

under the number of the Beast uttered a solemn warning against Mithras worship as an embodiment of the spirit of Antichrist.

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JOB.

II.

WE are to picture Job, then, suddenly plunged into overwhelming misfortune, dark thoughts of God's mysterious providence surging in his soul, and his friends gathered around to comfort him, but speechless in their sympathy—his pain was so great. Seven days thus pass in silent sorrow. At length the warm touch of friendship unseals the fountain of the heart, and the sufferer opens his mouth, and pours forth his pent-up feelings. With consummate art the poet leads up to the inevitable crisis. A long-drawn wail in which Job curses his day, because it brought him forth to all this agony, and longs wistfully for death and Sheol, where “the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest,” a hushed reference to the unnamed One who “has given light to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul,” and at length Job names God as the One who has “hid his way,” and “set an hedge about him,” so that he can turn neither this way nor that (iii. 23). Eliphaz' glowing visions of the blessedness of the man whom God hath chastened only drive him into bitter tauntings of God for His inexplicable cruelty. It is His arrows that are within him; His terrors that have “set themselves in array against him” (vi. 4). It is He that setteth a watch over him, as though he were the dragon of the deep (vii. 12). And all the while Job feels that he has given God no occasion for such treatment. All his life long he has kept “the words of the Holy One” (vi. 10). Therefore he feels himself fast falling away from his faith, “forsaking the fear of the

Almighty" (vi. 14). And at the end of the speech he breaks into indignant remonstrance with the Almighty. In bitter parody of the eighth Psalm he asks :

What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him,
 And that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him,
 That thou shouldest visit him every morning,
 And try him every moment ?
 How long wilt thou not look away from me,
 Nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle ?
 If I have sinned, what do I against thee, thou watcher of men ?
 Why hast thou set me up as a butt for thee,
 So that I am become a burden in thy way ?¹
 Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away
 mine iniquity,
 That I may lay me down in the dust,
 Where thou wilt seek me diligently, but I shall be no more ?
 (vii. 17 ff.)

The second of the friends, Bildad, is horror-stricken at Job's impiety, and appeals in awed tones to God's inflexible justice. But this only rouses Job to more daring invectives against the Almighty. God is supreme Arbiter of justice, indeed. But what if He be partial, or actually unjust, in His judgments ? Who then can put himself in the right with Him ? If they went to court together, there was no daysman to stand between them, and see justice done. And if God plied him with His deep questions, how could he answer even one of a thousand ? God is so great and terrible that, however innocent he might be, he must yet bow prostrate before Him, and plead guilty. God, he feels, is determined to have him in the wrong.

Though I wash myself in snow water,
 And make my hands never so clean,
 Yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch,
 So that my very clothes shall abhor me. (ix. 30 f.)

Yet Job knows he is innocent of all great transgression. And

¹ יִשָּׂא is one of the 18 *Tiqqune Sopherim* (emendations of the Scribes).
 יִשָּׂא is doubtless the original reading.

in one outburst of desperate defiance he arraigns his Almighty Antagonist. He has no regard for his life: he spurns it as a hateful thing. Let God therefore slay him, if He please: he will speak out his mind. "I am innocent; but it is all one: God destroyeth the innocent and the wicked alike." There is no justice in His rule. Injustice prevails throughout the world. When plague comes, the innocent are slain equally with the wicked; and God mocks at their despair. "The earth is given over to the power of the wicked; and God blindeth the eyes of its judges," so that they can no longer distinguish right and wrong. And God cannot deny the charge. "If it be not He, who then is it?" (ix. 21 ff.)

This may be the most convenient point to define the issues involved in the conflict between Job and his friends. It would be grossly unjust to characterize Job's friends as naturally unkind or intolerant. They were, according to their lights, good, wise, true-hearted and deeply religious men. Typical representatives of the current orthodoxy, they believed with all their hearts in God and His righteous reign. He was the supreme Ruler and Author of all that happened; and what He did must be right. The key to the Divine government was thus found in the simple and straightforward principle: God visits righteousness with happiness and good fortune, and wickedness with misfortune and misery. To men imbued with this idea, their friend's calamities had but one explanation: a good man at heart, he had yet fallen into some grievous sin, for which God was now exacting the due penalty. But it was sympathetic sorrow rather than anger that moved them at the first. They loved their friend, and grieved deeply over his misfortunes; and they honestly sought to help him with their counsel. If only he would acknowledge his sin and turn to God, they were persuaded that He would readily

pardon and heal him, and make his future happier even than his past. Thus, one after the other, they sought, with true tenderness of touch, avoiding all that would hurt his feelings, and dwelling rather on the unsearchable holiness of God, in Whose sight even the angels of heaven are unclean, to bring home his sins to his conscience. And they all draw lovely pictures of the happiness that will follow his turning to God.

He will yet fill thy mouth with laughter,
And thy lips with shouting. (viii. 21.)
Thou shalt forget thy misery,
Thou shalt remember it as waters that are passed away.
And thy life shall be clearer than the noonday;
Though there be darkness, it shall shine as morning light.
(xi. 16 f.)

But Job's impious blasphemy (as they can only count it) leads them to plainer dealing. It is now clear that he has committed some great iniquity, which he wraps up in his heart. And, moreover, such talk as his would undermine the foundations of all religion. (xv. 4.) They no longer scruple, therefore, to charge him directly with sin. The grave and courteous Eliphaz, the worthiest of the three, even draws up a whole catalogue of crimes of which he holds his friend guilty. (xxii. 5 ff.) Nor do they spare his feelings. They hold up his children's fate as a signal example of the bitter fruits of wickedness. (viii. 4.) And they warn him of still more terrible calamities to come. As yet, God has exacted of him less than his iniquity deserveth. (xi. 6.) If he repent not, He will pour out all His wrath, overwhelming him in calamities. (xviii. 4 ff.)

Job starts from the same general principles as his friends. For him, too, God is the great First Cause, and the supreme Dispenser of good and evil fortune. And God distributes good and evil according as He judges men righteous or wicked. But God has brought all this evil upon him,

though he is innocent. Therefore, he can only conclude, God's government is unjust. (ix. 21 ff.) This idea once rooted in his mind, he looks out on the universe, and finds it one vast realm of miserable injustice. The climax is reached in the deliberate impeachment of Providence in chapter xxi., where the misfortunes of the righteous are contrasted with the happiness of the wicked who have no fear of God, but yet "spend their days in prosperity, and in peace go down to Sheol," and find the very clods sweet unto them. If it be answered that God visits the iniquities of the wicked upon their children, is that not further proof of His injustice? (xxi. 19.) And if appeal be made to His greatness, is not His injustice all the more monstrous? There seems no limit to Job's reckless defiance of the Almighty. God is not only unjust, but He is devoid of all dignity and honourable feeling. He has not the generosity to forgive his sins, and forget them. (vii. 21.) But, like a petty inquisitor, He spies on his minutest actions, and delights only to search out his faults. (x. 3 ff.) He even rakes up the ashes of the long dead past, and brings up the sins of his thoughtless youth against him. (xiii. 26.) In his wild frenzy, Job imputes to God the most exquisite refinement of cruelty; for as he broods over his past blessedness, the terrible thought occurs to him that God fashioned him, and crowned him with favour, and made his past life so happy—only to hurl him into these calamities, and so aggravate his pain. (x. 8 ff.)

To which of these conflicting voices then are we to listen?

In his learned and acute studies of Job, Budde has revived the theory of Hengstenberg, that the truth lies on the side of the friends, and is found in its purest form in the speeches of Elihu, for whose authenticity he vigorously contends. In his former days, Budde concedes, Job was a "perfect and upright" man. But there were germs of spiritual pride and self-righteousness latent in his character; and

God designed his sufferings to purge him of this evil leaven. The actual result of his afflictions at first was to drive him into blasphemous attacks on the Almighty. But his friends revealed to him the true meaning of the visitation. Then, when his heart was softened, God Himself appeared to drive home the truth. And Job withdrew his blasphemies, and repented in dust and ashes. It may be enough to reply to this construction that Job is the real hero of the piece, and that our sympathies are all with him. His friends may pour out their truisms—for their general observations are true enough; Job may shock us by his profanities; yet it is he that holds our interest,—all the more as he leaves his friends behind, and girds himself for his Titanic contest with the Almighty. And we cannot doubt that the poet meant it so. The friends and their rigid maxims are but the foil. It is in the struggles and doubts of Job that the poet tells the story of his own soul.

Are we then to regard the tendency of the poem as negative and destructive? Such is the view of a number of scholars, represented in this country by Dr. E. J. Dillon, who classes Job among his *Sceptics of the Old Testament*; and in Germany by Fried. Delitzsch, who calls the poem the “Song of Songs (*Hohelied*) of Pessimism.” The most extreme advocate of this theory is Eugen Müller, pastor in Rostock, who in a recent monograph, *Der echte Hiob* (1902), describes the poem as practically atheistic, involving a complete denial of Divine righteousness. But this view fails to recognize the complexity of human character, which poetry, as distinguished from logic, reflects. No one is perfectly consistent in his thoughts and feelings. Especially at times of darkness and doubt, the mind oscillates, often from one extreme to the other. The poet has depicted Job in such a state. He has lost his old moorings, and plunges hither and thither on a sea of troubles. Now he sinks to the trough of the wave.

But again he rises on its crest to heights of faith unknown to the unruffled orthodoxy of his friends. And the movement of his soul is no vain tumult of the waves. The current sets steadily forward to faith and God. And in this lies the real interest of the poem.

In his noble Commentary on Job, Ewald has a pregnant remark : " When doubt has been fully developed, it soon proves its own destruction ; and thus the higher truth is brought to light." The poem affords a fine example ; for Job's renewing faith is almost the direct recoil from his doubts.

We have seen how loyalty to conscience has made him impugn the justice of God. But all the while he clings to the just God, and grounds his hope on Him alone. Thus, when the friends try to justify God's ways by their " maxims of ashes," he accuses them of " respecting God's person," pleading His cause by lying servility. And he warns them that, if they pursue this course, God will break out upon them in His dreadful excellency. For He is a God that respecteth truth and straightforwardness alone. (xiii. 7 ff.) If so, then God must recognize the justice of his cause. His friends continue to treat him as a wicked man. But God knows he is innocent. " Even now, behold, my Witness is in heaven ; and he that voucheth for me is on high." (xvi. 19.) Meantime, indeed, his Witness is silent. But one day He must appear to speak on his behalf, and so to vindicate his righteousness. And on that day, once more the sufferer warns his friends, the Almighty will inflict punishment on them for their injustice ; and they will know there is a righteous Judge. (xix. 29.)

In the same way he returns to the blissful thought of the mercy of God. In his misery, he had looked to his friends for pity ; but they had failed him like the brooks that come down full in springtime when the ice and snow melt, but dry

up in the drought of summer, when men most need their waters. (vi. 15 ff.) They showed themselves even as pitiless as his Almighty Persecutor. (xix. 22.) And his only hope now lay in His mercy. In the frenzy of his pain he had pictured God as a very monster of cruelty, who had shown him favour at the first, only to add to his grief. But in his craving for a friend to pity him, he turns to God with a new longing. He feels that the God with whom he once walked so lovingly cannot abandon him to never-ending misery. His present wrath will pass away, and He will again have mercy upon His friend, before He lays him in the dust where He shall find him no more. Or even if He leave him to perish in his misery, He will in after days remember him, and repent, and come down to do him justice. (vii. 21.)

This new faith in God's merciful justice bears him up on one of the loftiest flights of spirit in the Old Testament. We have seen how wistfully, in his first sense of desolation, he longed for death as his only release from misery. Again and again he returns, fascinated, to the thought.

Oh that I might have my request,
 And that God would grant me the thing that I long for !
 Even that it would please God to crush me,
 That He would let loose His hand and cut me off !
 Then should I yet have comfort,
 Yea, I would exult in ruthless pain. (vi. 8 ff.)

But as he gazes into the misty depths of Sheol, the horror of death seizes him. The land of the dead is "a land of thick darkness, without any order, where the light is as darkness" (x. 22); and out of it there is no return.

As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away,
 So he that goeth down to Sheol shall come up no more.
 He shall not return again to his house,
 And his place shall know him no more. (vii. 9 f.)

And therefore in Sheol Job can no longer hope to see the

vindication of his cause, but must go down to posterity as a godless man. The thought is intolerable, and he revolts against it. The first gleam of a hope beyond breaks from almost midnight gloom. (Chap. xiv.) Job is mourning over man's brief and troublous life and swift, untimely end. "There is hope of the tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again." It may be cut down to the stump, and its root all decayed, "yet at the scent of water it will bud, and put forth boughs like a fresh, young plant."

But man dieth, and is laid low :
 Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he ?
 As the waters fail from the sea,
 And the river decayeth and drieth up,
 So man lieth down and riseth not ;
 Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake,
 Nor be roused out of their sleep. (*vv.* 11 f.)

But the hope of the tree suggests to the despairing soul a possible hope for man as well. "Perhaps he too will die and rise again."¹ Perhaps God will bring him down to Sheol, to hide him there till His wrath be past, and then "appoint him a set time and remember him." If he could entertain this hope, then he should wait patiently, and endure the cruellest pains, all the days of his warfare, till his release came ; and then, when God called, he would joyfully answer, and forget the misery of the past in the bliss of his new life with God. (*vv.* 13 f.) It is a hope, however, too high for him to grasp ; and he is plunged into deeper darkness than before. Death is the extinguisher of all man's hope

The waters wear the stones ;
 Their outpourings wash away the dust of the earth :
 So thou destroyest the hope of man.

¹ Surely not "a momentary interruption of doubt" (Davidson), but the theoretical principle of the hope in *v.* 15. If only he could be sure that man died and rose again, then he would bear all things bravely, expecting the time of his release.

Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth ;
Thou changest his countenance, and banishest him from thy
presence. (*vv.* 19 f.)

And the lot of the dead man in Sheol is utterly miserable. He knows nothing more of what takes place in the upper world. He cannot follow the fortunes even of his dearest. "His sons come to honour, but he knoweth it not ; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not." Nor is the sleep of the dead unbroken rest. He sleeps—"perchance to dream"! Though he knows nothing of his friends on earth, yet "his own flesh hath pain, and his own soul mourneth" (*vv.* 21 f.).

But again Job rises on the wings of faith and hope. The main part of the 19th chapter is perhaps the most pitiful passage in the book. Bildad has just drawn his terrible picture of the wicked man's fate. And Job, stung to the heart, seeks to move his friends to pity by the spectacle of all his accumulated woes : his glory stripped away, his hope plucked up by the root, God his Adversary, his dearest friends estranged from him, and no one to hear his cries and bring him redress for his wrongs, for God hath "subverted him in his cause." (*vv.* 6 ff.) But his friends are cold and pitiless as God Himself. (*v.* 22.) In his despair Job turns for his vindication to posterity. If only he could write his defence in a book, or engrave it on the rock with an iron stylus and molten lead, then future generations would read it, and judge justly, and attest his righteousness. (*vv.* 23 f.) But the record on the rocks is impossible. And again he turns to God. "But I know that my Vindicator—my Goel—liveth, and that He will one day stand upon my dust, as Afterman, to see justice done to my name ; and though then my flesh be consumed away, yet in spirit I shall rise to see the triumph of my cause ; and mine eyes shall behold God, no more a stranger to me."

(*vv.* 25 ff.)¹ It is not indeed the hope of a blessed immortality that here floats before Job's vision. But he does hope to rise from Sheol, and see God in person, if it be but for a moment, on the day when He stands upon his dust to vindicate his cause. Here Job reaches "the culminating point of his hope in God" (Godet). But he does not dwell long on the height which he has thus gained. The dazzling vision makes him reel. "His reins are consumed within him." (*v.* 27.) And he swiftly returns to earth, and his speeches henceforth move on lower planes.

Commentators on *Job* have been much perplexed by this apparent descent. It is not enough to say that the poet's hope of immortality was not sure enough to rest upon. By all the rules of art, the *positive* movement of the drama must be found in these succeeding chapters. And had immortality been the real solution of the problem (as Ewald, for example, maintains), the poet would have followed the gleam to fuller light. We must seek, therefore, for some other motive. Duhm and Smend, who have attacked this part of the problem most decisively, hold that Job has now found peace for himself, and turns to wrestle with the mysteries of the larger world. It is true that his most sustained impeachment of Providence is found in these later chapters (chap. xxi.). But the personal element is still predominant. And Job's speeches culminate in the great *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (chap. xxix.-xxxi.). The true explanation of the difficulty, we feel, lies nearer at hand. The problem of Job was far more practical than speculative. He had lost his old faith because it failed to

¹ These verses present many difficulties in detail, and the best translation can only be approximate. But from the context three things seem perfectly clear: (1) Job expects no other end of his miseries than speedy death; (2) he looks to God to be his Goel, the champion of his cause *after death*; and (3) he cherishes the hope that he will rise from Sheol to see the vindication of his rights.

stand the test of new experience. But he still felt that fellowship with God was the chief blessing of life ; and he was steadily fighting his way back through darkness and doubt to a more personal knowledge of God. It was this he sought far more than answers to his baffling questions. Obviously, the solution of this problem could not be postponed to the life beyond, were his hope of immortality never so sure. He must reach God in this present life. And the interest of the last section of the poem lies in his actual finding of God, and restoration to His friendship.

Again, Job returns to God by the very path that had formerly seemed to lead him away from God. As we have seen, his difficulty was not about the existence of God, or His justice in the abstract. It was that he could not find justice in God. If they went to court together, there was no daysman to secure him fair play ; and God was so great and terrible that he must needs bow prostrate before Him and acknowledge himself guilty. (ix. 3 ff.) But the very ground of his despair became his hope. If he could but win his way to God's presence, that fact alone would prove his salvation ; for no godless man could come before Him. (xiii. 16.) And if he once succeeded in setting his case fairly before God, the Almighty Judge must justify him : for he is innocent. In spite of God's terrors, therefore, Job is determined to appear and plead his case before Him. God may slay him for his presumption : nevertheless, he will take his life in his hand, and will maintain his ways before Him. Two conditions only he lays down : that God will remove His terrors, so that he may state his case calmly, and that He will be frank with him, and tell him plainly where he has sinned. (xiii. 13 ff.) The great victory he has gained over Sheol in chapter xix. gives him new courage to press his suit. He feels sure that his heavenly Vindicator will no longer disdain to hear him, but will listen attentively

to his plea (xxiii. 6.) In a strange antinomy of thought, he looks to God his Vindicator to be his Daysman with the God who sits upon the throne. And as He knows all his way of life, he is fully persuaded that, whatever test the great Judge may apply to him, "when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (xxiii. 10.) The full statement of his case is finally made in the great chapters to which we have already referred: chapter xxix., in which he draws that most glorious picture of a good man happy and honoured; chapter xxx., in which he depicts the intolerable miseries of his present state; and chapter xxxi.—a passage that touches the high-water mark of Old Testament morality—in which he sets forth his claim of righteousness. He has done nothing, he asserts, to merit these calamities. He has not only kept his hands clean from gross sins, but he has never even admitted the thought of such things into his heart. He has never allowed himself to be seduced into idolatry, or made gold his confidence. No cruelty, or inhumanity, can be laid to his charge. He has been the steadfast friend of the poor, the friendless and the stranger, for whom his door and hand were ever open. He has never even rejoiced at the troubles that befell his enemies, but treated all men alike as brethren whom the One God fashioned in the womb. This, he triumphantly declares, is his case, duly drawn. And here he affixes his sign-manual. Let his Almighty Antagonist now present His indictment. Let Him bring together the full catalogue of his transgressions. And Job will carry it upon his shoulder, and bind it on his forehead as a crown—so radiantly conscious is he of his innocence. And in this sublime confidence he will draw near as a prince to the Divine presence. (xxx. 35 ff.)¹

¹ The speech of Job ought really to end with the princely approach to God's presence. Verses 38-40 have been accidentally transposed from their original position (perhaps after *vv.* 33 f.). If, as we hold (in spite

In all this movement of soul we cannot see the working out of any definite theory of suffering, but rather the reflection of a real spiritual experience. The poem is the dramatic representation of the poet's own sufferings and doubts, his bitter feelings and blasphemous thoughts of the strange providence of God, his wrestlings with the barren consolations of well-meaning friends which only drove him into deeper despair, but also the proud consciousness of his own rectitude which he maintained through all his fears and doubts, and the steps by which he climbed again the steep ascent of heaven.

The poet has thus led us close to the one great and inevitable *dénouement*. Job has presented his case, and challenged God to arraign him. God must now appear, either to explain the mystery, or at least to vindicate His own character. And at the dramatic moment He does appear, in a burst of glorious music, to answer Job out of the whirlwind. In His speech,¹ therefore, we may look for the highest wisdom and truth the poet has to teach us—the revelation of God in which he himself found salvation.

In these chapters we have perhaps the most sublime poetry in literature. In vision after vision of exquisite beauty and perfect poetic truth, we have the whole panorama of creation unrolled before us: the heavens and the earth and the place of the dead, the home of light and darkness, the treasures of the snow and hail, the path of the lightning, the mists and floods that refresh even the desert places and the lands where no man is, the constellations and their

of Budde's subtle defence), the Elihu speeches are a later addition, the Divine appearance follows immediately after Job's declaration of his innocence. This adds greatly to the dramatic power of the poem.

¹ We follow most recent editors in reading *one* speech of Jahveh (chap. xxxviii., xxxix., xl. 2, 8-14) and *one* prostrate reply from Job (xl. 3-5, xlii. 2-6). The pictures of behemoth and leviathan (xl. 15-xli. *fin.*) are universally regarded as a later addition.

ordered march, and the animal creation in their native freedom. And in stupendous irony Job is invited to ascend the throne, and himself assume the government of the universe.

Like the poor mortal who here dares to contend with the Almighty, we are overwhelmed by the splendour of it all. But when the first dazzling impression is over, we cannot but ask : Is not God blinding His servant by His glorious light, only to leave him in blacker darkness than before ?

Our instinctive disappointment with the sublime *dénouement* arises, it seems to us, from our applying our colder Western minds to the poem. It is the speculative aspect of the problem that most appeals to us, and we approach the poem expecting to find some clear logical solution contained in it. But, as we have already emphasized, the poet himself was hardly concerned with this aspect. It was a profoundly practical problem that faced him. He had lost his faith, and was painfully fighting his way back to faith. From this point of view, the mere fact of God's appearance is of supreme importance. Faith involves a twofold relation. In Newman's great words, religion is a relation "between two, and two only, absolutely luminous and self-evident beings, myself and my Creator." To the poet, as he stands revealed in his hero, his own character was perfectly luminous. He was sure of himself, and of his own innocence and sincerity. But God was shrouded in darkness. To the very end of his struggles Job is oppressed by the elusiveness of God. He feels Him to be all about him. He is assured that He will vindicate his rights. Yet he cannot grasp Him.

Behold, I go forward, but He is not there ;
 And backward, but I cannot perceive Him ;
 I seek Him ¹ on the left hand, but I cannot behold Him :
 I turn ² to the right hand, but I cannot see Him. (xxiii. 8 f.)

¹ and ² We follow Duhm in reading יָמִינִי לְפָנָיו and הִלַּכְתִּי לְפָנָיו for הִלַּכְתִּי לְפָנָיו

For the restoration of living religion he needed a new experience of God. And the Divine appearance reflects this experience. Stripped of its poetic dress, it is no other than a real vision of God in the works of His hand. The poet who thus unveils his experience had hitherto sought to regain God in the feelings and cravings and strivings of his own heart. But there he found, at the best, only his own aspirations after, and ideas about, God—not the living God Himself. Now he rises out of himself and his own self-centred broodings and questionings to contemplate the great universe around him ; and there he finds all things instinct with God. And God becomes to him as luminous a Being as his own soul. In the same way—if we may compare modern philosophy with ancient poetry, for the heart of man is the same in all the ages—Kant, lost in speculative mazes, found salvation in the immediate intuition of God in “ the starry heavens above and the moral law within.”

And further, if we study the speech of Jahveh from the Oriental point of view, we do find it luminous with the light the doubter sought for. The Oriental does not prove and argue, but is most sensitive to direct mental presentations. He feels by immediate instinct what we can only painfully educe. The speech of Jahveh is characteristically Oriental. It offers no speculative answer to the problem of suffering. But it gives majestic impressions of the greatness, the power and wisdom, and the gracious care of God, Who has created all things so well, and rules them so wisely, and provides so bountifully even for the wild creatures of the desert, who live so far apart from human life. And though the inference is not directly drawn, the moral is clear. In the universe of human life, as well as in the boundless universe without, there is much complexity and much mystery, many things that are far beyond our power to comprehend. But the God of wisdom, power and grace rules in both

worlds. And though we cannot trace even the outlines of His purpose, we can yet trust Him to rule our lives wisely, lovingly and well. We have the same appeal to immediate intuition, and the same moral, in the Sermon on the Mount. "Behold the fowls of the air ; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns : yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin : and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them. Wherefore, shall God not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ? " (Matt. vi. 26 ff.).

In Job's answer to the Almighty we have the effect the poet intended to produce by the speech ; and this bears out our reading of the poem. The effect is purely practical. Job understands the mysteries of Providence no better than before ; but he has reached a new personal experience of God. Hitherto he had known Him only by tradition, " by the hearing of the ear." Now he knows Him in actual spiritual experience. " Mine own eye seeth Thee." This vision of God at first overwhelms him—as every real vision of God's transcendent glory must—and he retracts his former blasphemous cavillings against Almighty Providence. He will no longer dare to criticize the ways of God ; for they are too high and wonderful for him. " I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be restrained." Yet he knows God as *his* God, and can now rest assured that He will do all things well. Henceforth, then, he will live more humbly and reverently, yet with all the more glad confidence, before his God, doing justice and loving mercy, whatever outward fortune may betide. (xlii. 2 ff.)

The revelation of God in which Job found peace is, indeed, imperfect. It is not only that Nature, from another point

of view, is "red in tooth and claw with ravine"; but the restless heart of man craves for a deeper—a more human and personal—knowledge of God. Only in the Son who was "the effulgence of His glory and the very image of His substance," Who loved us and gave Himself for us, do we find perfect rest for our souls. And yet the light in which Job rejoiced was a real revelation from God—a bright ray of the light that was to shine "more and more unto the perfect day." He knew not the meaning of his sufferings. But through them he entered into closer fellowship with his God. And though he had no sure hope of immortal life, yet (to use his own image) he had "graven his testimony on the rock," and suffering saints in future days read it, and embraced the hope that God was "nevertheless with them all their days, and would afterwards receive them into glory." (Ps. lxiii. 23f.) And thus the poet was a witness beforehand to Him who "brought life and immortality to light," through faith in Whom we know that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

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