

shaking our sleep thoroughly off, that the day may find us ready, and we may not have to begin getting up, and stretching ourselves, when the sunlight is up. What, then, we do in that case let us do here also. Let us put off imaginings; let us get clear of the dreams of this life present; let us lay aside its deep slumber, and be clad in virtue for garments. For it is to point out all this that he says, *Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.* Yes, for the day is calling us to battle-array, and to the fight. Yet fear not at hearing of array and arms. For in the case of the visible suit of armour, to put it on is a heavy and abhorred task. But here it is desirable, and worth being prayed for; for it is of Light the arms are! Hence they will set thee forth brighter than the sunbeam, and giving out a great glistening: and they place thee in security; for they are arms: and glittering do they make thee; for arms of light are they! What then? Is there no necessity for thee to fight? Yea, needful is it to fight, yet not to be distressed, and toil. For it is not, in fact, war, but a solemn dance and feast-day." ¹

W. SANDAY.

THE BOOK OF JOB.

VIII. THE THEOPHANY.

I. FIRST DIVINE REMONSTRANCE (CH. XXXVIII. II—XL. 5).

WHEN the Majesty of Heaven appears to his afflicted servant, He is very far from doing that which Job had demanded and expected of Him; but, if He does other,

¹ *Ihom. in Rom. xiii. 12.*

He does better than it had entered the heart of Job to conceive. He transcends, instead of following, the anticipated lines of action. In asserting his own righteousness Job had impeached the righteousness of God. He had challenged his Judge to try him, to put him to the proof. And he had expected, as we learn from Chapter xiii. Verse 22,¹ that, if God responded to his challenge, He would accuse and question him, or that He would suffer Job to question *Him*, and to set Him on justifying his ways. In the blindness of his grief and passion, in short, Job was wholly occupied with himself, as in similar conditions we are all apt to be, and conceived of God as having nothing else to do than to vindicate Himself to him, and to solve the problems by which he was oppressed. But when Jehovah appears and speaks, He makes no attempt to vindicate Himself; He offers no solution of the problems with which Job had wearied himself in vain. He is Himself the solution of them. Not by what He says, but by manifesting Himself as He is, He reaches and satisfies the heart of Job—as indeed He satisfies us all, if only we can see Him when He appears and hear Him when He speaks to us.

He opens his First Remonstrance with a single upbraiding sentence (Chap. xxxviii. 2), in which He affirms Job to be altogether on the wrong tack; and then proceeds at once to cause “all his glory”—which means all his goodness—to pass before his face. And as Job listens to the sublime descant in which the Maker of all things discloses the splendours of his loving-kindness no less than of his power as manifested in earth and sky, in land and sea, in calm and

¹ See also Chap. xxiv. 1, *et seq.*

storm, in light and darkness, in the grass of the field, in bird and beast (Chaps. xxxviii. 4—xxxix. 30), he *sees* Him ; *i.e.*, he comes to know both God and himself far more truly and deeply than he had ever done before. He is amazed at his own temerity in having challenged a Power and a Righteousness beyond the reach of his thought ; in place of any longer insisting on his own unimpeachable integrity, he confesses that he is "vile : " and he casts from him the doubts, born of ignorance and wounded self-love, over which he had brooded so long, although they are still unresolved ; or, rather, he lets them drop as no longer worth a moment's thought now that he sees God face to face (Chap. xl. 1-5).

At no point is our Poet truer to experience and the facts of human life than here. For, in our hours of pain and doubt and misgiving, the apparent difficulties round which our thoughts circle in endless flight are seldom our real difficulties. When we most earnestly crave a solution for the questions which baffle our intellect, what we really need after all is not so much an answer to these questions as a new and larger experience, a gracious and sacred emotion, which will carry us clean out of the intellectual arena, all choked with dust of our own making, into the pure upper air which is all suffused with a Divine Love, and which will quicken in us, or intensify, a sense of the Love which watches over us, a Love that does not "alter where it alteration finds," but shines on for ever, and is "the star to every wandering bark." And very often we, like Job, are led to the assurance that "the good God loveth us" through the conviction that "He made and loveth all."

CHAPTERS XXXVIII.—XL. 5.

CHAP. XXXVIII. *Then Jehovah answered Job out of the tempest
and said :*

2. *Who is this that darkeneth counsel
By words devoid of knowledge ?*
3. *Gird up thy loins, now, like a man ;
I will question thee, and answer thou me.*
4. *Where wast thou when I founded the earth ?
Say, if thou art of skill in understanding !*
5. *Who fixed its measures—if thou knowest,
Or who stretched out a line upon it ?*
6. *On what were its foundations sunk,
Or who laid its corner-stone,*
7. *When the stars of morning sang in concert,
And all the Sons of God shouted for joy ?*
8. *Or who shut in the sea with doors
When it burst forth from the womb ;*
9. *When I made the clouds the garments thereof,
And thick mists its swaddling clothes ;*
10. *When I measured my bound for it,
And set bars and gates,*
11. *And said, " Thus far shalt thou come, but no farther,
And here shall the pride of thy waves be stayed ! "*
12. *Hast thou ever commanded that it be morning,
And caused the dawn to know its place,*
13. *That it should seize hold upon the skirts of the earth,
And shake the wicked out of it ?*
14. *She is changed like clay under a signet,
And [all things] stand out as in gay attire ;*
15. *But the light is withholden from the wicked,
And the uplifted arm is broken.*
16. *Hast thou gone down to the fountains of the sea,
Or traversed the recesses of the deep ?*
17. *Have the gates of death been opened unto thee,
Or hast thou seen the portals of the realm of shades ?*
18. *Hast thou surveyed the breadths of the earth ?
Say, if thou knowest it all !*
19. *Which is the path to the abode of light,
And the darkness—where is its dwelling ?*
20. *For [doubtless] thou didst lead it to its place,
And art acquainted with the path to its abode !*

21. *Thou knowest it, for thou wast then born,
And vast is the number of thy days!*
22. *Hast thou entered the storehouse of the snow,
And seen the arsenals of the hail,*
23. *Which I reserve for the time of trouble,
For the day of conflict and of war?*
24. *How is the light distributed,
And the Eastwind scattered over the earth?*
25. *Who hath cleft a channel for the rain-torrent,
Or a track for the flash of thunder,*
26. *That it may rain on an unpeopled land,
On a desert where no man is,*
27. *To saturate the wilds and wastes,
And to make the pastures put forth their herbage?*
28. *Hath the rain a father?
Or who begat the dewdrops?*
29. *From whose womb came forth the ice,
And the hoarfrost of heaven—who hath engendered it,*
30. *That the waters should be hardened as into stone,
And the surface of the deep cohere?*
31. *Canst thou fasten the links of the Cluster;
Canst thou unloose the fetters of the Giant?*
32. *Canst thou bring forth the Constellations in their season?
The Bear and her offspring—canst thou guide them?*
33. *Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven?
Canst thou determine their influence upon the earth?*
34. *Canst thou lift thy voice to the clouds,
That an abundance of waters may overhang thee?*
35. *Canst thou send forth the lightnings so that they go,
Or will they say to thee, "We are here!"*
36. *Who hath put [this] wisdom into thy reins,
Or who hath given [such] understanding to thine heart?*
37. *Who by wisdom can count the clouds,
Or slant the bottles of heaven,*
38. *As when the dust cakes into mire,
And clod cleaveth fast to clod?*
39. *Wilt thou hunt prey for the Lion,
Or still the craving of his whelps,*
40. *When they crouch in their dens,
And lie in ambush under the covert?*

41. *Who provideth his prey for the Raven,
When his young cry unto God
And wander for lack of food?*
- CHAP. XXXIX. *Knowest thou the time when the Rock-Goats bear?
Hast thou marked the travailing of the roes?*
2. *Canst thou number the months which they fulfil?
And knowest thou the time when they bring forth,
3. When they bow them down and give birth to their young
And cast out their throes?*
4. *Their young grow big and hale in the plain,
They go forth and do not return.*
5. *Who sent out the Wild-Ass free,
And who loosed the Wanderer's bands,
6. Whose home I have made in the wilderness,
And in the salt waste his haunt?*
7. *He scorneth the din of the city,
And heeds no driver's cry;*
8. *The range of the mountains is his pasture;
And he searcheth after all that is green.*
9. *Will the Bison be willing to serve thee?
Will he lodge by night in thy stall?*
10. *Canst thou tether the Bison to the furrow by a trace?
Will he harrow the valleys, following after thee?*
11. *Will thou trust him because his strength is great?
Or wilt thou leave thy labour to him?*
12. *Wilt thou trust him to bring home thy grain,
And gather it into thy garner?*
13. *The wing of the Ostrich waveth proudly;
But hath she the pinion and plumage of the pious stork?*
14. *Nay, for she abandoneth her eggs to the earth,
And hatcheth them in the sand,
15. Forgetting that the foot may trample them,
Or that the beast of the field may crush them;*
16. *Harsh is she to her young, as though they were not her own,
Careless that her travail should be in vain:*
17. *For God hath denied her wisdom,
And hath not meted out understanding to her;*

18. *But what time she lasheth herself to flight
She laughs at the horse and his rider.*
19. *Dost thou give strength to the Horse?
Dost thou clothe his neck with the waving mane?*
20. *Dost thou make him charge like a locust?
The snort of his nostrils is terrible!*
21. *He paweth in the plain, and rejoiceth in his strength,
He rusheth forth to confront the weapons;*
22. *He laugheth at fear and is never dismayed,
And he recoileth not from the sword;*
23. *The arrows rattle against him,
The glittering spear and the javelin;*
24. *With a bound, and a rush, he drinketh up the ground;
He cannot contain himself at the blast of the trumpet;*
25. *At every blast he crieth, "Ha, ha!"
He scenteth the battle from afar,
The thunder of the captains and the shouting.*
26. *Doth the Hawk fly by thy cunning,
And stretch its wings towards the south?*
27. *Doth the Eagle soar aloft at thy command
And build his eyrie on high?*
28. *He alighteth on the crag,
And lodgeth on the tooth and keep of the cliff;*
29. *Thence he espieth the prey,
His eyes behold it from afar:*
30. *Even his young ones gorge the blood,
And where the slain are there is he.*
- CHAP. XL. *Moreover Jehovah answered Job and said:*
2. *Is he who contended with the Almighty corrected?
Let him who disputed with God reply.*
3. *Then Job answered Jehovah and said:*
4. *Lo, I am weak! What can I reply to Thee?
I lay my hand on my mouth.*
5. *Once have I spoken . . . but I will not speak again;
Twice . . . but I will add no more.*

Chapter xxxviii. Verse 2.—"O, that the Almighty would answer me!" Job had exclaimed (Chap. xxxi. 35); and now the Almighty does answer him, but not with an "indictment." Instead of "telling God the very number of his steps," he is called to forget himself and his own petty claims in a close, sincere, and admiring study of those "ways" which all "men do sing" even when they "contemplate them from afar." The reproach of this opening sentence is instantly followed by a self-manifestation of the God whom he had so long desired to behold, in the light of which he sees how utterly he had misjudged his Maker, and obscured the Divine "counsel," purpose, scheme, by his inadequate conceptions of it.

Verse 3.—When challenging the Divine Justice Job had said (Chap. xiii. 22): "Do Thou accuse me, and I will answer; or let me speak, and do Thou respond." And now that God challenges *him*, He bids him gird up his loins like a man and answer, not an accusation, but a series of interrogations which feelingly persuade him of the labyrinth of interwoven mysteries amid which man gropes his way; interrogations which, as Humboldt has said, "the natural philosophy of the present day may frame more scientifically, but cannot satisfactorily solve."

In Verses 4-15, verses constructed according to the strictest laws of Hebrew poetry, the mysteries of *earth, sea, and light* are set forth in strophes each consisting of four sentences and eight members.

Verses 4-7 deal with the mysterious origin of the Earth. And, here, Jehovah is represented as taking very much the line and tone of thought with which Eliphaz had opened the Second Colloquy (Chap. xv. 7).

There is an obvious similarity between his demand of Job—

Wast thou born first, O man,
And wast thou brought forth before the hills?

and Jehovah's—

Where wast thou when I founded the Earth?

There is the same irony in both, the same intention of reducing Job to silence by convicting him of ignorance and presumption, although the one demand simply irritates him, while the other, which yet is not another, melts and subdues him. It is not difficult, however, to account for this difference of effect; for who does not know that it is the Speaker who stands behind the words that gives our words their several and varying force, and that the same vein of irony must produce very different effects on different lips? Eliphaz had sarcastically rebuked Job for assuming that the secret of the universe was with him, as though he had played the spy on the Divine Cabinet at which the creation of the world was mooted and had thus “engrossed wisdom to himself,” quite unconscious that in thus rebuking Job *he* was assuming a superior wisdom—assuming that he himself was really familiar with the secret of which Job, despite his exclusive pretensions, was wholly ignorant. And how could such an assumption fail to irritate one who was fully aware that what the Friends knew that he knew also? But the same rebuke from the mouth of the Creator of the universe, of the only wise God who had presided over the Cabinet, and said: “Let us create the heavens and the earth, and let us make man in our own image, after our likeness,”—how should this irritate even the wisest of men or fail to humble his pride of knowledge?

In *Verse 5* the prevalence of order, rule, law in the creation of the world is emphatically recognized by the words "measures" and "line;" while the architectural figure implied in these words also serves to introduce the more pronounced image of *Verse 6*, in which the metaphor of the Builder becomes explicit, and the Maker of all is portrayed as an Architect, bearing line and measure, who, having sunk the foundations of the earth, proceeds to lay its corner-stone.

It is a curious instance of the perverse inconsistency of traditional habits of thought that one of our ablest Commentators, after a frank recognition of the metaphor of these Verses, goes on to take them literally, sees in "the foundations" of *Verse 6* "the lower strata on which the Earth's surface rests," and finds in the expression a singularly accurate anticipation "of facts but lately disclosed by science;" while in *Verse 7* he discovers, in like manner, a proof that "the stars were in existence before the earth assumed its actual shape." When shall we learn that to treat a Sacred Poem as if it were a scientific treatise, and to extract an accurate cosmogony from the very metaphors of the Bible, is a perilous and fatal course, if we do not learn it when studying a Poem which probably contains as many metaphors at variance with the scientific conceptions of the present age as of those which are in harmony with it?

What the Poet is thinking of in *Verse 7* is not scientific facts but the mystic connection everywhere assumed in Holy Writ between "stars" and "angels," and of that strange sympathy between heaven and earth in virtue of which we are affected by all the motions of the celestial sphere, while they in heaven are tremu-

lously sensitive to all that passes on earth. As we meditate on the Verse we are far more suitably engaged in drinking in its beauty than in pressing it into the service of a science which is not in any of its thoughts ; in illustrating it from other literatures which shew that the mystical conceptions it embalms are not peculiar to any race or time ; as, for example, the familiar passage from Shakespeare ¹ which no repetition can stale :

Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold :
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubim :

and in which, not only the connection of stars with angels is reproduced, and the music which heaven pipes to the dancing earth, but even that metaphor of a building which dominates Verses 5 and 6. Nor should we fail to note the exquisite propriety of the epithet which sets "the stars of the *morning*" to sing in the morning of the new-made world. What the Poet would have us find in his words is beyond the reach of mere Science—the Divine Builder of the universe rearing this mighty and beautiful home for the children whom He was about to call into being, and the angelic hosts, the armies of the skies, rushing forth from heaven so soon as its corner stone was laid to gaze, admire, and hymn his praise with songs and choral symphonies and shouts of joy.

Verses 8–11 deal with the no less mysterious origin of the Sea, and are but a magnificent paraphrase of the creative fiat (Genesis i. 9) : " Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place." Breaking forth from the chaotic earth, like some gigantic and

¹ *Merchant of Venice*, Act V., Scene 1.

portentous birth, swaddled in mists and with clouds for its garments, the mighty ocean, which no man hath tamed or can tame, was shut in and confined within its rocky barriers by the hand of God. Lawless as it seems, it is under law to Him. In its wildest and most furious moods it does but execute his decree ; nor in its maddest rage can it overstep the bounds He has appointed for it. In language which has deeply impressed itself on the imagination of man, we are taught to recognize even in the heaving and irresistible sea the reign of order and of law. Job's fine descant on the works and wonders of God (Chap. xxvi.), in which he trampled on Bildad's musty proverbs and shallow assumptions of superior wisdom, seems to have been much in the Poet's thoughts throughout the present Chapter ; and in these Verses, especially in Verse 11—a Verse as often quoted perhaps as any in the whole Book—we have an echo of Job's saying (Chap. xxvi. 12):

By his power He agitates the sea,
And He is of skill to smite its pride.

The transition from the Sea to the origin of Light (Verses 12–15) is very natural, since to the ancients it seemed, as indeed it still *seems* to us, that the sun rose out of the lap of the deep : and here, in images still more striking though less familiar, the Poet sets forth the moral and physical effects of the Dawn : (1) the discomfiture of the wicked ; and (2) the revelation of form and colour. How deeply and habitually he had been moved by the first of these effects we may infer, as from his frequent allusions to it, so also from the detailed description elaborated in Chapter xxiv. 13–17. Now, as he once more recurs to it, his imagination stirs

and works, and he sees (*Verse 13*) the bright Dawn gradually extending its strong arms till it can seize the great earth-carpet by its extremities, and “shake the wicked out of it”—the light, which they hate and fear, and in which these bats of darkness cannot see, driving them to their dens. The physical effects of the dawn of day are set forth, under two different figures, in *Verse 14*; the Poet here, as elsewhere, preferring a broken metaphor to a maimed and crippled thought. First, he compares the revelation of *form* on the dark or shapeless earth, which we owe to the light of returning day, to the clear-cut impress made by a signet on the fine prepared clay which the ancients used in lieu of wax. And then he compares the revelation of *colour*, the rich embroidery of various hues which we owe to the same source, to the clothing of its naked body with bright and gay attire. Even in *Verse 15*, in which he endeavours to state the moral of these fine metaphors in plain unvarnished terms, his quickened and raised imagination still works in and through his words, and he cannot tell us that the darkness, which is the light in which the wicked walk and labour and rejoice, is withdrawn from them by the pure increasing splendours of the day, without painting this defeat of bold and insolent depravity in a figure of quite classical beauty, and shewing us how the uplifted arm of Violence is broken by the swift stroke of Dawn.

In Verses 16–21 the mysteries which encompass all our knowledge, and which we sometimes foolishly permit to poison all our knowledge, still engage the Poet’s mind. His thoughts still circle round “the cosmical phenomena”—round sea and land, light and darkness; and still he maintains the tone of ironical challenge

which he has taken throughout. "Hast thou"—it is demanded of Job, the implication being of course that he has *not*—"descended to the springs of the sea, or traversed the recesses of the deep?" And, again (*Verses 17*): "Hast thou entered into the gates of death, or so much as seen the very portals of Hades?" And here, doubtless, Job would be reminded of his own confession (Chap. xxvi. 5, 6) that the Shades tremble so often as the Divine glance penetrates the waters that roll above their gloomy habitation, and that to Jehovah Hades itself lies bare, and there is no covering to Abaddon; while we cannot fail to be reminded of the immense labour and straining effort by which Job had risen to and grasped the hope that, beyond the sea of death, there might be a land of light in which he would find a vindication and a home (*Cf.* Chap. xvii.) And still the inexorable demand goes on (*Verses 18 and 19*): "Hast thou comprehended the whole breadth of the earth, so that thou altogether knowest it and all that it contains? Or may there not be even in the province of Divine activity with which thou art most familiar that which lies beyond thy reach? Thou hast spoken learnedly (Chap. xxvi. 10) of the 'bound where light toucheth darkness,' and hast loftily rebuked (Chap. xxiv. 13) those who rebel against the light, who know nothing of its ways, and will not abide in its paths; but dost thou thyself know the path whether to the abode of light or to the crypt of darkness?"

In *Verses 20 and 21* the irony which pervades the whole of this Remonstrance mounts to a climax and breaks through all disguise of metaphor, all bounds of reserve, that it may pierce Job to the heart, cutting sheer through all his assumptions of wisdom, and feel-

ingly persuade him of his ignorance and of his weakness. The Verses need no comment ; it is enough to cite them : for who can listen to such words as these and not catch the laugh in them, the mocking deference, the kindly but penetrating scorn ?

Doubtless thou didst lead it [the light] to its place,
And art acquainted with the path to its abode !
Thou knowest it, for thou wast then born,
And vast is the number of thy days !

Dull men are to be met who resent the attribution of irony to the Maker of us all, very mainly, I suspect, because it is the weapon which wounds them most keenly, because it cuts their solemn assumptions of wisdom and dignity and self-approval to the very quick, because they have, and feel that they have, no defence against it ; and there are good men who shrink from it as irreverent or over bold. But surely no honest man, however dull, however reverent, he may be, can deny that here, in the Bible itself, irony is attributed to Jehovah ; and that He is even represented as turning it against the just man in whose integrity He took a pride—wounding him with it indeed, but wounding only that He might heal.

From this point onward, though the Poet still busies himself with “cosmical phenomena,” he gives his thoughts a wider range, his main thesis still being, however, that in their ultimate causes, as in many of their uses and effects, these phenomena are inscrutable to man ; and this is a position which the more we know we are the less likely to impugn. Modern Philosophy, indeed, maintains, as if it were a discovery of its own, that only phenomena are or can be known to man, *noumena* being beyond his apprehension ; while modern

Science, at least in the persons of some of its representatives, goes a long step farther, and insists that, since final causes are beyond our grasp, there can be none; thus making "man the measure of all things" in a sense very strange and grotesque.

In Verses 22-30 there is little to detain us. The secrets of snow and hail, of the distribution of light and wind, of rain and lightning, dew and ice, are demanded of the man who had assumed to judge and censure the ways of God mainly because he could not comprehend them, and demanded with an overwhelming rapidity and force which leaves but little scope for touches whether of graphic description or of moral reflection. Yet such touches are to be found, although the questions which convince Job of his ignorance and presumption move with a swiftness and a heat which are well-nigh bewildering. The inimical, or apparently inimical, functions of many of the great forces of Nature are glanced at in *Verses 22 and 23*. Their teleological aspects are touched upon in *Verses 26 and 27*, where the beneficent action of rain-storms on the unpeopled desert and the tenantless steppe is indicated, no less than its more obviously benignant ministry on the farms and pastures to which men owe their bread. While in *Verses 25 and 30* we have graphic descriptive touches not unworthy of our Poet in "the channel cleft for the rain torrent" as it streams down through the riven atmosphere, and the "track" laid down by the Divine Wisdom and Care for the fierce lightning flash; and, again, in the "waters hardened into stone" by the cold irresistible hand of the frost, which compels even the fluid and heaving surface of the deep to "cohere."

There is more to detain us in Verses 31-38, though even here I may economize time and space by referring the reader to the brief dissertation given under Chapter iii. Verse 8, for an account of the occult astrological "influences" attributed by the ancients—as also indeed by a vast majority of the moderns¹—to the stars; and of the physical and spiritual truths imbedded in that inveterate superstition. These influences are doubtless glanced at by the Poet in the Verses before us, though it is not these mainly which are now in his thoughts. The context, both before and after, shews that it was rather the stars regarded as part of the inscrutable order of Nature which now occupied his mind, and their obvious physical action on the earth rather than their occult and supernatural influence.

"The Cluster" of *Verse 31* is, of course, the constellation known to us as the Pleiades, and "the Giant," Orion. And if the first meaning of the question be: "Canst thou bind together the several jewels of the celestial Cluster, so that the Pleiads shall be grouped or strung together as in a girdle or a brooch; or canst thou unbind and displace the stars which compose the belt or chain of Orion, so that the Giant shall be freed from his bands?" yet we can hardly doubt that, in its second and deeper meaning, it refers to that happy change, or ascent, from winter into spring, on the recurrence of which the beauty and fruitfulness of the

¹ The most remarkable modern instance of the inveteracy of this superstition is perhaps to be found in the fact, that Professor Stanley Jevons is capable of arguing, and of pressing the most recent discoveries of astronomical and statistical science into an argument, for "a close and intimate connection between commercial crises and the spots upon the sun;" as if the great lord of day were but an omnipotent Bear upon the Stock Exchange! May we not soon hope to hear, from some other gifted scientist, that the sun is making "a good thing" out of his speculations, and getting very "warm"?

earth depend. To the Arabs the bright cluster of the Pleiads, rising before the Sun in the East, announced the approach of the vernal season; while Orion, the most conspicuous object in their winter sky, sank out of sight. The full and main import of the question probably is, therefore: "Canst thou bring back the gracious fruitful warmth of Spring, and release the frozen earth from Winter's sterile bands?"

"The Constellations" of *Verse 32* seem to be the signs of the Zodiac—this at least is the interpretation put on "Mazzaroth" by many of our best Commentators¹—which indicate and announce all the changes in "the sweet procession of the year." And the three stars in the Bear, known to us as the "horses" of Charles's Wain, were called in the Orient "the daughters of the Bier," or funeral Wain, and were said to be following the corpse of their father, slain by *Gedi*, the pole-star. The succession of the celestial signs, "led forth each in its season," would mark the entire circuit of the year, as would also the varying positions of the Wain in its annual revolution round the Pole. The former would be the recognized index of the seasons, while the latter would also mark, as on a dial, the progress of the night. So that the full force of the question

¹ But Canon Cook makes a suggestion which deserves the consideration of those who are able to appreciate it. According to the authorities which he quotes in a Note to this Verse, *Mas-ra-ti*, "the course or march of the Sun-god," is the Egyptian name for "the Milky Way;" and *al-majarah* the Arabian name; while there prevailed among the ancients a tradition that the Milky Way was a former path of the Sun, its light being but a trace of the glory which the Sun had left behind it; and hence he proposes to render *mazzaroth* by "the Milky Way." The arguments in favour of this interpretation are (1) the correspondence between the Egyptian *masrati* and the Hebrew *mazzaroth*; (2) that many traces of the Egyptian language, habits, and traditions are undoubtedly to be found in this Poem; and (3) that it would be remarkable if no reference were made to a celestial phenomenon so striking as the Milky Way by a Poet who was evidently an attentive watcher of the skies, while yet there is none if we may not find it here.

would be: "Canst thou command the changeful seasons of the year, leading them in each in its turn, with their rich and several blessings for mankind?"

Verse 33.—On the supposed and real "influences" of the heavenly bodies on the world and on the affairs of men—an allusion to which we here meet once more—and the strange persistence of astrological superstitions as illustrated by our own great poet, I have already spoken in the comment on Chapter iii. 8.

In *Verses 34–38* the Poet recurs to the agencies of rain and storm in order still more deeply to impress upon us the feebleness of man and the inscrutable mysteries involved even in the forces with which he is most familiar. The Verses are full of graphic and picturesque touches which, while they shew the most careful and imaginative observation of the facts of Nature, owe much of their power to the naïve and childlike spirit with which he regarded them. As the centurion in the Gospels conceived of Jesus, so he conceives of Jehovah, as holding all the forces of Nature and all the ministries of Life in his immediate control; as bidding them go and they go, come and they come, do this or that and they do it. Of this ministerial function of the most dazzling and tremendous natural forces we have a splendid example in *Verse 35*, where we are taught to think of Jehovah as saying "Go" to the very lightnings, and they go; "Come," and they reply, "We are here!" While we have a capital instance of his terse graphic rendering of an imaginative conception of natural phenomena in his inquiry (*Verse 37*): "Who can *slant* the bottles of heaven?"—i.e., tip up the clouds so that they discharge their contents on the earth; and of his careful

observation of them in his description (*Verse 38*) of "the dust caking into mire," and of "clod being glued to clod," when an abundance of water falls upon them.

It is profoundly interesting and instructive to compare with the graphic and sublime utterances of our Poet in this Chapter a passage from the sacred book of the Persians (*Yasna* xlv. 3) in which, from the same position, precisely the same line of thought is pursued, though it is pitched in a much lower key :—

"I ask Thee, tell me the truth, O Ahura! who was from the beginning the Father of the pure creatures? Who has made a path for the sun, and for the stars? Who (but Thou) makest the moon to increase and to decrease? That, O Mazda, and other things I wish to know!

I ask Thee, tell me the truth, O Ahura! who holds up the earth, and the clouds, that they do not fall? Who holds the sea, and the trees? Who has given swiftness to the winds, and the clouds? Who is the Creator of the good spirit?

I ask Thee, tell me the truth, O Ahura! who has made the kindly light, and the darkness? Who has made the kindly sleep, and the awaking? And who has made him who ponders on the measures of thy laws?"

With the closing Verses of Chapter xxxviii. there begins a graphic series of individual portraits, which has long attracted and held the admiration of the most competent judges of art in this kind. From the great inanimate forces of Nature and their elementary play the Poet descends, or "condescends"—if it be not rather an ascent—to the various species of the ani-

mal world, lovingly touching on their characteristic "points," instincts, habits, their beauty and grace and strength; and shewing us, as it were, God once more reviewing the creatures He had made and finding them "very good." It was while referring to this series of graphic and picturesque portraits that Carlyle said of this poem: "So *true* every way; true eyesight and vision for all things; material things no less than spiritual. *Such living likenesses were never since drawn.*" And I well remember the profound and kindling emotion of a sculptor and a painter to whom, many years ago, I read the splendid idealizations of the Wild Ass and the Horse given in Chapter xxxix., and the way in which they raged at themselves for their "idiotic ignorance and neglect" of a fount of inspiration so pure and stimulating.

Yet, it must be confessed, that these "likenesses" are ideal rather than actual—as ideal as Shakespeare's delineation of the horse of Adonis, though immeasurably superior even to that admired masterpiece precisely because they are not so real and so technical; it must even be confessed that, at least in the case of the Hippopotamus and the Crocodile, they so far excel any incarnate example of these species as to look well-nigh fabulous. But we must remember both that it is the very function of the Poet to see, and to help us to see, the ideal in the actual, to give us forms freed from their accidental limitations; and that, as Ruskin insists, the ideal, so far from being opposed to or different from the true, is in fact the perfection of it; that, in short, to cite his very words, "The ideal is the utmost degree of beauty of which the species is capable." Just as he argues that "the Apollo is not a *false* representation of

man, but the most perfect representation of all that is essential and constant in man, free from the accidents and evils which corrupt the truth of his nature;” so we may argue that in these noble delineations of Bison and Ostrich, Horse and Eagle, Behemoth and Leviathan, our Poet is but giving us that which is essential to these several creatures in its most perfect form, apart from the limitations and defects to be found in every individual embodiment of them; that by his very calling of Poet he was bound to give us these ideals; and that in these he has given us the very truest likenesses that could possibly be painted.

This noble gallery opens, very modestly, with mere sketches of the Lion and the Raven (*Verses* 39-41); and probably these sketches are placed in the forefront of the series for the very reason for which the Psalmist (Psalms civ. 21, 22; cxlvii. 9), and our Lord Himself (St. Luke xii. 24), afterwards alluded to the ravens and the lions; viz., to convey the hint that man is of more value than beasts of prey and carrion birds; and that He who feeds them, “yea, providently caters for the sparrow,” is not likely to forget *him* or fail to be “comfort to his age.”

In *Chapter xxxix.* we have more elaborate studies, are permitted indeed to gaze on some of the inspired Artist's most finished masterpieces. I shall not be so foolish, however, or so presumptuous, as to make any attempt to reproduce them in words; they are best seen in their own light: and all that the Commentator can do for them, unless indeed he be as true and great a Poet as the Artist himself, is to explain obscure terms or to put his readers in remembrance, so far as may be necessary, of the facts on which these descriptions are based.

In *Verses* 1-4 we have a picture of the wild Rock-Goat — *Ibices* as naturalists call them, *yeelim*, or “climbers,” they are called here. They are very shy, and inhabit “exclusively the more desolate and rocky parts of the country.” But as a full description of them, and of most of the “pure creatures” mentioned in this Chapter, is to be found in so accessible and reliable a book as Canon Tristram’s “Natural History of the Bible,” let me once for all refer the student to its pages. The only points which call for notice here are, I think, these. In *Verse* 2 the verb “number” is used in the sense of “fixing the number,” and might be translated “Canst thou *determine*,” &c. And in *Verse* 3 the striking phrase, “And cast out their *throes*,” strange as it looks, has many parallels: Euripides (*Ion*, 45) uses precisely the same phrase; and in a similar connection infants are called “pangs” by Arab poets.

Verses 5-8 contain the famous description of the Wild-Ass, and breathe the very spirit of freedom. In *Verse* 5 the Hebrew gives two names for it; the first denoting speed, and the second—which I have rendered “the Wanderer”—its roving and unbreakable spirit. All wild animals who “feed on that which is green” love to lick salt. Hence the allusion in *Verse* 6 to “the *salt* waste:” the wild ass would naturally seek those gorges and plateaus of the desert, or the steppe, where salt was to be found. The main emphasis of the Poet is laid on the most characteristic features of this beautiful creature; its intractable temper, its disdain of man, its wide and incessant quest of the food it loves. Tristram says that he saw “a wild ass in the oasis of Souf, which had been snared when a colt; but though it had been kept for three years in confinement, it was

as untractable as when first caught, biting and kicking furiously at every one who approached it." As he does *not* give any description of its appearance, I may add that it is reported to have an arched neck, slender and graceful legs, a silver coat with broad patches of bay on thigh and shoulder, a dark-crested mane prolonged in a dark stripe to the tuft of the tail; and to possess a speed beyond that of the fleetest horse.

The *Reêm* of *Verses* 9-12 has occasioned no little speculation and controversy. "Our translators have unfortunately adopted the rendering of the Septuagint, 'the one-horned' for *reêm*, which is no fabled monster, but a two-horned reality, a beast which once roamed freely through the forests of Palestine, but is now extinct." Of this "ox of yore," the Auroch—corrupted into *urus* by the Romans—an ox "scarcely less than an elephant in size" and of prodigious strength, with immense horns, and of an untameable ferocity and pride, a full description will be found in Tristram. Cæsar saw and hunted it. Its nearest extant representative is the bison (*Bos urus*), which still lingers in the forests of Lithuania and the Caucasus, though the fate of the Auroch (*Bos primigenius*) is fast overtaking it, and in all probability it will soon be no more seen. The tone of irony, which is often laid aside in these graphic sketches—the Poet being too much occupied with the beauty and strength of the creatures he depicts to maintain it—is very pronounced in these Verses; and once more we hear the laugh of Jehovah as He challenges Job to harness the *reêm* to his wains, and set it to draw home the produce of his fields.

Verses 13-18.—The Ostrich resembles the stork in its stilt-like structure, in the colours of its plumage—

both have black and white feathers in pinion and tail—and in its gregarious habit; but lacks its pious, maternal *storgé*. In virtue of this *storgé*, from which indeed it is said to have derived its name, the Greeks and the Romans used the stork as a symbol of parental love. For its lack, or supposed lack, of care for its eggs and young, the Arabs call the Ostrich, "Wicked Bird." They have many proverbs built on their close observation of the Ostrich, and in three of these we may find our best illustrations of the Verses before us. The first runs, "More stupid than an ostrich;" the second, "Swifter than an ostrich;" while a third compares the man who is harsh at home but compliant with strangers to the bird "who abandons her own eggs, but hatches strange ones." The immense speed of the ostrich may be inferred from the fact that, when fully "extended," she covers twenty-four feet at a stride. But see Tristram.

Verses 19-25.—As might have been expected in an Arabian poem, the description of the Horse, with its heroic beauty and its impetuous lust of battle, is by far the grandest of all these animal "pieces." Probably there is no finer description of this noble creature in the whole range of literature, nor even any worthy to be compared with it as a whole, although in other ancient authors we meet with occasional touches resembling those employed here. *Æschylus* (*Septem*, 375), for example, describes the horse as "impatiently awaiting the blast of the trumpet" (*Comp. Verses 24, 25*); *Pliny* (viii. 42) has "presagiunt pugnam;" and *Virgil* (*Æn.* v. 316), "corripiunt spatia," and (*Georg.* iii. 83):

. . . Tum, si qua sonum procul arma dedere,
Stare loco nescit, micat auribus, et tremit artus.

Verse 26.—The Hebrew *Netz* includes, besides the Hawk proper, all the smaller raptorial birds; and among them *Tinnunculus alaudarius*, our own familiar Kestrel, which is very common throughout Syria. As this is “the only bird which the eagles appear to permit to live in close proximity to them,” it may be that it is the Kestrel which is here intended, since here, as in Nature, we find it “in close proximity” to the *Nesher*, or Eagle.

Verse 27–30.—As this first gallery opens with a sketch of the king of beasts, so, appropriately enough, it closes with a picture of the king of birds, which is not unworthy of a place beside any, even the chief, of the masterpieces which have gone before it.

Suddenly the vessel let down to Job, “like a great sheet lowered by ropes at its four corners, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts and fowls of the air,” is withdrawn, and from the cloud of the Divine Presence there issues the challenge (*Chapter xl., Verses 1 and 2*): “Is he who contended with the Almighty corrected? Let him who disputed with God reply.” The challenge might be even more severely, and not less faithfully, rendered: “Is the *censurer* of the Almighty corrected? Let him that *criticised* God reply.” And Job, who already sees in part what the Divine intention is, responds with an exclamation (*Verses 3 and 4*) of which it is difficult to give a satisfactory translation. “Behold, I am *vile!*” conveys too much, and, “Lo, I am *weak!*” too little. What he means is that he is too *small*, too *light*, too insignificant and feeble to contend with God, too unwise and unready to answer Him adequately, or even to put into words all that he has in his heart to say. Therefore he “lays

his hand on his mouth" to keep it closed, forces and compels himself to silence, though he has still somewhat to urge "an if he would," could he but give his thoughts words and run the hazard of speaking amiss. But that he no longer dares to do. Once, twice, an impulse had risen within him, prompting him to suggest some plea in his own defence or to indicate difficulties which, to his mind, were still unresolved. But he will no longer venture to criticise, much less censure, ways which he feels to be too wonderful for him, dark only through their very excess of light. Long since he had begged (Chap. xiii. 20-22) that, should God deign to enter into controversy with him, He would lay aside his majesty, lest, terrified and overwhelmed, he should be unable to answer Him a word. But so far from conceding that request, Jehovah has appeared to him arrayed in the full panoply of his glory, with pitiless and yet most pitiful severity abating no jot of his state, thus making Job more and more deeply conscious of his own insignificance and temerity, and of his inability to answer his Divine Adversary "one in a thousand." Hence all that he can do is to confess that, as compared with his Antagonist, he is but as dust on a balance, and to hint that he is being surprised, dazzled, overwhelmed, rather than answered and convinced.

He has yet to learn—or, at least, he has not yet fully learned—that no logical and conclusive answer can be given, even by Jehovah Himself, to the questions of the inquisitive and sceptical intellect; or that no such answer can be rendered in terms which the intellect of man, while under its present conditions, can grasp: that, when all has been said which can be said, much must still be left to reverence, to faith, to love. Our

“intellectual part” is but a part of our being, not the whole. And when we demand a simply intellectual solution of the mystery of the universe, we demand that which God would not indeed grudge to give us, but which we cannot take. It is not, as some divines have put it, that He resents our “desire to be wise above that which is written;” for doubtless He would have us wise to the farthest limit of our power: but that when we ask to have the secret of the universe, and of his government of the universe, put into our hand, we ask more than our hand can grasp, more than our intellect, while working under its present limitations, is able to receive; more, too, than it would be good, even if it were possible, for us to have while our moral nature, which is of even greater moment than our intellectual part, is so imperfect, and needs the very training which only faith, only the ventures of a reverent and affectionate trust, can supply.

To know God is one thing; to know all about God, all that He knows of Himself and of all things, is another. And, happily, we may know God, and so know as to trust and love Him, without knowing all that He is and all that He knows. And when once we really know *Him*, we shall learn the enormous insolence of the demand we are so often tempted to make; viz., that the key to the whole course and aim of his Providence should be placed in our feeble and unready hands. This was the lesson Job had still to learn, and for the learning of which that deeper consciousness of his own “smallness,” “lightness,” “weakness,”—in one word, his own “limitations”—which we have heard him confess, was the best and inevitable preparation.