

THE EXPOSITOR.

THE BOOK OF JOB.

VIII.—THE THEOPHANY. (CHAPTERS XXXVIII.—XLII. 6.)

AT last the invisible Opponent who stood behind Job's visible antagonists,¹ and who had remained obstinately dumb to challenge, invective, expostulation, entreaty, opens his mouth and answers him out of the tempest which Elihu has so graphically described. *And what does he say?* The answer to that question has astonished and perplexed every candid and thoughtful student of this great Poem. For when *God* deigns to speak, we expect to be satisfied, if not convinced; when *He* replies, we expect his answer to be final, conclusive, complete. And yet his reply to Job is no reply. He does not answer one of the questions Job has asked, nor solve one of the problems he has started. So far as logic is concerned, or a real penetrative insight into the mysteries of Providence and of human life, we learn far more from Elihu, from Job himself, and even from the very Friends, than from the Maker and Teacher of them all.²

Driven from the peace of faith by the stings and

¹ See *Introduction* to Chapters iv.—xiv., EXPOSITOR, vol. iv. pp. 321-323.

² See EXPOSITOR, vol. xi. pp. 293-296.

scourges of calamity, Job passes through all the agonies of doubt and fear, of wounded trust and love. In his agony he gives the most varied and impressive expression to the fluctuating passions of a heart torn from its rest, to the questions which we all ask in our turn but cannot answer, to the great moral problems which we all start but cannot solve, when we are brought face to face with the mysteries which at once darken and ennoble our lives. His friends give him no help, but simply aggravate the burden of his grief by "darkening counsel with words devoid of wisdom." Even Elihu has only a little help to give, although to him it is a most wonderful and healing thought that the afflictions of men are not necessarily punitive, but may be disciplinary and remedial. Yet even he has no adequate reply to the deep and awful problems in which the spirit of Job is entangled, and against which it beats and bruises itself in vain. *He* is not the Light, but has only come to bear witness to the Light; ¹ *he* cannot justify the ways of God with men: he can only prepare the way for the Lord who, Himself, is coming to end and crown the argument.

As Elihu's eloquent Discourse draws to a close, our hearts grow full of expectation and hope. The mighty tempest in which Jehovah shrouds Himself sweeps up through the darkened heaven; it draws nearer and nearer; we are blinded by the "flash which He flings to the ends of the earth:" our hearts "throb and leap out of their place,"² and we say, "God is about to speak,

¹ More than one of the best Commentators suggest this relation of Elihu to Jehovah, and hold that he was but the *Baptist* to that great Redeemer, the Messenger sent before to announce his advent and to prepare his way.

² Chapter xxxvii. Verses 1-5.

and there will be light." But God speaks, and, lo, there is no light. He does not so much as touch the intellectual problems over which we have been brooding so long, much less, as we hoped, sweep them beyond the farthest horizon of our thoughts. He simply overwhelms us with his Majesty. He causes his "glory" to pass before us, and though, after he has seen this great sight, Job's face shines with a reflected lustre which has to be veiled from us under the mere forms of a recovered and augmented prosperity, we are none the brighter for it. He claims to have all power in heaven and in earth, to be Lord of all the wonders of the day and of the night, of tempest and of calm. He simply asserts what no one has denied, that all the processes of Nature and all the changes of Providence are his handiwork; that it is He who calleth forth the stars and determines their influence on the earth, He who sendeth rain and fruitful seasons, He who provides food for bird and beast, arms them with strength, clothes them with beauty, and quickens in them the manifold wise instincts by which they are preserved and multiplied. He does not utter a single word to relieve the mysteries of his rule, to explain why the good suffer and the wicked flourish; why He permits our hearts to be so often and so cruelly torn by agonies of bereavement, of misgiving, of doubt. When the majestic Voice ceases we are no nearer than before to a solution of the haunting problems of life. We can only wonder that Job should sink in utter love and self-abasement before Him; we can only ask, in accents of unfeigned surprise—and it is well with us if some tone of contempt do not blend with our surprise: "*What* is there in all this to shed calm, and order, and

an invincible faith into his perturbed and doubting spirit?" We say: "This pathetic Poem is a logical failure after all; it does not carry its theme to any satisfactory conclusion, nor to *any* conclusion: it suggests doubts to which it furnishes no reply, problems which it does not even attempt to solve: charmed with its beauty we may be, but we are none the wiser for our patient study of its argument."

Now that would be a sorry conclusion of our labour. And before we resign ourselves to it, let us at least ask:—

I. Is it so certain as we sometimes assume it to be that this Poem was *intended* to explain the mystery of human life? Is it even certain that a logical explanation of that mystery is either *possible* or *desirable* to creatures such as we are in such a world as this?

It is surely a significant fact that *all* the books which handle the theme of "Job," even now that the true Light has come into the world, are equally unsatisfactory and disappointing to the logical intellect. From the *Confessions* of St. Augustine down to Dr. Newman's *History of My Religious Opinions*, there have been hundreds of books which have professed to give the history of an inquisitive human spirit, sounding its dim and perilous way across dark seas of Doubt to the clear rest and haven of Faith; but read which of these books we may, we observe in it two singular phenomena. First, so long as the author sets forth the doubts and perplexities by which he has been exercised, we find his words instinct with life, and passion, and power: they commend themselves to our understanding and excite our sympathy; we feel that he is happily expressing thoughts and emotions which have

often stirred within our own souls. But—and this is the second and more striking phenomenon—no sooner does he begin to tell us what it was that solved and conquered his doubts, to describe the several steps by which he climbed back to faith, to explain how much wider, and purer, and firmer his faith is for the trial through which it has passed; no sooner does he enter on this climax of his work than—unless indeed we have gone through an experience similar to his—a thick bewildering haze settles down on his words; we read them, but they are no longer instinct with life and force; they neither commend themselves to our sympathies nor convince our judgment. We cry in disappointment: “Is that *all*? What was there *in that* to induce faith? The man has not fairly met one of his doubts, nor solved one of his problems; he has simply evaded them, and crept, by an illogical by-path, to a most lame and impotent conclusion.”

No man who, “perplexed in faith,” has read books of this kind, hoping to find in them aids to faith and answers to doubt, can be an entire stranger to this feeling of disappointment and defeated hope. Written, as such books often are, by men as able as they are good, there is no one of them which, if I may judge from a wide experience of them, does not disappoint the reader just as the Book of Job disappoints him. They may command our admiration; they may touch our hearts; but they do not satisfy our reason or refute our doubts: they fail at the very point at which we are most anxious for their success.

And this fact should surely teach us that the path of logic is not commonly the path to faith. It should lead us to ask whether it may not be impossible to

solve, in human words and for the human intellect, the deep mysteries over which, nevertheless, our minds and hearts *will* brood and fret; nay, whether, if it were possible, it would not be undesirable. Logic can do much, but it cannot do all. It may convince the reason, but it cannot bend the will or change the heart. "*With the heart* man believeth unto righteousness;" and logic does not address itself to the heart. It is doubtful whether the human intellect, at least while it has no ampler and more flexible organ than the brain, can so comprehend the ways of Him who is infinite as to demonstrate their equity and kindness, or even comprehend the proof, if proof were to be had; but it is very certain that, were such a demonstration well within our reach, we might still distrust his goodness, or even hate it when it thwarted or pained us.

If proof were possible, if God could inspire or man could indite an argument which should once for all interpret our life to us, solve all its problems, dispel all its mystery, it is still open to doubt whether it would be well that we should have it. For the mystery which encompasses us on every side is an educational force of the utmost value. We fret against it, indeed, and strive to be quit of it; and it is well that we do; for it is this very strife and fret by which we are strengthened, by which our character is developed, and we are compelled to look up to Heaven in trust and hope. If we no longer had any questions to ask, any problems to solve, if we saw the full meaning and final purpose of God's dealings with us, we should lose more than we should gain. With certainty we might be content; and we might *rust* in our content. But with mystery within us and on every side of us, compelling us to

ask, "What does this mean? and that? and, above all, what does God mean by it all?" we lose the rest of content to gain a strife of thought which trains and educates us, which impels us onward and upward, and for which, in the end, we shall be all the wiser and better and happier. It may be, it surely is, inevitable that, with an infinite God above us and around us and within us, we should be encompassed by mysteries we cannot fathom; that, if the mysteries which now perplex us were removed, they would only give place to mysteries still more profound. Even logic suggests so much as that. But, quite apart from speculation, here stands the fact—that it is obviously part of the Divine scheme of training for us that evil and pain should be in the world, that they should excite in us questions we should not otherwise have asked, and endeavours after knowledge and holiness and freedom we should not otherwise have made. And God is wise. His scheme for us is likely to be better than any we could frame for ourselves. But if it be, as it would seem to be, his scheme to educate us by the mysteries around us, and the questions and endeavours these mysteries excite, He can give us no book, no argument, no revelation which would dispel these mysteries; the craving intellect *must* be left unsatisfied in order that faith and inquiry may have free scope and do their work of discipline upon us.

What is it that kindles and trains the intelligence of children, that chastens their will and develops their moral qualities and powers? Is it not that a mysterious world lies all around them—a world in which things seem to be different from what they are and hold out another promise to that which they fulfil? is it not *this*

which for ever sets them on asking questions which we can very hardly answer, and wondering over marvels which we perhaps have ceased to admire? Is it not the uncertainty as to what the next moment may bring, or teach, which makes their eyes bright with expectation and with hope? Is it not because *we* often say and do that which they cannot comprehend, and even that which pains and disappoints and perplexes them, is it not this which braces and enlarges their character and makes room in them for faith and trust and love? If we could condense all the wisdom of the world and of life into a tiny manual which they could master in their earliest years, should we venture to place it in their hands? If we did, we should simply rob them of their youth, of their keen enjoyment of the mysteries, the changes and surprises, of life; imperfectly and by rote they would acquire what they now learn so much more truly and thoroughly and happily by experience and by efforts which strengthen and develop them.

God teaches us—Jehovah taught Job—as we teach children—by the mystery of life, by its illusions and contradictions, by its intermixtures of evil with good, of sorrow with joy; by the questions we are compelled to ask even though we cannot answer them, by the problems we are compelled to study although we cannot solve them. And is not his way the best way?

2. But, if the “answer” of Jehovah disappoints us, it satisfied Job; and not only satisfied him, but swept away all his doubts and fears in a transport of gratitude and renewed love: and we must now endeavour to see how and why it was that an answer which answered nothing produced what seems to us so astonishing and disproportionate an effect on him.

In our study of Holy Writ we often *make* the difficulties by which we are perplexed, and look for solutions of them everywhere but straight before our eyes. When, for example, we read that "Jehovah answered Job out of the tempest," we forthwith ask, "And what did he say?" expecting to hear some conclusive argument that will pour the light of an eternal Wisdom on the mysteries of human life; and thus we overlook the immense force and pathos of the fact *that Jehovah spake to Job at all*. And yet, so soon as we open our eyes on this simple and obvious fact, it is easy to believe that, even if Job had not understood a single word of the Divine remonstrance, the mere assurance that Jehovah was speaking to him would excite a rush of sacred emotion, before which all recollection of his misgivings and miseries would be carried away as with a flood. For it was *this* which he had craved throughout. Again and again, in an endless variety of forms, he had cried, "O that God would meet me! O that He would speak to me! O that He would fix a day, however distant, in which I might come before Him and plead my cause! O that He would even appear to question and to judge me!"¹ The pain at the very heart of his pain was not that he had to suffer; but that, in his sufferings, God had forgotten or abandoned him. He could bear that God should "take" the children He had given. He could bear to receive "evil" at the Hand from which he had received such various stores of good. He could even bear that his "friends" should turn upon him and rend him with their cruel assumptions

¹ Chap. ix. 32-35; Chap. xiii. 3, 22-28; Chap. xiv. 13-15; Chap. xvi. 19-22; Chap. xix. 23-27; Chap. xxiii. 2-9; Chap. xxix. 2-5; Chap. xxx. 20-26.

and baseless suspicions. What he could not bear was that *God* should abandon him, *abandon* as well as afflict him; that when he cried for pity or redress there should be none in heaven itself to answer or regard him. In vain did Elihu affirm¹ that God was not alienated or indifferent, though He had not yet appeared to deliver his verdict on the strife, so much more bitter and terrible than that outward controversy with his Friends, which was making havoc in Job's heart. Until it was proclaimed by a voice which he felt to be from Heaven, how, indeed, could Job believe that even when he sighed out, "I shall never see Him!" his cause was before *GóD*, that God was only waiting to pronounce his sentence until He could make it a favourable sentence and Job was fully prepared to hear it? His heart was breaking under the cruel pang of *desertion*: and his cry, like that of One greater than he, was "My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me?"

And if now, through the tempest and the darkness, there should sound a Voice from heaven; if, however it came, the conviction should come to him that the God he could not find had found him, and was speaking to him, would it very much matter what God said? Would it not be enough that it was *God* who was speaking, that his Divine Friend had come back to him, and come back to assure him that He had never forgotten or abandoned him? Would it not be enough to feel that *He* was in the very tempest which had struck him to the earth, that He had listened to him even when He did not answer him, loved him even when He smote him, and had even been afflicted in all

¹ Chap. xxxv. 14-16.

his afflictions? It was this—O, it was *this*—which dropped like balm into his torn and wounded heart. It was the resurrection of faith and hope and love in the rekindled sense of the Divine Presence and favour which raised Job into a life in which doubt and fear had no place, into a joy on which even repentance was no stain. Not what God said, but that God spoke to him and had come to him—it was this which cast him into the dust, which liberated in him the humility which is man's truest exaltation, and which constrained from him the happiest words he utters, although they sound so sad—

I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear,
But now mine eye hath seen Thee :
Wherefore I retract and repent
In dust and ashes.

And, surely, it is this same sense of an auspicious Divine Presence, that comes we know not how, though by happy experience we do know both "whence it cometh and whither it goeth," before which *all* the darknesses of doubt flee away. It is an experience which lies beyond the scope of language. No man who has passed through it can explain it, or even adequately express it in words, since words are incapable of fully rendering any of our deepest emotions. All we can say of it is, that it is not produced by logic, by argument, by answers nicely adapted to questions we have asked, or to the doubts over which we have brooded—as, indeed, what master passion of the soul is thus produced? and that, as it did not spring from logic, so neither can it be expressed in logical forms. It is too deep for words to reach, too subtle and spiritual for words to hold. When any man can tell

what love is, and what it is that kindles a supreme human affection in his soul, he may with some reason demand that we should tell him what faith is, and how we gain or recover our faith in God : but not till then. "Love laughs at logic : " and if love for man or woman, why not love for God ? And hence our Poet is never more true to human experience than when he makes the answer of Jehovah no answer to the logical and inquisitive intellect.

3. Still the question recurs : *What* was it that recovered Job to faith and trust and peace ? Was there absolutely *nothing* in the answer of Jehovah out of the tempest to meet the inquest of his beseeching doubts ?

Well, yes, there was something, but not much, I think. There *is* an argument in the Divine Answer which may be reproduced in logical forms, though it is only an argument of hints and suggestions. It does not touch the profounder questions which Job had raised, nor would it be difficult to pick holes in it were we to take it simply as addressed to the sceptical intellect. It does not go very deep at the best. It is addressed to the heart rather than to the brain, to the faith which lived in Job's doubts rather than to the doubts which clouded his faith. It would not convince a sceptic, however reasonable and honest he might be. Nothing would convince him except that sense of a Divine Presence and Goodness which, as we have seen, swept all Job's misgivings clean out of his heart ; and this no argument can convey.

Nevertheless we must mark and accentuate the lines of argument which, as all critics are agreed, are involved in this Answer, though they are not very

apparent.¹ Viewed simply as an argument, then, it met that painful sense of mystery which oppressed Job as he sat solitary and alone among his Friends, all the more alone because they were with him. One and a chief element in his pain was that he could not make out what God was driving at, that he could see no good reason why a good man should be saddened by loss and misery, and a bad man live out all his days in mirth and affluence. And this is a pain we have all felt in our turn, and of which we should all be very gladly rid. The injustice, the inequalities, the pains and degradations which enter into the human lot perplex and affect us ; we can see no good reason for them ; we cannot vindicate them, whether to ourselves or to others.

Does Jehovah, then, when He answers Job, answer the questions which this spectacle of human misery suggests? Does He furnish us with a good and adequate reason for the inequalities of the human lot? He does nothing of the kind. He does not lift an iota from that painful mystery. He simply assures Job, and us, that we should not let that mystery pain and perplex

¹ Reuss states this Divine Argument not without some insight, yet surely in a very hard and brusque way. As he takes it, it comes to this. In the First Remonstrance (Chap. xxxviii. 2—Chap. xxxix. 30) Jehovah virtually demands: "Thou who assumest to judge me, the invisible Ruler of the universe, canst thou so much as solve the problems and mysteries of the visible world?" and seeks to draw from Job a confession of ignorance in the presence of fathomless Wisdom. In the Second Remonstrance (Chap. xl. 7—Chap. xli. 34) He demands: "Wilt *thou* take the reins, thou who art crushed by the first strokes of my rod, and govern the world in my stead?" and seeks to draw from Job an avowal of powerlessness in the presence of boundless Might—powerless even in the presence of mere brutes, such as Behemoth and Leviathan, *which is infinitely more humiliating*. I do not apprehend that to *humiliate* Job was even part of the Divine aim ; but, rather, that that aim was to *elevate* him by quickening in him humility and trust. And hence, in the text, while seeking to preserve all that is of worth in Reuss's statement of the Divine Argument, I have tried to give it a truer and more gracious turn.

us, and hints that it may have both a nobler motive and a higher end than as yet we can conceive. In short, the argument of the Divine Answer is Butler's argument — the argument *from analogy*. To the perplexed and stricken Patriarch, who sits brooding sorrowfully over the dark problems of human life and fate, Jehovah points out that equally insoluble mysteries are over his head and under his feet; that he lives, and moves, and has his being among them; that, turn where he may, look where he will, he cannot escape them; and that, as he finds them everywhere else, he should expect to find them in his own being and in the destiny of man. Briefly put, put simply as an argument, the Divine Answer runs thus: "You fret and despair over the single mystery which has been forced home upon you by pangs of sorrow and loss; you are perturbed, shaken to the very heart, because you cannot master and interpret it. But, see, there are mysteries everywhere; the whole universe stands thick with them. Can you interpret *these*, you who assume that you ought to be able to interpret *that*? Can you explain the creation of the world, the separation of sky and earth, land and sea, and the interwoven influences of the one on the other?¹ Have you mastered the secrets of the light and the darkness, of wind and rain, of snow and ice, of the migrations of the birds of the air, of the structure and instincts of the beasts of the river and the field?² Yet, instead of fretting against these mysteries, you accept and profit by them. You *use* sea and land, day and night, wind and rain, birds and beasts, and make them serve your turn.

¹ Chap. xxxviii. 2-18, 31-36.

² Chap. xxxviii. 19-30, 39-41; Chap. xxxix. 1-30; Chaps. xl. 15--xli. 34.

You live content amid a thousand other problems you cannot solve, and even turn them to account. Should you not look, then, to find mysteries in the creature whom I have set over all the works of my hands—in man, and in his lot? Will it not be wise of you to use your life rather than to brood over it, to turn your lot, with all its changes and surprises, to the best account, rather than to fret over the problems it suggests?"

A second argument may be hinted at, implied rather than stated, meant for us perhaps rather than Job, in the Divine Answer. By his sublime description of the heavens, and the earth, and all that in them is, Jehovah may have meant to suggest to Job: "*Consider* these mysteries and parables of Nature, and what they reveal of the character and purpose of Him by whom they were created and made. You cannot adequately interpret any one of them; but you can see that they all work together for good. You cannot tell how the world was made, how the firm earth and flowing seas were formed; but you can see that the earth yields you her fruits, and that the sea carries your ships and brings you the wealth of distant lands. You cannot command the wind or the clouds that bring rain; but you can see that the winds carry health and the rains fertility wherever they go. You cannot explain the migratory instinct of the travelling birds; but you can see that God feeds and fosters them by the instinct which drives them from shore to shore. The world around you is full of mysteries which you cannot solve; but, so far as you can judge, is not the end they subserve a beneficent end? And if the world within you also has mysteries which you cannot fathom, cannot you trust that somehow, here or hereafter, these too

the love that has so long been seeking him. And God may have to deal with us as we with our children. In his wisdom and kindness He may send us out to meet the cold blasts of adversity, or suffer us to serve the passions which, while promising liberty and enjoyment, fetter and degrade the soul. And when we have spent all and are in want, the "famine" comes, or the "tempest" sweeps through our darkened heavens, through our darkened hearts, strewing them with wrecks. And *now*, if the kind, tender Voice speak to us out of the tempest with unaltered and unalterable affection, or its music be heard through the harsh discords of famine and want; if the conviction comes to us that there is a Friend, a Father in heaven who loves us despite our manifold offences, our love springs up to meet his love. We wait for no arguments; we ask for no proofs. It is enough that our Father speaks to us once more, that He loves us still, that He rejoices over us as we bow in shame and penitence before Him. Not by logical arguments which convince our reason, but by tender appeals which touch and break our hearts, our Father conquers us at last, and wins our love and trust for ever.

4. There are, of course, many other forces at work in this Answer, all conspiring to the same end of grace—Job's redemption from the perplexities and misgivings by which he was enthralled. Most of these the student must be left to discover and formulate for himself; but there are two of them which, since they meet wants and answer to convictions of our own time, may be briefly pointed out.

(a) The first is that the Hebrew Poet forestalled the secret of Wordsworth—anticipated the very invitation

which our own poet has addressed to the men of the present century. I have sometimes thought that all that was special and peculiar to Wordsworth might be gathered from one of his shortest pieces, "The Tables Turned." For it seems to have been his great task to bear an invitation to men vexed with the strife of thought and weary with the "toil and trouble" of anxious speculation to "leave their books" and come forth into "the light of things," "let Nature be their teacher," and to bring to "her world of ready wealth" "a heart that watches and receives." He would have them find, as he himself had found, in "the sweet music of the woodland linnet," or in the clear full tones of "the blithe throstle," more of wisdom, more of that "sweet lore which Nature brings" than in all the "barren leaves" of cloistral study and speculation. He held, and would have them hold, that

One impulse from a vernal wood
 May teach us more of man,
 Of moral evil and of good,
 Than all the sages can.

And it is precisely in this spirit that the Hebrew Poet represents Jehovah as calling Job forth from the dreary waste of brooding speculation, where he was wandering "in endless mazes lost," into the wholesome world of Nature; as summoning him to watch the ways of the lion and the raven, the rock-goat and the wild ass, the bison and the ostrich: and "'mid all the mighty sum of things for ever speaking" to learn a higher and a more healthy wisdom than he can gain by brooding over his own heart and its wounds. In short, he would have him find in the serenity of Nature a rebuke to his own perturbation of spirit,

and in its majesty a keener sense of his own feebleness and of the close restrictions under which it worked.

(β) The other is that Jehovah is represented as calling Job away from the personal to the impersonal—another most healthy transition—from an eternal brooding over the narrow circle of his own sorrowful experience into the broad world of universal experience and life. Job had been painfully awakened, as men commonly are awakened, to the force of certain facts with which he was quite familiar before the “fence round all that he had” was broken down, but which in his untroubled prosperity he had forgotten, or overlooked, or had at least failed to bring into vital contact with his beliefs; these he could no longer ignore, or glide over without any real sense of their bearing, when once they had invaded his own life and laid it waste. Many a good man, as he knew very well, had suffered the most cruel losses, or endured utterly unprovoked agonies of want and shame, before he himself was struck down from the top of happy days: and he had seen, as he confesses, many a wicked man happy in a prosperous and honoured life, happy too in a sudden, painless death, while he still held, or professed to hold, that under the righteous rule of God only the good could prosper, and all who did wickedly were put to the ban.¹ With the strange self-convicting inconsistency which we may see in good men every day, he had been content to hold a creed daily contradicted by the most patent facts, and which, as we have heard him acknowledge again and again, he felt to be contradicted by these facts the very moment he was compelled to reflect on them.

¹ Chap. xii. 4-6; xxi. 5-21; xxiv. 1-25.

It was well for him, then, that he should be awakened from his easy self-complacent dream, however rudely; that he should be shaken from his narrow inadequate creed and compelled to wider truer thoughts of God and of the moral complexities of his rule even by being touched, and touched to the very quick, first in all that he had, and then in his own "bone and flesh:" just as it is well that we should be compelled, even by shocks of loss and change and pain, to leave squaring our guess by the mere shows of things, or by facts carefully selected to fit our theory, and to bring our thoughts into accord with the hard but beneficent realities of life, and with as many of them as we can grasp. But it would not have been well that Job, when once he was thoroughly awakened, should have been left to brood for ever over the new set of facts, the meaning and force of which he had been constrained to recognize: to brood over any one set of facts, however carefully they have been selected, however keenly pressed home, can only lead man astray, and confirm him in his habit of dropping from his thoughts whatever he cannot conveniently carry. God's aim for Job would not have been reached if, having learned from his own sufferings how much and how keenly even the righteous may suffer, he had continued to dwell exclusively on the facts of suffering and the problems they suggest, going round and round in the same dreary circle of meditation, and finding no outlet from it, instead of being quickened to a larger sense of the mystery of life and truer wider thoughts of the Providence which was leading him through suffering to a purer and more enduring joy. God had cast him down only to raise him up, to establish him

on a higher ground of vantage, from which he might contemplate his own life and the life of man with other, larger, and sincerer eyes. And hence He who had called him to reflect by the penetrating ministry of suffering and loss, now calls him away from the narrow weary round of his personal experience toward the large and high conclusions of faith and trust and charity on which it was his purpose from the first to establish him.

This, indeed, is one and a chief end for which God afflicts us all. Every affliction brings us a message from Him, a summons to wider and less inadequate thoughts of Him and of our relation to Him, and of the great end of mercy which He has in view both for the individual man and for the world at large. And it is only as we listen to this message, and respond to it, that we get the real good and reach the real end of the things which we suffer, and find our winter change to spring.

5. There is still one point raised by the Theophany on which, for the sake of certain prosaic readers of this Poem, it may be necessary to touch. For it is only too certain that in some minds the question will be raised: "But did God speak all these words, *in an audible voice*, out of a tempestuous sky, to Job and his Friends as they sat, drenched with tropical rain, on the *mezbele*?" And to such a question how can one reply except with a gentle reminder that it is a poem we are studying, not a chronicle? A big voice out of a black sky is not, therefore, a necessary assumption. The poem is probably founded on historical facts, indeed; and there may be some veritable fact in the experience of the historic Job behind the sentence, "Then

Jehovah answered Job out of the tempest." When his mind was prepared for a Divine intervention by the wise and friendly words of Elihu, a great tempest may have forced it away from his personal interests and from the fierce polemic with the Friends—and these great convulsions of Nature are very potent in suddenly dwarfing all personal interests and hushing all strifes—to thoughts of the unfathomable power and majesty of God, and the folly of striving with Him. A storm may have set him thinking, and thinking in a new and healthier direction. Or the "tempest" in his own soul may have sufficed to prepare him for thoughts such as those to which the Poet here gives expression.

But what, after all, have we to do with all this? Nothing is more futile, in dealing with any great work of imagination, than the endeavour to separate the real from the ideal, to look through the flowing outlines and rich tender colours to the dry bones of fact which lie beyond and within them? It is enough, or should be enough, for us to know that, in his heart at least, Job heard a Divine Voice remonstrating with him, appealing to him. However he may have reached it, we may at least be quite sure that the Poet did reach the conviction that in this Answer there are truths of a force and potency to end and crown the long strife of thought through which he has conducted us; and that he received these truths, since they were high beyond his unassisted reach, by direct inspiration from Heaven. And what need we know, or ask, beyond this?

6. In point of form the Theophany divides itself into a First Divine Remonstrance, extending from Chapter xxxviii. Verse 2, to Chapter xxxix. Verse 30,

or to Chapter xl. Verse 5, if we include Job's response to it ; and a Second Divine Remonstrance, conducted on the same lines as the First, extending from Chapter xl. Verse 7, to Chapter xli. Verse 34, or, including Job's response, to Chapter xlii. Verse 6.

S. COX.

WRESTING THE SCRIPTURES.

It would be difficult for me fully to express my sense of the perils which have been caused to religion, and of the evils which have been inflicted upon humanity, by the misuse and misinterpretation of the words of Scripture. The subject is a very large one, and its due treatment would require one or two volumes. The composition of such a work would occupy a lifetime ; but, if written from a full and accurate knowledge, it would not only be of inestimable value to the Church, but would, I believe, exercise a deep influence on the development of religious thought. It would tend to remove from the system of Christianity those unauthorized accretions which are a needless source of difficulty to thousands ; and it would save the most fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith from many of the bitter and dangerous assaults to which, perhaps, they would never have been subjected if theologians had not demanded a simultaneously and equally loyal assent to hundreds of exegetical conclusions which ought never to have been mixed up with them, and with which they are in no wise concerned.

It would necessarily enter into the scope of such a work to shew that, in consequence of the inherent tendencies of human nature, the sacred books of *every*