

THE BOOK OF JOB.

IX.—THE EPILOGUE (CHAPTER XLII. 7-17).

A MODERN poet would probably, a Christian poet would certainly, have given a more inward and spiritual *dénouement* to the story of Job than that contained in the Verses before us. But even the man of genius cannot be before his age at all points : and we must not expect modern or Christian ideas of the greatest poet of the ancient world, much less of a poet who wrought under the conditions of Hebrew thought and inspiration. Even in the legend of Prometheus, though it be—at least as handled by Æschylus—the most fascinating that we owe to classical antiquity, and profoundly tintured by the spirit which pervades the Christian revelation, the triumph of the Sufferer consists simply in his release from his agonies and his restoration to his original and august conditions, enhanced, perhaps, by a consciousness of the immense benefaction he had conferred on the feeble race of man. And, for reasons which even yet we have not wholly mastered, though some of them are obvious enough, it was the will of God that only glimpses, only partial and occasional previsions, of life and immortality should be vouchsafed to the prophetic soul of Israel, musing on things to come. Hence our Poet, though he knew, even as it is our happiness to know, that

There is a Height higher than mortal thought ;
There is a Love warmer than mortal love ;
There is a Life which taketh not its hues

From earth or earthly things, and so grows pure
 And higher than the petty cares of men,
 And is a blessed life and glorified,

nevertheless brings his story to what may fairly seem to us a somewhat tame, if not impotent, conclusion : and we have constant need, as we study this Epilogue, to bear in mind the limitations under which he was compelled to work.

The general thought he had to express in these Verses, the consolatory promise he was commissioned to carry to as many as would suffer and be strong, was that which Shakespeare has thrown into the tender fanciful lines :

The liquid drops that you have shed
 Shall come again, transform'd to orient pearl,
 Advantaging their loss with interest
 Of ten times double gain of happiness.

But this consolatory thought and promise had to be expressed, if at least he was to bring it home to the heart of his time, under the "forms of mentation" common to his time. Glimpses of a higher, and even of the highest and most Christian, solution of the mystery he has already given us, in that he has shewn us a man who could be true to his convictions even when he could gain no reward thereby ; true to his God even when God seemed to abandon, afflict, and mock him without cause : a man whom even the unmerited unprovoked anger of the Almighty drove only to larger thoughts of Him, and a more inward and hearty affiance upon Him ; a man who plunged, by the worst wrongs of time, into the very depths of despair, could spring up out of them to grasp a life beyond the reach of time. These were Job's true gains, his true compensations ; in these lay his true victory. But these

were not gains that could be thrown into concrete forms and made plain and attractive to Hebrew eyes. For them there must be an outward, as well as an inward, gain and victory. The triumph of Job, which was also the triumph of God, must have its "ovation;" that is, it must be clothed in forms which would touch the popular imagination and bring it home to the popular heart. They must see the good man released from his undeserved sufferings, rewarded with "ten times double gain of happiness," loaded with the very blessings which they and their fathers had been taught to regard as "the portion" of the good. If they were to learn patience from his patience, and a brave endurance of hardness, he must ride through their midst, bringing his "spoils" with him.

All this the Poet enabled them to see and learn by the brief Epilogue which he now appends to his sublime Poem. *We* may feel it to be the least satisfactory part of his work; but to *them* it would be the most satisfactory, animating, and inspiring; and even inspired men, if they are to serve their own generation, must speak to it in a language it can understand. Nor need we, should this formal *dénouement* of the story seem to us pitched in too low a key, either part with the higher solution of the great problem of human suffering and its issues which we have gathered from the main body of the Poem, or too conclusively turn away from the solution suggested by the Epilogue. For here, too, there lies under the mere form and letter a thought which can hardly fail to be welcome to us. Much as in certain moods we are tempted to long for a better country, even a heavenly, nevertheless this present world is our home, and has long been our

home. We love it for its beauty, and for our innumerable associations with it, even when we are most impatient of it. We crave to see it brought under the law, into the freedom, of righteousness, with all its sin and misery clean swept out of it : we look forward with strong desire to the advent of a time when its inhabitants being wholly redeemed from evil, its sighs and groans shall be hushed, its earnest expectation fulfilled, and the world, so long made subject to vanity and corruption, shall rise into the glorious liberty it is to share with us. And in this Epilogue we have a clear intimation that our hope for the world is one day to become a fair and sacred reality. For Job is a representative of suffering humanity. As he was restored to the happy days when the Almighty "kept" him, when the lamp of the Divine favour shone brightly and stedfastly upon him, and the very stones of the field were at peace with him ; so also we are to see a day when the happiness and peace vouchsafed to him are to be vouchsafed to the whole race, when the long agony and travail of the creation shall be accomplished, and there shall come forth a new heaven and a new earth in which only righteousness and peace will dwell.

CHAPTER XLII.

(7.) *And it came to pass that, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My anger is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, because ye have not spoken of me aright, like my servant Job.* (8.) *Therefore, now, take to you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer them up as an offering on your behalf ; and Job my servant shall intercede for you ; for I will surely accept him, and not deal out to you according to your impiety : for ye have not spoken of me aright, like my servant Job.* (9.) *Then Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuchite, and Zophar the Naamathite, went and did as the Lord bade them ;* (10.) *and the*

Lord accepted Job; and the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he interceded for his friends: and the Lord gave to Job twice as much as he had before.

(11.) *Then came to him all his brothers, and all his sisters, and all who had known him aforesaid, and ate bread with him in his house; and condoled with him, and comforted him, for all the evil which the Lord had brought upon him. And they every one gave him a kesitah, and every one a gold ring.* (12.) *Thus the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses.* (13.) *He had also seven sons, and three daughters; (14.) and he called the name of the first Femima, and the name of the second Cassia, and the name of the third Keren-happuch: (15.) and in all the land were no women so fair as the daughters of Job. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brethren.* (16.) *After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years, and beheld his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations.*

(17.) *So Job died, old and full of days.*

Chapter xlii. Verse 7.—Even in the First Colloquy Job had detected a certain base courtier tone in the apologies of the Friends, and had warned them (Chap. xiii. 7-11) both that they were speaking wrongfully for God, and that He would “heavily rebuke” them for saying what they thought would be welcome to Him rather than what they knew to be true. And now his prevision is verified. No sooner has Jehovah reconciled Job to Himself than He turns on the Friends with the rebuke: “Mine anger is kindled against you, for ye have not spoken of me aright, like my servant Job.” But had not Job spoken wrongfully of God? Yes, often; but he had not spoken wrongfully *for* God. He had criticised, censured, condemned whatever seemed unjust in the ways of God with men, not stopping to consider whether he were competent to judge, whether he understood the ways he condemned; and for this “presumptuous sin” he had been punished

and corrected, his heaviest punishment being the misery which his own suspicions and misconceptions had caused him ; but he had never belied his honest convictions. It was his very fidelity to his convictions which had led him to charge God foolishly. He had dared to believe (Chap. xvi. 21) that, if God had wronged him, He would "right a man even *against* Himself, and a son of man against a fellow" of the Lord of hosts. And in this he had thought rightly of God, and spoken rightly ; while the Friends had thought wrongly and spoken wrongly. If Job had condemned God to clear himself (Chap. xl. 8), they had condemned Job to clear God ; and whereas he had spoken sincerely, they had paltered with their conscience and forced themselves to believe that Job must have sinned rather than admit that there was more in the moral government of God than their theology had dreamed of.

For this sin an atonement must be made. The atonement demanded of them is (*Verse 8*) that they should recognize and confess their sin ; that they should humble themselves before the very man whom they had condemned as a sinner above all men, and beg him to intercede for them with the God whom they seem to have regarded as their property rather than their Lord, whom they certainly regarded as with and for them and against him. It was a terrible downfall, a bitter but wholesome humiliation, for men who were so familiar with all the secrets of Heaven ; and one hardly knows with what face Zophar, who had reviled Job so loudly and harshly, could urge such a prayer as this upon him.

There is a fine stroke in *Verse 10* ; for here the Penitent brings forth fruit meet for repentance. Job

had been forgiven his trespass against God, the proof of his forgiveness being that God had convicted him of his sin ; and now he forgives those who had trespassed against him, and proves his forgiveness by interceding on their behalf. And the Poet marks this moment of magnanimity and forgiveness as at once the crown, climax, and consummation of his virtue, and the turning-point in his career. It was *when*, if not because, Job prayed for his unfriendly Friends that God delivered him from his captivity to loss and pain and shame. His flesh came back to him like that of a little child, and a new day of grace and favour dawned upon him.

It is as we study the final paragraph of the Epilogue that we most need to remember the conditions under which the Poet worked. No doubt, as I have admitted, a modern Christian poet would have carried the story to a different close. *He* would have felt that the gifts of Fortune were but a sorry compensation for a tried and perfected virtue like that of Job ; that it would be but a poor comfort to him to be fawned upon once more by the kinsfolk and acquaintance who had abandoned him in the long day of his destitution and misery ; and that the children born to him in the years of his recovered prosperity could not in any way "make up" to him for the children he had lost. And hence *he* would probably have translated Job, so soon as his love and trust were restored, to that ampler and serener world of which he had caught some glimpses in the dark night of his sorrow, and which men so seldom see till they can see nothing else. But such a close, however natural and satisfactory it might be to

us, would have been unnatural, unsatisfactory, dispiriting to the men whether of Job's day or of Solomon's. And so, for their teaching and encouragement, the inspired Hebrew Poet submits to the limitations of his age; he abandons the higher *dénouement* which he himself probably was perfectly capable of grasping—as we may infer from the hints scattered through the Poem proper—and carries his story to a conclusion such as his own generation was able to receive. He portrays him as receiving “double” for all his losses (*Verses* 10, 12); as submitting to the caresses of his brothers, sisters, and all who had known him aforetime, although they had stood aloof from him while the hand of God was heavy upon him (Comp. *Verse* 11 with Chap. xix. 13-19); and as having seven sons and three daughters born to him, to replace the ten children of whom he had been bereaved (*Verse* 13).

We need not therefore assume, however, that Job “committed himself” to the kinsfolk and acquaintance, who were as “ready chorus” to the favour as to the apparent anger of the Almighty; and it would be monstrous to suppose that *a father* could be content so that he had children round him, and the same number of children, even if they wore new faces and were called by new names. Job could not forget the goodly sons and daughters whom the Lord had taken from him because it pleased the Lord to give him other sons and daughters as goodly. Even in the ancient world, even in the East—although to many these phrases seem to explain everything, however contrary to nature—a father's heart was made of more penetrable stuff than that, and could be as fond and constant as if it were beating now. What, for example,

could have compensated Abraham for the loss of Isaac, or Isaac for the loss of Esau, although *he* was not the son of the promise? And did not Jacob utterly refuse to be comforted for the loss of Joseph, although many stalwart sons were left to him, and Benjamin, the darling of his old age, was there to take the vacant place? No, we are not to imagine that Job was "past feeling" because he was an Oriental of the antique world; but we are to admit that to the ancient Eastern world, as indeed to the great bulk of the world, both Eastern and Western, to this day, a catastrophe which did not replace suffering Virtue in all opulent and happy conditions would have seemed a sin alike against art and against morality.

Hence it was, I take it, that the Poet surrounded Job, after his trial, with troops of friends, with goodly sons and daughters, so fair that no names could adequately express their charms; and lavished on him droves, and herds, and flocks—all of which, although they were the usual and coveted signs of wealth and enjoyment, must have been but a very little thing to "the man who had been in hell," and who, even in torment, had lifted up his eyes and seen that, for him at least, heaven was *not* very far off.

The *kesitah* of *Verse* 11 is commonly taken, as in the Septuagint, to be a silver coin stamped with the figure of a lamb. The simple fact is that no one knows what it was. But the best authorities incline to think that it was not a coin at all, but a lump, bar, or wedge of silver. Thus Madden, in his learned and elaborate *History of Jewish Coinage*, says: "The real meaning of *kesitah* seems to be 'a portion,' and it is evidently a piece of silver of unknown weight." Whatever it

may have been, and whether the "rings" presented with the kesitahs were earrings or noserings, they constituted, I suppose, the *nuzzur*, or present—such as Orientals still make on paying a visit of ceremony—offered to Job by those who had known him aforetime when they came to condole with him and comfort him.

The names of *Verse* 14 are, of course, significant. *Femima*, according to its Arabic derivation, means "dove;" according to its Greek derivation, it means "day." *Cassia* is simply the cassia, or cinnamon, of our commerce, a sweet and fragrant bark. And *Kerenhappuch* may be either the Hebrew form of the Greek "cornucopia," or, more probably, "horn of pigment"—the pigment used by Eastern women for enhancing the beauty of their eyes.

These names were given to Job's daughters to denote the excellent beauty of these fair women; and that these dazzling beauties *were* what their names implied we are expressly told in *Verse* 15. Here, too, we are told that their father gave them an equal portion with his sons; and this fact is doubtless noted in order to suggest that his new children lived together on terms as frank and kindly as those which had obtained among the children he had lost.¹

Women so fair and well endowed were not likely to lack husbands. And, in *Verse* 16, it seems to be implied that his sons found wives and his daughters husbands; and that Jehovah vouchsafed both to them and their offspring that "heritage from the Lord" which Orientals most covet.² It was only when Job was "old and full of days" (*Verse* 17), when he was *satisfied*, or even *satiated with life*, only when he had

¹ See Note on Chap. i. Ver. 4.

² Psalm cxxvii. 3.

seen his children's children to the fourth generation, that he died—died unto men, to live more truly and more fully unto God.

Here the Story ends—in the Hebrew ; but in the Septuagint there is the following significant addition to it : “ *It is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raiseth ;* ” a sentence which seems to indicate that even in the ancient Eastern world there were some, if not many, besides the Poet himself, who could appreciate a higher and happier *dénouement* to the tragical history of Job than that contained in the Epilogue. What is the age of the tradition embodied in this sentence it is impossible to say ; in all probability it could not have originated till the days of Ezra ; but both those who wrote and those who received it must have looked, as we look, for far better things for Job than wealth, children, troops of friends, however frankly they may have admitted that all these were not intended as a compensation for the things he had suffered, nor as a reward for his patient endurance of them, but simply as the outward and visible sign of his complete restoration to the Divine favour and goodwill.

The Problem of this Scripture is one which has engaged the thoughts of many of the most admired poets. Æschylus, Omar Khayyám, Milton, Goethe, Shelley, Byron, and many more, have tried their hands upon it, though only Æschylus, I think, can be said to have carried it to a satisfactory close. His Prometheus steals fire from heaven to comfort the feeble and timid race of men, and will not repent, nor yield to the cruel will of Zeus whatever tortures are inflicted on

him : nailed to the rock, with the vulture tearing at his heart, he still glories in his good deed. But Milton's Satan, though equally indomitable and defiant, is resolute only to do ill ; and Goethe's Faust, by his vulgar craving for sensual indulgence, forfeits the respect inspired by his insatiable thirst for knowledge, and has to be forgiven, not justified : while the Prometheus of Shelley and the Cain of Byron are portrayed as baffled and defeated by a capricious and malignant Power, rather than reconciled to the infinite Love which sits at the centre and shines through the mystery of life. Even Omar,¹ profound as is the admiration inspired by his noble Rubáiyát, disappoints us, and compels us to confess that he gives up the problem instead of solving it, and, in his despair of finding a law of justice in the tangled lot of man, sinks into moral indifference. Much as we may admire the weight of thought which he compresses into a few words, or even into a single word, the subtle irony of his style, the original and prodigal beauty of his illustrations, who is not moved to very sadness as he reads the verses in which the great Persian—if indeed Omar be not a mask behind which we are to see a modern English face—sums up his “ conclusion of the whole matter ” ?

What ! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
 A conscious Something to resent the yoke
 Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
 Of everlasting penalties if broke !

What ! from his helpless Creature be repaid
 Pure Gold for what He lent us dross-allay'd—
 Sue for a Debt we never did contract,
 And cannot answer—Oh the sorry trade !

¹ A very instructive and pathetic Essay might be written by any scholar who would be at the pains of comparing the very different treatment of this Problem in the Book of Job and in the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám.

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with predestin'd Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin !

Oh Thou, who man of baser Earth didst make,
And e'en with Paradise devise the Snake ;
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blackened, Man's forgiveness give, and *take* !

It is an unspeakable relief to turn from all these sceptical solutions of the mystery of life, which yet are no solutions, to the story of Job, which, as it moves in a higher plane of thought, so also it offers us a true and adequate solution of the mystery. For here, too, "the same great spectacle of heroic endurance is set before us;" and Job, like Omar, like Prometheus, is the representative of humanity. A man of like passions with ourselves, he suffers as we suffer, and breaks his heart on the very problems we are all compelled to confront, and passes victoriously through the very agony which every reflective and religious spirit is called to undergo. To him, as to us, it was long inexplicable why the best efforts of man are baffled, and his purest happiness is marred, by pain, loss, change, sin; and how He who made us what we are, and rules the whole process of our life, can nevertheless be just. But at last he learned that, though we cannot hope to comprehend the ways of an infinite and eternal God—so long at least as we are involved in the trammels of time and sense—we may nevertheless, and reasonably, trust in the Lord and do good without fear; since, to the good, suffering is a discipline of perfection, a discipline which, while it even now brings forth in us the peaceable fruit of righteousness, also prepares us to inherit an ampler, fuller, happier life beyond the grave. And

whosoever has learned to see in suffering a proof of God's love, and beyond the darkness of death a land of light, in which all wrongs shall be redressed and all virtue meet its due reward—a land, in fine, in which the varied discipline of this world shall issue in a life conformed to its fair and high ideal, and cherished by all happy and auspicious conditions—he has a solution of the great Problem in which he may rest and rejoice.

As we look back, then, on all the way in which we have been led by our great Poet, on Jehovah's appeal to his creative acts and Job's controversy with his Friends, we may well sum up the impressions it has left upon us in the ascription which Blake engraved above the final plate of his noble "Inventions of Job :"
 "GREAT AND MARVELLOUS ARE THY WORKS, LORD GOD
 ALMIGHTY ; JUST AND TRUE ARE THY WAYS, O THOU
 KING OF SAINTS."
 S. COX.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

XVI.—THE CHIEF PRIESTS—THE TRIAL.

IT is remarkable that "the chief priests" have at first no place in the evangelical history ; they begin to appear only when it begins to be tragic. Their presence is as the shadow of death. While the Pharisees and scribes, like men zealous for the law and careful of the people, anxiously examine every act and criticise every word of Jesus, the priests seem while He is most active to be entirely unconcerned, leave Him untroubled with questions, undisturbed by opposition or argument. The men who are shocked at the good deeds done on the Sabbath,¹ who murmur

¹ Mark iii. 1-6 ; Luke vi. 1-11.