advent he yearns is to be capable of removing "the rod" of Almighty power, by which Job has been so horribly bruised, that he may no longer be struck dumb by fear of it. Were such a Mediator to stand between them, with his hand on both, Job would fearlessly urge his integrity and the claims that it gave him on God : "for," he subjoins (*Verse 35*), "*I know no cause for fear ;*" literally, "I am not so with, or in, myself ;" *i.e.* "I am conscious of nothing in myself that should make me dumb or afraid, were only a fair trial and an impartial judge accorded me."¹

Now to insist on seeing the whole Gospel in this noble passage would not only be to shew ourselves unreasonable and destitute of either historical or critical judgment, it would also be to discharge from it its true power and value. A hazy and hypothetical anticipation of the Gospel is of little worth to those who have the Gospel itself in their hands ; but any passage in ancient writings which proves that man was made for the Gospel, by proving that the Gospel corresponds to and satisfies a deep, inbred, and ineradicable craving of the human heart, is simply quite invaluable, especially in a critical and sceptical age such as this. Even those who never weary of telling us that Christ "carried morality to the sublimest point attained, or even attainable, by humanity,"² qualify and emasculate the admission

¹ For a corresponding idiom compare the Greek of 1 Cor. iv. 4.

² "Supernatural Religion," vol. ii. part iii. chap. iii.

by affirming both that his moral teaching was only "the perfect development of natural morality,"¹ *i.e.* that it sprang from the brain of a man and not from the inspiration of God, and that this fair morality will never take its proper place in our thoughts, or exert its due influence on the life of the world, until we give up all faith in the supernatural inspiration of his words and in the miracles He is supposed to have wrought. Nor, they tell us, do we lose anything of value by resigning the dubious hypothesis of a supernatural revelation, and by holding all that is miraculous in it to be a late and incredible addition to the true story of the Gospel. On the contrary, to use the words of a recognized Master of the sceptical school,² "we gain infinitely more than we lose in abandoning belief in the reality of Divine Revelation. While we retain pure and unimpaired the treasure of Christian morality, we relinquish nothing but the debasing elements added to it by human superstition."

The masters of this same sceptical school are the first to censure any reading of Christian meanings into such scriptures as the Book of Job, the first to insist that we shall take them in their plain historical sense and as the mere utterance of the thoughts and cravings of the human heart unillumined and unassisted by any immediate light from Heaven. And we thank them for it, both in the interests of Biblical criticism and in the interests of our great contention with them, since they thus enable us to answer them out of their own mouths. We admit that Job had no direct and supernatural revelation of the

¹ "Supernatural Religion," vol. ii. part iii. chap. iii.

² *Ibid.*

will and purpose of God, that he only longed and yearned for one. We admit that, in this passage, he uttered no clear prophetic anticipation of the advent of the Mediator between God and men, but only the profound craving of his heart for such a Mediator. But, then, what becomes of their argument? They contend that if man has a pure and noble morality, he needs no supernatural revelation of the will of God, no Mediator to interpret God to man and to reconcile man to God. But, beyond all dispute, Job had a pure and noble morality—a morality which was even Christian in its breadth and delicacy, its tenderness and patience.¹ Does *he* feel that he is an infinite gainer because he has no Divine Revelation, and no God-man such as “the Christian superstition” has vainly conceived? On the contrary Job, like Plato, was profoundly sure that he should never know God as he needed to know Him until some man or spirit was sent to reveal God to his longing soul. On the contrary, the craving which gave him no rest was precisely that which we are told it was impossible for him to know—the craving for a Divine Revelation, and for a Mediator through whom God should draw near to man no longer “dark with excess of light,” but veiling his majesty in mortal limitations, that men might draw near to Him unafraid. And one of the most pertinent uses which this great Poem can subserve for the men of this generation is, that it disproves the sceptical hypothesis once for all, and in its most scientific form, by proving that the craving

¹ For the proof of this assertion see Chapters xxix. and xxxi. of the Poem.

to see God and to hear Him speak to us is one of the primitive, inherent, and deepest intuitions and necessities of the human heart. No student of Job can well believe that anything short of a supernatural revelation, and a mediator both human and Divine, can satisfy the needs of such a creature as man in such a world as this.¹ S. COX.

THE WRITER OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL AND
ST. JOHN.

ARE these one and the same person, or are they not? The question is too large and too important to be adequately discussed in the pages of THE EXPOSITOR, but it seems to the present writer that there are some aspects of it which may profitably be dwelt upon at no great length and in a common-sense way.

Let us take the Gospel simply as we find it, and endeavour to make out what it says, or seems to say, of itself. In so doing there are one or two preliminary matters which we must decide about. For example, we must assume the substantial integrity of the Gospel; by which we mean that the opening verses are part of the original document, that the closing chapter is not an addition from another hand, but that the *final* original and authoritative form of the Gospel was that in which we have it now. This does not affect the narrative of the woman taken in adultery, which has no bearing on the present argument, though we believe that narrative also to be original. We

¹This argument has already been stated at greater length in the pages of THE EXPOSITOR. (See article on "Morality *versus* Revelation," in vol. i. pp. 470, *et seq.*)