

THE EXPOSITOR.

THE BOOK OF JOB.

IV.—THE SECOND COLLOQUY. (CHAPTERS XV.—XXI.)

6.—JOB TO ZOPHAR (CHAP. XXI.).

IN his last speech Job had risen to a clear and firm conviction of a retributive life beyond the grave. But this new and sustaining conviction was based on a prior conviction, at which also he had only newly arrived, a conviction which was still strange and terrible to him, viz., that *this* life was not, as he had always conceived it to be, a purely retributive one. Like the Friends, he had long taken it for granted that, under the rule of a just and righteous God, righteousness must invariably result in prosperity and happiness, unrighteousness in calamity and misery. His own unmerited losses and pains and griefs had constrained him to question this traditional and accepted dogma, however ; and, to his consternation, no sooner did he attempt to verify it, than he found it to be untrue alike to the facts of his own experience, and to facts which he had many times observed in the life and experience of other men. Heretofore he had not paused to consider what these facts signified, or how they bore on his narrow and inadequate interpretation of the mystery of Providence. The facts had, so to

speak, lain in one compartment of his brain, and the dogma which professed to interpret them in another, with no link of connection between them. His own undeserved sufferings had now supplied the missing link ; and no sooner is the connection established than the dogma grows incredible to him. He had been wont to argue—God is just, and therefore his providence must be just ; the laws by which He governs the lives of men must bring good to the good and evil to the evil. Now, he argues—God is just, and therefore his providence must be just ; but, as facts prove that He does not reward every man according to his deeds in this life, there must be a future life in which the work of his providence will run to its proper retributive close.

It is this new and larger conviction which gives form and colour to the thoughts recorded in the Chapter before us. True, he does not once utter that assured hope of a life beyond the grave which found such splendid expression in the closing Verses of Chapter xix. But, as I have just said, that hope was based on the conviction that the present life is not strictly and adequately retributive ; and it is *this* conviction, still new and strange to his mind, on which his thoughts now work, seeking to define and formulate it. So that if, for the present, he says nothing more of the great hope which had brought light into his darkness, if he seems to sink to a lower level of meditation, *he sinks only to the level on which his hope rests ; he is at work on the basis on which it stands*, making it more solid and strong. If, therefore, we would do him justice, we must not conceive of him as lapsing from his hope into his old mood of scepticism and despair, but,

rather, as building and buttressing up the foundation on which that hope stands, in order that it may stand the more squarely and securely.

To this task, indeed, he had been summoned by the invective of Zophar. For Zophar had reduced the retributive dogma, now discarded by Job, but still held by the Friends, to its narrowest point, and had given it its sharpest and most incisive edge. According to him, men not only received the due reward of their sins within the limits of this present life; they received it instantly, strikingly, universally, so that no man could miss seeing it, so that even the veriest sceptic could not question the fact. Challenged in this bold and formal way, the very ground of his new hope being thus rudely struck from under it, Job for the first time boldly and formally argues that the wicked do *not* suffer an instant reward of their wickedness; nay, that so far as the eye of man can trace them, they often altogether outstrip the pursuing vengeance. Hitherto, when they had painted the wicked man and his doom, he had been content, since he knew whom they meant, to assert that *he* was not wicked, and to lament that, though innocent, he was being treated as if he were guilty. If now and then he had flashed out without a doubt (*cf.* Chap. ix. 22-24) as to whether their hypothesis were true in so far as the wicked were concerned, if he had consistently denied its truth in so far as the upright were concerned, he had never yet confronted the assertion that the wicked get their due in this world with formal denial and reasoned disproof. But now that Zophar has declared that assertion to be invariably and conspicuously true, he meets it front to front, both with flat denial and with an appeal to known

and admitted facts of human experience. First, in Verses 7-16, he affirms, as a fact familiar to all candid observers, that wicked men *do* prosper. Then, in Verses 17-21, he affirms that they are *not* invariably punished—punished by a constant and inviolable law. So that he meets Zophar's assertion on both sides, the positive and the negative, affirming that at least some wicked men prosper to the very end of their days, and denying, therefore, that they are overwhelmed by instant calamity. *These are the facts*, whatever Zophar and his colleagues think they ought to be. And (Verses 22-26) why should they assume to be wiser than God, to impose their conjectural dogmas on Him, and seek to wrest his providence and the facts of it from their true significance? Finally, in Verses 27-34, he tells them plainly that though they still choose to wear a mask, to talk of "the wicked man" when they mean him, and so

with forged quaint conceit
To set a gloss upon their bold intent,

he knows whom they mean well enough, and sees clean through their flimsy disguise. Nay, though he so far responds to their method of disguise as himself to carry on his argument in the general and abstract terms which they affect, they are not to suppose that he does not resent the "surmises" by which they wrong him, the gross unfounded charges which Zophar has all but openly alleged against him. He is quite aware that he is the wicked person, the greedy Epicurean sinner, the tyrant and freebooter, described in his last speech. Nor, while he thus confounds Zophar, is he unmindful of the arguments adduced in this Colloquy by Eliphaz and Bildad. They, as we have seen, had

backed up the thesis common to all the Friends by an appeal to the ancestral wisdom of the Arab clans, and by proverbs still current among them. And from the conclusion supported by the ancient and current wisdom of a single race, Job appeals (Verses 29-33) to the wisdom gathered from many races by "men of travel." The universal verdict was against them, though they might snatch a verdict from the proverbs and traditions of this race or that.

On the whole, then, we may say that in his closing speech, while he steadily pursues his own line of thought, Job nevertheless replies to all the speakers in this Second Colloquy, and disposes of all the arguments or assertions they have brought against him.

CHAPTER XXI.

1. *Then Job answered and said:*
2. *Give good heed to my discourse,*
And let this be the consolation you afford me:
3. *Suffer me that I may speak,*
And, after I have spoken, mock on.
4. *As for me, was my complaint of man?*
And wherefore should I not be impatient?
5. *Look on me and be astonished,*
And lay hand upon mouth.
6. *Even as I think upon it I am perturbed,*
And trembling taketh hold on my flesh.
7. *Wherefore do the wicked live on,*
Wax old, and become mighty in power?
8. *Their seed are established in their sight,*
And their offspring before their eyes;
9. *Their homes are free from fear,*
And no scourge of God is upon them:
10. *Their bull engendereth and doth not fail,*
Their cow calveth and doth not miscarry;
11. *They send forth their little ones like a flock,*
And their children skip for joy;

12. *They rise up to the timbrel and harp,
And rejoice at the sound of the pipe :*
13. *They wear away their days in mirth,
And go down to Hades in a moment :*
14. *Yet they say to God, " Depart from us,
For we take no pleasure in the knowledge of thy ways ;*
15. *What is the Almighty that we should serve Him,
And what will it profit us if we make our suit unto Him ?"*
16. *Mark, their prosperity is not in their own hand.
Far from me be the counsel of the wicked !*
17. *How seldom is the lamp of the wicked put out,
And how rarely doth their destruction come upon them,
The woes He apportioneth in his anger,*
18. *That they should become like straw before the blast,
And as chaff which the storm whirleth away !*
19. *" God layeth up his iniquity for his children !"
Let Him requite it on him, that he may feel it :*
20. *His own eye should behold his calamity,
And he himself should drink the wrath of the Almighty :*
21. *For what careth he for his house after him
When the number of his months is cut short ?*
22. *Shall a man teach God knowledge,
When it is He who shall judge the highest ?*
23. *One dieth in his full strength,
Wholly at ease and tranquil ;*
24. *His loins are full of fat,
And his bones are moist with marrow :*
25. *And another dieth with bitter soul,
And hath never tasted good :*
26. *Yet, alike, they lie down in the dust,
And the worms cover them both.*
27. *Behold, I know your thoughts
And the surmises by which ye wrong me !*
28. *For ye say, " Where is the tyrant's house,
And where the tent in which the wicked abide ?"*
29. *Have ye never questioned with men of travel ?
And know ye not their tokens ?*
30. *" That the wicked is spared in the day of calamity,
In the day when wrath cometh on :*

31. *Who careth to tell him of his ways to his face,
And who will requite him for what he hath done ?*
32. *He is borne to the tomb with pomp,
And watch is kept over his pile ;*
33. *Sweet to him are the clods of the valley :
And he shall draw every man after him,
As they are innumerable who went before him."*
34. *How, then, can ye comfort me with that which is vain ?
For your answers are still full of deceit.*

Verse 2.—The Friends, so far from being able to solve the problem by which Job's mind and heart are racked, do not even see that there is any problem to be solved. That which perplexes and agonizes him is simple and plain to them. He is a sinner, and therefore he suffers; a great sinner, and therefore he suffers greatly. As they can neither help him to solve the problem which tasks his labouring thoughts, nor give him the comfort which springs from sympathy and friendship, he asks, as the only poor semblance of consolation they can afford him—for had they not come expressly to "condole with him and comfort him"?—that they should listen to him with attention (*cf.* Chap. xiii. 5). Not (*Verse 3*) that he expects to convince them; probably they will remain of the same opinion still, and resume the invective to which he has just listened: his only comfort will be that of having "delivered his soul," of having spoken out his whole mind. They may well listen to him; for (*Verse 4*) his complaint was not of men such as themselves. The *differentia* of it, that which distinguished it from the complaints of other mourners, was that he was neither bewailing the injustice which he had met with from men, nor imploring the pity of men. His complaint mounted higher, and struck at the very throne and providence of God. His mind was occupied,

preoccupied, with a mystery so great and impenetrable that he could not stoop to the petty resentments and petty cravings of those in whose minds suffering quickened no questions of vital and transcendent moment. No wonder he was "impatient" with them, with the thoughts and surmises with which they wronged him, and wronged him most of all because they did not touch the problem at which he was labouring, never once rose to the level along which he was sounding his dim and perilous way. They themselves (*Verse 5*) if they would look on him aright, and see what the enigma was which he was striving to penetrate, would be no less astonished and perturbed than he was; they would feel that he stood on a height, and facing a mystery, which might well dizzy and appal him. The apparent, the undeniable, injustice of God's dealings with men—*this* was the mystery with which he stood confronted, the problem he had set himself to solve, the frowning and precipitous height which he must either scale or perish. Bold and desperate as he was (*Verse 6*), he could not so much as think of his perilous enterprize without being perturbed afresh, till he trembled under the weight of it. Eliphaz had trembled and quaked when the oracular Shape, or Spirit, came to teach him what he had never doubted, that God was more just than man. But what was his terror compared to that of Job, who had to address himself to a far profounder problem, unaided whether by man or spirit?

In Verses 7-16 he states this problem on its positive side, so states it as to traverse Zophar's argument at every point and turn. It is that (*Verse 7*), though a just God is in heaven, the wicked live and thrive, live

on to old age, and thrive till they become a power in the earth. Nor (*Verse 8*) is their prosperity confined to themselves; they transmit it to their children, whom they see established about them before they die—a point-blank contradiction of all three of the Friends, since Eliphaz had said (Chap. xv. 34), “The household of the impure shall be desolate;” Bildad (Chap. xviii. 19), “He shall have neither offshoot nor offspring;” and Zophar (Chap. xx. 10), “His children shall fawn upon the poor.” At least two of the Friends are contradicted again in *Verse 9*, for Bildad (Chap. xviii. 15) had spoken of the habitation of the sinner as sprinkled with brimstone, and Zophar (Chap. xx. 26) as consumed with fire; whereas Job declares that no doom falls upon it from Heaven. All goes well with him, indeed, and with his household (*Verses 10–12*). His flocks multiply in peace, neither smitten by lightning nor carried off by roving clans; his children are numerous as a flock, and circle round him with dance and song: and here the third Friend, Eliphaz, is contradicted; for he had declared (Chap. xv. 29) both that the sinner should never be rich, and (Chap. xv. 32, 33) that he should not live out half his days. So impressed is Job, in his ruin and misery, with the tranquillity and joyousness of the life vouchsafed to the godless man whom he had in his eye, that he paints an ideal portrait of him in these Verses, and makes him the central figure of a pastoral and idyllic scene. And when at last nature gives way (*Verse 13*), when the pastoral comes to a close, and the music is hushed, and the dancing feet are still, he dies “in a moment,” without a pang—not languishing through a lingering agony, as Job was doing, but going straight down into

the under-world, without struggle, or pain, or any sign of the Divine displeasure. We who pray against "sudden death" need to be reminded that it is often a blessing. Not without reason Job regards it as the crowning benediction of a happy and prosperous life. And yet (*Verses 14, 15*) this man who enjoyed his life to the full, and to the last, and then lapsed from it in an instant, on whose head, therefore, every possible blessing seemed to be accumulated, was one of those who did not delight in God, nor care to have Him in any of their thoughts; one of those who had strenuously put Him out of their thoughts, because they had no pleasure in his ways; one of those to whom the knowledge of God, and fellowship with God, and the service of God, were alike distasteful, unprofitable, repugnant. *This* was the wonder of it; it was *this* which made the problem so dark and insoluble. For (*Verse 16*) the prosperity of the men who hate God is not "in their own hand." It is *God* who gives it to them. The more Job thinks of it, the more the wonder grows. That the godless should live and thrive, live long and happily, and rise to power, and transmit their standing and wealth to their children; that they should bask in the sunshine of peaceful and happy days, their eyes following with keen delight the merry dances of their children, and should at last pass suddenly into the world of spirits, unracked by any pain, overtaken by no calamity; and that it should be God who metes out to the godless a life so sweet, and a death so much to be desired—all this, as we can tell from the way in which he lingers over every detail of it, makes up a problem, a mystery, which fairly staggers him; it is unintelligible to him, undecipherable, a living and dazzling hieroglyph to which he has no key.

And yet, tranquil and prosperous though they be, and though their prosperity be of God, Job will have none of it; the unbending firmness of his upright soul will not stoop to happiness on terms so base. He rejects it with an accent of horror and repugnance in the words, "*Far from me be the counsel of the wicked!*" For these words compose an Oriental formula of aversion and deprecation, such as we meet with again and again in the Coran,¹ such as is frequent on the lips of the Arabs to this day. Eliphaz repeats it in the next Colloquy (Chap. xxii. 18). But on Job's lips it has a strange force. What he means by it is, "Better do well and suffer for it, than do ill and prosper by it." Even though the wicked are *not* punished for their iniquity, and he himself *is* chastened for his integrity, he would not be as they are. It is a horror to him even to think of sharing their character and fate.

Now it is impossible to place this picture of the wicked man side by side with those which each of the Friends has painted, or, rather, with the one picture which each of them has successively touched with broader strokes of caricature, without recognizing the vast difference between them; without feeling that *they* had made their portrait of him as like Job as they dared, while *he* had made it as unlike himself as he could; without suspecting that the man himself is exaggerated in both pictures, and that the background of circumstance and condition sketched in is as much out of scale as the man himself. The wicked man, as a rule, is neither the doomed monster of the Friends nor the joyous and idyllic personage of Job. Nor is

¹ Such a formula will be found in Sura lxxvii., *The Sent* ("Woe to those who on that day are charged with imposture"), repeated no less than ten times; *i.e.*, it composes no less than ten out of the fifty Verses of the Chapter.

there only one type of wicked man in the world. There are many, and their fates are as various and strangely blended as the types to which they conform. We must remember, therefore, that Job and the Friends are *arguing* with each other, not in our modern, Western, syllogistic way, but in the pictorial and parabolic method of the unchanging East. These pictures are not meant simply as pictures, and hence they are not strictly and accurately true. *They are also meant to convey the facts on which the disputants rely, and the arguments which they deduce from them.* What the Friends mean by their overstrained delineations is, "You, Job, are a wicked man, and therefore you suffer." What Job means is, "I am not in the least like a wicked man, although I suffer; nor is it true that all wicked men suffer an instant punishment for their sins." The ultimate law of Greek art, "Nothing in extremes," was by no means a canon of Hebrew art; and therefore we need not be surprised to meet these exaggerated delineations wherever the exigencies of argument or of emphasis demanded them.

In Verses 17-21 Job proceeds with the negative side of the argument. Having shewn that the wicked often enjoy their prosperity to the last, he denies that they are soon and suddenly requited for their transgressions, as Zophar and Bildad had affirmed they were. In *Verse* 17 he opens with a phrase of some subtlety as to its form, though its sense is quite plain. Literally rendered, his words would be, "How *often*," instead of "How *seldom*," "is the lamp of the wicked put out!" But this "how often" is one of those ironical idioms found in all the superior languages; it is either an ironical

exclamation or an ironical interrogation, and means precisely the opposite of what it seems to affirm. Exclamation or interrogation, there is no doubt that Job is here answering what the Friends have been preaching at him, Zophar in Chapter xx., Bildad in Chapter xviii., and contends that the wicked man very rarely suffers what they had maintained to be his common lot. The opening line of the Verse, indeed, is a direct quotation from Bildad (Chap. xviii. 5); the word "destruction" in the second line is probably taken from the twelfth Verse of the same Chapter (xviii.); and as the word rendered "woes" in the third line *may* mean "snares," it may contain a reference to the famous Net passage in Bildad's oration (Chap. xviii. 8-10), in which he so variously represents the punishment of the sinner as "a divinely-decreed seizure." The wicked man may now and then, Job admits (*Verse* 18), be swept away like chaff, or like chopped straw, by a tempest of retribution; but such moral tempests are rare, they do not happen every day, nor fall on the head of every sinner. In *Verse* 19 he quotes a saying from the lips of the Friends, or, rather, a sentiment to which they had given frequent expression, from the first speech of Eliphaz (Chap. v. 4) to the last of Zophar (Chap. xx. 10), viz., that God punishes the guilt of the godless, if not on the ungodly man himself, at least in his children; but he quotes it only to repudiate it (*Verses* 20, 21). This transfer of punishment from the guilty to the innocent he holds to be a violation of all law, an invasion of moral freedom, a defeat of the very ends of moral discipline. Not only did it reduce the law of retribution to an arbitrary and uncertain caprice; it deprived the sinner himself of the only chastisement he was

capable of feeling, and by which he might possibly be corrected. A godless man is a selfish man, a

fool whose sense can feel no more
But his own wringing.

What cares he for that which may come after he himself has once slipped from the scene? If he is to be made to feel his guilt, he must be compelled to drain the cup of calamity with his own lips.

In the third paragraph of his Speech (*Verses 22-26*) Job insists on the inequality of death, as he had before insisted on the inequity of life. It is the very equality of death which makes it unequal. In life the several fortunes of the good and the bad are not determined by their respective characters, as they ought to be if the contention of the Friends were true; and in death one indiscriminate fate befalls them both. He opens the section (*Verse 22*) with a gird at the Friends. According to their theory, virtue and happiness, vice and misery, are correlatives. But that theory was inconsistent with some of the commonest facts of human life. Did they shrug their shoulders, as who should say, "So much the worse for the facts"? or did they wilfully close their eyes to facts at variance with their hypothesis? But *that* was to affect a higher wisdom than that of God Himself. His voice, his will, the principles on which He ruled men, were expressed in facts. Would they venture to set their conception of what ought to be against their perception of what was, and so judge Him who judges "the highest"? these "highest" being either the real highest, the spirits nearest to God's throne, or the pretended highest, *i.e.*,

the men who affected to impose their petty theories on Him, and to prescribe the laws by which He was bound to govern the world.

In the subsequent Verses (*Verses 23-26*) Job states in a pictorial form some of the facts which the theory of his Friends did not cover, and could not be stretched to cover. It is almost impossible to read these Verses, and to consider his description of the typical bad man and the typical good man, without being reminded of our Lord's parable of Dives and Lazarus, in which Job's two men are reproduced, and the problem which taxed his thoughts receives a solution that would probably have satisfied *him*, though it only sets us on asking questions that go even deeper than his. For a retributive life in Hades, in which the defective recompenses of this present life will be redressed and completed, seems to have been the very conviction at which he had arrived, and in which he felt that he could rest. But what he does here is simply to turn on the Friends, and demand where, in the two representative cases which he had sketched, was their law of immediate and invariable retribution? Here were exceptions to it—grave, frequent, notorious exceptions: what could they make of these?

At last (*Verses 27-34*) Job comes to speak of himself, and of the wrong done him by the Friends. Even though he is simply confronting their theory with the commonest and most undeniable facts of experience, he knows (*Verse 27*) how they will misinterpret him, knows that, while he is speaking, they both regard him as himself an evil-doer, and believe that that is why he is so anxious to prove that evil-doers often escape

the punishment they have deserved. He infers their present unfounded "surmises" from the charges they have already alleged against him. Had they not again and again described *him* under the thin disguise they had thrown over their delineations of the wicked man? Had not Zophar, in his last speech, denounced him as a violent and rapacious tyrant (*Verse 28*), from whose greed nothing was safe, and who had been smitten down in the midst of his robberies and oppressions? His answer to the wicked surmises by which they wrong him is simple and direct. The facts which he has adduced in proof of the frequent and undisturbed prosperity of the evil-doer are *not* adduced with a view to justify himself. How can they be when (*Verse 29*) they were the commonplaces of all men of wide observation and experience? What was the constant report of those who had seen many races and manylands, when they were called upon for their "tokens," *i.e.*, for the proofs that they had travelled, for the most memorable incidents which they had witnessed, and the most valuable reflections which their "extensive view" had suggested to them? Did it not confirm all that he had said of the exemption of the wicked from the stroke of calamity in life, and of their being accorded a happy and honourable death? Were they not for ever telling of great and godless tyrants, lapped in wealth and luxury to old age, and then laid in mausoleums which were the wonder and admiration of all who beheld them? Did not their testimony, then, refute the allegation of Zophar, that the wicked are swept away by a sudden torrent of calamity, all remembrance of them perishing from the face of the earth?

The report of these observant and reflective travellers is given, as from their own lips, in *Verses* 30-33. The godless despot, they say, is secure in life, because no man dare accuse him to his face, or is able to requite him as he deserves. And, instead of being forgotten, he is remembered and honoured in his death, a stately tomb being reared over his dust, and the common lot of man being "made sweet to him by the pageantry of his burial and his after fame;" for then, as now, the great mausoleums on which the resources of art and wealth were lavished too often commemorated the name and fame of tyrants, who were thus kept in remembrance when wiser and better men than they, the benefactors instead of the oppressors of the race, were forgotten out of mind. The phrase in Verse 32, "*And watch is kept over his pile,*" if it means anything more than the care with which the grave of the despot was guarded, as in India and Egypt, or the curses invoked on all who should disturb the dust of the dead, which may still be read on the surviving tombs of Phœnicia and Greece, is capable of two interpretations. It may refer to the custom of Egypt, where a statue of the dead man was sometimes erected on the lid of his sarcophagus; or it may refer to the Arab custom of building a mound over the grave of a dead but honoured chieftain, or placing it on an eminence, in order that even in death he might be surrounded by the huts of his clan, and be still able, as it were, to overlook their encampment—"keeping watch from his pile." If we must see such an allusion to ancient custom in the words, and choose between the customs of Arabia and Egypt, I should prefer the latter; partly because we have already met at least one clear refer-

ence to the sepulchral customs of Egypt in the Poem (Chap. iii. 13-15), and partly because the Hebrew word here rendered "pile" is all but identical with an Egyptian word which means "sarcophagus." But, however we take this allusion, the sense of the passage is clear: Job insists on the funereal and monumental pomp accorded to the godless tyrant after his death, in order to refute Bildad's assertion that he left no trace or memorial behind him.

Verse 34.—The arguments of the Friends, therefore, are shewn to be baseless, their theory does not cover the facts it professes to cover. Stripped of all artifice and disguise, reduced to its ultimate principle, to its true value, there remains in their endeavour to make him out an evil-doer against the testimony of his own conscience, nothing but vanity and deceit, nothing but a base attempt to curry favour with God by covering their friend with an obloquy he has done nothing to provoke.

If we now look back across the whole of this Second Colloquy, we cannot but admit that it marks a decided and a large advance in the action of the drama. Even the Friends pass on to "a more removed ground," a ground farther removed from their starting-point than any they attained in the course of the First Colloquy. They make a real advance, although they make it only by abandoning a position they can no longer defend, and concentrating their force on a more limited range; for there is true progress in the conduct of any argument when the circle of thought, almost sure to be too wide at first, is narrowed in, when it is confined to the necessary and vital points. By abandoning their

attempt to justify all the ways of God with all men, good as well as bad, and by limiting their contention to the law of retribution in so far as it enters into the lot of the wicked, they shew that they have no wish

To feed contention in a lingering act,

nor to run many a mile about when they may reach their end a nearer way.

The change in their tone—*advance* it may be called, in a certain wry and discreditable sense—is even more marked than that of their argument. There is more passion and wilfulness in it, and less reason; more dogmatism, and less charity. In the First Colloquy they put their main thesis as gently as they well could, and blended with their declamations on the law of retribution gracious and urgent invitations to repentance. Now, they state it well-nigh as harshly as they can; the urbane tones of invitation die from their lips, to give place to the shrill accents of invective and denunciation. Above all, they are dropping their disguise, always somewhat too thin. That irritating cloak—“the wicked man,” in whom they wished Job to see himself as they saw him—grows more and more transparent as the Colloquy goes on, and fades into thin air at its close. We shall neither be vexed nor perplexed with it again. What they have still to allege against him they will say openly and to his face.

But this real, though dubious-looking, advance on the part of the Friends is as nothing compared with that of Job himself. In manner and in substance his speeches in this Colloquy indicate an immense and happy change. As the Friends grow more hot and wild and venomous, he takes a more reasonable and

composed, a firmer and more hopeful, tone. He shakes off their sarcasms and insults more calmly and yet more swiftly than before. He no longer permits them to prescribe the line and direction of his thoughts, but compels them, even while he replies to them, to follow him. The more violently they assert the instant punishment of sin, the more clearly he sees that their assertion, so far from being verified, is contradicted by the facts of human experience; the more assured he grows that, if the wicked sometimes suffer an adequate and immediate punishment, they often escape it. And on this fact—now that his eyes are opened to it by the exaggerated and unqualified assertions of the Friends, and it is no longer dubious to him—he builds that hope, that conviction, of a strictly retributive life to come of which we have so magnificent an expression in his famous and memorable Inscription. The terms of that Inscription (Chap. xix. 23-27) are vague, as we have seen, and perhaps purposely vague. Job neither knows nor speculates on the date, the duration, or the mode of that life; and it is as unwise as it is unnecessary for us to read later and Christian meanings into his indefinite words. It is enough for him that Hades is no longer a land of gloom, black as the blackness of death, where there is no order, and the very light is darkness (Chap. x. 21, 22). He begins to see a true light in it, a divine order—a light of retribution, an order of righteousness. Before he was afflicted he may have conceived, and probably did conceive, of life in Hades, *i.e.*, of life after death, as a dim and cold reflection of life on earth, with shadowy joys and shadowy griefs; as a place of rest mainly, and quiescence, and repose (Chap. iii. 13-19). But now he believes that its life

will be a real, full, retributive life, morally connected with, an evolution and development of, the present life; that the righteous will enjoy a full reward in it, be made glad according to the days in which they have been afflicted, and receive from God a divine compensation for all their wrongs, a final and complete vindication of their integrity.

How great and vital an advance this was, how it threw light both on the life that now is and on that which is to come, we can partly imagine for ourselves. And it grows clearer to us as we compare it with a similar advance, a similar discovery, among the Greeks, which took place at least a century after this Poem was written. The men of the Homeric times believed their dead, even those who had been most illustrious or most holy in life, to be mere *εἰδωλα*—mere images, phantoms, ghosts of their former selves, which had sunk into what Virgil calls “the dusky realms of the shades beneath the earth.” Their existence in Hades, the mere shadow-world in which they were but shadows, if it had a faint resemblance to their life on earth, had no logical or moral connection with it. The lines of human character and destiny were not, so to speak, produced beyond the fatal chasm of the grave. Zeus, the god of the living, was not the god of the dead, and had no authority, no power over them; so that earthly piety brought no reward in the under-world, and impiety no necessary or special punishment. Hades had its own proper deities—stern, pitiless, implacable—themselves but little happier than the subjects of their rule, and utterly unlike the bright and joyous gods who ruled in heaven. But this primitive and purely negative conception could not long maintain itself. In the later

legends of the inappeasable tortures of Tantalus and Sisyphus on the one hand, and of Minos, the impartial judge, on the other, the idea of moral retribution began to creep in and to connect this life with the next. But it was not until the great poets, such as Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and, above all, Pindar, and the great philosophers, above all, Plato, lit up the whole realm of Hades with the light of an eternal righteousness, of a just and impartial doom awaiting all the sons of men, that the thought of a future life really laid hold on the Greek mind and became a moral power, a power making for righteousness, among them.¹ And this, I apprehend, was the very light which had now dawned on the darkened mind of Job (*cf.* Chap. xvii. 13-16), making a new day in it. Not the defined Christian hope of immortality for the whole man, not an incredible or incomprehensible anticipation of the resurrection of the body; but a large, bright, though indefinite, assurance of an after-life morally connected with the present life, in which the justice often denied men here would run its full course and mount to its proper close: *this*, I take it, was the hope and conviction of Job, this the immense spoil which he now carries off from his conflict with death and despair.

S. COX.

¹ See Professor Fairbairn's Essay on the Belief in Immortality, Part iii. in "Studies in the Philosophy of Religion and History."
