

THE BOOK OF JOB.

IV.—THE SECOND COLLOQUY. (CHAPTERS XV.-XX.)

4.—JOB TO BILDAD. (CHAPTER XIX.)

WILLING to wound and yet afraid to strike at Job openly and directly, Bildad had drawn a picture of the wicked man in which, as all that was specific in it, all the individualizing and characteristic touches, were taken from the life, and from the life of Job, he doubtless intended him to recognize himself. And, as he listened, Job had at last divined his intention (Chap. xxi. Verse 27), and had been as deeply wounded by "the heavy accent of that moving tongue" as his Friend could have desired. For, in much, Bildad's description was undeniably true. The points he had laboured most were that the sinner is ultimately abandoned both by God and man, and that his name is utterly forgotten by posterity, or remembered only with horror and amazement. And Job felt both that God *had* forsaken him, and that men, even those who were most bound or most dear to him, had turned against him; he feared, he could not but fear, that *his* name would perish from the earth, or be recalled with a shudder as that of a bold bad man who had dared to strive with his Maker and had been beaten in the strife. Now, as his good name was dear to him; as *that* and "his integrity to Heaven" were all he dare now call his own; as, moreover, "he counted himself in nothing else so happy as in a soul remembering his good friends," insomuch that he had turned to his friends for comfort even when God had forsaken him, we can understand how amazed he was when from the very spring whence comfort

should have flowed to him discomfort swelled ; how impossible he found it to "forget the shames that they had stained him with" by the mouth of Bildad, and how keenly he was wounded when they dived into his soul only to scatter there

Dangers, death, wringing of the conscience,
Fears and despairs.

Nevertheless, wronged and wounded as he is, "the unstooping firmness of his upright soul" will not suffer him either to yield tamely to the misconstruction of the admitted facts of his life which they seek to force upon him, or to turn away his own or other eyes from the contemplation of these facts, however mournful they may be, however suggestive of guilt. With a touch of his old impatient fire he protests (Verses 5, 6) that, if they still maintain his calamities to be the due and fair result of his sins, he must still maintain that they spring from the injustice of the God whose interpreters they affect to be. And then, recalling the "guard of patience" which he has set "between his will and all offences," he turns with resolute courage to look upon the facts from which they have drawn a conclusion so sinister, and to inquire what those facts really mean and portend. He dwells on all the details of his abandonment by God (Verses 7-12), and by man (Verses 13-20), tracing even the faithlessness of his kinsfolk and friends to the unprovoked enmity of God (*cf.* Verse 13), and gives us a most moving and pathetic description of the miseries which that desertion had caused him. He himself is moved by his own most moving words, and breaks out into an appeal to his Friends to have pity on him, whatever they may think of him, beseeching them that, "touched with human gentleness and love," they would,

if but for a moment, "glance an eye of pity on his losses" and griefs, on a misery that has grown intolerable, unspeakable (Verses 21, 22).

But nothing is so hard as an alienated friend, except it be an alarmed and offended bigot. And Job has to deal with both. They sit utterly unmoved by a cry as piercing and pathetic as ever issued from the lips of man. And after a brief pause, the man, the friend, on whom they have now committed the supreme wrong, repulsing the warm generous heart that leaped toward them and driving it to despair, springs clean out of his despair on the wings of an imperishable faith in the God whom they have traduced, and rises to the very climax and triumph of hope. Bildad had threatened him that his name would be forgotten, or that posterity would remember only to execrate him. And, now, Job replies with a formal and deliberate appeal to posterity. He has that to say which the generations that come after him must never forget, since a great truth once revealed is the everlasting heritage of the race. And the great truth he would fain have cut deep on a rock for ever is, *that God is his Goel*; or, rather, the great fact he would have recorded for the comfort of after ages is that, even out of the depths of his despair, he can look up and see a great star of hope shining above his head; that even "through the hollow eyes of death" he "spies life peering," and is assured that on some distant happy day all the wrongs of time will be redressed. "Transported beyond this ignorant present," he "feels the future in the instant," and knows that the God in whom he has already found an Umpire, an Advocate, a Witness, a Surety, will at last reveal Himself as his Redeemer, to clear him of every charge,

and to save him from all evil. God will publicly declare his innocence, and he, even though he die, shall live, and hear that declaration for himself.

CHAPTER XIX.

1. *Then answered Job and said :*
2. *How long will ye rack my soul*
 And break me in pieces with words ?
3. *These ten times have ye insulted me.*
 Shameless that ye are ! Ye astound me.
4. *If it be that I have erred,*
 My error rests with myself :
5. *But if ye will magnify yourselves against me,*
 And urge against me my reproach,
6. *Know ye that God hath wrested my cause,*
 And flung his net about me.
7. *Behold, I exclaim at my wrong, but am not answered ;*
 I cry aloud, but there is no justice !
8. *He hath fenced up my way, that I cannot pass,*
 And set darkness in my paths :
9. *He hath stripped me of mine honour,*
 And taken the crown from my head ;
10. *He hath broken me down on every side, so that I am gone,*
 And hath uprooted my hope like a tree ;
11. *He hath also kindled his wrath against me,*
 And reckoned me for a foe :
12. *His troops advance in array ;*
 They throw up their causeway against me,
 And encamp round my tent.
13. *He hath removed my brethren far away,*
 And those who knew me are wholly estranged from me ;
14. *My kinsfolk stand aloof,*
 And my familiar friends have forgotten me ;
15. *The inmates of my house and my maidens count me a stranger,*
 An alien have I become in their eyes ;
16. *I call to my servant, but he will not answer,*
 Though I implore him with mine own mouth :
17. *My breath has become strange to my wife ;*
 I am offensive to my brethren :

18. *The very children despise me,
When I rise up they speak against me :*
19. *All my inward friends abhor me,
And they whom I love are turned against me :*
20. *My bone cleaves to my skin and my flesh,
And I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.*
21. *Have pity on me, have pity on me, O ye my friends,
For the hand of God hath touched me !*
22. *Why should ye persecute me, like God,
And not be satisfied with my pangs ?*
23. *O that my words were written down,
That they were inscribed in the book,—*
24. *With an iron pen, and with lead,
Cut deep in the rock for ever !*
25. *“ I know that my Redeemer liveth ;
And He shall stand, at last, over this dust :*
26. *And after my body hath thus been destroyed,
Yet from my flesh shall I see God ;*
27. *Whom I shall see on my side,
And mine own eyes shall behold, not those of another :
For that my reins pine away within me ! ”*
28. *If then ye should say, “ How may we persecute him ? ”
For ye find the cause of my affliction in me—*
29. *Beware the sword ! For the punishments of the sword are wrathful,
That ye may know there is a judgment.*

Verses 2 and 3.—Job commences his reply, as usual, with a brief discharge of personalities, reproaching the Friends with the cruelty, the pertinacity, the shameless injustice of their assault upon him. His feeling is,

I have too long borne
Your blunt upbraidings and your bitter scoffs,

and he demands of them how much longer, not content with the unutterable anguish he is compelled to suffer, they will add to it by stretching him on the rack of their unfounded censures and rebukes. “ These ten

times have ye insulted me!" he exclaims, every fresh assumption of his guilt being a fresh insult. But the word "ten" is not, of course, to be taken literally. Ten is a round number, and, as being the number of fingers on a man's hands—fingers being probably the first counters—was employed to denote the utmost possible number. What Job means is, "You have carried insult to the last possible point; you have exhausted on me every possible form of censure and false imputation of guilt!" Carried away by their ignorant zeal against him, they are lost to all sense of shame and decency. They are more transported by passion than he by calamity; and he can only sit wrapt in indignant amazement at the evil change that has passed upon them.

Verse 4.—What is it that so strangely excites them? Why are they thus transported from themselves? why turned from friends who revere and pity him into implacable judges with eyes full of condemnation and lofty rebuke? Even if their assumption were true, and he had erred and gone astray, his guilt would remain with himself; *he* would have to expiate it, not they; the punitive results of his offence would not extend to them and darken over their lot. As they would not suffer by his sin, could they not afford to look on it dispassionately, and to mingle a little commiseration for him with their censure of his supposed offence?

Verses 5 and 6.—But their assumption was *not* true. He had not sinned, or had not so sinned as to provoke the calamities that were crushing him. If their theory of a retributive Providence was a true and complete one, then that Providence was manifestly unjust. If

they still inferred from the evils which had befallen him that he had done evil, although he had refuted the premisses from which that inference was drawn again and again, he could only reassert his integrity. "The good he stood on was his truth and honesty;" nothing was left him but that: if that should fail him, he must sink into the abyss. And therefore, if nothing would content them but to magnify themselves upon him by depriving him of his last stay and hope, rather than yield it he would hurl back on them the charge that the God whom they had eulogized and defended was as cruel and unjust as they were, and had "wrested," or perverted, his cause even as they had wrested it.

How could any man who "delighted no less in truth than life" do otherwise? God was *not* punishing him for his iniquity; He was testing, purging, perfecting his righteousness. If God's dealings with Job had meant what they assumed them to mean, God Himself admits that it would have been a perversion of justice. So that, shocking as Job's charges against God sound to some minds, they were after all but an impassioned and rhetorical statement of facts which God Himself confesses to be true.

Bildad had affirmed (Chap. xviii. 8) that the wicked man—meaning Job—was thrust into the net *by his own feet*. "No," retorts Job (*Verse 6*), "it is *God* who has flung his net around me. It is not by my own act that I am entangled in these complicated and binding miseries, but by the act of the Almighty."

Up to this point, then, it is evident that Job is addressing himself mainly and directly to the charges which Bildad had indirectly alleged against him. But, from this point onward, it is equally evident that he

detaches himself more and more from the toils of a merely personal controversy. The assertions of his opponent still give direction and colour to his thoughts, indeed. The charge that he was abandoned by God and man supplies the theme of most of the Verses which follow. Nevertheless, as we consider these Verses, we feel that Job is not so much attempting to answer the conclusion Bildad had inferred from the fact of this double abandonment, as brooding over the fact itself, and seeking to ascertain what it really signifies, and portends. Indeed, it was Job himself (Chap. xvi. 7-11) who had suggested this the most oppressive aspect of his fate to Bildad, complaining that it was because God hated him that men opened their mouths against him ; so that, in dwelling on it, he is really pursuing his own line of meditation rather than that of his opponents. He lingers, as sorrow is apt to do, on all the aspects and details of his miserable lot, finding fresh food for grief in each of them. But he no longer cares to argue and contend about the interpretation which men put upon them ; he is bent upon interpreting them for himself, bent on discovering the *true* interpretation of them, not that which would be most pleasant to himself, or that which would best enable him to discomfit the Friends. He is feeling after, if haply he may find it, the truth that will strengthen him to endure his misery by shewing him that even such misery as his is compatible with the justice and the goodness of God, although it seems to disprove them.

This meditative inquest into the apparently inexplicable facts of his own experience is very finely rendered. He begins with his abandonment by God. He

describes the emotions it had quickened and released within him. And here, first of all (*Verse 6*), there was the general sense of entanglement, of being surprised and caught in a net woven out of sins of which he nevertheless knew himself not to be guilty. Then, *Verse 7*, this unaccountable contradiction between his conscience and his fate forces from him cries of exhortation against the terrible wrong done him, which, however, elicit no response: "I cry out, Violence!" like a wayfarer surprised by brigands, "but there is none to answer, nor any that regardeth." They are permitted to carry him off captive, after having inflicted many and grievous wounds. Then, *Verse 8*, every outlet from his captive and imprisoned state seems closed up, so that he can neither find any loophole of escape, nor see to take it even if he should find it. Then, *Verse 9*, witnesses and spectators of his misery find access to his dungeon, and from his abject condition "moralize" his guilt. And thus God, "the main mover of all these harms," the Author of all his misery, added yet this above all, that He tore the crown of righteousness from his head, and stripped him of that robe of virtue and integrity in which, having lost all else, he hoped to involve himself. Bereft of robe and crown, he is left naked and exposed to all the storms of an angry Heaven. And now, no words can render his misery, no figures, however graphic; but he tries to convey it in figures expressive though insufficient. Like a great tree, under whose branches many had found shelter and repose, caught in the mighty hands of a tempest, and torn up by the roots, he lies, fallen and dishonoured, on the ground (*Verse 10*). God—and this is the climax of all his woes, as it is also the

source from which they all flow—is turned to be his Adversary; and, like a hapless city (*Verses 11 and 12*), assailed by an irresistible host, he has to endure the ever-renewed charge and onset of all who serve and follow Him.

Nothing in human life is so terrible as the misery and despair of a man who deems himself abandoned and doomed by God—as they know who have ever conversed with one so utterly lost to hope and impervious to it. But, though not so terrible, it may be questioned whether to be abandoned by men, to be cut off from human sympathy, is not a still more touching and pathetic sorrow. That any man should be wholly abandoned by God is, happily, not only impossible in itself, but so difficult as to be well-nigh impossible for us to conceive. But to be abandoned by men, to be cast out from the charity of even the tenderest hearts, to become the object of universal scorn and loathing and contempt; this, as it is not impossible in itself, so neither is it a condition which few can conceive. It is a misery that touches us close home; for most of us have lost a love or a sympathy that we once dearly prized; and we can imagine how our life would lose all its sweet uses were we, by some great sin, or even by being unjustly suspected of some great sin, to be put out of the pale of human charity and love, to be regarded even by the most friendly eyes with reprehension and abhorrence. Men cannot live in the dislike and contempt of their fellows. They may steel their hearts against it for a time; if it be undeserved, resentment may for a time nerve them to bear it. But, sooner or later, it quite breaks them down, and even the most steadfast spirit quails under

it. Job himself quails and faints under it. It is when he realizes how utterly he has been condemned and cast off by all sorts and conditions of men that his spirit is overwhelmed within him; and he cries out, although he knows he cries in vain, "Have pity on me, have pity on me, O ye my friends!"

In *Verses* 13-20 he turns from his abandonment by God to complain of this still more pathetic injury. He gives a singularly complete and touching description of the aversion in which he was held by his own kin, by his own kind. This, too, he traces to the hand of God—not so much blaming the men who shudder and shrink from him as the God who had made him so loathsome and offensive that he was unfitted for human society, repulsive to the very eyes of love. One result, and one of the saddest results, of the condition to which the wrath of God had reduced him is that his wife, his kinsfolk, his clan, his servants and dependants, even the little children, despise and avoid him as a man smitten and accursed of Heaven. First, he tells us (*Verses* 13, 14) that his kindred, his friends, the leading members of his own and related clans—those outside the circle of his own household—were estranged from him. Then (*Verses* 15, 16) he complains that, within that circle, his menials and slaves, even to his body-servant, who once flew at his slightest glance or gesture, now disdain to obey him, and disregard his very entreaties.

Those he commands move only in command,
Nothing in love;

or they disobey even a positive and audible command. To them he is as "a stranger" and a foreigner, *i.e.*, one who has no claim either to their allegiance or to their

sympathy: his fall is reflected from their stubborn faces, where it shews itself, after the manner of their kind, without delicacy or reserve. Then, *Verse 17*, a still more bitter complaint rises to his lips, an acuter misery. The very wife of his bosom can no longer endure his presence, and his own brothers, sons of the same womb (as the Hebrew idiom "men of *my* womb" means), are offended at him: the most intimate and beloved members of his family revolt from him. Nay, the desertion is universal. The very children (*Verse 18*) playing about the *mezbele* on which he lies, to whom he once appeared with "brows of so high authority" that they were dumb with fear, deride him, and mock at his convulsive and ineffectual attempts to rise from it. And they have learned this strange and wounding insolence from the men, even from the leading men, of his tribe—his "inward friends," literally, "the men of his counsel," those with whom he conferred and to whom he confided his most secret purposes and thoughts (*Verse 19*). With all these abhorring and reviling him, Job does not need to tell us that the common rank and file of his clan also array themselves against him. *They* would be sure to follow their chiefs, or their neighbours, to become his enemies even if they knew not why they were so, and, "like to village curs, bark when their fellows" did.

Verse 20.—To give new force to this description of his state now that God had abandoned him to the alienation of men, and to hint at the reason of their alienation from him, Job touches on a new feature of the cruel and wasting disease by which his body was being devoured. For *elephantiasis*, while it causes an abnormal swelling of the vascular tissue, especially in

the joints of the body, is commonly attended by an extraordinary wasting away of the trunk and the limbs. In medical language, both atrophy and hypertrophy are among its symptoms. And Job now refers to this terrible emaciation of the body partly to indicate how unfit, how incompetent, he was to endure the load of Divine anger and human aversion, and partly to account for the alienation of men. He had touched this point before (*Verse 17*), and now he touches it again, that we may not judge his friends and kinsmen too severely. His disease of itself rendered him, as he is aware, loathsome and offensive to them, and still more offensive because they found in it a sign of the Divine displeasure.

But if it were offensive to *them*, what must it have been to *him*? If it bred strange doubts and questions in their hearts, what must it have bred in his heart? Throughout his speech he has been insisting that it is *God* who has inflicted these undeserved miseries upon him, — God, to whom he owes his pain and anguish of body and the still more intolerable anguish of his soul. If *they* cannot, how can *he*, reconcile the infliction of all this anguish and shame on an innocent man with the justice of God? Once more, therefore, he appeals, though only for a moment, from God to man. Perhaps, as he has recounted the sad tale of his woes, he has seen, or thinks he has seen, some sign of relenting, some quiver of compunction or compassion on the faces of his Friends. Assuredly, if he has not moved them, he has moved himself to the very depths. And so, in his profound emotion, he breaks into the imploring and pitiful appeal of *Verses 21, 22*. He beseeches them to let their hearts speak, to stay his fainting soul with some

word of ruth or pity. They are his *friends*; *they*, at least, have not wholly abandoned him; they still sit by his side, and deign to hold some little converse with him, whereas other men have left him for ever, and God remains obstinately silent, let him plead and appeal as he will. Will they not open their hearts to him, then, and let him take refuge in their sympathy from the afflicting hand of God and from the harsh misjudgments of the world at large? Why should they add their persecutions to those of God? why take on themselves the judicial and punitive functions proper to Him? Why affect to look down upon him from an usurped height of sinlessness and infallibility? Why should they not be satisfied with the pangs already inflicted on him? why gnaw into his flesh with the keen tooth of calumny, attributing to him, as God had done, sins of which he was not guilty, and treating him as though he were a convicted criminal trembling at their bar?

It was a tender and a moving appeal. But those hard Pharisaic faces were unmoved by it. If their hearts were touched by any human and kindly emotion, they suppressed it. It was their duty to suppress it; their principles forbade them to yield to it. Entrenched in their narrow creed, they have nothing but austere reprobation for their wicked friend. They are the more austere both because he is their friend, and they still have a sort of love — what Sophocles so happily calls “an unloving love” — for him, and because they feel that it costs them something to maintain their austerity. With such sacrifices, they think, God is well pleased. And so, as Job glances eagerly into their hard set faces, he reads in them their unalterable verdict against him. He feels that his last appeal has failed, that he must

hope for nothing more from them. Once more the eager hungry heart is thrown back upon itself. But there must be pity, there must be justice, somewhere; in heaven, if not on earth; in death, if not in life; in God, if not with men: and, wherever it is, he will find it or perish in the search. "To be a seeker," said Cromwell, "is to be of the next best sect to being a finder." Job was both seeker and finder, for at last he finds the justice he has sought so long. How, and where, we are about to see.

S. COX.

THAT CHRIST SPOKE GREEK—A REPLY.

I TRUST I shall not outrun the patience of readers of *THE EXPOSITOR* by saying a few words in reply to the paper of Dr. Sanday contained in the February number. If indeed it were true, as Dr. Sanday somewhat strangely says, that the difference between us "is not really so very great," the labour which I now undertake might well be spared. But the difference is, both in theory and practical results, in fact, immense. On his hypothesis, almost all the words which the Son of God really uttered in this world have perished, and only a reflection of them has been preserved; while, on mine, the words of Christ are still possessed in the language in which they were spoken. On his hypothesis, Christianity in the form in which it was taught by Christ Himself has disappeared, so that what He uttered in Hebrew has, in a way by no means easy to explain, descended to us only in Greek;¹ while, on mine, we still have access in our existing Gospels to

¹ Comp. Jowett's "Epistles of St. Paul," i. 452. Second Edition.