THE

PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE

VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,

DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH

INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE

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NEW EDITION.

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JOB.

Exposition

By REV. G. RAWLINSON, M.A.,

CANON OF CANTERBURY.

Homiletics

By REV. T. WHITELAW, D.D.

Homilies by Various Authors.

REV. PROF. E. JOHNSON, M.A. REV. PROF. W. F. ADENEY, M.A
REV. R. GREEN.

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THE BOOK OF JOB.

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. Analysis of the Book.

The Book of Job is a work which divides itself manifestly into sections. These may be made more or fewer, according to the extent to which the work of analysis is carried out. The least critical reader cannot fail to recognize three divisions: I. An historical prologue, or introduction; II. A main body of moral and religious discourses, chiefly in the form of dialogue; and III. An historical conclusion, or epilogue. Part I. and Part III. of this division, being comparatively brief and concise, do not lend themselves very readily to any subdivision; but Part II., which forms the main bulk of the treatise, and extends from the beginning of ch. iii. to ver. 6 of ch. xlii., falls naturally into several very distinct portions. First there is a long dialogue between Job and three of his friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—which reaches from ch. iii. 1 to the end of ch. xxxi., where a marked line is drawn by the insertion of the phrase, "The words of Job are ended." Then follows a harangue by a new speaker, Elihu, which occupies six chapters (ch. xxxii.—xxxvii.). Next comes a discourse ascribed to Jehovah himself, which occupies four chapters (ch. xxxviii.—xli.); and after this there is a short speech by Job (ch. xlii. 1—6), extending to less than half a chapter. Further, the long dialogue between Job and his three friends resolves itself into three sections—a first dialogue, in which all the four speakers take part, reaching from ch. iii. 1 to the end of ch. xiv.; a second dialogue, in which again all the speakers are engaged, extending from ch. xv. 1 to the end of ch. xxi.; and a third dialogue, in which Job, Eliphaz, and Bildad take part, reaching from ch. xxii. 1 to the

end of ch. xxxi. The scheme of the book may thus be exhibited as follows:—

I. Introductory historical section. Ch. i., ii.
II. Moral and religious discourses. Ch. iii.—xlii. 6.
  1. Discourses between Job and his three friends. Ch. iii.—xxxi.
    (1) First dialogue. Ch. iii.—xiv.
    (2) Second dialogue. Ch. xv.—xxi.
    (3) Third dialogue. Ch. xxii.—xxxi.
  2. Harangue of Elihu. Ch. xxxii.—xxxvii.
  3. Discourse of Jehovah. Ch. xxxviii.—xli.
  4. Short speech of Job. Ch. xlii. 1—6.
III. Concluding historical section. Ch. xlii. 7—16.

1. The "Introductory section" explains the circumstances under which the dialogues took place. The person of Job is, first of all, set before us. He is a chieftain of the land of Uz, of great wealth and high rank—"the greatest of all the Beney Kedem, or men of the East" (ch. i. 3). He has a numerous and flourishing family (ch. i. 2, 4, 5), and enjoys in advanced life[1] such a degree of earthly happiness as is accorded to few. At the same time, he is noted for his piety and good conduct. The author of the section declares him to have been "perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (ch. i. 1), and later on adduces the Divine testimony to the same effect: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" (ch. i. 8; ii. 3). Job is living in this prosperous and happy state, respected and beloved, with his family about him, and a host of servants and retainers continually ministering to his wants (ch. i. 15—17), when in the courts of heaven a scene occurs which brings this happy condition of things to an end, and reduces the patriarch to extreme wretchedness. Satan, the accuser of the brethren, appears before the throne of God together with the blessed company of the angels, and, having his attention called to Job by the Almighty, replies with the scoff, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" and then backs up his sarcasm with the bold assertion, "Put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath," *i.e.* withdraw his blessings, "and he will curse thee to thy face" (ch. i. 9—11). The question is thus raised with respect to Job's sincerity, and, by parity of reasoning, with respect to the sincerity of all other apparently religious and God-fearing men—Is there such a thing as real piety? Is not the appearance of it in the world a mere form of selfishness? Are not the so-called "perfect and upright men" mere self-seekers, like others, only self-seekers who add to their other vices the detestable one of hypocrisy? The question is one of the highest moral interest, and, to solve it, or to help towards solving it, God allows the trial to be made in the person of Job. He permits the accuser to strip Job of his earthly

[1] Job's family of ten grown-up children, the issue of one wife, necessitates a *minimum* of fifty years of age, and suggests as more probable the age of sixty or seventy. His position in the community whereof he was a member (ch. xxix 7—10, 21—25) favours the longer period.

prosperity, to deprive him of his property, destroy his numerous offspring, and finally inflict upon him a most loathsome, painful, and terrible disease, from which there was, humanly speaking, no hope of recovery. Under this accumulation of evils, the faith of Job's wife gives way entirely, and she reproaches her husband with his patience and tameness, suggesting to him that he should do, exactly what Satan had declared that he would do, "Curse God, and die" (ch. ii. 9). But Job remains firm and unmoved. At the loss of his property he says not a word; when he hears of the destruction of his children, he shows the tokens of natural grief (ch. i. 20), but only utters the sublime speech, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord" (ch. i. 21); when he is stricken with his foul disease, he submits without a murmur; when his wife offers her foolish and wicked counsel, he repels it with the remark, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" "In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (ch. ii. 10), nor did he "charge God foolishly" (ch. i. 22). Here the narrative might have ended, Satan being baffled, Job's character vindicated, and the real existence of true and disinterested piety having been irrefragably manifested and proved. But a new incident supervened, giving rise to the discussions with which the book is mainly concerned, and in which the author, or authors, whoever he or they were, was, it is evident, chiefly anxious to interest readers. Three of Job's friends, hearing of his misfortunes, came to visit him from some considerable distance, to condole with him on his sufferings, and, if possible, to comfort him. After one burst of irrepressible grief on beholding his miserable state, they sat down with him in silence on the ground, "seven days and seven nights," without addressing to him a word (ch. ii. 13). Then at length he broke the silence, and the discussion began.

2. The discussion opened with a speech from Job, in which, no longer able to control himself, he cursed the day that gave him birth, and the night of his conception, lamented that he had not died in his childhood, and expressed a longing to go down to the grave at once, as having no further hope on earth. Eliphaz, then, probably the oldest of the three "comforters," took the word, rebuking Job for his want of fortitude, and at once suggesting (ch. iv. 7—11)—what becomes one of the main points of controversy—that Job's calamities have come upon him from God's hand as a punishment for sins which he has committed, and of which he has not repented. On this view he naturally exhorts him to repent, confess, and turn to God, promising him in that case a renewal of all his former prosperity (ch. v. 18—26). Job replies (ch. vi. and vii.), and then in turn the other two "comforters" address him (ch. viii. and xi.), re-echoing in the main the arguments of Eliphaz, while Job answers them severally in ch. ix., x., and xii.—xiv. As the discussion continues, the disputants wax hot. Bildad is harsher and blunter than Eliphaz; Zophar, ruder and

coarser than Bildad; while Job, on his part, exasperated by his friends' unfairness and want of sympathy, grows passionate and reckless, uttering words which he is obliged to acknowledge to be rash, and retorting upon his opponents their own discourteous language (ch. xiii. 4). The argument makes little progress. The "friends" maintain Job's guilt. Job, while admitting that he is not exempt from human frailty, acknowledging "iniquities of his youth" (ch. xiii. 26), and allowing frequent sins of infirmity (ch. vii. 20, 21; x. 14; xiii. 23; xiv. 16, 17), insists that he "is *not* wicked" (ch. x. 7); that he has not fallen away from God; that, if his cause is heard, he is certain to be justified (ch. xiii. 8). To the "friends" this insistence seems almost blasphemous, and they take a worse and worse view of his moral condition, becoming convinced that he has been secretly guilty of some unpardonable sin, and is hardened in guilt, and irrecoverable (ch. xi. 20; xv. 4—6). The fact of his sufferings, and their intensity, is to them proof positive that he lies under the anger of God, and therefore must have provoked him by some heinous sin or other. Job, in rebutting their arguments, allows himself to be drawn into statements with regard to God's indifference to moral good and evil (ch. ix. 22—24; xii. 6) which are, to say the least, incautious and presumptuous, while he also goes near to tax God with injustice towards himself (ch. iii. 20—26; vii. 12—21; ix. 30—35, etc.). At the same time, he in no way renounces God or ceases to trust in him. He is confident that in some way or other and at some time or other, his own innocence will be vindicated, and God's justice manifested. Meanwhile he hangs upon God, turns to him when his friends' words are too cruel, continually prays to him, looks to him for salvation, proclaims that, "though he slay him, yet will he trust in him" (ch. xiii. 15). Finally, he expresses a presentiment that, after death, when he is in the grave, God will find a mode of doing him justice, will "remember him" (ch. xiv. 13), and give him a "renewal" (ch. xiv. 14).

3. A second dialogue begins with the opening of ch. xv., and extends to the end of ch. xxi. Again Eliphaz takes the word, and, after reproaching Job for presumption, impiety, and arrogance (ch. xv. 1—16), in a tone much more severe than that which he had used previously, resumes the argument, and endeavours to prove, from the authority of the wise men of old, that wickedness is always punished in this life with the utmost severity (vers. 17—35). Bildad follows, in ch. xviii., with a series of denunciations and threats, apparently assuming the guilt of Job as proved, and maintaining that the calamities which have fallen upon him are exactly what he ought to have expected (vers. 5—21). Zophar, in ch. xx., continues the same strain, ascribing Job's calamities to special sins, which he supposes him to have committed (vers. 5—19), and menacing him with further and worse evils (vers. 20—29). Job makes reply to each of the friends separately (ch. xvi., xvii., xix., and xxi.), but at first scarcely deigns to grapple with their arguments, which seem to him "words of wind" (ch. xvi. 3). Instead, he addresses himself to God, describes his

sufferings (vers. 6—16), maintains his innocence (ver. 17), and appeals to earth and heaven to declare themselves on his side (vers. 18, 19), and to God himself to be his Witness (ver. 19). "The train of thought thus suggested carries him," as Canon Cook observes,[1] "much further in the way towards the great truth—that, since in this life the righteous certainly are not saved from evil, it follows that their ways are watched, and their sufferings recorded, with a view to a future and perfect manifestation of the Divine justice. This view becomes gradually brighter and more definite as the controversy proceeds, and at last finds expression in a strong and clear declaration of his conviction that at the latter day (evidently the day which Job had expressed a longing to see, ch. xiv. 12—14) God will personally manifest himself, and that he, Job, will then see him in his body, with his own eyes, and notwithstanding the destruction of his skin, *i.e.* the outward man, retaining or recovering his personal identity. There can be no doubt that Job here (ch. xix. 25—27) virtually anticipates the final answer to all difficulties supplied by the Christian revelation." On the other hand, provoked by Zophar, Job concludes the second dialogue with a very wrong-headed and overcoloured view of the happiness of the wicked in this life, and maintains that the distribution of good and evil in the present world proceeds on no discoverable principle (ch. xxi. 7—33).

4. The third dialogue, which begins with ch. xxii. and terminates at the close of ch. xxxi., is confined to three interlocutors—Job, Eliphaz, and Bildad, Zophar taking no part in it, at any rate as the text stands at present. It comprises four speeches only—one by Eliphaz (ch. xxii.), one by Bildad (ch. xxv.), and two by Job (ch. xxiii., xxiv., and ch. xxvi.—xxxi.). The speech of Eliphaz is an elaboration of the two points on which he had principally insisted throughout—Job's extreme wickedness (ch. xxv. 5—20), and God's readiness to pardon and restore him if he will humble himself in the dust, repent of his evil doings, and turn to God in sincerity and truth (ch. xxv. 21—30). Bildad's speech consists of a few short reflections on the majesty of God, and the weakness and sinfulness of man. Job, in his reply to Eliphaz (ch. xxiii., xxiv.), repeats in the main his former statements, enforcing them, however, by new arguments. "His own innocence, his longing for judgment, the misery of the oppressed, and the triumph of the oppressors, are successively brought forward."[2] In his second speech (ch. xxvi.—xxxi.) he takes a wider and more comprehensive survey. After brushing aside the irrelevant remarks of Bildad (ch. xxvi. 1—4), he proceeds to deliver with all solemnity his "last word" (ch. xxxi. 40) upon the whole controversy. First of all, he makes a full acknowledgment of God's greatness, might, and inscrutableness (ch. xxvi. 5—14). Then he addresses himself once more to the question of God's dealings with the wicked in this life, and, retracting his previous utterances on the subject (ch. ix. 22—24; xii. 6; xxi. 7—33; xxiv. 2—24), admits that, as a

[1] 'Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. i. p. 1089.
[2] 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 4.

general rule, retributive justice overtakes them (ch. xxvii. 11—23). Next, he shows that, great as is man's cleverness and ingenuity with respect to earthly things and physical phenomena, with respect to heavenly things and the spiritual world he knows next to nothing. God is inscrutable to him, and his nearest approach to wisdom is, through the fear of the Lord, to direct his conduct aright (ch. xxviii.). Finally, he turns his eye upon himself, and in three touching chapters describes his happy condition in his former life before his troubles came (ch. xxix.), the miserable state to which he has since then been reduced (ch. xxix.), and his moral character and condition, as shown by the way in which he has conducted himself under all the various circumstances and relations of human existence (ch. xxxi.). This last review amounts to a complete vindication of his character from all the aspersions and insinuations of his opponents.

5. A new speaker now appears upon the scene. Elihu, a comparatively young man, who has been present at all the colloquies, and heard all the arguments, dissatisfied alike with the discourses of Job and with the replies made to them by his "comforters" (ch. xxxii. 2, 3), interposes with a long harangue (ch. xxxii. 6—xxxvii.), addressed partly to the "comforters" (ch. xxxii. 6—22), but mainly to Job himself (ch. xxxiii., xxxv.—xxxvii.), and having for its object to shame the "comforters," to rebuke Job, and to vindicate God's ways from the misrepresentations of both parties to the controversy. The speech is that of a somewhat arrogant and conceited young man. It exaggerates Job's faults of temper and language, and consequently censures him unduly; but it adds one important element to the controversy by its insistence on the view that calamities are sent by God, for the most part, *as chastisements*, not punishments, in love, not in anger, and have for their main object to warn, and teach, and restrain from evil courses, not to take vengeance on past sins. There is much that is elevating and instructive in Elihu's arguments and reflections (ch. xxxiii. 14—30; xxxiv. 5—11; xxxvi. 7—16; xxxvii. 2—13, etc.); but the tone of the speech is harsh, disrespectful, and presumptuous, so that we feel no surprise at Job not condescending to answer it, but meeting it by a contemptuous silence.

6. Suddenly, though not without some preliminary warnings (ch. xxxvi. 32, 33; xxxvii. 1—5), in the midst of a tempest of thunder, lightning, and rain, God himself takes the word (ch. xxxviii.), and makes an address which occupies, with one short interruption (ch. xl. 3—5), four chapters (ch. xxxviii.—xli.). The object of the address is not, however, to solve the various questions raised in the course of the controversy, but to bring Job to see and acknowledge that he has been rash with his tongue, and that, in questioning the perfect rectitude of the Divine government of the world, he has trenched on ground where he is incompetent to form a judgment. This is done by "a marvellously beautiful and comprehensive survey of the glory of creation," and especially of the animal creation, with its wonderful variety of instincts. Job is challenged to declare how things

were originally made, how they are ordered and maintained, how the stars are kept in their courses, how the various phenomena of nature are produced, how the animal creation is sustained and provided for. He makes a half-submission (ch. xl. 3—5); and then he is asked two further questions—Will he undertake the government of mankind for a space (ch. xl. 10—14)? Can he control and keep in order two out of God's many creatures—behemoth and leviathan—the hippopotamus and the crocodile (ch. xl. 15—24; xli. 1—34)? If not, on what grounds does he presume to question God's actual government of the world, which no one is entitled to question who is not competent to take the rule himself?

7. Briefly, but unreservedly, in ch. xlii. 1—6 Job makes his final submission. He has "spoken unadvisedly with his lips," he has "uttered that which he did not understand" (ver. 3). The knowledge which he had claimed to have is "too wonderful for him;" wherefore he "abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes" (ver. 6).

8. The entire dialogue being thus ended, a short historical section follows (ch. xlii. 7—16), and terminates the book. God, we are told, having rebuked the arrogancy of Job's utterances, and reduced him to a state of absolute submission and resignation, turned upon the "comforters," condemning them as far more guilty than Job, since they "had not spoken the thing that was right concerning him, as his servant Job had" (vers. 7, 8). The theory by which they had thought to maintain God's perfect justice was unsound, untrue. It was contradicted by the facts of human experience—to maintain it, despite this contradiction, was not to honour God, but to dishonour him. The three "comforters" were therefore required to offer for themselves, in the way of expiation, a burnt offering; and a promise was given them that, if Job would intercede on their behalf, they should be accepted (ver. 8). The sacrifice was offered, and, after Job's intercession had been made, Jehovah "turned his captivity," or, in other words, made restitution to him of all that he had lost, and more. He recovered his health. His wealth was restored to double its previous amount (ver. 12 compared with ch. i. 3); his friends and relatives flocked around him, and increased his store (ver. 11); he was once more blessed with children, and had the same number as before, viz. "seven sons and three daughters" (ver. 13); and his daughters were women of surpassing beauty (ver. 15). He himself lived, after his restoration, a hundred and forty years, and "saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations." At last he passed from the earth, "being old and full of days" (ver. 17).

§ 2. Integrity of the Book.

Four principal objections have been taken to the "integrity" of the Book of Job. It has been argued that the difference of style is so great between the two historical sections (ch. i., ii., and ch. xlii. 6—17) and the rest of the work as to render it impossible, or, at any rate, highly

improbable, that they proceeded from the same author. Not only is there the radical difference which exists between Hebrew prose and Hebrew poetry, but the prose of the historical sections is of the plainest and least ornate kind, while the poetry of the body of the book is highly wrought, extremely ornate, and in places over-rhetorical. The historical sections, moreover, are written in pure Hebrew, while the body of the work has many forms and expressions characteristic of the Chaldee.[1] *Jehovah* is the ordinary name of God in the historical sections, where it occurs twenty-six times; it is found but once in the rest of the treatise (ch. xii. 9).[2] On the other hand, *Shaddai*, "the Almighty," which is used to designate God thirty times in the body of the work, does not occur at all in the opening and concluding sections. But, notwithstanding these diversities, it is the present opinion of the best critics, both English and continental, that there are no sufficient reasons for assigning the two portions of the work to different authors. The "prosaic words" of the opening and concluding section, says Ewald, "harmonize thoroughly with the old poem in subject-matter and thoughts, in colouring and in art, also in language, so far as prose can be like poetry."[3] "The Book of Job is now considered," says Mr. Froude, "to be, *beyond all doubt*, a genuine Hebrew original, completed by its writer almost in the form in which it now remains to us. The questions on the authenticity of the prologue and epilogue, which were once thought important, have given way before a more sound conception of the dramatic *unity* of the entire poem."[4] "The best critics," observes Canon Cook, "now acknowledge that the style of the historical portions is quite as antique in its severe grandeur as that of the Pentateuch itself—to which it bears a striking resemblance—or as any other part of this book, while it is strikingly unlike the narrative style of all the later productions of the Hebrews. . . . At present, indeed, it is generally acknowledged that the entire work would be unintelligible without these portions."[5]

A portion of ch. xxvii., extending from ver. 11 to the end, is regarded by some as either a transfer to Job of what was originally a speech of Zophar's or else an absolute interpolation. The ground of this view is the difficulty caused by the contrast between the sentiments expressed in the passage and those to which Job has previously given utterance, especially in ch. xxiv. 2—24, joined with the fact that the omission of any speech from Zophar in the third colloquy destroys "the symmetry of the general form" of the dialogue. But ancient and modern ideas of symmetry are not altogether alike; and the Hebrew writers generally are certainly not among those who

[1] For a list of Chaldaisms, see Professor Lee's 'Book of Job,' Introduction, p. 50, note 2. He enumerates twenty-eight, and remarks that "many of them occur several times," and that "many more might be added."

[2] *I.e.* in the dialogues, or dramatic portion of the work. In the historical framework wherein the dialogues are set it occurs also in ch. xxxviii. 1; xl. i. 3, 6; and xlii. 1.

[3] Quoted by Canon Cook, in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. i. p. 1091.

[4] 'Short Studies on Great Subjects,' vol. i. p. 283.

[5] 'Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. i. pp. 1091, 1092.

regard exact and complete symmetry as imperative, and will not sacrifice it to any other consideration. Zophar's silence at the close of ch. xxvi., like Bildad's short speech in ch. xxv., is probably intended to mark the exhaustion of Job's opponents in the controversy, and to prepare the way for their entire collapse at the end of ch. xxxi. Zophar's silence is sufficiently accounted for by his having nothing to say; if he had spoken, the place for his speech would have been between ch. xxvi. and xxvii., where evidently a pause occurred, Job having waited for him to speak, if he were inclined to do so. As for the supposed facility with which speeches in a dramatic form might be transferred from one speaker to another by inadvertence—if the speeches were merely headed by a name, it would, no doubt, be possible; but not where they are introduced, as in the Book of Job, by a formal statement "Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said" (ch. xi. 1; xx. 1). Four consecutive words do not readily drop out; not to mention that, in the case supposed, three more must have fallen out at the beginning of ch. xxviii. Moreover, the style of the disputed passage is entirely unlike that of Zophar's two speeches. As for the marked contrast between the matter of the passage and Job's former utterances, it must be freely and fully admitted; but it is sufficiently explained by the supposition that Job's previous utterances on the subject had been tentative and controversial, not the expression of his real sentiments, and that he would naturally wish to supplement what he had said, and correct what was faulty in it, before he brought his part in the controversy to a close (ch. xxxi. 40, "The words of Job are ended"). As for the passage being a mere interpolation, it is enough to observe that no critical basis has been assigned for this view; and that a scholar so competent as Ewald remarks, in winding up his judgment upon the subject,[1] "Only a grievous misunderstanding of the whole book would have misled the modern critics who hold that this passage is interpolated or misplaced."

Another supposed "interpolation" is the passage commencing with ver. 15 of ch. xl. and terminating at the end of ch. xli. This has been regarded, first, as inferior to the rest of the book in style, and, secondly, as superfluous, not having any bearing upon the argument. The latter objection is certainly strange, since the passage has exactly the same bearing upon the argument as the whole of ch. xxxix., which is not objected to. The argument from supposed difference of style—always a delicate one—is sufficiently met by the criticism of Renan, who says,[2] "Le style du fragment dont nous parlons est *celui des meilleurs endroits du poëme.* Nulle part la coupe n'est plus vigoureuse, le parallelisme plus sonore; tout indique que ce singulier morceau *est de la même main,* mais non pas du même jet, *que le reste du discours de Jéhovah.*"

But the principal attack upon the integrity of the Book of Job is directed against the long harangue of Elihu, which commences in ch. xxxii. (ver. 7),

[1] Quoted by Canon Cook, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 7.
[2] 'Le Livre de Job,' p. 1.

and does not terminate until the close of ch. xxxvii., thus occupying six chapters, and forming nearly one-seventh of the entire treatise. It is urged here again that the difference of language and style between these chapters and the rest of the book indicates a totally distinct and much later author, while the tone of thought and the doctrinal views are also thought to be markedly different, and to suggest a comparatively late date. Further, it is maintained that the "long dissertation" adds nothing to "the progress of the argument," and "betrays not the faintest conception of the real cause of Job's sufferings."[1] It is thus otiose, superfluous, quite unworthy of the place which it occupies. Some critics have gone so far as to excise it. It is necessary to consider these arguments *seriatim*. (1) The difference of style must be admitted; it is unquestionable, and allowed on all sides. The language is obscure and difficult, the Chaldaisms numerous, the transitions abrupt, the arguments rather indicated than worked out. But these characteristics may have been intentionally given to the speech by the author, who assigns to each of his interlocutors a marked individuality, and in Elihu introduces a young man, impetuous, rude of speech, full of thoughts which struggle for utterance, and embarrassed by the novelty of having to find words for them in the presence of persons superior to him in age and position. That the difference of style is not such as to necessarily indicate another author, may be concluded from the suggestion of Renan—an excellent judge of Hebrew style—that the passage was written by the author of the remainder of the book *in his old age*. (2) The tone of thought and the doctrinal views, though certainly in advance of those assigned to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, cannot be truly said to surpass those of Job, though in some points additional to, and an improvement on, them. Job has really a deeper insight into Divine truth, and into the scheme of the universe, than Elihu, and his doctrine of a "Redeemer" (ch. xix. 25) goes beyond that of the "angel-interpreter" of the Buzzite (ch. xxxiii. 23). (3) It may be true, as Mr. Froude says, that Elihu's speech "betrays not the faintest conception of the real cause of Job's sufferings,"[2] but this was inevitable, since none of the interlocutors on earth is supposed to have known anything of the antecedent colloquies in heaven (ch. i. 7—12; ii. 2—6); but it is certainly very far from the truth to say that the speech "adds nothing to the progress of the argument."[3] Elihu brings forward and establishes the view only just indicated (ch. v. 17, 18), and never dwelt on, by any other interlocutor, that the afflictions wherewith God visits his servants are, in comparatively few cases, penal, being generally of the nature of chastisements, dealt out in love, and designed to be remedial, to check departures from the right path, to "keep back from the pit" (ch. xxxiii. 18), to purify, refine, and bring about moral improvement. He opens the view, nowhere else put forward in the book, that life is a *discipline*, prosperity and adversity being intended equally to serve as "instruction" (ch.

[1] Froude, 'Short Studies on Great Subjects,' vol. i. p. 319, note.
[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

xxxiii. 16), and to subserve the formation in each individual of that character, temper, and frame of mind which God desires to have formed in him.[1] To regard Elihu as "proceeding evidently on the false hypothesis of the three friends," and as echoing their views, is to do him scant justice. He takes an independent line; he is far from regarding Job's sufferings as the penalty of his sins, still further from taxing him with the long catalogue of offences ascribed to him by the others (ch. xviii. 5—21; xx. 5—29; xxii. 5—17). He finds in him two faults only, and they are not faults in his earlier life, whereby he had provoked his visitations, but faults in his existing temper, exhibited in his recent utterances—namely, undue self-confidence (ch. xxxii. 2; xxxiii. 9; xxxiv. 6), and presumption in judging God's ways and charging him with injustice (ch. xxxiv. 5—12; xxxv. 2, etc.). It is reasonable to regard Elihu as having by his reasonings influenced the mind of Job, convinced him of having transgressed, and disposed him for that humility which secures his final acceptance (ch. xl. 3—5, xlii. 2—6). Thus his interposition in the argument is far from being otiose, or superfluous; it is really a step in advance of all that has gone before, and helps towards the final *dénouement*.

§ 3. Character.

It has been much debated whether the Book of Job is to be looked upon as an historical composition, as a work of imagination, or as something between the two. The early Christian Fathers and the earlier Jewish rabbis treat it as absolutely historical, and no whisper arises to the contrary till several centuries after the Christian era. Then a certain Resh Lakish, in a dialogue with Samuel Bar-Nachman, preserved to us in the Talmud, suggests that "Job did not exist, and was not a created man, but is a mere parable."[2] This opinion, however, did not for a long time take any firm hold, even of any Jewish school. Maimonides, "the most celebrated of the rabbis," treated it as an open question,[3] while Hai Gaon, Rashi, and others directly contradict Resh Lakish, and maintain the historical character of the narrative. Ben Gershom, on the other hand, and Spinoza agree with Resh Lakish, regarding the work as one of fiction, intended for moral and religious instruction. The same view is maintained, among Christian writers, by Spanheim, Carpzov, Bouillier, Bernstein, J. D. Michaelis, Hahn, Ewald, Schlottmann, and others.

The arguments in favour of this view are,[4] first, that the work is not placed by the Jews among their historical Scriptures, but in the Hagiographa, or writings intended for religious instruction, together with the Psalms, the Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes. Secondly, that the narrative is incredible, the appearance of Satan among the angels

[1] Compare Butler's 'Analogy,' pt. i. ch. v.

[2] 'Baba Bathra,' 15, *a*. [3] 'More Nevochim,' iii. 22.

[4] See the summary in Rosenmüller's 'Prolegomena in Jobum,' pp. 5—8.

of God, and the familiar dialogues between the Almighty and the prince of darkness being plainly fictions, while the utterance by Job of long discourses, adorned with every rhetorical artifice, and strictly bound by the laws of metre, while he was suffering excruciating agonies from mental grief and sharp physical pains, is so unlikely that it may be pronounced morally impossible. The round numbers (ch. i. 2, 3; xlii. 12, 13), and the sacred character of the numbers—three (ch. i. 2, 3, 17; ii. 11; xlii. 13), seven (ch. i. 2, 3; ii. 13; xlii. 8, 13), and ten (ch. i. 2; xlii. 13)—are also objected to; the *exact* doubling of Job's substance (ch. xlii. 10, 12) and *exact* restoration of the old number of his sons and daughters (ch. i. 2; xlii. 14) are thought most improbable; while an *exact* doubling of his former term of life is detected in ch. xlii. 16, and pronounced to be another indication of a fictitious, not a real, history. Hence the conclusion is drawn that the story of Job is "no single thing which happened once, but that it belongs to humanity itself, and is the drama of the trial of man, with Almighty God and the angels as spectators of it."[1]

These arguments are met, first, by the remark that in the Hagiographa are contained some admittedly historical books, as Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles; secondly, by the denial that there is anything incredible or unworthy of God in the scenes depicted in ch. i. 6—12; ii. 1—7; thirdly, by the suggestion that Job probably made his speeches in the intervals between his attacks of pain, and that rhythmic utterance is no unusual gift among the sages of Arabia;[2] fourthly, by the observation that there is nothing to prevent round numbers or sacred numbers from being also historical; fifthly, by the remark that the Oriental writers, and indeed historical writers generally, are in the habit of using round numbers instead of exact ones, partly for brevity, partly to avoid the pretence of such an accuracy of knowledge as is scarcely ever possessed by any historian; and sixthly, by the statement that we are not intended to understand an *exact* doubling of all Job's possessions by what is said in ch. xlii. 10, 12. Further, it is noted that the (assumed) *exact* duplication of his age before his calamities by the years that he lived after them is a gratuitous supposition of the critics, since Job's age at the time when his misfortunes fell upon him is nowhere stated, and may have been anything between sixty and eighty, or indeed between sixty and a hundred.

In favour of the historical character of the book, it is urged, first, that the real existence of Job as an historical personage is attested by Ezekiel (xiv. 14, 20), by St. James (v. 11), and by Oriental tradition generally;[3] secondly, that "the invention of a story without foundation in facts, the creation of a person represented as having a real historical existence, is wholly alien to the spirit of antiquity, appearing only in the latest epoch of the literature of any ancient people, and belonging in its complete form

[1] Froude, 'Short Studies on Great Subjects,' vol. i. p. 297.
[2] Schultens, 'Commentarius in Jobum,' iii. 1. p. 45.
[3] 'Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. i. p. 1094.

to the most modern times;"[1] thirdly, that had the work been a fiction of a late period (as supposed by the sceptical school) it could not possibly have presented so vivid, so true, and so harmonious a picture of the patriarchal times, no ancient writer having ever succeeded in reproducing the manners of a past age, or in avoiding allusion to those of his own, antiquity not having, in M. Renan's words,[2] "any idea of what we call local colouring." Further, it is remarked that the book at once professes to be historical,[3] and carries with it such internal evidence of truthfulness and reality as is entirely unmistakable. "This effect of reality," says Canon Cook,[4] "is produced by a number of internal indications which can scarcely be accounted for save by a faithful adherence to objective truth. In all the characters there is a thorough consistency; each agent in the transaction has peculiarities of thought and feeling, which give him a distinct and vivid personality; this is more especially the case with Job himself, whose character is not merely drawn in broad outlines, but, like that of David and others, whose history is given with most detail in Scripture, is developed under a variety of most trying circumstances, presenting under each change new aspects, but ever retaining its peculiar and most living individuality. Even the language and illustrations of the several speakers have distinct characteristics. The incidents, moreover, which in a fiction would probably have been noted in a vague and general manner, are narrated with minuteness and an accurate observance of local and temporary conditions. Thus we may remark the mode in which the supernatural visitation is carried into execution, by natural agencies and under circumstances peculiar to the district, at a season when the inroads of Chaldean and Sabean robbers were customary and peculiarly dreaded; by fire and whirlwinds such as occur at intervals in the desert; and lastly by elephantiasis, of which the symptoms are described so accurately as to leave no doubt that the writer must have recorded what he actually observed, unless indeed he inserted them with the special intention of giving an air of truthfulness to his composition. Were such a supposition in itself plausible, in this case it would be confuted by the fact that these symptoms are not described in any single passage, so as to attract the attention of the reader, but are made out by a critical and scientific examination of words occurring at distant intervals in the complaints of the sufferer. The most refined art could scarcely produce this result; it is rarely attempted, still more rarely, if ever, attained in the most artificial ages; it was never dreamed of by ancient writers, and must be regarded in this case as a strong instance of the undesigned coincidences which sound criticism accepts as a sure attestation to the genuineness [authenticity ?] of a work."

If, however, on these grounds the *general* historical character of the Book

[1] Ewald, 'Das Buch Ijob,' Einleitung, p 15.

[2] 'Le Livre de Job,' Introduction, p. xvi.

[3] Professor Stanley Leathes, in the Bishop of Gloucester's 'Old Testament Commentary for English Readers,' vol. iv. p. 3.

[4] 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 10.

of Job be admitted, it still remains to be considered whether human ingenuity and imagination has any part in it. Nothing was more common in antiquity than to take a set of historical facts, and expand them into a poem, whereof the greater portion was the creation of the brain and genius of the author. In the poem of Pentaur,[1] ascribed to the fourteenth century B.C.,[2] a set of incidents are taken from the Hittite-Egyptian War, and so poeticized as to cover Rameses the Great with a manifestly unreal halo of glory. The Homeric poems, and the entire series of works belonging to the epic cycle, proceed upon the same system—on a basis of fact is erected a superstructure the larger portion of which is fiction. There is reason to believe the same of the *Maha-Bharata* and *Ramayana* of the Hindoos. Greek tragedy furnishes another instance. Looking to these precedents, to the general cast of the work, and to the difficulty of supposing that a real historical report of such long speeches as those of Job and his friends could have been made and handed down by tradition even to the earliest time at which any one supposes that the Book of Job could have been written, critics generally have come to the conclusion that, while the narrative rests on a solid substratum of fact, in its form and general features, in its reasonings and representations of character, the book is a work of creative genius. From this conclusion the present writer is not inclined to dissent, though he would incline to the views of those who regard the author of Job as largely guided by the traditions which he was able to collect, and the traditions themselves as to a large extent trustworthy.

§ 4. Probable Date and Author.

The indications of date derived from the matter of the book, from its tone, and from its general style, strongly favour the theory of its high antiquity. The language is archaic, more akin to the Arabic than that of any other portion of the Hebrew Scriptures, and full of Aramaisms which are not of the later type, but such as characterize the antique and highly poetic style, and occur in parts of the Pentateuch, in the Song of Deborah, and in the earliest Psalms.[3] The style has a "grand archaic character," which has been recognized by almost all critics. "Firm, compact, sonorous as the ring of a pure metal, severe and at times rugged, yet always dignified and majestic, the language belongs altogether to a period when thought was slow but profound and intensely concentrated, when the weighty and oracular sayings of the wise were wont to be engraved on rocks with a pen of iron, and in characters of molten lead. It is a truly lapidary style, such as was natural only in an age when writing, though known, was rarely used, before language had acquired clearness, fluency, and flexibility, but lost much of its freshness and native force."[4]

[1] See 'Records of the Past,' vol. ii. pp. 68—78.

[2] Ibid., p. 66.

[3] So Ewald, Renan, Schlottmann, and Kosegarten. (See 'Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. i. p. 1095.)

[4] Ibid. Compare 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. p. 12.

The manners, customs, institutions, and general mode of life described in the book are such as belong especially to the times which are commonly called "patriarchal." The pastoral descriptions have the genuine air of the wild, free, vigorous life of the desert. The city life (ch. xxix.) is exactly that of the earliest settled communities, with councils of grey-bearded elders, judges in the gate (ch. xxix. 7), the chieftain at once judge and warrior (ch. xxix. 25), yet with written indictments (ch. xxxi. 35) and settled forms of legal procedure (ch. ix. 33; xvii. 3; xxxi. 28). The civilization, if such it may be called, is of the primitive type, with rock-inscriptions (ch. ix. 24), mining such as was practised by the Egyptians in the Sinaitic peninsula from B.C. 2000, great buildings, ruined sepulchres, tombs watched over by sculptured figures of the dead (ch. xxi. 32). The historical allusions touch nothing of a recent date, but only such ancient things as the Pyramids (ch. iii. 14), the apostasy of Nimrod (ch. ix. 9), the Flood (ch. xxii. 16), the destruction of the "cities of the plain" (ch. xviii. 15), and the like; they include no mention—not the faintest hint—of any of the great events of Israelite history, not even of the Exodus, the passage of the Red Sea, or the giving of the Law on Sinai, much less of the conquest of Canaan, or of the stirring times of the judges and the first great kings of Israel. It is inconceivable, as has been often said, that a writer of a late date, say of the time of Captivity, or of Josiah, or even of Solomon, should, in a long work like the Book of Job, intentionally and successfully avoid all reference to historical occurrences, and to changes in religious forms or doctrines of a date posterior to that of the events which form the subject of his narrative.

It is a legitimate conclusion from these facts, that the Book of Job is probably more ancient than any other composition in the Bible, excepting, perhaps, the Pentateuch, or portions of it. It must almost certainly have been written before the promulgation of the Law.[1] How long before is doubtful. Job's term of life (two hundred to two hundred and fifty years) would seem to place him in the period between Eber and Abraham, or at any rate in that between Eber and Jacob, who lived only a hundred and forty-seven years, and after whom the term of human life seems to have rapidly shortened (Deut. xxxi. 2; Ps. xc. 10). The book, however, was not written until after Job's death (ch. xlii. 17), and may have been written some considerable time after. On the whole, therefore, it seems most reasonable to place the composition towards the close of the patriarchal period, not very long before the Exodus.

The only tradition which has come down to us with respect to the authorship of the Book of Job ascribes it to Moses. Aben Ezra (about A.D. 1150) declares this to be the general opinion of "the sages of blessed memory."[2] In the Talmud it is laid down as undoubted, "Moses wrote his own book" (*i.e.* the Pentateuch), "the section about Balaam, *and Job*."[3] The testimony

[1] 'Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. i. p. 1099. [2] 'Commentarius in Jobum,' ii. 11.
[3] 'Baba Bathra,' p. 14, *b*. Compare Ephrem Syrus, 'Jobi Librum Moyses scripsit.'

may not possess much critical value, but it is the only tradition that we have. Apart from this, we float upon a sea of conjecture. The most ingenious of the conjectures put forward is that of Dr. Mill and Professor Lee,[1] who think that Job himself put the discourses into a written form, and that Moses, having become acquainted with this work while he was in Midian, determined to communicate it to his countrymen, as analogous to the trial of their faith in Egypt; and, in order to render it intelligible to them, added the opening and concluding sections, which, it is remarked, are altogether in the style of the Pentateuch.[2] A far less probable theory assigns the authorship of the bulk of the book to Elihu.[3] Those who reject these views, yet allow the antiquity of the composition, can only suggest some unknown Palestinian author, some *ἀνὴρ πολύτροπος*, who, like the old hero of Ithaca,

> Πολλῶν ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω,
> Πολλὰ δ' ὅγ' ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν,
> Ἀρνύμενος ψυχήν . . .

and who, "having broken free from the narrow littleness of the peculiar people, divorced himself from them outwardly as well as inwardly," and having "travelled away into the world, lived long, perhaps all his life, in exile."[4] Such vague fancies are of little value; and the theory of Dr. Mill and Professor Lee, though unproved, is probably the nearest approach to the truth that can be made at the present day.

§ 5. Object of the Work.

The author of the Book of Job, though dealing with historical facts, is scarcely to be termed, in the ordinary sense of the word, an historian. He is a didactic writer, and comes forward with a moral and religious object. Placing the complicated problem of human life before him, he sets himself to inquire into a number of its most hidden and abstruse mysteries. Why are some men especially and exceptionally prosperous? Why are others crushed and overwhelmed with misfortunes? Does God care for men, or does he not? Is there such a thing as disinterested goodness? What is this life to lead to? Is the grave the end of everything, or is it not? If God rules the world, does he rule it on the principle of absolute justice? If so, how, when, and where is this justice to appear? Further and deeper issues are the questions—Can man be just before God? and can he comprehend God?

First and foremost is placed the question—Is there such a thing as disinterested goodness? This Satan by implication denies ("Doth Job fear God for nought?" ch. i. 9), and we know how persistently it has been denied by worldly and wicked men, the servants of Satan, ever since. This question is answered by the entire narrative, considered as a history. Job is tried and tested in every possible way, by unexampled misfortunes, by a most painful and loathsome disease, by the defection of his wife, by the cruel charges of his friends, by the desertion of his relatives, by the insult-

[1] 'The Book of Job,' Introduction, pp. 36—48. [2] Ibid., p. 39. [3] Ibid., p. 44.
[4] Froude, 'Short Studies on Great Subjects,' vol. i. pp. 295, 296.

ing language and actions of the rabble (ch. xxx. 1—10); yet he retains his integrity, he remains faithful to God, he continues to place all his hope and trust in the Almighty (ch. xiii. 15; xxxi. 2, 6, 23, 35). A crucial experiment has been made, and Job stands the test—there is no reason to believe that with any other good and righteous man the result would be different.

A secondary position is occupied by the inquiry concerning the grounds upon which prosperity and adversity, happiness and unhappiness, are distributed to men in this life. To this question the three friends have a very short and simple answer—they are distributed by God in exact accordance with men's deserts—"God being just and righteous, temporal prosperity and wretchedness are dealt out by him immediately by his own will to his subjects according to their behaviour."[1] This theory Job strenuously combats—he *knows* that it is not true—in the inmost depth of his consciousness he is certain that he has not provoked the calamities which have fallen upon him by his sins. But if so, how are his sufferings to be accounted for? What other theory of the distribution of temporal good and evil is there? Can it be that God does not care? that goodness and wickedness are indifferent to him (ch. ix. 22, 23)? If not, why do so many of the ungodly prosper (ch. xii. 6; xxi. 7—33)? Why is the just, upright man so often oppressed and laughed to scorn (ch. xii. 4)? Job despairs of solving the problem, and is almost driven to question the justice of God. But Elihu is brought forward to furnish another and a truer answer, though it may not be a complete one. God sends calamities on good men by way of chastisement, not of punishment; in love, not in anger; to purify and strengthen them, to purge out faults, to "save from the pit" (ch. xxxiii. 18, 28), to purify them and enlighten them (see the Exposition of ch. xxxiii., introductory paragraph). To teach this is certainly one of the main purposes of the book, and one to which considerable space is devoted.

Another purpose which the writer must certainly have had in view was to raise the question concerning man's future destiny. Was death the end of all things? What was *Sheôl?* and what was the condition of those who dwelt in it? *Sheôl* is mentioned by name no fewer than eight times in the book,[2] and referred to, and to some extent described, in other passages (ch. x. 21, 22; xviii. 18). Job looks upon it as about to become his abode (ch. xvii. 13), and even entreats to be sent there (ch. xiv. 13). He speaks of being kept there secretly for some indefinite time, after which he looks for a "renewal" (ch. xiv. 13). Moreover, in one passage, where "a clear, bright hope, like a sudden gleam of sunlight between clouds," bursts upon him, he expresses his conviction that "in another life, when his skin is wasted off his bones, and the worms have done their work on the prison of his spirit," he will be allowed to see God his Redeemer—to "see him, and have his pleadings heard."[3] A purpose to penetrate, if

[1] Froude, 'Short Studies on Great Subjects,' vol. i. p. 292.
[2] Ch. vii. 9; xi. 8; xiv. 13; xvii. 13, 16; xxi. 13; xxiv. 19; xxvi. 6.
[3] Froude, 'Short Studies on Great Subjects,' vol. i. pp. 309, 312.

possible, the darkness of the tomb must therefore be ascribed to the writer, and a desire at once to cheer men by the glorious hope of a future life, and to clear God of any suspicion of unjust rule by pointing to a time when justice will be done, and the inequalities of the existing condition of things redressed by the permanent establishment of conditions entirely new.

Can man be just before God? This is another question raised; and it is answered by a *distinguo*. Absolutely just he cannot be. Sins of infirmity must attach to him, sins of his youth (ch. xiii. 26), sins of temper, sins of rash speech (ch. vi. 3, 26; xxxiii. 8—10), and the like. But just, in the sense of "honest," "sincere," "bent on serving God," he may be and he must be, unless he is to be a hypocrite and a castaway (ch. ix. 21; x. 7; xii. 4, etc.). Job holds fast by his innocency, and is pronounced by God himself to be "perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil" (ch. i. 1; ii. 3). He is ultimately approved by God, and accepted (ch. xlii. 7, 8), while those who have tried their best to make him confess himself a sinner are condemned, and only pardoned on his intercession (ch. xlii. 3, 4). Men are thus taught by this book, not certainly without the express intention of the writer, that they can do right if they try, that they can purify themselves, and live noble and worthy lives, and that they are bound to do so.

Lastly, there is the question of man's power to know God, which occupies a considerable space, and is answered, like the preceding question, by drawing a distinction. That man has a knowledge of God to a large extent, knows him to be just, wise, and good, eternal, almighty, omniscient, is assumed throughout the book, and written on almost every page of it. But that man can fully comprehend God is denied, and disproved by very cogent and valid reasonings (ch. xxviii. 12—28; xxxvi. 26—33; xxxvii. 1—23; xxxviii. 4—41; xxxix.; xl.; xli.). Man, therefore, must not presume to sit in judgment upon God, who "doeth great things, which man cannot comprehend" (ch. xxxvii. 5), and "whose ways are past finding out." His attitude must be one of submission, reserve, and reverence. He must continually bear in mind that he has no faculties to grasp the whole range of actual facts and consider their relations one to another, no power to comprehend the scheme of the universe, much less to sound the depths of the being of him who made it. As Bishop Butler points out, in two chapters of his 'Analogy,'[1] that the ignorance of man is a sufficient answer to most of the objections which men are in the habit of urging against the wisdom, equity, and goodness of the Divine government, whether as made known to us by reason or by revelation, so the author of 'Job' is evidently bent on impressing strongly upon us, as one of the main lessons to be learnt from reflection and experience, and one of the main teachings which he would enforce upon us by his treatise, that we are quite incompetent

[1] Pt. i. ch. vii. and pt. ii. ch. iv. Compare his sermon, "On the Ignorance of Man" ('Sermons preached at the Rolls Chapel,' sermon xv. pp. 150—160).

to understand the general scheme of things, and therefore quite unfit to criticize and judge God's doings. He has revealed himself to us, not for speculative, but for practical purposes, and it is our true wisdom to know that we only know him sufficiently for our practical guidance (ch. xxviii. 12—28).

§ 6. Literature of Job.

The earliest commentary on Job is that by Ephrem Syrus, Presbyter of Edessa, who lived in the fourth century after Christ. This work was translated from the Syriac into Latin by Petrus Benedictus, and will be found in his 'Opera Syriaca,' vol. ii. pp. 1—20 (Rome, 1740). It is scanty, and of little value. Jerome's translation, which forms a part of the Vulgate, is, on the contrary, of the highest importance, and should be consulted by all students, as, practically, a most valuable commentary. The work called Jerome's 'Commentary on Job'[1] appears not to be genuine, and may safely be neglected. Some 'Annotations' by Augustine, Bishop of Hippo about A.D. 390—410, are interesting, and will be found in most editions of that author. The most important, however, of the patristic commentaries is that by Gregory the Great, entitled, 'Expositiones in Job, sive Moralium Libri xxxv.,' published separately at Rome in 1475, and at Paris in 1495. This exposition throws little light on the text, but is valued for moral and spiritual purposes. It belongs to the end of the sixth century.

Among Jewish comments the most valuable are those of Aben Ezra[2] (A.D. 1168), Nachmanides[3] (A.D. 1250), and Levi Ben Gershon[4] (A.D. 1326). An Arabic paraphrase by Saadia, and an Arabic commentary by Tanchum, are praised by Ewald.[5] The commentary by Cardinal Caietan[6] (A.D. 1535), the paraphrase of Titelmann[7] (A.D. 1547), the commentary of Steuch[8] (A.D. 1567), the partial commentary of De Huerga[9] (A.D. 1582), and the complete one of Zuniga[10] (A.D. 1584), evince the industry, and in some respects the learning, of scholars belonging to the unreformed Church during the course of the sixteenth century, but are unsatisfactory, since their writers were wholly unacquainted with Hebrew. The best work of this period, written at the very close of the century, and displaying con-

[1] 'In Historiam Jobi Commentariorum Libri iii.,' Basle, 1527.
[2] 'Commentarius in Jobum,' published in the 'Biblia Rabbinica Bombergiana,' Venice, 1525–6.
[3] 'Commentarius in Jobum,' published in the same.
[4] 'Commentarius in Jobum,' Naples, 1487.
[5] 'Das Buch Ijob,' Vorrede, p. xi.
[6] 'Commentarii in Librum Jobi,' Rome, 1535.
[7] 'Elucidatio Paraphrastica in Jobum,' Antwerp, 1547.
[8] 'Enarrationes in Librum Jobi,' Venice, 1567.
[9] 'Commentaria in xviii. Priora Capita Jobi,' Compluti, 1582
[10] 'Commentaria in Librum Job,' Toledo, 1584.

siderable knowledge of the original, is that of De Pineda [1] (A.D. 1597—1600), which contains a *résumé* of all that is most valuable in the labours of his Roman Catholic predecessors. Among the early Reformers, Bucer,[2] Œcolampadius,[3] and Calvin [4] produced works on Job, which have some merit, the 'Conciones' of Calvin having an especial value. These publications were followed by the very elaborate commentary of Mercer [5] in 1575, and by the paraphrase and commentary of Theodore Beza [6] in 1583. Nothing further of much importance was published on the continent by divines of the Reformed communions until the translation, commentary, and paraphrase of Le Clerc [7] (A.D. 1731), which was followed in 1737 by the great work of A. Schultens,[8] to which the present writer begs to acknowledge his great obligations. Rosenmüller says, in his notice of this work, "Schultens surpasses all the commentators who have preceded him in an exact and refined knowledge of the Hebrew tongue, and also of the Arabic, as well as in varied erudition and acuteness of judgment. His chief faults are prolixity in the statement and examination of the views of others, and an indulgence in etymological fancies which have no solid foundation." [9]

In England, the earliest work on Job of any importance was that of Samuel Wesley,[10] published in 1736, almost simultaneously with the *magnum opus* of Schultens. This book was not one of much value, but it was followed, in 1742, by the scholarly production of Dr. Richard Grey,[11] in which the Latin version of Schultens, and a large number of Schultens's notes, were reproduced for the benefit of his own countrymen, while the text also was placed before them, both in Hebrew type and in Roman characters. Attention having been thus drawn in England to the labours of foreign scholars on the Book of Job, several other works on the subject were published by Englishmen in rapid succession, as especially the following: 'A Dissertation on the Book of Job, its Nature, Argument, Age, and Author,' by John Garnett, B.D. (London, 1751); 'The Book of Job, with a Paraphrase from the third verse of the third chapter, where it is supposed

[1] 'Commentariorum in Librum Job Libri xiii., adjuncta singulis capitibus sua Paraphrasi,' Matriti, 1597–1601.

[2] 'Commentaria in Librum Job,' Strasburg, 1528.

[3] 'Exegemata in Job et in Danielem,' Basle, 1532.

[4] 'Conciones in Jobum,' Geneva, 1569.

[5] 'Commentarii in Librum Job,' Geneva, 1575.

[6] 'Jobus, Commentario et Paraphrasi Illustratus,' Geneva, 1583.

[7] 'Veteris Testamenti Libri Hagiographi, Jobus, Davidis Psalmi, Salomonis Proverbia, Concionatrix, et Canticum Canticorum ex translatione Joh. Clerici, cum ejusdem Commentario philologico in omnes memoratos libros, et paraphrasi in Jobum et Psalmos,' Amsterdam, 1731.

[8] 'Liber Jobi, cum Nova Versione ad Hebræum Fontem, et Commentario Perpetuo,' Leyden, 1737.

[9] 'Elenchus Interpretum Jobi' (prefixed to his 'Scholia in Jobum'), p. xxxvi.

[10] 'Dissertationes et Conjecturæ in Librum Jobi,' London, 1736.

[11] 'Liber Jobi, in Versiculos metrice Divisus, cum Versione Latina A. Schultens, notisque ex ejus Commentario excerptis,' London, 1742.

the metre begins, to the seventh verse of the forty-second chapter, where it ends,' by Leonard Chappelow, B.D., Arabic Professor (Cambridge and London, 1752); and 'An Essay towards a new English Version of the Book of Job, from the original Hebrew, with a Commentary,' by Thomas Heath (London, 1755). It cannot be said that these books were of any great importance, or advanced much either the critical knowledge of the text of Job or a correct and judicious exegesis.

No great progress was made in either of these two respects until the commencement of the present century. Then, in 1806, Rosenmüller published the first edition of his remarkable work,[1] which he afterwards, in 1824, republished in an enlarged form, in his 'Scholia in Vetus Testamentum,' pars quinta. This was a great advance on all previous efforts; and it was shortly followed by the even more striking production of Ewald, 'Das Buch Ijob' (Gottingen, 1836)—a work exhibiting profound learning and great originality of genius, but disfigured by many wild speculations, and involving an entire denial of the inspiration of Scripture. Comments by Umbreit, Hahn,[2] Hirzel,[3] and Dillmann[4] have since issued from the German press, which are generally characterized by diligence and ingenuity, but lack the genius of Ewald, while they avoid, however, some of his eccentricities. The latest German comment of importance is that of Merx, a well-known Orientalist, which contains a Hebrew text, a new translation, and an introduction, together with critical notes. This work exhibits much learning, but a singular lack of judgment.[5]

M. Renan's 'Livre de Job' (Paris, 1859) is the last word of French scholarship on the subject before us. It has all his merits, but also all his defects. The style is clear, eloquent, brilliant; the appreciation of the literary excellences of Job, keen; the scholarship advanced, if not faultless; but the exegesis leaves much to be desired.

In England, during the present century, the most important work which has appeared, dealing exclusively with Job, is that of Dr. Lee.[6] Published in the year 1837, after the second edition of Rosenmüller had seen the light, but before the great work of Ewald, this volume is deserving of the attentive consideration of all students. It is the composition of an advanced Hebraist, and of one well versed, besides, in other Oriental studies. It exhibits much critical acumen, and great independence of thought and judgment. No subsequent commentary wholly supersedes it; and it will probably long retain a special value on account of its copious illustrations

[1] 'Jobus: Latine Vertit et Annotatione Perpetua illustravit,' E. T. C. Rosenmüller, Leipsic, 1806.

[2] Published in 1850.

[3] Published in the 'Kurz-Gefasstes Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament,' Leipsic, 1849 and 1852 (1st and 2nd edit.).

[4] Published in the third edition of the same. [5] Published in 1871.

[6] 'The Book of the Patriarch Job, translated from the Original Hebrew, with an Introduction and a Commentary,' by Samuel Lee, D.D., London, 1837.

from the Persian and the Arabic. Other useful English commentaries are those of Bishop Wordsworth (London, 1865–71), Canon Cook (London, 1873),[1] and Dr. Stanley Leathes (London, Paris, and New York, 1884).[2] Canon Cook also published an important article on Job (not altogether superseded by the Introduction to his 'Commentary') in Dr. William Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' in the year 1863. An article of less value, but still of some interest, will be found in Kitto's 'Biblical Cyclopædia' (Edinburgh, 1856). Mr. Froude's essay on 'The Book of Job' belongs to the year 1853, when it appeared in the *Westminster Review*. Highly ingenious, and characterized by his wonted vigour and eloquence, it will always be read with pleasure and advantage, but is unsatisfactory from a deficiency of critique, and a rather narrow prejudice against orthodoxy. Among other minor works on Job are 'Quæstionum in Jobeidos Locos Vexatos,' by Hupfeld, published in 1853; 'Animadversiones Philologicæ in Jobum,' by Schultens (Utrecht, 1708); 'Jobi Physica Sacra,' by Scheuchzern (Zurich, 1721); 'Kleine Geographisch-historische Abhandlung zur Erläuterung einiger Stellen Mosis, und Vornehmlich des ganzen Buchs Hiob,' by Koch (Lemgo, 1747); 'Observationes Miscellaneæ in Librum Job,' by Bouillier (Amsterdam, 1758); 'Animadversiones in Librum Job,' by Eckermann (Lubeck, 1779); 'Notes on the Book of Job,' by the Rev. A. Barnes (London, 1847); 'Comment on Job,' by Keil and Delitzsch (in T. Clark's series), Edinburgh, 1866; 'The Book of Job, as expounded to his Cambridge Pupils,' by Hermann Hedwig Bernard (Cambridge, 1884); and 'Commentary on Job,' by the Rev. T. Robinson, D.D., in the 'Preacher's Commentary on the Old Testament' (London, 1884).

[1] Published in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. pp. 1—145.

[2] Published in the 'Old Testament Commentary for English Readers,' of Bishop Ellicott, vol. iv. pp. 1—75.

THE BOOK OF JOB.

INTRODUCTORY SECTION. CH. I. AND II. HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF JOB'S AFFLICTIONS.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

The "Historical Introduction" to Job extends to two chapters. In the first we are given an account, firstly, of his outward circumstances—his abode, wealth, family, etc., and of his character (vers. 1—5); secondly, of the circumstances under which God allowed him to be tried by afflictions (vers. 6—12); thirdly, of the earlier afflictions themselves (vers. 13—19); and, fourthly, of his behaviour under them (vers. 20—22). The second chapter gives, firstly, the ground of his further trial (vers. 1—6); secondly, the nature of it, and his behaviour under it (vers. 7—10); and thirdly, the coming of his three friends to him, and their behaviour (vers. 11—13). The narrative is characterized by remarkable simplicity and directness. It has a decided air of antiquity about it, and presents but few linguistic difficulties.

Ver. 1.—**There was a man.** This opening presents to us the Book of Job as a detached work, separate from and independent of all others. The historical books are generally united each to each by the *vau* connective. **In the land of Uz.** Uz, or Huz (Hebrew, עוּץ), seems to have been originally, like Judah, Moab, Ammon, Edom, etc., the name of a man. It was borne by a son of Nahor, the brother of Abraham (Gen. xxii. 21), and again by a son of Dishan, the son of Seir the Horite (Gen. xxxvi. 28). Some regard it as also a personal name in Gen. x. 23. But from this use it passed to the descendants of one or more of these patriarchs, and from them to the country or countries which they inhabited. The "land of Uz" is spoken of, not only in this passage, but also in Jer. xxv. 20 and Lam. iv. 21. These last-cited places seem to show that Jeremiah's "land of Uz" was in or near Edom, and therefore south of Palestine; but as Uzzites, like so many nations of these parts, were migratory, we need not be surprised if the name Uz was, at different times, attached to various localities. Arabian tradition regards the region of the Hauran, north-east of Palestine, as Job's country. The other geographical names in the Book of Job point to a more eastern location, one not far remote from the southern Euphrates, and the adjacent parts of Arabia. Sheba, Dedan, Teman, Buz, Shuah, and Chesed (Casdim) all point to this locality. On the other hand, there is a passage in the inscriptions of Asshur-bani-pal (circ. B.C. 650—625) which, associating together the names of Huz and Buz (Khazu and Bazu), appears to place them both in Central Arabia, not far from the Jebel Shammar ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 470). My own conclusion would be that, while the name "land of Uz" designated at various periods various localities, Job's "land of Uz" lay a little west of the Lower Euphrates, on the borders of Chaldea and Arabia. **Whose name was Job.** In the Hebrew the name is "Iyyôb," whence the "Eyoub" of the Arabs and the "Hiob" of the Germans. It is quite a distinct name from that of the third son of Issachar (Gen. xlvi. 18), which is properly expressed by "Job," being יוֹב. *Iyyôb* is supposed to be derived from *âîb* (אָיַב), "to be hostile," and to mean "cruelly or hostilely treated," in which case we must suppose it to have been first given to the patriarch in his later life, and to have superseded some other, as "Peter" superseded "Simon," and "Paul" superseded

"Saul." According to a Jewish tradition, adopted by some of the Christian Fathers, Job's original name was "Jobab," and under this name he reigned as King of Edom (Gen. xxxvi. 33). But this kingship is scarcely compatible with the view given of him in the Book of Job. The supposed connection of the name of Juba with that of Job is very doubtful. **And that man was perfect.** *Tam* (תָּם), the word translated "perfect," seems to mean "complete, entire, not wanting in any respect." It corresponds to the Greek τέλειος, and the Latin *integer* (comp. Horace, 'Od.,' i. 22. 1, "Integer vitæ, scelerisque purus"). It does not mean "absolutely sinless," which Job was not (comp. ch. ix. 20; xl. 4). **And upright.** This is the exact meaning of *yâshâr* (יָשָׁר). "The Book of Jasher" was "the Book of the Upright," (*βιβλίον τοῦ εὐθοῦς*, 2 Sam. i. 18). **One that feared God, and eschewed evil;** literally, *fearing God and departing from evil.* The same testimony is given of Job by God himself in ver. 8, and again in ch. ii. 3 (comp. also Ezek. xiv. 14, 20). We must suppose Job to have reached as near perfection as was possible for man at the time.

Ver. 2.—**And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.** The numbers three and seven, and their product, ten, are certainly sacred numbers, regarded as expressive of ideal perfection. But this does not prevent their being also historical. As Canon Cook observes, "Striking coincidences between outward facts and ideal numbers are not uncommon in the purely historical portions of Scripture" ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 20). There are *twelve* apostles, *seventy* (7 × 10) disciples sent out by our Lord, *seven* deacons, *three* synoptic Gospels, *twelve* minor prophets, *seven* princes of Persia and Media, *ten* sons of Haman, *three* of Noah, Gomer, Terah, Levi, and Zeruiah, *seven* of Japhet, Mizraim, Seir the Horite, Gad, and Jesse (1 Chron. ii. 13—15), *twelve* of Ishmael, *twelve* of Jacob, *etc.* Our Lord is *thirty* (3 × 10) years old when he begins to teach, and his ministry lasts *three* years; he heals *seven* lepers, casts out of Mary Magdalene *seven* devils, speaks upon the cross *seven* "words," bids Peter forgive his brother "*seventy* times *seven*," etc. It is thus not only in vision or in prophecy, or in symbolical language, that these "ideal numbers" come to the front far more frequently than others, but also in the most matter-of-fact histories.

Ver. 3.—**His substance also;** literally, *his acquisition* (from קָנָה, *acquirere*), but used of wealth generally. **Seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses.** Note, first of all, the absence of horses or mules from this list—an indication of high antiquity. Horses were not known in Egypt till the time of the shepherd-kings (about B.C. 1900—1650), who introduced them from Asia. None are given to Abraham by the Pharaoh contemporary with him (Gen. xii. 16). We hear of none as possessed by the patriarchs in Palestine; and, on the whole, it is not probable that they had been known in Western Asia very long before their introduction into Egypt. They are natives of Central Asia, where they are still found wild, and passed gradually by exportation to the more southern regions, Armenia, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Arabia. Note, secondly, that the items of Job's wealth accord with those of Abraham's (Gen. xii. 16). Thirdly, note that Job's wealth in cattle is not beyond credibility. An Egyptian lord of the time of the fourth dynasty relates that he possessed above 1000 oxen and cows, 974 sheep, 2,235 goats, and 760 asses (Rawlinson's 'Egypt,' vol. ii. p. 88). Further, the proportion of the camels is noticeable, and implies a residence on the borders of the desert (see the comment on ver. 1). **And a very great household;** literally, *and a very great service*, or *retinue of servants.* Oriental emirs and shcikhs consider it necessary for their dignity to maintain a number of attendants and retainers (except, perhaps, in feudal times) quite unknown to the West. Abraham had three hundred and eighteen trained servants, born in his house (Gen. xiv. 14). Egyptian households were "full of domestics," comprising attendants of all kinds—grooms, artisans, clerks, musicians, messengers, and the like. A sheikh, situated as Job was, would also require a certain number of guards, while for his cattle he would need a large body of shepherds, oxherds, and the like (see Birch's 'Egypt from the Earliest Times,' p. 44). **So that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.** The *Beney Kedem*, or "men of the east," literally, *sons of the east*, seems to include the entire population between Palestine and the Euphrates (Gen. xxix. 1; Judg. vi. 3; vii. 12; viii. 10; Isa. xi. 14; Jer. xlix. 28, etc.). Many tribes of Arabs are similarly designated at the present day, *e.g.* the Beni Harb, the Beni Suhr, the Beni Naim, the Beni Lam, etc. It would seem that the Phœnicians must have called themselves Beni Kedem when they settled in Greece, since the Greeks knew them as "Cadmeians," and made them descendants of a mythic "Cadm-us" (Herod., v. 57—59). The name "Saracens" is to some extent analogous, since it means "Men of the morning."

Ver. 4.—**And his sons went and feasted.** "Went and feasted" seems to mean "were

in the habit of feasting" (Rosenmüller, Lee). In their houses. Each had his own residence, and the residence was not a tent, but a "house." Job and his sons were not mere nomads, but belonged to the settled population. The same is implied by the "ploughing of the oxen" (ver. 14), and indeed by Job's "*yoke* of oxen" in ver. 3. **Every one his day.** Most commentators regard these feasts as birthday festivities. Each son in his turn, when his birthday arrived, entertained his six brothers. Others think that each of the seven brothers had his own special day of the week on which he received his brothers at his table, so that the feasting was continuous. But this scarcely suits the context. And it is admitted that "his day" (in ch. iii. 1) means "his birthday." The celebration of birthdays by means of a feast was a very widespread custom in the East (see Gen. xl. 20; Herod., i. 133; ix. 110; Mark xiv. 21). **And sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.** This by itself is sufficient to show that the feasts were occasional, not continuous. Constant absence of daughters, day after day, from the parental board is inconceivable.

Ver. 5.—**And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about**; rather, *when the days of the feasting had come round*; i.e. whenever one of the birthdays had arrived in due course, and the feasting had taken place. **That Job sent and sanctified them.** In the old world, outside the Mosaic Law, the father of the family was the priest, to whom alone it belonged to bless, purify, and offer sacrifice. Job, after each birthday-feast, sent, it would seem, for his sons, and purified them by the accustomed ablutions, or possibly by some other ceremonial process, regarding it as probable that, in the course of their feasting, they had contracted some defilement. It would seem by the next clause that the purification took place at the close of the day of festivity. **And rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings.** Burnt offerings were instituted soon after the Fall, as we learn from Gen. iv. 4, and were in common use long before the Mosaic Law was given (see Gen. viii. 20; xxii. 8, 13; xxxi. 54; Exod. xviii. 12; 'Records of the Past,' vol. ii. pp. 20, 21; vol. xii. pp. 49, 71, etc.). The practice was common, so far as appears, to all the nations of antiquity, except the Persians (Herod., i. 132). According to **the number of them all.** One, apparently, for each child, since each might have sinned in the way suggested. The offerings were clearly intended as expiatory. **For Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.** Two wholly different meanings are assigned by good Hebraists to the expression ברך אלהים. According to some, ברך has its usual sense, "to bless," and אלהים signifies "false gods," or "idols;" according to the others, who form the great majority, אלהים has its usual sense of "God," and ברך has the unusual sense of "curse" (so Buxtorf, Rosenmüller, Schultens, Cook, Stanley Leathes, among moderns, and among ancient authorities, the Septuagint and the Vulgate). How the same word comes to have the two wholly opposite senses of "to bless" and "to curse" has been differently explained. Some think that, as men blessed their friends both on receiving them and on bidding them adieu, the word ברך got the sense of "bidding adieu to," "dismissing," "renouncing." Others regard the use of ברך for "to curse" as a mere euphemism, and compare the use of *sacer* and *sacrari* in Latin, and such expressions as "*Bless* the stupid man!" "What a *blessed* nuisance!" in English. The maledictory sense seems to be established by ch. ii. 9 and 1 Kings xxi. 10. By "cursing God in their hearts," Job probably means "forgetting him," "putting him out of sight," "not giving him the honour which is his due." **Thus did Job continually**; literally, as in the margin, *all the days*; i.e. whenever one of the festival-days occurred.

Ver. 6.—**Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord.** By "the sons of God" it is generally admitted that, in this place, the angels are meant (so again in ch. xxxviii. 7). The meaning of the phrase is probably different in Gen. vi. 2. Angels and men are alike "sons of God," as created by him, in his image, to obey and serve him. Christ, the "Only Begotten," is his Son in quite a different sense. We may gather, perhaps, from this place and ch. ii. 1 that there are fixed times at which the angelic host, often sent out by the Almighty on distant errands, has to gather together, one and all, before the great white throne, to pay homage to their Lord, and probably to give an account of their doings. **And Satan came also among them.** The word "Satan" has the article prefixed to it (השטן) here and elsewhere in Job, as in Zech. iii. 1, 2 and in Luke xxii. 31; Rev. xii. 9. Thus accompanied, it is less a proper name than an appellative—"the adversary" (comp. 1 Pet. v. 8; ὁ ἀντίδικος). In 1 Chron. xxi. 1, without the article, it is undoubtedly a proper name, as in the New Testament, *passim*. Accusation of men before God is one of the special offices of the evil spirit (see Zech. iii. 1, 2), who is "the accuser of the brethren, he that accuses

them before God day and night" (Rev. xii. 10). The accusations that he makes may be either true or false, but they are so often false that his ordinary New Testament name is ὁ διάβολος, "the Slanderer." The existence of an evil spirit must have been known to all who read or heard the story of the fall of man (Gen. iii.), and the descriptive epithet, "the Adversary," is likely to have been in use from a very early date. The notion that the Satan of the Old Testament is a reflex of the Persian Ahriman, and that the Jews derived their belief upon the subject from the Persians, is quite untenable. The character and position of Satan in the Hebrew system are quite unlike those of Ahriman (*Angro-mainyus*) in the religion of the Zoroastrians (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. iii. pp. 104—113).

Ver. 7.—**And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou?** God condescends to address the evil spirit, and asks him questions—not that anything could be added to his own knowledge, but that the angels, who were present (ver. 6), might hear and have their attention called to the doings of Satan, which would need to be watched by them, and sometimes to be restrained or (it may be) prevented (comp. 1 Kings xxii. 20, where again the colloquy is opened by God asking a question). **Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.** Satan, therefore, is not himself, like the bulk of his evil angels, "reserved in everlasting *chains* under darkness to the judgment of the last day" (Jude 6). He searches the whole earth continually, never pausing, never resting, but "going about," as St. Peter says (1 Pet. v. 8), "like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," waiting till the coming of the "thousand years," when an angel will "bind him with a great chain, and cast him into the bottomless pit" (Rev. xx. 1, 2). It will be a happy day for the earth when that time comes.

Ver. 8.—**And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered?** literally, *Hast thou set thine heart on?* equivalent to "Hast thou given thine attention to?" (comp. Isa. xli. 22; Hag. i. 5, 7). **My servant Job**; *i.e.* "my *true* servant, faithful in all that he does" (comp. Heb. iii. 5). It is a high honour to any man for God to acknowledge him as his servant (see Josh. i. 2; 1 Kings xi. 13, etc.). **That there is none like him in the earth**; rather, *for there is none like him* (see the Revised Version). This is given as a reason why Satan should have paid special attention to his case, and is a sort of challenge: "Thou that art always spying out some defect or other in a righteous man, hast thou noted my servant Job, and discovered **any fault in him?" A perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil** (see the comment on ver. 1).

Ver. 9.—**Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?** Satan insinuates that Job's motive is purely selfish. He serves God, not for love of God, or for love of goodness, but for what he gets by it. Satan is too shrewd to endeavour, as Job's friends do later, to pick holes in Job's conduct. No; that is exemplary. But the true character of acts is determined by the motive. What is Job's motive? Does he not serve God to gain his protection and blessing? Similarly, in modern times, ungodly men argue that religious and devout persons are religious and devout with a view to their own interest, because they expect to gain by it, either in this world, or in the next, or in both. This is a form of calumny which it is impossible to escape. And bad men, who are conscious to themselves of never acting except from a selfish motive, may well imagine the same of others. It is rarely that such an insinuation can be disproved. In the present instance God vindicates his servant, and covers the adversary with shame, as the other adversaries and calumniators of righteousness will be covered at the last day.

Ver. 10.—**Hast not thou made an hedge about him?** *i.e.* "hedged him around, protected him, made a sort of invisible fence about him, through which no evil could creep." This was undoubtedly true. God *had* so protected him. But the question was not as to this fact, but as to Job's motive. Was it mere prudence?—the desire to secure a continuance of this protection? **And about his house**; *i.e.* "his family"—his sons and daughters—the members of his household. **And about all that he hath on every side.** His possessions—land, houses, cattle, live stock of all kinds, furniture, goods and chattels. **Thou hast blessed the work of his hands** (comp. Ps. i. 3, where it is said of the righteous man, that "whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper"). So it was with Job. God's blessing was upon him, and success crowned all his enterprises. "The work of his hands" will include everything that he attempted. **And his substance is increased in the land.** In the former clause we have the cause, God's blessing; in the latter the effect, a great increase in Job's "substance," or "cattle" (marginal reading). (On the final number of his cattle, see ver. 3.)

Ver. 11.—**But put forth thine hand now**; literally, *send forth thy hand*, as a man does who strikes a blow (comp. Gen. xxii. 12; Exod. iii. 20; ix. 15, etc.). **And touch all that he hath**; or, *smite all that he hath*; i.e. ruin him, strip him of his possessions. **And he will curse thee to thy face.** Professor

Lee translates, "If not, he will bless thee to thy face;" the LXX., "Surely he will bless thee to thy face;" Canon Cook, "See if he will not renounce thee openly." But the majority of Hebraists agree with the Authorized Version. Satan suggests that, if Job be stripped of his possessions, he will openly curse God, and renounce his worship. Here he did not so much calumniate, or lie, as show the evil thoughts that were in his own heart. No doubt he believed that Job would act as he said.

Ver. 12.—**And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power**; literally, *in thy hand*, as in the margin. God withdraws his protection from Job's possessions; he does not himself take them away, as Satan had suggested (ver. 11); but he allows Satan, who can do nothing without his allowance, to deal with them as he pleases. As God dispenses blessings through the angelic host (Ps. xci. 11, 12; Heb. i. 14), so he, sometimes at any rate, allows spirits of evil to be the ministers of his chastisements. **Only upon himself put not forth thine hand.** The *person* of Job was not to be touched as yet. He was to be injured only in his belongings. **So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.** Having obtained a permission which he thought would serve his purpose, Satan did not delay, but promptly departed, to take advantage of the permission given him. To be in the presence of God must be an intense pain to the evil one.

Ver. 13.—**And there was a day when his sons and his daughters** were **eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house.** One of the birthdays, the eldest brother's probably, had come round, and the ordinary gathering (see ver. 4) had taken place—the feasting and drinking had begun, while the father, remaining in his own house, was perhaps interceding with God for his children, or anxiously considering the possibility that, in their light-hearted merriment, they might have put God away altogether from their thoughts, and so have practically renounced him, when the series of calamities began. How often calamity comes to us when we are least expecting it, when all seems quiet about us, when everything is prospering—nay, even when a high festival-time has come, and the joy-bells are sounding in our ears, and our hearts are elated within us! Job was, at any rate, spared the sudden plunge from exuberant joy into the depths of woe. It was his habit to preserve an even temper, and neither to be greatly exalted, nor, unless under an extremity of suffering, to be greatly depressed. He was now, however, about to be subjected to a fiery trial.

Ver. 14.—**And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were ploughing, and the asses** (literally, *the she-asses*) **feeding beside them** (literally, *at their hand*). Note that, notwithstanding the festival, labour was still going on; there was no general holiday; the oxen were at work in the field, not perhaps all of them, but the greater number, for the ploughing-time is short in the Oriental countries, and the "earing" is all done at the same time. The bulk of Job's labourers were probably engaged in the business, and they had brought the asses with them, probably to keep them under their eye, lest thieves should carry them off, when the catastrophe related in the next verse occurred.

Ver. 15.—**And the Sabeans** (literally, *Sheba*) **fell upon them, and took them away.** The Sabeans were the principal people of Arabia in ancient times, and the name seems to be used sometimes in the general sense of "Arabs" (see Ps. lxxii. 10, 15; Jer. vi. 20). We may suppose that here, either the general sense is intended, or, if the specific one, then that, at the date whereto the story of Job belongs, there were Sabeans in Eastern as well as in Southern Arabia, in the neighbourhood of the Upper Persian Gulf as well as in the neighbourhood of the Indian Ocean. The plundering habits of all the Arab tribes are well known. Strabo says that the Sabeans, even at the height of their prosperity, made excursions for the sake of plunder into Arabia Petræa and even Syria (Strab., xvi. 4). **Yea, they have slain**; rather, *they slew*, or *they smote*. **The servants**; literally, *the young men*; i.e. the labourers who were engaged in ploughing, and would be in duty bound to resist the carrying off of the cattle. **With the edge of the sword.** The lance is the chief weapon of the modern Bedouin, but it may have been different anciently. Or the expression used may merely mean "with weapons of war." **And I only am escaped alone to tell thee.** Professor Lee translates, "And I have *hardly* escaped alone to tell thee."

Ver. 16.—**While he was yet speaking**; literally, *he, yet speaking*; ἔτι τούτου λαλοῦντος, LXX. The writer hurries his words to express the rapidity with which one announcement followed another (see vers. 17, 18). **There came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven.** "The fire of God" is undoubtedly lightning (comp. Numb. xi. 1—3; 2 Kings i. 10, 14; Ps. lxxviii. 21). This Satan, under permission, might wield, as being "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. ii. 2); but there is, no doubt, something very extraordinary in a storm extending over the pastures occupied by nine thousand sheep, and destroying the whole of them (Cook).

Still, it cannot be said that such a storm is impossible; and perhaps the damage done was not greater than that which followed on the seventh Egyptian plague (see Exod. ix. 18—26). **And hath burned up the sheep, and the servants**; literally, *the young men*; i.e. the shepherds who were in attendance upon the sheep. **And consumed them**; literally, *devoured them*. Fire is often said to "devour" what it destroys. "The Egyptians," says Herodotus, "believe fire to be a live animal, which eats whatever it can seize, and then, glutted with the food, dies with the matter which it feeds upon" (Herod., iii. 16). **And I only am escaped alone to tell thee** (see the comment on ver. 15).

Ver. 17.—**While he was yet speaking, there came also another** (see the comment on ver. 16). The exact repetition of a clause, without the alteration of a word or a letter, is very archaic (comp. Gen. i. 4, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; and for another repetition, Gen. i. 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). **And said, The Chaldeans**; literally, *the Casdim* (כַּשְׂדִּים), which is the word uniformly used in the Hebrew where the Authorized Version has "Chaldeans" or "Chaldees." The native name seems to have been *Kaldi* or *Kaldai*, whence the Greek Χαλδαῖοι, and the Latin *Chaldæi*. It is very difficult to account for the Hebrews having substituted a sibilant for the liquid; but it was certainly done from the earliest period of their literature (Gen. xi. 31) to the latest (see Targums, *passim*). Some derive the Hebrew *Casdim* from "Chesed," one of the sons of Nahor (Gen. xxii. 22); but Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees before Chesed was born (Gen. xxii. 20). And there is no evidence of any connection between Chesed, who was born at Haran, and the Babylonian Chaldeans. The Chaldeans were probably early settlers in Babylonia; by degrees they were pressed to the south, and gave the name of Chaldea to Lower Babylonia, or the tract nearest to the Persian Gulf (Strab., xvi. 1, § 66; Ptolemy, 'Geographia,' v. 20). From a remote date they were a settled and civilized people; but no doubt originally they had the same predatory instincts as their neighbours. **Made out three bands.** Professor Lee translates, "appointed three captains," which is a possible meaning of the words; but the weight of authority supports the rendering of the Authorized Version. **And fell upon the camels.** Perhaps the most valuable part of Job's possessions. Three thousand camels would be regarded as a splendid capture by any body of Oriental marauders. **And have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants** (literally, *the young men*, as in ver. 16) **with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee** (compare the comment on ver. 15).

Ver. 18.—**While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said** (see the comment on ver. 16), **Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house** (comp. ver. 13). It is a common proverb that "misfortunes never come singly." Shakespeare says they "come not single foes, but in battalions." Still, so overwhelming a series of calamities falling upon a single individual all in one day could not but strike those who heard of them as abnormal, and almost certainly supernatural. So Job's friends concluded (ch. v. 17).

Ver. 19.—**And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness**; rather, *from across the wilderness*—a wind which began in the region lying on the other side of the wilderness, and sweeping across it, came with full force upon the inhabited tract where Job and his sons were dwelling. The desert winds are often very violent. Generally they are laden with heavy clouds of fine sand, which cause intolerable discomfort and thirst; but when they sweep over a rocky and gravelly region, they are simply of extreme violence, without other distressing feature. They then resemble the hurricanes or tornadoes of the West Indies. We may reasonably connect this hurricane with the thunderstorm of ver. 16. **And smote the four corners of the house, and it fell.** The "houses" of the East are not the solid structures of heavy timber, brick, and stone to which we of the West are accustomed, but light fabrics of planks and palisades, thatched mostly with reeds. Houses of this kind, when the rain descends, and the winds blow and beat against them (Matt. vii. 6), readily fall. **Upon the young men**; rather, *the young persons*. *Na'ar* (נַעַר) is of both genders in early Hebrew (see Gen. xxiv. 14, etc.). **And they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.** Again, the calamity has a completeness which marks it as supernatural. The fall of a house does not usually destroy all the inmates.

Ver. 20.—**Then Job arose.** Not till the last calamity was announced did Job stir. The loss of his wealth little moved him. But when he heard that his children were destroyed, all of them "at one fell swoop," then he could endure no longer, but rose from the seat on which he was sitting, and showed forth his grief. First he **rent his mantle**, "the outer robe worn by men of rank" (Cook)—a customary sign of grief in the ancient world (Gen. xxxvii. 29, 34; xliv. 13; 1 Kings xxi. 27; 2 Kings xix. 1; Esth. iv. 1; Joel ii. 13; Herod., viii. 99; Livy, i. 13, etc.); **then he shaved his head**—another

less usual but still not uncommon sign of grief, forbidden under the Law of the Jews (Lev. xxi. 5; Deut. xiv. 1), but widely practised by the Gentiles (Isa. xv. 2; Jer. xlvii. 5; xlviii. 37; Herod., ii. 36; ix. 24; Plut.,'Vit. Pelop.,' § 34; Q. Curt.,'Vit. Alex.,' x. 5, § 17). **And fell down upon the ground, and worshipped.** After giving vent to his natural grief, Job made an act of adoration. Recognizing the fact that adversity, as well as prosperity comes from God, and submitting himself to the Divine will, he "worshipped." How often has his act flashed across the minds of Christians, and enabled them, in their dark hour, to imitate him, and repeat his words, "The Lord gave," etc.!

Ver. 21.—**And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither.** There is some difficulty in the word "thither," since no man returns to his mother's womb (John iii. 4), at death or otherwise. The expression must not be pressed. It arises out of the analogy, constantly felt and acknowledged, between "mother" earth and a man's actual mother (comp. Ps. cxxix. 15). **The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.** Job is here represented as knowing God by his name "Jehovah," though elsewhere the "great Name" appears once only in the words of Job (ch. xii. 9), and never in the words of his friends. The natural conclusion is that the name was known in the land of Uz at the time, but was very rarely used—scarcely, except in moments of excitement. **Blessed be the Name of the Lord**; literally, *may the Name of Jehovah be blessed!* The emphatic word is kept for the last. According to Satan, Job was to have "cursed God to his face" (ver. 11). The event is that he openly and resolutely blesses God. That the same word is used in its two opposite senses rather accentuates the antithesis.

Ver. 22.—**In all this Job sinned not.** It was only the commencement of the probation; but, so far, at any rate, Job had not sinned—he had preserved his integrity, had spoken and done rightly. **Nor charged God foolishly**; literally, *gave not folly to God*, which is explained to mean either "did not attribute to God anything inconsistent with wisdom and goodness" (Delitzsch, Merx), or "did not utter any foolishness against God" (Ewald, Dillmann, Cook). The latter is probably the true meaning (comp. ch. vi. 6; xxiv. 12).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The hero of the poem.* I. THE PATRIARCH'S NAME. Job. 1. *Historical.* Not fictitious, but real (Ezek. xiv. 14; Jas. v. 11). Even if the Book of Job proceeded from the brilliant Solomonic period, the person of Job must be looked for in remote patriarchal times. 2. *Significant.* Meaning "Persecuted," or "Repenting," if not better connected with a root denoting "joyous exultation." Scripture names are frequently suggestive of traits in character (*e.g.* Jacob, Peter, Barnabas) or points in history (*e.g.* Abraham, Israel, Benjamin, Samuel). 3. *Illustrious.* Allied to that of princes (Gen. xlvi. 13; xxxvi. 33), like whom probably he was descended from the father of the faithful (Gen. xxv. 6). The piety, no less than the intellectual endowments, of ancestors sometimes reappears in their posterity. 4. *Honoured.* Commended by God (Ezek. xiv. 14), extolled by St. James (v. 11), immortalized by the Hebrew bard.

II. THE PATRIARCH'S COUNTRY. Uz. 1. *Heathen.* Though considerably civilized, as surviving monuments attest, the sons of the East were not embraced within the Abrahamic covenant, in which respect they fell behind the sons of Israel (Rom. ix. 4). For countries, as for individuals, the institutions of religion are a higher honour and a greater privilege than the blessings of civilization. Yet: 2. *Not God-forsaken.* If Job's countrymen, like Abraham's, were addicted to idolatry (ch. xxxi. 26—28), it is apparent that a remnant still adhered to the primeval faith of mankind. Probably no age or people has ever been wholly bereft of light from heaven or of the gracious influences of God's Spirit. In the darkest times and most idolatrous lands God has been able to find a seed to serve him (1 Kings xix. 18; Rom. xi. 4, 5).

III. THE PATRIARCH'S PIETY. 1. *Perfect.* Used of Noah (Gen. vi. 9) and of Abraham (Gen. xvii. 1); describes the patriarch's religious character with reference to itself as (1) complete, full-orbed, well-proportioned, thoroughly symmetrical, possessing all the attributes and qualities indispensable to spiritual manhood—an ideal after which Old Testament saints strove (Ps. cxix. 6) and New Testament believers aspired (Acts xxiv. 16), and which by Christ (Matt. v. 48), Paul (1 Thess. v. 23), and by St. James (i. 4) is propounded as the goal of Christian attainment; and as (2) sincere, clear and

transparent in motive, single and undivided in aim, pure and unmixed in affection, without guile, without hypocrisy, without duplicity—a quality again exemplified by David (Ps. xxvi. 1), Zacharias and Elisabeth (Luke i. 6), Nathanael (John i. 47), St. Paul (2 Cor. iv. 2), and enjoined by Christ as a perpetual obligation (Col. iii. 22; 1 Tim. i. 5). 2. *Upright.* Defining Job's piety in its relation to the law of right, as that which was "straight," or without deviation (*i.e.* conscious; Eccles. vii. 20), in either thought or act from the prescribed path of duty, and also distinguishing it from the "crooked ways" of the ungodly (Ps. cxxv. 4, 5; Prov. ii. 15), against which saints are warned (Josh. i. 7; Prov. iv. 25, 27), and which they strive to shun (Ps. ci. 3; Heb. xiii. 18). 3. *God-fearing.* Setting forth the aspect which Job's piety maintained towards God—an outlook not of dark, slavish terror, but of bright filial reverence and holy awe, such solemn and profound veneration as a contemplation of the Divine character is fitted to inspire (Ps. lxxxix. 7; xcix. 3), as Abraham cherished (Gen. xxii. 12), as is inculcated upon Christians (Heb. xii. 28), and as lies at the foundation of all true greatness (Ps. cxi. 10; ch. xxviii. 28; Prov. i. 7). 4. *Sin-hating.* Completing the portrait of the patriarch's religious character by depicting the attitude in which it stood to moral evil, whether in himself or in the world around, which was not a position of indifference or neutrality, but of active and determined hostility—a necessary feature in the character of the good man as portrayed in Scripture (Ps. xxxiv. 14; xxxvii. 27; Prov. xiv. 6; Eph. v. 11; 1 John iii. 3, 6).

IV. THE PATRIARCH'S ESTATE. 1. *Extensive.* It comprised seven thousand sheep, bespeaking him an opulent flockmaster; three thousand camels, implying that he acted as a princely merchant; five hundred yoke of oxen, pointing to a large farm; and five hundred she-asses, which were highly prized for their milk; while along with these it embraced "a very great household," or a multitude of servants, such as ploughmen, shepherds, camel-drivers, besides guards, overseers, traffickers, and scribes; from which it is certain that the patriarch could not have been an idler—thus showing that piety is not incompatible with great business activity, or the ordinary occupations of life necessarily detrimental to the culture of the soul (Rom. xii. 11). 2. *Valuable.* The different items of the above catalogue clearly show that Job was rich, material wealth being in his case allied with spiritual treasure, thus proving that, though good men are not always rich, as unfortunately rich men are not always good, it is yet by no means impossible to be both; witness Abraham (Gen. xiii. 2), Isaac (Gen. xxvi. 13, 14), Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 10), Joseph of Arimathæa (Matt. xxvii. 57). 3. *Removable.* As the event showed, and as is the case with the estate of every man, great or small, upon the earth (Jas. i. 10, 11; 1 John ii. 17).

V. THE PATRIARCH'S FAMILY. 1. *Numerous.* Under the Old Testament economy a large family was promised as a special recompense to the pious (Ps. cxiii. 9; cxxvii. 4, 5; cxxviii. 1—4), and though an abundant offspring is not now a sign of grace or an evidence of religion, yet children are among the most precious of Heaven's gifts, and happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them. 2. *Happy.* Whether the entertainments they gave were birthday commemorations, or periodically returning religious festivals, or weekly banquets, they obviously formed a cheery and genial household. Innocent festivity is neither unbecoming nor irreligious, since it is not true that "man was made to mourn" (Burns), while it is true that God's people are commanded to rejoice evermore (Eccles. ix. 7; Ps. c. 1; Phil. iv. 4). 3. *Loving.* If Job's family were mirthful, they were likewise harmonious and united. Few spectacles on earth are more beautiful than families whose members are endeared to one another by reciprocal affection (Ps. cxxxiii. 1); and yet good men have often seen their households torn by unseemly strife; *e.g.* Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David.

VI. THE PATRIARCH'S SOLICITUDE. 1. *Reasonable.* Gaiety and merry-making, while innocent in themselves and sanctioned by religion, have a tendency to cause the heart to forget God. Those who frequent social banquets and indulge in the world's delicacies are apt to become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God (2 Tim. iii. 4); *e.g.* Solomon, Dives, Demas. 2. *Becoming.* As a pious man, Job could scarcely fail to be concerned about the behaviour of so many young people, especially while attending a feast. As a father, he was doubly constrained to have respect to their spiritual and eternal welfare. Even more is it the duty of a parent to train up his sons and daughters in the nurture and admonition of the Lord than to provide for their education and

settlement in life (Eph. vi. 4). 3. *Earnest.* The father who could be at such pains and expense about the religious education of his children as Job appears to have been was clearly in earnest, and might profitably be taken as a pattern by Christian parents. Contrast the parental negligence of Eli (1 Sam. ii. 29). 4. *Habitual.* As Job's zeal was prompt, so likewise was it constant. The godly practice of Divine worship was maintained with unwearied regularity, week after week, or at least upon the close of every festive occasion. As a parent's responsibility for his children does not terminate with their childhood, so neither should his endeavours to promote their welfare cease with their arriving at the stage of manhood and womanhood.

Learn: 1. God may have children outside the pale of the Church visible. 2. Prosperity and piety, though not commonly conjoined, are by no means incompatible. 3. God's people should aim at the possession of a piety which is "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." 4. Good men's families should themselves be good. 5. Pious parents should train their children in the fear of God and in the observance of his precepts.

Vers. 1—5.—*Job.* I. AN ORIENTAL PRINCE. II. A WEALTHY MAN. III. AN EMINENT SAINT. IV. A GODLY PARENT. V. A SACRIFICING PRIEST.

Ver. 3.—*Wealth and piety.* I. THEIR COMMON CHARACTERISTICS. 1. *God's gifts;* and therefore to be received with thankfulness. 2. *Man's ornaments;* and therefore to be borne humbly. 3. *A Christian's talents;* and therefore to be used with fidelity.

II. THEIR RECIPROCAL RELATIONS. 1. Wealth and piety are not necessarily incompatible. 2. Wealth and piety are often mutually destructive. 3. Wealth and piety may prove reciprocally helpful.

III. THEIR COMPARATIVE EXCELLENCES. 1. Piety may be obtained by all; wealth can be secured only by a few. 2. Piety is useful to all; wealth is injurious to some. 3. Piety will abide with all; wealth can remain with none.

LESSONS. 1. They that have piety can do without wealth. 2. They that have wealth cannot do without piety.

Ver. 4.—*Banqueting.* I. AN ANCIENT CUSTOM. II. A PERMISSIBLE ENJOYMENT. III. A NATURAL ACTION. IV. A DANGEROUS OCCUPATION.

Ver. 5.—*Family worship.* I. SHOULD PRECEDE THE BUSINESS OF THE DAY. Job rose up early in the morning.

II. SHOULD BE PERFORMED IN THE ASSEMBLED HOUSEHOLD. Job gathered all his sons to his devotions.

III. SHOULD BE CELEBRATED AFTER DUE PREPARATION. Job sanctified his sons by the customary ablutions.

IV. SHOULD BE INSPIRED BY FAITH IN THE ATONING SACRIFICE. Job offered up burnt offerings.

V. SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY LIBERAL OBLATIONS. Job presented victims to the number of them all.

VI. SHOULD BE MARKED BY CONFESSION AND INTERCESSION. Job interceded for his children.

VII. SHOULD BE MAINTAINED WITH UNBROKEN REGULARITY. Job did so continually.

Learn: (1) The duty, (2) the propriety, (3) the need, and (4) the value, of family worship.

Vers. 6—12.—*The fundamental controversy of the poem.* I. THE OCCASION OF THE CONTROVERSY. The presence of Satan among the sons of God. 1. *The celestial assembly.* (1) The beings composing it. Sons of God, *i.e.* angels (*vide* ch. xxxviii. 7 and cf. Ps. xxix. 1), here styled "sons of Elohim," to indicate their nature, as deriving their existence from God (cf. Luke iii. 38); their dignity, as enjoying an exalted rank in the scale of being (cf. Dan. iii. 25); and their office, as serving in the capacity of ministers to the Supreme (cf. Ps. lxxxii. 6). (2) The purpose of their gathering. "To present themselves before the Lord;" not to assist in the deliberations of the Infinite Mind

(Isa. xl. 13, 14; Rom. xi. 34), but as ambassadors returning from their respective circuits to render account of their ministrations and to receive commissions for future execution. Even so must all God's intelligent creatures upon earth appear before the dread tribunal of the skies (2 Cor. v. 10), and every one give an account of himself to God (Rom. xiv. 12). 2. *The unexpected visitor.* (1) The import of his name. "Satan," the adversary, the calumniator, the accuser; not the evil genius of the later theology of the Jews, but the dark, sullen spirit of Divine revelation, who headed the revolt in heaven against the authority of God (Rev. xii. 7—9), seduced our first parents into sin (Gen. iii. 1—6; 2 Cor. xi. 3), tempted Jesus Christ (Matt. iv. 1), warred against him throughout his entire career on earth (Matt. xiii. 39; Luke x. 18; John xii. 31), now ruleth in the children of disobedience (Eph. ii. 2), and fights against the children of light (Eph. vi. 11—16). (2) The nature of his occupation. "Going to and fro through the earth, and walking up and down in it;" which points out his dominion—this lower world, *i.e.* conceived as alienated from God, and involved in moral and spiritual darkness (Eph. ii. 2; 1 John v. 19; Rev. xvi. 10); his activity,—though at present, in some cases, reserved in chains (Jude 6), he is still permitted a large amount of liberty (1 Pet. v. 8); his diligence,—he never intermits his business, but ever prosecutes his infernal errands, going to and fro, and walking up and down; his unrest, having, as afterwards Cain, fallen under a ban of wandering, which has doomed him to be always seeking rest, but finding none (Matt. xii. 45), as ever since his children have been like the troubled sea which cannot rest (Isa. lvii. 20, 21). (3) The object of his coming. If to present himself before the Lord with the other sons of God (ch. ii. 1), *i.e.* to report concerning his wicked machinations, his appearance, we may rest assured, was wholly involuntary and compulsory, which may remind us that Satan, no less than other creatures, is subject to Divine authority; that Satan's proceedings in the world are under the perpetual surveillance of the Almighty; and that Satan can neither travel further nor work longer than he receives express commission from Jehovah to do. But it is probable that the underlying motive of Satan's intruding upon Heaven's assembly was not to render an account of any mission with which he had been entrusted, but to prosecute his diabolic work of calumniating God's children who were yet on earth (cf. Rev. xii. 10; Zech. iii. 1).

II. THE PARTIES TO THE CONTROVERSY. Jehovah and Satan. 1. *Jehovah.* (1) The self-existent and all-sufficient Deity (Exod. iii. 14). (2) The Lord of angels (ch. iv. 18). (3) The Fear of saints (Gen. xxxi. 42; ch. i. 1). (4) The Governor of the universe (ch. ix. 12; xxxiv. 13; xxxvi. 23; xli. 11). 2. *Satan.* (1) The creature of God. (2) The impersonation of evil. (3) The adversary of Christ. (4) The accuser of the brethren.

III. THE SUBJECT OF THE CONTROVERSY. The disinterested character of piety or religion. 1. *The Divine challenge.* "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth?" The language of: (1) Divine condescension, in not only noticing a creature, but stooping to converse with an adversary, yea, with a devil (Ps. cxiii. 6). (2) Divine observation, in particularizing Job by name, and dilating on his character, which demonstrates that God's knowledge of his people extends to such minute details as the names they bear, the professions they make, the characters they possess (Exod. xxxiii. 12; Isa. xlix. 1; John x. 3). (3) Divine admiration, in so commending Job's piety as to show that he took a holy pride in his servant's worth, as he ever does (Zeph. iii. 17). (4) Divine affection, in so speaking of the patriarch as to evince that he was a special object of Divine regard, calling him "my servant," as Christ afterwards styled his followers "my friends" (John xv. 14). (5) And Divine protection, the question instinctively suggesting Jehovah's jealous care of his servant (Zech. ii. 8). 2. *The Satanic answer.* "Doth Job fear God for nought?" etc. Containing: (1) A reluctant admission—that Job did fear God, and that, in respect of outward appearance at least of religion, he had attained to incomparable eminence. Saints should aim to possess a piety so conspicuous that, however aspersed, it cannot be contradicted, even by the devil. (2) A base insinuation—that the piety of the patriarch proceeded from purely mercenary motives. See the malignity of Satan in attempting to depreciate what he finds it impossible to deny—an art in which Satan's servants are generally adepts. (3) A momentous implication—the higher question of the efficacy of the plan of redemption and the sufficiency of Divine grace being

practically involved in the standing or falling of Job, whose sincerity was impeached. In the devil's sermons there is always more than meets the ear (cf. Gen. iii. 5). (4) An audacious proposition—that God should bring the question in debate to an issue by experiments on the patriarch, as if God had doubts concerning the integrity of his servant, or as if, although he had, he was likely to subject that servant to the ordeal of suffering in order to please the devil! Verily there are no limits to the impudence of Satan! (5) A rash prediction—that Job would forthwith, on the application of the touchstone of adversity, rebound to the opposite extreme and "curse God to his face," which he did not, showing that Satan's prophecies, like his promises, generally turn out lies.

IV. THE DETERMINATION OF THE CONTROVERSY. By the trial of the patriarch. 1. *The Divine permission.* "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power." A permission (1) truly amazing when we consider by whom, to whom, and concerning whom it was given, how far it reached, and for what purpose it was designed; yet (2) perfectly justifiable, since Job's possessions were more Jehovah's than the patriarch's (Ps. xxiv. 1; l. 10—12; Exod. xix. 5; Hag. ii. 18; Ezek. xviii. 4), as the patriarch afterwards recognized (ch. i. 21), and might be disposed of as God pleased without the charge being incurred of doing wrong to his creature; and (3) absolutely necessary, if the trial was to be so conducted that no loophole should remain for the least suspicion of its thoroughness and impartiality; though at the same time (4) mercifully limited, only the patriarch's possessions being put into the adversary's power, and not his person as in the second trial (ch. ii. 7), God never suffering his people to be tried above that which they are able to bear (1 Cor. x. 13), or more than is necessary. 2. *The Divine limitation.* "Only upon himself put not forth thine hand;" which reminds us (1) that Satan has no power against a saint further than God permits (John xix. 11); (2) that God can set a bar to the malignity of Satan, as well as to the waves of the sea (ch. xxxviii. 11) and the rage of man (Ps. lxxvi. 10); (3) that God can cast a shield around the persons of his people in the day of their calamity (ch. xxii. 25; Ps. xci. 1—7); and (4) that God frequently protects his people against Satan's assaults when they are not aware.

Learn: 1. That if Satan can find his way into the assemblies of God's sons in heaven, it need hardly surprise one to detect him amongst the congregations of God's children on earth. 2. That if so eminent a saint as Job did not escape impeachment by the devil, it will not be wonderful if lesser saints should be accused. 3. That if God permitted a Job to be put into the devil's power, as Christ allowed a Peter to be cast into Satan's sieve, it may almost be expected that ordinary Christians will also be subjected to trial. 4. That if God set a limit to Satan's power in dealing with his servant Job, he will not accord unlimited authority to the adversary when he comes to try those who are less able to withstand his assaults. 5. And that if Job was sustained when passing through the fiery ordeal, so will all who like Job are sincere in heart be upheld in the day of their calamity.

Ver. 7.—*A sermon on Satan.* I. THE CHARACTER OF SATAN'S PERSON. The question implies: 1. The existence and personality of the spirit of evil. 2. His angelic nature. 3. His incessant activity. 4. His unwearied vigilance. 5. The restlessness of his wicked heart.

II. THE SPHERE OF SATAN'S ACTION. 1. Generally, the earth as opposed to heaven. 2. Particularly, (1) the human heart; (2) the human family; (3) the Christian Church; (4) the heathen world.

III. THE MODE OF SATAN'S WORKING. 1. By temptation. 2. By accusation.

Learn: 1. The necessity of watchfulness. 2. The value of prayer. 3. The importance of putting on the Christian armour. 4. The advantage of Christian work.

Ver. 9.—"*Doth Job fear God for nought?*" I. YES! *God's servants are not hypocrites.* 1. Those who serve God from mercenary motives do not truly serve him at all (Isa. i. 13). 2. Those who serve God sincerely adhere to him when all creature-comforts are withdrawn (Hab. iii. 17).

II. NO! *God's servants do not go unrewarded.* Like Job, they are honoured with: 1. Divine attention (Ps. xxxiii. 18). 2. Divine approbation (Ps. cxlvii. 11). 3. Divine

provision (Ps. xxxiv. 9; cxi. 5). 4. Divine protection (Ps. lxxxv. 9); cf. the Old Testament saints in the times of Malachi (iii. 16).

Vers. 13—22.—*The first trial of the patriarch.* I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE TRIAL. *The patriarch at the height of his prosperity.* The season pitched upon for making an assault upon the patriarch was a day of: 1. *Festive rejoicing;* when the patriarch's family were convened at a banquet of unusual magnificence, "eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house;" such a sumptuous entertainment doubtless as became the firstborn to provide. 2. *Busy industry;* when the whole household of the patriarch was astir with unwonted activity: the ploughmen driving furrows through the soil with the assistance of the patient oxen, while the she-asses cropped the pastures in their vicinity; the shepherds tending the vast droves of sheep which spread themselves across the plain; and the camel-drivers going and returning with their caravans of costly merchandise. 3. *Unmingled happiness;* in which the patriarch, it may well be imagined, surveying his earthly lot, observing the loving unity and innocent gladness of his children, and beholding the fidelity and diligence of his servants, realized that his cup of terrestrial felicity was full and even overflowing. 4. *Fancied security;* in which not a cloud appeared in all the wide and clear horizon; not a shadow dimmed the brightness of the sky, not a speck of trouble anywhere could be detected to excite the patriarch's alarm. It was such a day as seldom falls to the lot of God's people on earth to enjoy; and the selection of that day above all others for casting down the patriarch from the pinnacle of his greatness and the summit of his felicity was doubtless craftily designed that the very loftiness of the patriarch's elevation might intensify the depth and severity of his fall.

II. THE MANAGEMENT OF THE TRIAL. The patriarch's prosperity overthrown. 1. *The swiftly completed ruin.* (1) Sudden in its coming; the citadel of Job's integrity being more likely to be carried by a *coup de main* than by a leisurely and deliberate attack, inasmuch as to be forewarned is also to be forearmed, and dangers that men see they can usually adopt measures to avert. (2) Universal in its sweep; the devil falling not a step behind, if he could not advance a step beyond, the Divine permission, with one terrible avalanche of disaster descending on the fair scene of the patriarch's prosperity, and leaving not a spot unvisited by his devouring rage. (3) Pitiless in its devastation; exempting only four domestics (not sons! which might have been a mitigation; but the devil's mercies are generally cruel), consigning all the rest to one overwhelming, remorseless destruction. (4) Cunning in its contrivance; being effected not directly and immediately by the devil himself, but by natural agencies—Sabeans and Chaldeans, lightnings and hurricanes—so that it might appear to be the work of God's ordinary providence, and be ascribed by the stricken man to the Deity whom he served and adored. 2. *The skilfully arranged report.* (1) Messenger following upon messenger, like Ahimaaz speeding after Cushi (2 Sam. xviii. 22), so that the full tale of misfortunes might not be declared at once, but with exquisite torture protracted to the utmost. (2) Calamity heaped upon calamity; not a single messenger arriving with happy tidings, but each one with a heavier burden than his predecessor. (3) Stroke descending upon stroke; not one speaker having the grace, like Ahimaaz when reporting Absalom's death to David, to mitigate the blow to the old man; but, like Cushi, each one with excruciating minuteness of detail dwelling on his tale of misery, and with something like selfish satisfaction emphasizing the fact of his own escape to be the bearer of the appalling news, not perceiving that that might only be an aggravation of the patriarch's distress; and with no interruption in the awful torrent of adversity, not so much as a moment to breathe in, but on and on in one incessant stream: "While he was yet speaking;" and, "While he was yet speaking;" and, "While he was yet speaking." Clearly if Satan's craft was conspicuous in his preparation for the trial, it was equally apparent in his management of the same.

III. THE ISSUE OF THE TRIAL. The patriarch's reception of the news. 1. *With penitential sorrow;* expressed in the symbolic actions of rending his garments (cf. Gen. xxxvii. 34; Josh. vii. 6; 2 Sam. i. 11; iii. 31) and shaving his head (cf. Isa. xv. 2; xxii. 12; Jer. vii. 29; xli. 5; Micah i. 16); the first revealing the vehemence and

intensity of the patriarch's emotion, and the second pointing to its calmness and moderation. 2. *With pious resignation.* Acknowledging: (1) His originally destitute condition: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb;" so that his calamities had only set him where he was at first—an argument for contentment (1 Tim. vi. 7). (2) His prospective departure from the world: "Naked shall I return thither;" so that after all he had but experienced a little earlier what was certain to befall him in the end (cf. Eccles. v. 15; xii. 7; and 'Measure for Measure,' act iii. sc. 2)—an argument for submission. (3) His entire dependence upon God for all the blessings of his earthly lot: "The Lord gave;" so that he himself could claim no absolute ownership in anything he had lost (1 Cor. iv. 7; Jas. i. 17)—an argument for acquiescence. (4) His devout recognition of the hand of God in his afflictions and losses: "The Lord hath taken away;" so that not only had he laid his hand upon him who had perfect right to do so, but in removing his possessions and children he had merely taken what was first his own—a fourth argument for resignation. 3. *With lowly adoration.* Falling on the ground and worshipping; thus giving the lie to Satan's calumny by retaining his steadfastness and maintaining his integrity; not cursing God to his face, but solemnly, reverently, and devoutly adding, "Blessed be the Name of Jehovah!"

IV. THE VERDICT ON THE TRIAL. The complete vindication of the patriarch. His triumphant passage through the appalling ordeal is: 1. *Commended by God.* The statement of the historian we must regard as but the transcript of the Divine judgment upon the trial: "In all this Job sinned not, neither charged God foolishly." 2. *Admitted by Satan.* This appears from ch. ii. 4, where, though the devil is prepared with an explanation of the cause, he is yet constrained to admit the fact of Job's steadfast allegiance to Jehovah throughout his first onslaught. 3. *Recorded by the historian.* So that wherever this ancient poem finds a reader there shall the courage and fidelity of the stricken patriarch be known and admired.

Learn: 1. That if God has his times and seasons, and Christ has his hours, and man his opportunities for working, so also the devil has his days for his Satanic movements. 2. That the devil's assaults upon human virtue and Christian fidelity are always characterized by consummate wisdom as regards both the times and the instruments as well as the methods of attack. 3. That the power of Satan to injure man is well-nigh unlimited, at least when God permits. 4. That the most prosperous estate of man may, in a moment, be converted into the profoundest misery, as the brightest day may be followed by the darkest night. 5. That calamities seldom fall upon God's people singly and alone, are apt to be misconstrued as to their origin and design, but should never fail to lead the heart closer to God. 6. That God's people should in times of adversity remember their origin and prepare for their end. 7. That, whether suffering or rejoicing, saints should imitate the piety of Job, recognize God's hand in everything, and "in everything give thanks."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Introductory. On the general teaching of the book. For all earnest readers; for all who can think seriously, feel deeply; all who have in their own persons loved and lost; who have known life in its brightest and its darkest moods; all, again, who have that fine gift of sympathy which makes the pain and woe of humanity their own;—this book has a most powerful attraction, a profound charm. Here we have suffering through all the scale of human being; suffering tuned to music most plaintive, which strikes some response from the chords of every human heart. Here, too, we have reflection upon suffering, intense thought bent without fear and without reserve upon the great questions of life. Who has not, in some weary, desponding hour, at some time or other, sighed forth, "What is the meaning of it all?" It is a question which seems to answer itself joyously, or rather to require no asking, in the brighter days of life. Nature and the heart of man smile upon one another with the reflection of the gladness of the Creative Mind when he saw that all his works were very good. But in many a midnight hour of mental darkness the question that we thought answered and set at rest forces its presence upon us, and demands an answer of our reason. And Reason, "from wave to wave of fancied misery driven," loses her bearings; ignorant of

the latitude, she knows not whither to steer for a port. This is the mood of Job. And relief comes at length, in an unexpected way, from the Source whence alone it can come. We are taught the great lesson of suffering—to wait and to hope. He who tarries in patience until he beholds the "end of the Lord" shall find an abundant reward of his faith and constancy.

I. THE ENIGMAS OF LIFE. Pain, loss, disease, exchanged for pleasure, gain, health, and riches. Man cannot *understand* this process. And he cannot willingly *submit* to what he does not understand. 1. He has an *instinct for happiness*, which he cannot deny without denying himself. He and all nature, he feels, and truly feels, were constructed for happiness. He is bound to work for this end, both in himself and others. The Creator (he is thus naturally taught to reason) must be a happy and happiness-loving Being, ever blessed, ever blessing. Thus, when a rebuff is given to these powerful and clear instincts, and their truth is suddenly extinguished, as it were, in the man's own bosom; when all the springs of natural joy are in a moment dried up like the summer torrent of the East;—what wonder that he should complain? Is he the victim of some radical deception? Are all his thoughts illusions? Whence came those instincts for happiness, which one day appear to be an infallible guide, and which the next day's calamity mocks and baffles? The mechanism of the mind itself is loosened, the column of reason totters. This train of thought calls to our memory 'King Lear,' a work of art that in many points may remind us of Job, only that there is wanting in Lear that constant, unshakable faith in eternal justice and goodness which brings at last solution to every perplexity, rest from every struggle with the inevitable. 2. It is no enigma of life *that suffering should be connected with guilt*. This connection is and ought to be. Such is another intuitive perception of the human heart. We can understand and approve this relation, even when we are the subjects of it. The horrible mystery of pain does not exist, or at least is not felt to be intolerable, when the man can say, "I indeed suffer justly the reward of my deeds!" Had Job felt that he had brought these woes upon himself by disobedience to the Almighty will, he would, as an awakened man, have been consoled by the reflection; for, in that case, repentance was open to him, and, with repentance, the removal of the worst part of suffering—its curse. But it was just the absence of this clear connection which made the burden of calamity so oppressive, which deprived his sorrow of its only alleviation. Especially was this so in that ancient time in which Job lived. It is evident, from the whole tenor of the discourse of the friends, that the only authorized explanation of personal suffering was personal guilt. So much was this so, that the very words in Hebrew seem to confuse the two notions. "The dictionary even opposed the prevalence of another doctrine. Crime, punishment, pain, suffering, injustice, misfortune, are in Hebrew almost indiscernible. He who has struggled with the difficulties presented by these words understands better than any the impossibility of the Hebrew mind arriving, with words so confused, at a distinction that we regard as the principle of all morality" (Renan). 3. But Job, on the other hand, dares, with all the independence of the just thinker, of the man who cannot be untrue to the clearest light of his self-consciousness, to deny the application of this judgment to his case. He denies that his present sufferings point back to previous sins. Whatever be the solution of the problem, *that*, he knows, cannot be the true one. No deluge of religious commonplace shall move him from his fixed position, his conscious integrity of soul. No agony can wring from him an echo to the shallow cant of men who prate about suffering without really having suffered. Despite all that wife and friends can urge, he will not, cannot, desert the side of truth, or what he feels to be the truth. And in this experience truth does not condemn him; on the whole it acquits him. This is one of the most instructive lessons the entire poem yields us—to be true to ourselves, to follow the light within, let others scold and rebuke as they will. More frequently, no doubt, we need to apply this lesson in an humiliating way. If we are true to ourselves, we shall have to admit that we have brought our troubles upon ourselves by our own faults. But sometimes it may be otherwise. The link may be wanting which unites the effect to its cause. If we *feel* this to be so, we must have the courage to say so; and on the same ground upon which we ought to have the honesty to acknowledge the sinful origin when we have detected it. Job is an example of that manly simplicity of heart, that faithfulness to self, without which we cannot be genuine men, nor fair and tolerant to others. It does not follow, because a man

stands by what his conscience or consciousness tells him, that his conscience is necessarily in the right. St. Paul pointed out this (Acts xxvi. 9; 1 Cor. iv. 4). Still, a man must hold by conscience as the nearest oracle till he gets better light, which is certain in the end to come when needed. 4. Equally important, on the other hand, is the rebuke to cant, which this book so powerfully supplies. Cant is the habit of repeating second-hand opinions, of taking certain things for granted because they are commonly asserted, although we have no sufficient ground in our own experience of their truth. It is the habit of pretending feelings which we have not, because they are considered to be the correct feelings under certain circumstances. It is imitation in thought and affectation in sentiment. It attends on genuine thought and sincere emotion, as the shadow on the sun. No one will deny that the religious world is full of it. There is a fine illustration of it in the discourses of Job's friends, and rebuke of it in the manifestation of the Almighty at the end. 5. While we have a presentation of the great enigmas of life in the course of the poem, we have also an exposure of the perplexities of human thought and the vain attempts to solve them. The narrow dogma that all suffering is explained by guilt, on which, in one form or other, the friends of Job are never weary of insisting, along with that grand principle, the strict justice of the Almighty, which, in their view, renders the dogma indisputable,—this is the only clue offered to guide the poor darkened sufferer out of the prison of his thoughts. But it fails to lead him to the light. And, indeed, how utterly inadequate are such partial principles, drawn from a very limited area of experience, when applied to measure the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of God's moral universe! Another great lesson, then, which this book reads us is that of modesty and silence—the need of the confession of failure and incapacity to penetrate the secrets of the Divine mechanism to the bottom. We see but in part and know but in part; cannot by searching find out God unto perfection. Higher than heaven this knowledge, what can we do? deeper than hell, what can we know? There are clear and undoubted revelations of his goodness which fill the heart with joy and stir the tongue to praise. There are other, mysterious, hints of himself in pain and sadness, which overwhelm the heart with awe and check the effusion of the lips. But since nothing can ever disprove, or justly be brought, on any pretence of reason, to the disparagement of his justice, wisdom, and love, let us adore in silence. Let our souls wait patiently for him, until he again appear, shining upon us with the brightness of noonday!

II. SOLUTION OF LIFE'S ENIGMAS. 1. The book appears intended to convey a solution of our mental trouble and doubt of mind, so far, that is, as any solution is possible. A complete solution is impossible; Scripture, philosophy, experience, all unite in declaring this. Could we know the secret of pain and evil, suffering and calamity, in all their forms, we should touch the very secret of life itself; and in touching that secret we should touch the secret of God's Being—nay, we should be *as* God. Humanity is another name for limitation; God is the Infinite. We live at points on the circumference of existence; he is the Centre. Is it not an absurdity when man refuses to learn and acknowledge once for all that in seeking to know too much he is travelling out of his bounds; in his impatience with enforced ignorance he is impatient of being what he is, and raises a quarrel against his Maker and against the scheme of things which can but end in his complete discomfiture and overthrow? 2. But there is some solution, although not a complete, not a positive and all-explaining one. There is a *negative* solution, which is very comforting to every true and pious heart. All suffering has *not* its root in personal sin. There may be intense suffering in the very bosom of innocence, as a frost or blight may settle on the purest rose of the garden. This point is clearly established by the Divine vindication of "my servant Job." He has not been singled out as a mark for the arrows of the Almighty because he is a peculiarly bad man. Rather the opposite is true. It is the good who are reserved for trial. It is the beloved of the Eternal whom he chastens, in order that it may be seen what power has faith in the soul of man, what enduring constancy or virtue, like thrice-proved gold, has every man who confides in the eternal rectitude and love. 3. Suffering is, then, consistent with the relative innocence of the sufferer. This is one result of Job's long trial. Suffering is consistent with the perfect goodness of God. This is another. He may give, and he is good; he may take away, still, blessed be his Name! He may replace blooming health by loathsome leprosy; cause the once

soft-clothed, prosperous inmate of a wealthy home to sit in sackcloth, amidst ashes by a deserted hearth; yet still—

"Perfect then are all his ways,
Whom earth adores and heaven obeys."

Noble book! that gave, perhaps, to the ancient world the first hint of the solution of the mystery of pain, by detaching from it the hitherto inseparable association of a curse; which teaches men to believe that the Divine Author of all we suffer and all we enjoy is One ever-blessed God, and so dispels that dread Manicheanism so congenial to the natural mind; book, which contains in germ the gospel revelations concerning Divine chastisement and human sanctification, and the whole subjection of human nature to the mixed conditions of the present life in expectation of a glorious ultimate manifestation of the sons of God! 4. The riddle of human suffering, then, is not to be read, as men often superficially read it, in the light of some assumption which itself requires justification. It is and will remain an enigma. And like the statue of Isis so carefully veiled, the book impresses silence, silence! chiding the explications and solutions of our babbling tongues. The enigma of pain, of all that we call evil, is essentially the enigma of life itself. The key that will unlock the one will open also the other, and it lies ready to no human hand. This solution will not content an atheist or a materialist, perhaps. It will not be of any service to men who have not yet made up their minds whether to believe in a Will of perfect intelligence and justice, in a personal Author of this scheme of things. It is, indeed, the fatal flaw in all systems of unbelief or no-belief, that they can make nothing of evil. They cannot get rid of it, they cannot explain it away. It remains a disturbing element in every optimist view of life. Better man as you may in body and in mind, it will not disappear. It is a leaden weight upon the feet of all but the believer in the eternally wise and just God. Extremes meet; and alike to the enlightened rationalist and the darkened devotee of superstition, pain is a curse. But to the believer in God it is a part of the revelation of God. It is an aspect of the Shechinah. It is the dark side of that cloud whose edges are silvered with the eternal splendour. Darkness and light, the evening and the morning, the week of toil and the sabbath of rest, pain and pleasure, sadness and gladness, death and birth, time and eternity, short sowing and long reaping, acute but brief-lived trials, unending fruitions,—these are the conditions of human existence. To reconcile ourselves to them in and through the Author of them; not to fight against them, but loyally to accept them, and see that the end and meaning of all is reflected in the soul itself; —these are the lessons of the Book of Job. For there is no strength without trial; no wisdom without experience of both good and evil; no refinement without pain; no progress without self-dissatisfaction; nothing permanent or real that costs us nothing; no fellowship with the Eternal except by the initiation of suffering, by the endurance of the cross. To all who believe that the latter end of their life is to be made better than their beginning through the will of One who calls, adopts, and sanctifies men for himself, this book will be full of light and help. They will turn to its pages to remind their hearts that their Redeemer, their Vindicator, ever lives; that "blessing, not cursing, rules above, and that in it we live and move."—J.

Vers. 1—5.—*Job's life and character.* The scene opens in all brightness, and the hero of this sacred poem stands before us bathed in the sunshine of earthly prosperity, and, better, crowned with the favour of God—a truly enviable man. We have in these few lines given, in brief, suggestive touches—

I. A PICTURE OF COMPLETE HAPPINESS. There are internal and external elements of earthly bliss; and neither must be absent if that bliss is to be full and complete. First in importance is the internal element—the kingdom of God within the man. Yet a starved or stinted virtue, struggling with poverty and adversity, is a sight to kindle pity as well as admiration. Our moral sense is only thoroughly satisfied when we see goodness furnished with sufficiency of this world's means. The moral energies are cramped by extreme misery; they find in competence a stage upon which they can move with ease and grace, and put forth all their powers in harmonious development. The great master, Aristotle, taught that the secret of happiness lay in the rational and virtuous activity of the soul in the whole of its life. But he also insisted that a

sufficient provision of external goods was essential to complete happiness, just as the equipping of the Greek chorus was necessary for the representation of a drama. Yet the inferiority of the external elements of happiness to the internal is indicated, not only by their coming second in the description of the sacred poet, but by the swift tragic sequel, the darkening of the scene, the sudden breaking up of house and home and fortune of the prosperous man. And here we are reminded of the saying of another illustrious Greek, Solon: "Call no man happy till the day of his death." The fate of Crœsus, whose name was a synonym for worldly luck in the ancient Greek world, pointed the moral of that saying, according to the charming story of Herodotus, as Job's vicissitudes give point to it here. This world passeth; all that is external to us is liable to loss, change, uncertainty. Only the "sweet and virtuous soul, like seasoned timber, never gives." The ruins of a falling world leave the true man unshaken. Doing the will of God, united to him by conscious obedience and trust, he abides for ever. Thus, in the concise emphatic designation of Job's character, in the very first verse of the poem, its key-note is struck.

II. LINEAMENTS OF CHARACTER. Four words, like a few expressive touches from a master's pencil, place before us the character of the patriarch. 1. "That man was *perfect*." That is, he was sound (*integer vitæ*, as the Roman poet says) in heart and life, blameless in the ordinary sense in which we use that word, free from glaring vice or gross inconsistency. We must bear in mind that general epithets like these, denoting attributes of human character, are derived from our experience of external objects. They are, therefore, figurative expressions, not to be used in an exact mathematical sense, which, of course, is inapplicable to such an object as human character. Perfect, as a sound animal is said to be; without blemish, like a snowy, sacrificial lamb; spotless, like a "garnered fruit," without "pitted speck." There are two aspects of perfection —the negative and the positive. Negative perfection is more the Old Testament view. It is when the character presents a blank on the side of those gross vices, those sins against honour and truth and every Divine and social bond, which incur the hatred of man and the displeasure of Heaven. The New Testament view brings out the positive side of "perfection." It is not only the life void of offence, but it is the completeness of the Christian man in those heavenly graces, that bright resplendent adornment of the sanctified character, which in the sight of God is of great price. But there are conditions of life in which there is comparatively little scope for the development of character widely on the positive side. There is but a small circle of duties, employments, amusements, relations, in such circumstances as in the primeval and pastoral simplicity of Job. How different from this highly developed, widely and variously interesting modern life of ours! Where more is given, more will be required. But the example of Job consists in the simplicity and integrity with which he moved about in the sphere of his little sovereignty, and, with every facility for indulging passion, for infringing right, for encroaching on the happiness of others, kept himself white as the lily, nobly free from blame. Not that he was that insipidity of character, a merely *correct* man. Intense selfishness is often found in your correct men. We see from glimpses presently given us in the course of the poem that he was an actively good man. Here we may read the exquisite descriptions of his past life in ch. xxix. and xxxi., forced from him in his self-defence. We look upon the picture of a man who is the pillar of his community, a light, a comfort, a joy to dependents and equals alike. It is a picture which the thousands of our countrymen who are in the enjoyment of fortune, position, education, and influence in their respective neighbourhoods, may be invited to contemplate and to imitate. The Divine pleasures and the noble reward of a right use of wealth and position, form for multitudes of the great a field but little explored. Amidst the serious warnings of Scripture and of experience against the dangers of prosperity, let the pure example of Job stand out to remind the prosperous that they may make their means a help instead of a hindrance to the kingdom of heaven; may enslave the unrighteous mammon; in gaining much of this world, need not necessarily lose their souls! 2. He was *upright*. The idea is that of a right line. And the opposite image is conveyed by the word "froward," or "crooked," from the curved, deviating line. As the country-people say of an honest man, "He acts *straight*," and as our fine old English word gives it, "straightforward." There is a certain mathematics of conduct. Never to depart from truth, even in jest; not to extenuate, nor to

exaggerate, nor to be partial in our statements; not to add to nor take from *facts;* to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth;" to abstain from flattery on the one hand, and slanderous perversion on the other; to regard one's word as one's bond; to think and speak with others in that candour, that clearest light in which we ever commune with ourselves; to hate semblances and dissemblances, to get rid of duplicities and confusions; in all relations, to self, to God, to others, to be one and the same man; to avoid turnings and twistings in our route; to go straight to our ends, like an arrow to its mark;—this is the spirit, this is the temper, of the "upright" man. His character resembles the fine-drawn lines of a true work of art; while the "froward" man reminds us of the ill-drawn design, whose deformity no amount of overlaying and ornament can disguise. 3. *God-fearing.* This and the following epithet complete the representation of the two former. No man is "perfect" without being a fearer of God; none upright without departing from evil. Religion takes its rise in man's feeling of awe towards the vast unseen Power and Cause revealed through things seen. His conscience, by its exhortations, speaks to him of the righteousness of the unseen eternal Cause. All his experience inward and outward impresses upon him the sense of his absolute dependence. Obedience, active and passive, to the Eternal Will is the primary law revealed in the heart of man amidst Sinai-like thunders, over all the world, and in all times. Feelings like these constitute man's earliest and universal religion; Scripture designates them by this comprehensive expression, "the fear of God, the fear of the Eternal." It is no slavish feeling, if man be true to himself. It is not a blind terror, not a Panic inspiration. It is fear chastened and elevated by intelligence, by spiritual fellowship; it is unbounded respect, immeasurable reverence; it is ever on the way to become perfect love. The result of this genuine religion upon the character is to make us view all things in their relation to the unseen and the eternal. Thus life is dignified, lifted out of meanness, receives a certain significance and purport in its smallest details. Without religion we exist as animals, we do not live as men. The busiest career, the loudest reputation, the most splendid worldly success—what sense, what meaning, is there in it without the principle in the heart which consciously binds it to the unseen? "'Tis a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, but meaning nothing." 4. "*Eschewed evil.*" Or, a man who departed from evil. This was the habit of his life. It completes what is given in the second trait. His rectitude, leading him in a direct line of conduct, delivers him from the bypaths of deceit, of transgression, the ways of darkness and of shame. Here, then, in these four words we have suggested the idea of complete piety, the picture of a constant and a noble life, standing "four-square to all the winds that blow." We see a spotless character, attended by a fair fame in the world; the secret foundation on which the moral structure rests is revealed to us, in a habit of principle, a heart full of the fear of God. We look upon the patriarch, moving in the pure air and the holy sunlight of Heaven's favour, blessed with the good will of men, and with all those hopes of the future which a past happiness inspires, little dreaming that his skies are so soon to be darkened, and the foundations of his earthly joy to be so violently shaken.

III. FEATURES OF EXTERNAL PROSPERITY. These, too, are briefly and suggestively sketched, and need not be dwelt upon at length. All the elements of a high prosperity and great position in that simple state of life are present. 1. *His family.* He had ten children, the sons more than twice as numerous as the daughters. Men felt in those times that a large family was a great blessing, one of the visible marks of Heaven's favour. Sons especially were a new source of wealth and importance to the household. Parents in our day are perhaps seldom in the habit of thanking God for large families. They are too ready to groan beneath the care, rather than to cheerfully admit the reality of the blessing. Yet how constantly do we see proofs of the happiness of large families, even in poverty! A rightly ordered household is the Divinest of schools. Character is so variously developed and in so many ways tried and educated in them. In the variety of this little world there is a fine preparation going on for activity and for endurance in the greater world. On the whole, there can be no question that large families are a great source, not only of happiness, but of riches of every kind. And the truth needs to be insisted on from time to time, when we hear the matter spoken of in terms of disparagement or pity. The full quiver is

no object of pity in any time when men are obeying the laws of God in their social life. It is the solitary, and those who are doomed to lead a too self-centred existence, who need our pity. 2. *His property.* It consisted, we are told, in ample herds of cattle—sheep, camels, oxen, asses, and in a proportionate number of servants. All man's wealth is derived from the earth and its products in plants and animals. And it is a good thing to be reminded of this. We whose wealth is represented by mere symbols and figures for the most part have not the sense of our dependence brought home to us so vividly as he who leads the simple pastoral life of Job. There is health and blessing in the calling of the husbandman and the shepherd, living so near to Mother Earth, constantly reminded of their dependence upon her, of their power by diligence to extract comfort from her bosom. We all were once tillers and herdsmen and hunters; these are man's primeval occupations, and he must return to them again and again if he is to continue to prosper. Let us take the lesson that all sources of profit which are connected with the improvement of the earth are the healthiest that we can draw upon. To develop the earth and the mind of man—natural and spiritual cultivation—these are noble works and worthy pursuits. Let the emigration of the young and vigorous into the vast untilled tracts of the world be encouraged. There let them wed toil with nature, and build up scenes of comfort and happiness like that in which the patriarch dwelt.

IV. PIETY AMIDST THE TEMPTATIONS OF PROSPERITY. It was an ancient saying that a good man struggling with adversity was a sight for the gods. But how much more so a good man struggling with prosperity. For while adversity menaces our physical well-being, not less does prosperity endanger our spiritual health. It does not openly attack, it softens, it relaxes, it undermines. For ten men who can bear poverty is there one who can bear riches? What lovely spiritual blossoms spring out of the scant soil of outward misery, like the prisoner's flower between the stones of his dungeon! What moral emaciation, what leanness of soul, may attend the full purse, cower in the splendid mansion, lurk beneath the fine raiment of the worldly great! Even with true men, who are not to be easily overcome by outward temptations, it holds good, and they will own, in the beautiful words of Milton, that riches "slacken Virtue and abate her edge." We are not, indeed, to infer, because so much is said in the Gospel on the dangers of riches to the soul, that there are no dangers in poverty. But the truth is that the dangers of riches are more subtle, less obvious, being associated with pleasure, not with pain. Poverty stings, riches lull the soul. Misery may pervert the conscience; but luxury seems to put it to sleep. Our life is a struggle of the outward with the inward. The outward, in one form or other, threatens to get the better of us. On this great contest and agony the real interest of life, all its tragedy and poetry, depend. And if it kindles admiration, enthusiasm, awakens the sense of the sublime to see the victory of the soul over adversity, poverty, contempt, should it not equally delight our best feeling to see the victory of the soul over riches and prosperity? In the case of many, take away their surroundings, and they are nothing. The picture is worthless apart from the frame. Others are great in any circumstances. They do not make the man. It is the man who makes them interesting. They may change, they may be reversed; the man remains the same. It is such a moral hero of the tranquil scenes of peace that we are to contemplate in Job. His piety is well brought out in the contrast between the thoughtlessness of his children and his own seriousness (vers. 4, 5). They, in the heyday of youth and health and spirits, were wont on holidays or birthdays to meet and hold high festival in one another's houses. They give the type of the thoughtless cultivators of pleasure. Nor is it hinted that there was anything vicious in their pleasures. They loved the joyous pastimes of their season of life, and they took pleasure in one another's company—that was all. No hint is given that in the subsequent calamity they fell victims to the judgment of God upon their sins. They pass, with this brief mention, out of sight, and all the interest centres upon Job. What *he* felt and knew was that pleasure, however innocent, dulls, like riches, the soul towards God. Young people have been seen to remove the family Bible from its place in making preparations for a dance, as if conscious that there was something in the free indulgence of the instincts of pleasure inconsistent with the presence of the solemn reminders of religion. But pleasure has already travelled beyond the limits of moderation, and entered the region of lawlessness, licence, and excess, when there can be a

disposition to ignore, even for a moment, the holy influences of religion, the presence of God. In contrast, then, to the gay abandonment to mirth, the thoughtless devotion to the pleasures of the hour on the part of his children, we see in Job a mind which no distraction could divert from the constant sense of his relation to his God. A kindly father, he did not interfere to spoil his children's natural and innocent festivities on these special occasions of joy; but his thought followed them, with upliftings of the heart, and prayers for their preservation from those evils which may arise in the very midst of the scenes of highest social enjoyment, like serpents from a bed of flowers. Still, we need not assume excess or evil on the part of Job's children; the language merely suggests the anxiety of his mind lest such should be. It may be that the fear of God had entered their hearts too, and, restraining their enjoyment within due bounds, and inspiring thankfulness, allowed their festivals to be crowned with the favour of Heaven. One of our famed English writers, describing the scene at an old French peasant's house, when, after the labours of the day, before retiring to rest, the young people of the household joined in a cheerful dance, says he noticed some slight gesture, some uplifting of the eyes or hands, at a particular point—"in a word, I thought I saw religion mingling with the dance!" A beautiful hint for those who are perplexed with the problem how to unite religion with relaxation, to satisfy the instinct for amusement consistently with piety. There is no solution to be found for the problem except in the cheerful and loyal surrender of the heart to God, and the intelligent worship of him in all our activities, all our pleasures. It is a narrow or a spurious conception of religion which shuts us out from any genuine pleasures. The habitual recognition of our Creator in the use of this sensitive organization of body and mind which is his gift is the means of enhancing and at the same time hallowing every healthy pleasure of the body and the soul. One of the "fruits of the Spirit," one of the graces of the Christian life, one of the results of true piety, is "temperance," "moderation," or "self-control." We see this in Job. And we see the genuineness of his piety amidst prosperity in the anxiety he feels lest his children should have transgressed against this law of conduct (ver. 5). "It may be," he said, "that my sons have sinned, and said farewell to God—abandoned or forgotten him in their hearts." The next point is—*piety manifested in ritual.* Ritual, or cultus, has an important place in the history and development of religion. It is the outward presentation of religion, as symbolic of an inward reality. As cleanliness and neatness of person, propriety and gentleness of manners, have a certain value as an index of the inner man, so with the ritual and symbolic side of religion. It is a kind of language, and has the only value that language can have—that of meaning something. When it no longer has a meaning, it must pass away and be replaced by a more vital mode of expression. For both language and ritual are the changing element in religion; the inward and spiritual is the abiding and eternal. Now, we are here carried back to a time when the outward expression of piety was different and more elaborate than with us. Sacrifices of various kinds offered a most significant, powerful, varied medium of communication of the soul's penitences, devotions, aspirations to God. Here we have the ritual of penitence—the trespass offering. It is the devout longing for reconciliation to God, oneness with God, that is expressed, following on the sense of a rupture, or possible rupture, through carelessness or transgression of the soul's true relations to him. An account of such offerings under the Law of Moses will be found in Lev. iv.; vi. 17—23; vii. 1—10. And Job, rising early after each of these festivals, was wont to send for his children individually, that they might be present at the solemn sacrifice, and thus symbolically receive purification and absolution from the stain of guilt. Thus there rises before us, in this concluding trait of the character of Job, the picture of one who sought first the kingdom of God, and to be right with him—an example of paternal love and piety; of one who identified, like Joshua (xxiv. 15), his household with himself in the service of the Eternal. By the pleasing art of the sacred poet, our interest, our sympathy, is already powerfully drawn towards the hero of his story. The curtain falls on this bright life-scene as if with the good wishes and prayers of all spectators. May the shadow of Job never grow less! May his path be as the shining light, increasing to the perfect day! May he continue blessing and blessed in the bosom of his family and household, advance to "old age with honour, troops of friends," and come to his end in his season, as a shock of corn. fully ripe!—J.

Vers. 6—12.—*Counsels in heaven concerning man's life on earth.* I. EVERY MAN'S LIFE IS AN OBJECT OF INTEREST IN HEAVEN. This is a sublime thought, powerfully suggested by the present passage, and full of comfort for every man who trusts in the goodness of God. "Every man's life a plan of God's" (see the powerful sermon of Dr. Bushnell on this subject). Even of men who do not consciously know God or own his providence, this is true. Their career is controlled by a mysterious direction; their mistakes or misdeeds overruled for good. Of Cyrus, for example, it is said, "I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not know me" (Isa. xlv. 4).

II. BUT IN HOW PECULIARLY HAPPY A SENSE IS THIS TRUE OF EVERY GOOD MAN'S LIFE! His way is often entangled, perplexed, darkened to himself; but never so to God. From the bright scene of heavenly light and contemplation, where the map of every life is spread open to view, we are soon to plunge into gloom and sorrow by the side of the afflicted servant of God. But let us carry the memory of this glimpse of heaven through all the windings of the maze of grief which soon we are to tread in fancy, and may one day follow in actual experience. Already let us take the lesson home—that the way of God's children is not hidden, their cause not passed over, by the Most High. Their steps are ordered by him. In their blindness they will be led by paths they have not known. They may seem to themselves exiled from joy, banished from light and love; but he will yet make darkness light before them, and crooked ways straight, and will never forsake them. For in the life of flower and bird even, much more in the life of man, there is a plan of God.

III. EVERY MAN'S LIFE THE OBJECT OF OPPOSING INFLUENCES: of good and evil, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, heaven and hell. Nowhere is this grand secret of the mechanism of our being more distinctly disclosed than in this book. The presence of an evil influence, ever curious and busy about our life, is distinctly acknowledged; its origin left in mystery. We must recognize this dualism of influence on man's life without attempting to solve it. After all that has been thought and said on the subject, we can only acknowledge that it is a fundamental condition of our earthly existence. To ignore it, and try to live in some fool's paradise of extreme optimism, is to expose ourselves to disappointment and to danger; or to fall into the other extreme of a gloomy, desponding pessimism is to be unfaithful to that instinctive sense of God's goodness which is deep-seated in the heart. Scripture guides us in a middle course between these extremes—places before us, in equal distinctness, the two poles of thought, the opposing currents of influence; and this makes the practical duty manifest, to abhor the evil and cleave to the good, to fill the heart with reverence and trust for God, and to depart from evil in all its forms.

IV. THE SPIRIT OF ACCUSATION CONCERNED WITH GOOD MEN'S LIVES. This is the great characteristic of the evil spirit spoken of in various parts of Scripture. He is "Satan," that is, "the Adversary," one whose delight is in laying snares for men, seducing them from rectitude, and then slandering and accusing them before God. "The accuser of our brethren, who accuses them before our God day and night" (Rev. xii. 10). Here, in the court of heaven, the radiant scene of Divine glory which is brought before our view, while the rest of the retinue of angels, "sons of God," are present to discharge their functions of praise and of service, the evil genius of men comes to enjoy the dark pleasure of detraction and spite. While those bright spirits habitually look on the bright side of things, upon the creation lit up by the smile of God, reflecting everywhere his wisdom and his power, Satan dwells upon the dark side of things—upon that frailty and corruptibility of man, which appears to be the only blemish in the fine picture of God's world. Note the restlessness of this spirit of accusation. To and fro he roams in the earth, seeking rest, but finding none. How true a picture is this of every human heart which has given way to evil, and has thus become a mirror of the dark spirit! How restless are all men who are ill at ease in themselves, because devoid of peace with their God! The hunger for mischief is the counterpart of the hunger for righteousness. They roam about, discontented, maddened at the sight of goodness and purity which they have lost; barking, snapping, biting, devouring, like beasts of prey—fastening upon noble reputations and dragging them to the ground, as the panther springs upon the noble stag of the forest. What need have we to be warned against the misery of allowing ourselves to become the

servants of so dark a spirit, the agents of such malice! Whenever we find the rust of slander and backbiting gathering too easily on our tongues, whenever we find that the sight of good men's failures affords us more pleasure than that of their success and honour, we have need to look closely into the heart. We must be ill before we can enjoy these diseased pleasures. A soul in health towards God delights to see the reflection of that health in the faces and the lives of others. It is the misery of conscious sin which seeks relief in the sin of others. Whether in good or in evil, we cannot endure to be alone. The fulness of the heart's joy must have expression, and so must the burden of its unpardoned guilt—the one in words of charity to men and praise to God; the other in those of bitterness and blasphemy. But this scene sets before us a man who is to become the object, rather than the subject, of this malignant influence. Job is the victim, not the agent, of Satanic slanders. And it is well to consider here what there is in the constitution of our nature which lays us open to these diabolical attempts. 1. *There is a weak side in the nature of every one.* The sensuous side of nature presents a constant opening to attack. We can be easily bribed by bodily pleasures and frightened by bodily pains. Our affections too often expose us. We may be fortified on all sides; yet there is some postern door or secret entrance to the seat of will, which our wife, or little child, or bosom friend is well acquainted with and has the key of, and can readily, at any hour of day or night, pass through. Our tastes, pursuits, circumstances, variously constitute sources of weakness. Some men appear richer toward God amidst poverty and struggle; with many comfort and competence seem to foster and beautify their piety. In the case of Job, an attack is suddenly made all along the line; he is assailed in all the weak points of humanity. And in this completeness of his trial, with the result, lies a main point of instruction in the book. 2. *In the best of men there is a mixture of motives.* A man chooses the right from principle—from the fear of God in his heart. But he has promises beforehand to stimulate and encourage his choice, and successes afterwards to confirm it. None long travels on the narrow way without discovering that it is not only the right path, but the wise one; not only the right and the wise path, but the path of happiness, honour, and peace. Therefore, at any given point in a man's course, it may be difficult to determine what is the ruling motive of good within him. Did he begin to be good because he believed beforehand that it would turn out well with him in this world? Does he persevere because he has discovered by experience that godliness is profitable for this life? or is the fear and love of the Eternal and his righteousness the greatest, deepest, secret of his career? Who can answer these questions? Can any observer from outside? Can the man himself answer these questions? No. Trial, judgment, the sifting by the winnowing-fan, the cleansing of the refiner's fire, can alone declare what sort of man he is to himself and to others. By trial the inferior and the superior motives are separated. "Experience worketh knowledge;" and all new knowledge is new power. Blessed, then, the man that endureth affliction. The fine old Greek proverb, in his case, παθήματα, μαθήματα, comes true—"to suffer is to learn." Thus the very malignancy of his adversary, by the overruling of supreme wisdom and goodness, turns to his advantage; the calumnious foe becomes the unwilling friend. As the general feels grateful for an assault which has been severe, but in resisting which he has been taught a new lesson in war, so the faithful heart thanks God in the end for the permission of those trials which have called forth to the utmost and corroborated the holy energies within. 3. *Every outwardly good deed, every outwardly good life, admits of a twofold explanation, until the real facts be known.* This follows from the theory of motives. The most disinterested action, in semblance, may conceivably be referred, by a subtle analysis of motives, to some egotistic and more or less faulty motive. Here we have, in the theory of Satan concerning the piety of Job, an illustration of these laws. And the evil spirit, we may say, is within his right in insisting upon it, until the facts of experience shall refute him. It is trial alone which can, by its clear manifestation, refute the dark insinuations of our spiritual foes. Every man has two sides to his life—an outward and an inward. Does the inward correspond to the outward? Who can judge without proof? What all-silencing proof can there be but facts, stamped by suffering, written in blood and in fire? The Greeks had a saying that the character of a man was not to be known until he was placed in authority (Sophocles, 'Antigone'). Cer-

tainly that is one form of trial, through which Job had passed, gaining noble instruction. But it is a form of temptation far more severe to be cast down suddenly from previous influence and wealth, than to be suddenly raised to it. Our instinctive sympathy and pity towards those who have thus suffered teach us that it is so. And yet this is the trial for the chosen of God, for the selected specimens of his grace, the vessels of his holy fashioning. He will rebut and discomfit the slanders of the adversary and of all his followers, who love to scoff at the reality of goodness, to discount and depreciate and deny every human excellence, by subjecting his faithful ones to the last intensity of the furnace, that the truth and eternal reality of his work in the soul may be manifest to the eyes of all, both of the good and the evil.

V. LIFE, THEN, IS DIVINELY DELIVERED TO TRIAL. This is the teaching of this passage; it is the teaching of all Scripture. There is a precise permission from the sovereign will for evil to wreak its malice upon the good man. There is a distinction between the way in which good and evil respectively come upon us from the Divine hand. Good comes immediately, directly, fresh from the heart and love of him who is all goodness. But evil comes indirectly, through the dark and devious channels of evil and hostile wills. In blessing, in joy, God visits us in Person, his sunshine pierces through the windows of the soul unsought. But evil is only a licensed visitor to our dwelling, to our heart. And it is difficult to recognize behind the gloomy shape a controlling hand, a solicitous and loving eye. But it is one of the deep lessons of piety that we have all to learn—to say in affliction, "God permits this," as well as in joy, "God sends this." It may be learnt. In the low-stooping thunderous cloud, in the bursting rain and hail over our heads, we may feel the nearness of God, know his hand to be laid upon our conscience, his voice to be appealing to the inmost sense of our relation to him, which had perhaps slumbered beneath the bright and cloudless blue.

VI. GOD DOES NOT DELIVER LIFE TO DESTRUCTION, THOUGH HE MAY DELIVER IT FOR A TIME TO THE POWER OF EVIL. "He hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation." Jehovah says to Satan, "All that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand." Let us fix our attention on this antithesis: what a man has and what a man is. The stoic Epictetus dwelt, in his noble exhortations, on this contrast. There are things he says which are "within us," within our power, within the scope of our choice and control; other things which are "not within our power," over which our will has little or no control. The important matter, then, in self-government, is to be master of this inward sphere of thought, feeling, purpose. Then outward changes can work us no real harm. One who had duly imbibed these lessons said of his persecutors, "They may kill me, but they cannot hurt me." But the aspect of this truth in the light of the Christian revelation is more winning than the cold and haughty self-reliance of stoicism. He who has given himself up to the love and guidance of a heavenly Father knows that his soul is safe, whatever the disease of his body or the sufferings of his mind. Cast down he may be, destroyed he cannot be, so long as he is held by the hand that sustains the world. "Wherefore let them that suffer in well-doing commit their souls unto him, as unto a faithful Creator."

VII. This passage shows us that THERE IS LIGHT IN HEAVEN WHILE THERE IS DARKNESS UPON EARTH. There is the silver lining behind the cloud of every earthly affliction; for the presence of eternal wisdom and love is there. All was soon to be darkness, dismay, and doubt for the mind of Job; but to him who sees the end from the beginning all was clear and full of meaning. The machinations of the devil will only serve to bring out the fidelity and patience of his chosen servant, who will live to see the "end of the Lord," that he is very pitiful and of tender mercy. Let us lift up our thoughts, in every season of personal or national depression, in every time of discouragement, when wickedness abounds, when the devil seems to be advancing his kingdom and the light of faith is waning, to that eternal, unquenchable light of the wisdom that cannot err, the will that evil never can defeat. Let us never forget that

> "Blessing, not cursing, rules above,
> And that in it we live and move."

J.—

Vers. 13—22.—*The invasion of trouble, and its first effect on Job.* The lessons on which we have been dwelling, and on which Job had doubtless deeply meditated in the

leisure of his prosperous days, were now to receive the illustration of actual experience. A series of waves breaks in upon his peaceful home and heart, and, in the space of a few short hours, turns the smiling scene into utter desolation. We may notice in the story the following points: the calamities of Job, and their first effect upon his mind.

I. THE CALAMITIES. Their *suddenness and unexpectedness*. A bright holiday was selected by Providence for the discharge of those torrents of woe. The young people were making merry in their eldest brother's house—perhaps on his birthday—when the bolt out of the blue, without a moment's warning, struck. The imagination is powerfully affected by such contrasts. We do not pity ourselves or others so deeply when we have had time to prepare for the storm. The shock of the blow is broken when it finds us forewarned and forearmed. Men must all suffer at some time, and at some time must die; but the terror of the unlooked-for sorrow is as great as the joy of the unlooked-for blessing. But since there is a truth in the saying that "the unexpected always happens," how important to secure that only preparation for it which is within our power—a mind like Job's, fixed in principle, because fixed on God!

II. THERE WAS GRADATION IN THESE TROUBLES. They began in the inferior elements of life, and quickly rose to their climax in the superior. There was first the loss of property, in three distinct blows. First the oxen and the asses, then the sheep, and then the camels, were destroyed; and the whole of the herdsmen successively swept away. After the first loss, the instinct of Job would doubtless be to say, "Thank God for what is left;" and the same after the second; but the third cuts off these reflections, and strikes home the dreary conviction, "I am a ruined man!" Who can know but those who have suffered it what it is to lose a third or two-thirds of their worldly goods—much more to lose one's all? Shakespeare truly says that "'tis tenfold bitterer to lose than 'tis great at first to acquire." Still, a noble and loving soul, accustomed to find in affection life's choicest boon, will be consoled by the thought, "My family is left me; and their redoubled tenderness and sympathy, and cares and hopes for them, will still make life worth living." But even this sentiment, if it rose in the mind of the ruined man, is blighted in the bud by the terrible news that his sons and daughters have all perished by a sudden and violent death. Thus did some hidden wrath seem to exhaust its vials of concentrated fury on his devoted head; and he who had basked so long in the sunshine is plunged into the darkness, without apparently a single beam of comfort or of hope from without. Nay, more; that his children should have been cut off in the blossom of their sins, in the very height of their mirth, hurried away without time for further expiation or prayer, seemed, after all the father's earnest piety, as if Heaven had abandoned and doomed him.

III. We may notice, too, THE VARIETY OF THE SOURCES OF THESE AFFLICTIONS. The first came from the hand of men, from robbers, from men of violence and deceit. The second fell from heaven, in the form of devouring fire. The third, again, was a human outrage; and the fourth and most dreadful again from the tempestuous violence of heaven. For a just man to be the prey of injustice, to know that bad men gain at the expense of his loss, is a bitter experience; but to see mysterious, superhuman power, as it were, in alliance and compact with the wicked, is an awful aggravation.

IV. But WHAT IS THE EFFECT ON THE SUFFERER'S MIND? A glorious halo indeed surrounds him in this awful moment. Now is the time to see what there is in goodness, what is the real nature of faith; now or never the accuser must be abashed, and faint hearts must take courage, and God must be glorified. We learn from Job's behaviour that a true life in God is destined to triumph over all outward change and loss, over darkness, mystery, and death. 1. *Faith.* He believes in God. Not for a moment is his faith shaken. And his first instinct is to throw himself upon his God. He falls upon "the world's great altar-stairs which slope through darkness up to God." "Behold, he prays," and Satan already trembles for his wager. Oh, let us ever bend, reed-like, beneath the storm of Heaven-sent trial; not be broken like the rigid oak! He who can say from the heart, like the poor father in the Gospels (Mark ix. 24), "Lord, I believe," shall presently find the floods abating, and a great calm around him. 2. *Resignation.* Our will has nothing to do with the supreme turns and crises of being. We did not come into this world, we ought not to attempt to go out of it, by an act of our own. We must be resigned to live or to die. A supreme will determines our coming and our going, our entrance and our exit, in this short scene

of life. We did not determine the external condition in which we should be born. We all came naked into the world, and shall pass away taking nothing with us. Our bodily composition is earthy, and it must crumble back to earth. To her, the all-receiving mother of human-kind, we must each return. The deep sense of these relations is fitted to impress the habit of resignation. And, on the other hand, the transitoriness and weakness of our earthly estate should throw us upon the great spiritual realities. Resignation is not religious, self-renunciation is not complete, until we learn not only to give up earth and earthly will, but to cast ourselves on the bosom of the Eternal. He gives and he takes away the things that are no part of us, but only that he may hold ourselves, our souls, to him for ever. 3. *Thanksgiving.* What! thanks to God when he takes, as well as when he gives? Is this natural? is this possible? All is natural, is possible, to faith. For faith rests not upon what God does at this or that moment, but upon what he ever is. His action varies; in himself there is no variableness, nor shadow of a turning. Joy and sorrow, light and darkness, every possible phase of human experience,—these are the language of God to the soul. His meaning is one through all tones of his voice. Blessed, then, be the Name, not of the bestowing, health and joy imparting Father of light, Giver of every good and perfect gift; but blessed be the Name of the *Eternal*, true to himself in all his purposes, true to his children in all his dealings with them for their good.

"Blessed be the hand that gives,
Still blessed when it takes."

Oh that these songs, *e profundis* and *e tenebris*—"from the depth" and "the darkness"—might be heard more clearly, more unfalteringly, in all our public devotions as well as in all our private prayers! This offering of self to God in trust, submission, thanksgiving, is a "reasonable sacrifice." And as its savour ascends to heaven, it brings its peaceful answer back to the heart. The twenty-second verse reminds us by contrast, of the danger of sinning against God by reproaches and murmurs in our sorrow. "Job sinned not, and gave no offence to God," as the words may, perhaps, be better rendered. And after dwelling so much upon that temper which pleases our heavenly Father, let us enforce the lesson by reflecting on what we are so ready to forget—that he is justly displeased by indulgence in doubts of his existence or goodness, rebellion against the course of his providence, and the refusal of praise to his holy Name.—J.

Vers. 1—5.—*The typical conditions of domestic happiness.* This early Eastern poem, designed to throw light on the methods of the Divine discipline of men, opens with a pleasing picture of domestic felicity, presenting a typical example of happy family life. But Job is the central figure. It is the Book of Job. All has its relation to him. He is the one subject of the book. Not more truly is Job perfect than are the circumstances which surround him. All the elements of domestic happiness are present. They are seen in—

I. THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE. In his spirit he is "perfect," not marked by moral flaw. As "a just man" he walks in his integrity. In his deportment and his dealing with men he is "upright." No crooked vagaries mar his character or conduct. Honesty, straightforwardness, sincerity, are the conspicuous virtues of this good man. Towards God he is reverent, devout, obedient. The foundation of all wisdom, as of all virtue, is present—he "fears God." Evil he "eschews," he avoids it. Such are the characteristics necessary in the head of a godly, happy household.

II. A second feature is seen in THE NUMBER OF THE MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY AND THEIR AFFECTIONATE RELATIONSHIPS. Each adds his own element of character, and the variety of those elements secures the completeness of the family life, while affection preserves its unity. Love is the bond of perfectness in the family as in all communities.

III. A further element is found in THE ABUNDANT POSSESSIONS, raising the family from want to affluence, and bringing within its reach all that could promote its comfort and enjoyment.

IV. Over the whole is cast the guard and the sanctity of HABITUAL RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE. Declaring (1) Job's faith in God; (2) his reverent fear; (3) his know-

ledge of the doctrine of redemption by sacrifice; (4) his religious domestic discipline In all these Job is a model for the head of a family.

Most proper was it that such a man should be "the greatest of the sons of the East." Happy the nation whose greatest men are its best! Happy the people amongst whom the most observable are the most worthy of imitation. Such was Job, the subject of one of the most interesting, as of one of the oldest, examples of poetical, dramatic, religious writing.—R. G.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The sanctification of the home; or, parental priesthood.* Parentage involves authority, responsibility, power, and honour. It imposes special spiritual or religious duties; it demands right personal conduct, as an example; prudent discipline and careful instruction. It is the duty of a father to protect his family, not from temporal evils only, but from spiritual; to provide for their temporal and spiritual needs. The religious duties of parents embrace—

I. RELIGIOUS EXAMPLE.
II. RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.
III. RELIGIOUS GOVERNMENT OR DISCIPLINE.
IV. RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

The Christian father, standing as the priest or representative of his family before God, has not to *offer* a sacrifice for the sins of his family, but may and should *plead* the one Sacrifice on behalf of all committed to his care. These the first conditions of a happy home. In Job's case the spiritual instincts of the father are excited on behalf of his family exposed to the evils of surrounding idolatry. The Christian father has equal cause to be watchful. Consider (1) responsibilities, (2) toils, (3) rewards, of faithful Christian parents.—R. G.

Vers. 6—19.—*The trial of the righteous man.* The central subject of this book is the trial of the righteous man. Job is acknowledged of God to be "a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil." Yet he is tried, and tried sorely, and by permission of God. The difficulty to be solved by the history of Job is —How can it come to pass that the righteous suffer? To what end is this permitted? The trial of Job is divided into two parts—the first is briefly recounted, it contains the main facts; the second part is extended. The discussion of the book relates to the whole.

I. ATTENTION IS INSTANTLY DIRECTED TO THE AGENT OF THE TRIAL. Satan—the adversary. All our knowledge of the spirit-world is derived from Holy Scripture. The teaching of Scripture concerning evil spirits is full, minute, consistent. No valid objection to the existence of evil spirits can be raised on the ground of our ignorance, or our unfamiliarity with the phenomena attending the action of evil spirits. It is impossible to remove the teaching concerning Satan from Scripture without doing so great violence to it as to derange the whole. To a revelation we come to be taught, not to cavil. But the story is pictorially and dramatically represented. Satan is throughout "the agent of probation." Satanic action is not prevented, but controlled by God. The spirit of Satan is revealed by the malignant accusation made against Job. He charges Job with selfishness; his motive to obedience is a false one; his integrity will not stand a severe test. Very significant is the representation of the allowed Satanic testing—"All that he hath is in thy power."

II. ATTENTION IS DIRECTED TO THE NATURE OF THE TRIAL. It embraces the loss to Job of his substance, his servants, and his children. Wave after wave of sorrowful intelligence reaches him. Yet it is sudden. While one was "yet speaking, there came also another." It robbed the man of property, of his possessions; the man of honour, authority, and influence, of his servants; the tender father, of his family. How sad the change in his circumstances! How poignant his grief from the loss of his children! How desolate the home! How suddenly the brightness of noon changed for the darkness of midnight! It would be difficult to conceive a picture of more severe trial. It was intense, widespread, irreparable.

III. ATTENTION IS DIRECTED TO THE TEACHING OF THE TRIAL. 1. The folly of depending too confidently on earthly happiness. Every condition of happiness present; every ground of hope for its continuance; yet how speedily destroyed! 2. The demand

for other resources of blessedness than those found in the changeful conditions of the present life. The hand must not grasp earthly riches too firmly. All that is of earth fadeth: how needful to seek "durable riches"! 3. The whole surroundings and possessions of life may be made the occasions of the testing of virtue. 4. The necessity for such a view of one's life, and such a habit of obedience, as to be able to bow to the Divine will in the midst of our heaviest trials.—R. G.

Ver. 8.—*The righteous man.* Righteousness as descriptive of human character illustrated in Job. A few words only used. The Divine description. Highest testimony. Generally "my servant,"—the most honourable distinction. There is no higher calling in life than to serve God. But Job stands in special distinction—he is unequalled amongst men. His is the typical example of righteousness till a Greater than he appears. "There is none like him in the earth." A truly honourable position to be the first man of one's age. Job has the special honour of this Divine judgment. Needful for us to know the elements of so exalted a character. They are stated. The righteousness of Job is displayed in—

I. INWARD SANCTITY. Freedom from evil; "perfect"—wholeness, completeness of character; not to be supposed free from human frailty, but free from blemishes of character and conduct; a just man, having a well-balanced, self-controlled, law-abiding spirit.

II. UPRIGHTNESS. Conformed to that which is right; holding a right relation to God and man; correct and honourable in his dealings; a man of probity, truth, and honour. "One that feareth God."

III. REVERENCE TOWARDS GOD. Pious; fulfilling religious duties; devotional. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" "the root of the matter" in Job.

IV. ABHORRENCE OF EVIL. Having fear of God, he stands aloof from everything on which the Divine disapprobation rests. A pure mind withdraws from foulness, as a charitable man from selfishness, and an upright man from baseness.

Such a character is fitted to be a servant of God. On such the blessing of the Lord rests. But such are not exempt from trial. Even virtue must be tested. Into the hands of the dark agent of human probation even Job must be cast. This book reveals this truth, and illustrates and answers the difficulties suggested by it.—R. G.

Vers. 20—22.—*The triumph of faith.* The trial in its great severity has fallen upon Job. His oxen and asses have been rapaciously torn away from him by the Sabeans; many of his servants have been slain with the edge of the sword; the fire of God has consumed the sheep and the shepherds who took charge of them; the camels the Chaldeans have stolen, and slain the camel-keepers; the house of the eldest son, in which Job's sons and daughters were feasting, has been smitten by a great wind, and it has fallen, crushing the young men beneath its ruins. Could greater calamities happen to any man? This picture of desolation is complete. Surely every quality of character is tested. What call for passionate, impatient complaining! What is Job's conduct in this hour? He presents the example of *the triumphant victory of faith.*

I. THE VICTORY OF FAITH HAS ITS FOUNDATION IN A RECOGNITION OF THE DIVINE SUPREMACY. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." To live in the abiding acknowledgment of the Divine supremacy is the first requisite in a pure and a triumphing faith. It sees all things to be God's. He is Lord of all. Job feared God, and he trusted in God. Fear supports faith as truly as it sanctifies love.

II. THE VICTORY OF FAITH IS PROMOTED BY REVERENTIAL DEVOTION. Even the keen pangs of sorrow did not prevent Job from lowly worship. He sought the Lord in the day of his calamity, and he was helped. One allows his affliction to withdraw him from God; but he is driven to despair, for there is no helper; and the poor smitten spirit cannot stand alone. Another is driven to God, and finds a Hiding-place and Rock of defence. When we make God our Refuge, he becomes our Strength. It is foolish to forget God in the time of our need. He can help us when all other help fails. He will not see his feeble creatures come to him with lowly prayer, asking his aid with heart sincere, and yet leave them to their own resources. He who before God confesses his want gains for himself the Divine riches.

III. THE VICTORY OF FAITH IS CONSISTENT WITH GREAT PAINFULNESS AND SORROW.

Job rent his mantle and shaved off his hair—Eastern methods of representing sorrow. The great Exemplar was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He also "suffered"—was pre-eminently "a Man of sorrows." The godly in all ages have been put to the proof. "It came to pass that God did tempt Abraham." This is to be said of every son of Abraham.

IV. THE VICTORY OF FAITH IS THE LOWLY BUT BECOMING TRIBUTE OF THE HUMAN HEART TO THE SUPREMACY, THE WISDOM, AND THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

V. THE VICTORY OF FAITH ENSURES THE UTMOST DIVINE APPROVAL; and, as this completed history is designed to show, ends in a final reward which hides the recollection of the toil and suffering by which it is attained. The great lesson of all: "Have faith in God."—R. G.

Ver. 1.—*Job.* The Book of Job opens with a description of its hero. The portrait is drawn with the few swift, strong strokes of a master-hand. We have first the outer man and then the inner—first Job as he was known to any casual observer, and then Job as he was seen by the more thoughtful and penetrating, *i.e.* as he was in his true self.

I. THE OUTER MAN. 1. *A man.* Job first appears before us as a man. (1) Only a man. Not a demi-god, not an angel. Frail as a man, feeble, and fallible. (2) A true man. Diogenes went about with a lanthorn to search for a man. He need not have gone far if he had been in the land of Uz. Here was one who revealed the heroism of true manhood in the hour of most severe trial. (3) A typical man. Job is not called "the man," but "a man," one of a race. He is not named "the son of man." Only One could bear that title in its fulness of meaning. Job was an exceptional man indeed. But he was not unique. We are not to think of him as standing alone. The drama which is enacted in his experience is a type—though on a large scale—of the drama of human life generally. 2. *A Gentile.* Job was of "the land of Uz"—a Syrian or an Arab. Yet his story occurs in the Jewish Scriptures, and there he appears as one of God's most choice saints. Even in the Old Testament the Books of Job and Jonah show that all Divine grace is not confined to the narrow line of Israel. God has now those whom he owns in heathen lands. To be out of the covenant is not to be renounced by God, if one's heart and life are turned heavenwards. 3. *A marked individual.* "Whose name was Job." This man had a name, and his history has made it a great name. Though *one* of a race, every man has his own personality, character, and career. The significance of a name will depend on the conduct of the man who bears it. Job—Judas: what opposite ideas do these two names suggest? What will be the flavour of our names for those who come after us?

II. THE INNER MAN. 1. *A moral character.* (1) Inwardly true. This seems to be the idea of the biblical word "perfect." No one is perfect in our sense of the word. Certainly Job was not faultless, nor had he attained to the top of the highest pinnacle of grace. But he was no hypocrite. There was no guile, no duplicity, in him. He was true to the core, a man of moral simplicity, who wore no mask. Tests of trouble could not prove such a man false. (2) Outwardly upright. This characteristic is a necessary consequence of the preceding one. No man can be inwardly true whose way of life is crooked. Truth in the inward parts must be followed by righteousness of conduct. Note what tremendous stress the Bible lays on plain integrity. There is no saintliness without it. Job was an honest man—true to his word, fair in his dealings, trustworthy, and honourable. Such is the man in whom God delights. 2. *A religious character.* (1) Positively devout. "One that feared God." Thus Job had "the beginning of wisdom." Here was the secret of his moral integrity. The deepest moral characteristics of a good man rest on his religion. The interior life cannot be sound without this; for then, even if the second table of commandments may be kept, the first is neglected. (2) Negatively opposed to sin. Sin is the opposite of devoutness. The religious man not only shuns it; he hates it. Though sometimes he weakly succumbs to it, yet he detests it. It is not enough not to sin, we must hate and loathe sin.—W. F. A.

Vers. 2—5.—*The dangers of prosperity.* This book proposes to give us a picture of

extreme and probably unprecedented adversity. It is fitting that it should open with a scene of exceptional prosperity, to serve as a contrast to the dark scenes that follow. Moreover, the idea of the book is the better realized if we observe that the original prosperity is considered in its moral aspect, as concealing a possible temptation to sin.

I. THE PROSPERITY WAS SUBSTANTIAL. 1. *A large family.* This is always regarded in the Bible as a mark of prosperity. It is an unnatural social condition of congested populations that has led to the opposite idea in our own time. Certainly, where there are means for a livelihood, the family is a source of joy and influence, as well as wholesome self-sacrifice. 2. *Great property.* Job had more than the means for a livelihood. According to the estimate of a pastoral life, he was a very rich man, notoriously rich, and without an equal. Yet this man knew and feared God. It is therefore possible with God for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xix. 26).

II. THE PROSPERITY WAS ENJOYED. Job's sons and daughters were feasting together. Here is a picture of happy family life in the midst of affluence. The jealousy and bitterness that sometimes poison the cup of prosperity were not known in Job's household. His family was united and affectionate. It was by no means ascetic; but we have no reason for thinking it ought to have been so. No reproach is urged against Job's sons and daughters for feasting together. There is a time for innocent enjoyment, and when this is taken temperately and gratefully, only superstitious fears can suggest the idea of a Nemesis. The motto *Carpe diem* is mean and execrable, because it carries with it an implied renunciation of duty.

III. THERE WAS A DANGER IN THIS PROSPERITY. Job feared lest his children might have renounced God in their hearts. 1. *A danger of godlessness.* This is serious in the mind of Job, though it did not show itself in unkind or unjust conduct to men. To forsake God is sin, even though a man pay his debts. 2. *An internal evil.* "In their hearts." There might be no open blasphemy; yet the hearts of the gay and careless young men and women might be alienated from God. Even this is sin. 3. *An evil threatened by prosperity.* It is remarkable that this is the very sin which Job is subsequently tempted to commit by the agonies of overwhelming calamities. Here he thinks that prosperity may induce it in his children, for that tempts men to be satisfied with earth, to be vain, proud, and self-complacent.

IV. JOB GUARDED AGAINST THE DANGER. The patriarchal religion made the father the priest of his household. So he must be always when he realizes his position. Parents lay up property for their children; it is more important that they should make provision for their children's spiritual welfare. They watch anxiously for symptoms of disease in them; much more should they be on their guard against the first signs of moral defects. Job's children were sanctified—ceremonially cleansed. Ours need to be truly dedicated to God by parental prayers.—W. F. A.

Ver. 7.—*Satan's wanderings.* Here Satan appears in a very prominent and privileged position. He is the accuser rather than the tempter. At all events, he has a range of influence which suggests most terrible possibilities. We must remember that we are perhaps reading a symbolical drama, and must not take every line of it with dry literal exactness, as necessarily descriptive of actual historical events. Nevertheless, it suggests truths of great and lasting importance.

I. SATAN IS AT LARGE. He was at large in the days of Job, and he is so now. The days have not yet come when Satan is to be completely bound and made quite powerless for harm. We need therefore to be watching, for when we are most off our guard he is most likely to appear.

II. SATAN IS IN MOTION. "Going to and fro in the earth." He is not always tempting us. He left Christ "for a season" after the great forty days' temptation (Luke iv. 13). But if he leaves us for a time, it is to return again—no one can say how soon. One of his devices is to surprise us with novel temptations.

III. SATAN IS WATCHFUL. His eye was on Job. He had found that perfect and upright man, studied him, and laid deep plans for attacking him. Satan is indeed the old serpent, cunning and capable. There is no weak place in the armour that can possibly escape the vigilance of our horrible foe.

IV. SATAN IS SUBJECT TO GOD'S JUDGMENT. He appears in Job as privileged to

present himself among the sons of God. The complete rebellion and utter fall of the prince of evil is not yet seen. But even where that is recognized, as in the New Testament, the Judge of all the earth must be able to call his rebellious creature to account.

V. SATAN IS NOW RESTRICTED BY CHRIST'S VICTORY. He cannot range at large so freely as before. Jesus Christ lived on earth, wrestled with him, and flung the foul fiend to the earth. Our Lord has bound the strong man, and robbed his house (Mark iii. 27). It is true that the bondage is not yet complete. But the powers of evil are crippled wherever the light of Christ shines.

VI. SATAN'S RANGE DOES NOT EXTEND ABOVE THE EARTH. He wanders to and fro—in the earth. A wide range, but limited. Here we are tempted by the spirit of evil. But no temptations can enter heaven. We have but to hold out faithfully through our earthly pilgrimage, and there will be rest from the assaults of our great enemy when we pass to the home of the victorious.

VII. SATAN'S RANGE SHOULD BE EQUALLED BY THAT OF THE MESSENGERS OF THE GOSPEL. If he thus wanders, so should the Christian missionaries. Wherever the bite of the serpent is found, there should the healing balm be sent. Sin is world-wide, so also are the grace and power of Christ.—W. F. A.

Ver. 9.—*Disinterested piety.* Satan's suggestion is obvious enough. Job is religious; but Job is prosperous. Cast down his prosperity, and his religion will come down too like a house of cards.

I. TRUE RELIGION BRINGS GREAT REWARDS. As a matter of fact, Job was making the best of both worlds. While he was fearing and serving God, God was blessing and smiling upon him. 1. *Religion often brings earthly prosperity.* It is frequently true that "honesty is the best policy." God shows his love in very evident ways to many of his children, blessing them "in basket and store." When a good man is prosperous in business or home it is only right that he should acknowledge the kind hand from which all his happiness comes. 2. *Religion always brings heavenly prosperity.* It must be well with the soul that is near to God. He who owns Christ does most certainly possess a pearl of great price. Even the poor man in his adversity is rich with spiritual treasure when he has the love of God in his heart.

II. THE RELIGION WHICH DEPENDS ON REWARDS IS NOT TRUE. Job got much through his service of God, or rather along with that service; for all he had was of God's free grace, not of desert. But if he had only been religious in the spirit of the hireling, working for pay, his religion would have been rank hypocrisy. This is true of future as well as earthly rewards. It applies not only to the tradesman who goes to church that he may please church-going customers; it is true also of one who is a slave to "other-worldliness," and who behaves like a fanatical Mohammedan when he rushes forward to certain death in battle, inspired by the expectation of flying immediately to a paradise of *houris.* Self-seeking in religion is always fatal. It is natural to look forward to the rewards which God promises; but it is fatal to all devotion to make the pursuit of those rewards our chief motive. The true servant of God will say—

> "And I will ask for no reward,
> Except to serve thee still."

III. IT IS POSSIBLE TO RENDER DISINTERESTED SERVICE TO GOD. The accuser did not believe this; he spoke with Satanic cynicism. There are people who pride themselves on being men of the world, and who deny that there is any such thing as disinterested generosity. Possibly the reason is that they judge all men by their own low standard; or that they have not the eyes to see the best side of life. With all their boasted keenness of vision there is a whole realm of noble living which is entirely beyond their ken. The Satan-spirit can never understand the Christ-spirit. Now, the great problem of the Book of Job lies in this. That book is to prove the falsity of Satan's base insinuation. It is to show to the astonished accuser that disinterested devotion is possible. It is to prove, in the extreme instance of Job, that a man may lose all the apparent rewards of religion, and yet not give up his religion; that he may suffer grievous adversity, and yet not renounce his God. Job is a magnificent illustra-

tion of this truth. But behind Job is God, and the real secret is that God can and does inspire disinterested devotion.—W. F. A.

Ver. 12.—*In Satan's power.* I. GOD PERMITS TEMPORAL ADVERSITY. 1. *It cannot come without his permission.* Satan roams over the earth, longing for mischief; yet he cannot do any harm till he obtains leave from the court of heaven. It is some consolation in adversity to know that this has not fallen without God's observing it, nor even in spite of his will. That which he distinctly sanctions cannot be really bad. Therefore adversity is not the evil it appears to be. 2. *God does not always inflict evil immediately.* It is not God, but Satan, who smites Job. It would seem that God would never have done it, and that if Satan had not sought permission to hurt Job, Job's prosperity would have remained unshaken. This is not like the narratives of destroying angels sent forth by God to smite Jerusalem (2 Sam. xxiv. 16) and to destroy the Assyrian host (2 Kings xix. 35). In those cases the calamity was from God. Here it originates in Satan, though it is permitted by God. Possibly we may see a ray of light on the mystery of suffering in this fact, especially as a similar thing is seen in the New Testament, in the case of the woman "whom Satan has bound" (Luke xiii. 16), and in the case of a person "delivered over to Satan" (1 Tim. i. 20). St. Paul's thorn in the flesh was not a messenger of God, but "a messenger of Satan" (2 Cor. xii. 7). There are evils which God would not initiate, yet which it would not be well for him at once to restrain by force.

II. GOD LIMITS THE ADVERSITY HE PERMITS. Satan is permitted to lay hold on all that Job possesses, but not to touch the man himself. Thus the adversity is limited, and on various grounds. 1. *According to necessity.* It shall be no greater than is necessary to accomplish its object. God is lavish of mercies; he is parsimonious with afflictions—even in the case of the huge afflictions of a Job! But he is the Judge of how much trouble is necessary, and we cannot estimate it. 2. *According to powers of endurance.* God will not suffer us to be tempted beyond that we are able to endure (1 Cor. x. 13). He knew Job when he permitted tremendous troubles to fall upon him. Those Titanic shoulders could carry a giant's load of calamity. Weaker souls are more gently dealt with.

III. THE ADVERSITY IS ONLY PERMITTED FOR THE SAKE OF A GREAT GOOD. To the casual observer it looks as though Job were merely delivered over for Satan to make diabolical sport with him, as the Philistines made sport with blind Samson. But God would not thus cruelly deal with any man. The fact is, Job is to prove a great truth to devils and angels, and ultimately to men also. The testing of his fidelity is a lesson for the universe. It shows that God inspires disinterested devotion. Now, Job was not aware of this purpose. Had he known it, the trial would have been frustrated. To him the series of calamities is an overwhelming mystery, and he is tried the more by its inexplicable character. We cannot see the purpose of our troubles. But there *is* a purpose. Possibly one explanation is, not that we are merely to suffer for our own soul's discipline, but, like Job, for the sake of lessons which, without our knowing them, may be taught to others by means of our experience.—W. F. A.

Vers. 13—19.—*Job's unparalleled calamities.* Everything is done to heighten and intensify the impression of Job's calamities. Let us note their salient features.

I. THEY OCCUR AT A SEASON OF FESTIVITY. It was a feast-day, and Job's whole family was gathered together in his eldest son's house. Then of all times the affectionate father would be least prepared for ominous rumours of calamity. The thunderbolt fell from the cloudless blue sky. Without a note of warning, the fearful storm burst in an overwhelming deluge. This is a lesson against trusting to prosperity, as though it contained a promise of its own certain continuance. But it is no unmerciful arrangement of Providence that the dark future is hidden from us. We are made sad because

"We look before and after."

If we saw all the future, we could not endure the present.

II. THEY OCCUR IN RAPID SUCCESSION. So closely do these calamities follow one upon another that, before the first messenger has told his tale, a second herald arrives

with more evil news, followed as speedily by a third, and he after no more delay by the last, with his most dreadful message. It has often been noticed how troubles come in batches. In Job's case we can see the reason. One fearful power of malignity is behind the whole series.

III. THEY COME FROM VARIOUS QUARTERS. Though Satan is the ultimate cause of all the calamities, he does not inflict any of them with his own hand. He keeps that hidden, and finds means to send emissaries from all quarters—Arabs from the south fall on the home farm; lightning from heaven smites the sheep on the downs; three robber-bands of roving Chaldees from the north swoop down on the caravan of camels that carries Job's wealth of merchandise; and, worse than all else, a hurricane from the desert smites and fells the house where Job's sons and daughters are feasting. Who can dwell in security when trouble may come in so many directions? It is impossible for the strongest man to fortify himself against it. None of us can do more than make reasonable preparations, which may all prove useless. But all may trust the providence of him who rules wind and storm and heart of man, and without whose permission not a hair of our head can be touched.

IV. THEY ARE AGGRAVATED AS THEY PROCEED. The worst comes last. It is terrible for a rich man to see his wealth melting before his eyes in a few moments. This was Antonio's trouble when his fleet of merchandise was destroyed ('Merchant of Venice'), but it was not so fearful as Malcolm's, when all his children were murdered at once ('Macbeth'), or the late Archbishop Tait's, when one after another his children died of an epidemic of fever. Let the impoverished man be thankful if his family is spared to him. Note: 1. Possibly trouble is softened by coming with successive shocks. Each may drown the effect of its predecessor. 2. Job's trouble was only once surpassed—in Gethsemane.—W. F. A.

Vers. 21, 22.—*Job's resignation.* We cannot but be struck with the magnificent calmness of Job after receiving the successive blows of unprecedented calamities. He is not stunned; he is not distracted. He possesses his soul in patience. With a singular dignity of bearing he is seen to be greater now in his calamity than ever he appeared when at the height of success.

I. HOW JOB BEHAVED. 1. *He mourned.* This was natural, reasonable, and right. He would have been less than man if he had taken his troubles without a pang. God loves the heart of flesh, not the stony heart; and the heart of flesh must needs feel great trouble very keenly. God's saint is not a stoic. But though Job mourned, he did so with calmness and self-restraint. He did not fling himself down in passionate grief. His rising, his rending his mantle—from neck to girdle, according to custom—his shaving his head, all indicate his marvellous self-possession. He goes through the dreary process of conventional mourning with unflinching decision. His calmness, however, only covers the depth of his sorrow. There is something terrible about that methodical process. The tragedy is sublime. 2. *He worshipped.* He did not renounce God. On the contrary, he blessed the Name of the Lord. He could not understand the meaning and end of his strange experience. But he knew God, and he never dreamed of doubting God. Moreover, his trouble drives him to God. He falls before God in adoration. The singular thing is that he is not seen praying for help. His trouble is beyond help, and he is not one to whine in weak misery. He loses himself in adoration of God. This is the great secret of fortitude—not to cry for deliverance, ut to forget ourselves in God.

II. WHAT JOB RECEIVED. He spoke to God, or perhaps uttered a soliloquy, for the relief of his own heart, yet doubtless conscious of the sustaining presence of God. His words show his perfect reasonableness. There is nothing which makes people so unreasonable as trouble. Yet Job was not yet turned one hair's breadth from the line of truth and reason by his fearful calamities. It is a great security to see things as they are. Half our distress arises from our viewing them in false lights of passion and prejudice. If we are only calm enough to look about us, we may discover a strange revealing light in great calamities. They break through the conventional forms, and flash out facts. 1. *Job saw his own littleness.* In a moment he perceived that he had no natural right to all he had possessed. He had nothing when he entered the world; he could carry nothing out with him. Pride prepares for distresses which

humility escapes. When we perceive how very small we are, we cannot be amazed at any loss which we may sustain. 2. *Job recognized God's right.* He who gives has a right to withdraw. All we have is on loan from God. This truth does not make our loss the less, but a perception of it calms the foolish, rebellious spirit, which is the source of our deepest misery.—W. F. A.

Ver. 22.—*Standing fire.* Thus ends the first scene. Satan is completely defeated. His surmise is proved to be utterly false. God has permitted the hedge about Job to be broken through, and the destroyer has ravaged his possessions till the garden is turned into a desert. Yet the good man does not renounce God.

I. To CHARGE GOD WITH WRONG IS A SIN. This was the sin to which Satan was tempting Job. The suggestion was that he should say that God was acting cruelly, unjustly, wrongly. Now, as this seems a natural inference from the events, why was it wrong for Job to follow it? The answer must be found in the truth that God is not known inductively by means of external phenomena.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense."

He has made himself known by special revelations, and he is ever making himself more and more known in the voice of conscience. From these sources we know that the Judge of all the earth must do right. To doubt this is to forsake the higher light and to sink into culpable folly. To prefer a charge against God is worse than to doubt him. At least we might be silent.

II. THE ABSENCE OF SIN CAN ONLY BE PROVED BY TRIALS. It is easy to hide sin from view in times of quiet. Then the base metal may shine as brightly as the pure gold. The fiery test reveals its worthlessness. The important question is as to whether we have a character that will stand fire. It is of little value for a man not to be sinning when he has no inducement to sin. His goodness then is at best a negative innocence, and very possibly it is only a slumbering of latent evil.

III. THE MOST DIFFICULT THING IS NOT TO SIN WHEN ONE IS MOST TEMPTED. There were many sins, doubtless, to which Job was not at all liable. It was little to his credit that he was not guilty of them. The point of interest was that "in all this," *i.e.* in this specially trying series of calamities, Job did not commit the particular sin to which they pointed, *i.e.* charging God with wrong. People pride themselves on their goodness in various directions; but this is of small importance if they fail when they are really tempted.

IV. THE SECRET OF STANDING FIRE IS IN THE STRENGTH OF GOD. Now Job has the reward of his long devotion to God. Ver. 5 shows him a man of prayer in the days of prosperity; it shows him praying for his children in their need; thus Job was being prepared unconsciously for the evil day. When it came it found him ready, though it was quite unexpected, because it found him living near to God. When the whirlwind is about us it is too late to think of strengthening the tent-stakes. We need the inward strength of God, which comes by the slow growth of Christian experience, if we are to stand like the sturdy oak in the sudden swirl of calamities.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Vers. 1—13.—This chapter concludes the "Introductory section." It consists of three parts. Vers. 1—6 contain an account of Satan's second appearance in the courts of heaven, and of a second colloquy between him and the Almighty. Vers. 7—10 contain the sequel to this colloquy, viz. Satan's further affliction of Job, and his conduct under it. Vers. 11—13 contain an account of the arrival of Job's three special friends to mourn with him and to comfort him; and of their behaviour during the first seven days after their arrival.

Ver. 1.—**Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.** There is no "again" in the original. The words used are an exact repetition of those contained in ver. 6 of ch. i. But they mark, no doubt, a *second* occasion on which

the angelic host came to present themselves before the throne of God, and Satan came with them. **To present himself before the Lord.** These words are additional to those used in the former passage. We may gather from them, that, whereas on the former occasion Satan came only to observe, and with no intention of drawing God's special attention to himself, he now had such intention, and looked forward to a colloquy. He anticipated, doubtless, that the circumstances of Job's probation would be referred to, and he had prepared himself to make answer.

Ver. 2.—**And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it** (see the comment on ch. i. 7, of which this is an almost exact repetition).

Ver. 3.—**And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?** Thus far is identical with ch. i. 1 (*quod vide*). The rest of the verse is additional, having reference to the conduct of Job under his earlier trials (ch. i. 20—22). **And still he holdeth fast his integrity.** This has been justly called "the key-note of the whole book" (Cook). Satan had declared that Job's integrity rested on no solid basis, and would easily be overthrown and disappear. God, confident in his servant's faithfulness and truth, had allowed him to assail it. What was the result? God declares it with his own mouth. Job's "integrity" had not been wrested from him; he still maintained it (ch. i. 21, 22), as he was about to do till the end (ch. xlii. 1—6). Compare the ideal "just man" of Horace—

> "Justum et tenacem propositi virum
> Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
> Non vultus instantis tyranni
> Mente quatit solida, neque Auster,
> Dux inquieti turbidus Hadriæ. . . .
> Si fractus illabatur orbis,
> Impavidum ferient ruinæ."
> ('Od.,' iii. 3.)

Although thou movedst me against him (see ch. i. 9—11), **to destroy him**; literally, *to swallow him up*; i.e. to ruin him, overwhelm him with calamities. **Without cause**; *i.e.* "when he had done nothing to deserve such treatment."

Ver. 4.—**And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin.** No doubt a proverbial expression, resembling "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth;" "Tit for tat," and the like; but not expressive of retaliation. Satan means that, to keep his own "skin" intact, a man will sacrifice another's "skin," even that of his nearest and dearest. Job, he insinuates, submitted to the loss of his children without a murmur, because he feared that otherwise God would stretch forth his hand against his person, and smite it or destroy it. He cannot imagine any motive for submission and apparent resignation but a selfish one (comp. ch. i. 9). **Yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life**; *i.e.* "a man will submit to the loss, not only of all his possessions, but even of those whom he loves best, to save his own life—he will do anything for that." So the "false accuser." All the numerous acts of self-sacrifice which human history presents, and has presented from the first, are ignored.

Ver. 5.—**But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh**; *i.e.* "his person"—any part of his body. **And he will curse thee to thy face** (see the comment on ch. i. 11).

Ver. 6.—**And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold he is in thine hand**; *i.e.* "he is in thy power, to do with him as thou pleasest"—except in one respect. Again it is strongly marked that Satan's power is under God's control, and extends only so far as God allows. **But save his life**; rather, *only spare his life* (Revised Version). The didactic purposes for which God was allowing his faithful servant to be tried in the furnace of affliction would have been frustrated by Job's removal from the earth. Individually he might equally well have been compensated in another world; but then the lesson of his example to living men, and the lesson of his story to all future generations of mankind, would have been lost. Besides, God but rarely, in the old world, gave a faithful servant, still in the full vigour of life (ch. xlii. 16, 17), "over unto death" (Ps. cxviii. 18).

Ver. 7.—**So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord** (comp. ch. i. 12, *ad fin.*). Satan, we may be sure, is always anxious to quit the immediate presence of God; for "what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. vi. 14). But now he had a special motive for haste in his anxiety to put Job to the test. Doubtless he was confident that he would triumph. **And smote Job with sore boils.** "With a malignant inflammation" (Lee). It has been generally concluded, from the scattered notices of his malady contained in the Book of Job (especially ch. vii. 4, 5; xvii. 1; xix. 17—20; and xxx. 17—19), that the disease with which Satan "smote Job" was elephantiasis—sometimes called *Elephantiasis Arabum*—a marked and strongly developed form of leprosy (Rosenmüller, Michaelis, Professor Lee, Canon Cook, Stanley Leathes, etc.). Elephantiasis is thus popularly described by Canon Cook, in the 'Speaker's

Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 26; "An intense heat, a burning and ulcerous swelling, or leprosy in its most terrific form, taking its name from the appearance of the body, which is covered with a knotty, cancerous bark like the hide of an elephant; the whole frame is in a state of progressive dissolution, ending slowly but surely in death." A modern scientific work gives the following more exact, but more technical, account of the disease; "A non-contagious disease characterized by recurrence of febrile paroxysms, attended by inflammation, and progressive hypertrophy of the integument and areolar tissue, chiefly of the extremities and genital organs; and occasionally by swelling of the lymphatic glands, enlargement and dilatation of the lymphatics, and in some cases by the coexistence of chyluria, and the presence in the blood of certain nematode hæmatozoa, together with various symptoms of a morbid or depraved state of nutrition" (Quain's 'Dictionary of Medicine,' vol. i. p. 431). The disease is not now regarded as incurable, though, without an entire change of scene and climate, it is regarded as very seldom cured (ibid., p. 432). **From the sole of his foot unto his crown.** Elephantiasis is generally local, attacking some part of the body, as, especially, the extremities or the genital organs. But in the worst forms, the entire body suffers.

Ver. 8.—**And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal.** "The surface of the integuments," says Dr. Quain, "is often much inflamed, and sometimes discharges a serous ichor, or chyle-like fluid, according to the extent to which the lymphatics are engaged in the particular case" (ibid., p. 432). This "serous or lymph-like fluid" is occasionally "acrid and offensive." Job seems to have used his potsherd to scrape it away. **And he sat down among the ashes.** Not as a curative process, or even as an alleviation of his pains, but simply as was the custom of mourners (comp. Isa. xlvii. 3; lviii. 5; Jer. vi. 26; Ezek. xxvii. 30; Jonah iii. 6). The LXX. renders, "on the dung-heap;" but this meaning, if a possible one, is highly improbable.

Ver. 9.—**Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity?** Job's wife had said nothing when the other calamities had taken place—then she had "refrained her tongue, and kept silence," though probably with some difficulty. Now she can endure no longer. To see her husband so afflicted, and so patient under his afflictions, is more than she can bear. Her mind is weak and ill regulated, and she suffers herself to become Satan's ally and her husband's worst enemy. It is noticeable that she urges her husband to do exactly that which Satan had suggested that he would do (ch. i. 11; ii. 5), and had evidently wished him to do, thus fighting on his side, and increasing her husband's difficulties. The only other mention of her (ch. xix. 17) implies that she was rather a hindrance than a help to Job. **Curse God, and die;** *i.e.* "renounce God, put all regard for him away from thee, even though he kill thee for so doing." Job's wife implies that death is preferable to such a life as Job now leads and must expect to lead henceforward.

Ver. 10.—**But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh;** rather, *as one of the vile* (or *impious*) *women speaketh. Nabal*, the term used, is expressive, not of mere natural folly, but of that perversion of the intellect which comes on men when their hearts and understandings are corrupted and degraded (see 2 Sam. xiii. 13; Ps. xiv. 1; Isa. xxxii. 6). **What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?** Job remembers all the good which he has received of God during his past life, all the blessings and prosperity bestowed on him (ch. i. 2, 3), and asks—Would it be fair or right to take all the good things as a matter of course, and then to murmur if evil things are sent? He accepts both prosperity and affliction as coming from God, and expresses himself as willing to submit to his will. But he has, perhaps, scarcely attained to the conviction that whatever God sends to his faithful servants is always that which is best for them—that afflictions, in fact, are blessings in disguise, and ought to be received with gratitude, not with murmuring (comp. Heb. xii. 5—11). **In all this did not Job sin with his lips.** Thus far, that is, Job "kept the door of his mouth" strictly, righteously, piously. Later on he was not always so entirely free from fault.

Ver. 11.—**Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him.** It is not to be supposed that Job had no more than three friends—indeed, Elihu the Buzzite appears later on as one of his friends (ch. xxxii. 2—6)—but he had three contemporaries with whom he was especially intimate, old men (ch. xxxii. 6), with whom he was probably accustomed to confer from time to time, and who were in the habit of giving him their advice. All three, apparently, lived at a distance; and it seems to have been some weeks before the news of his misfortunes reached them. When the news came they held communication one with another, and agreed to pay him visits of condolence at a certain definite time, which was determined upon between them. Some months—at least two—seem to have elapsed between the date of Job's latest affliction and the time of their arrival (ch.

vii. 8). **They came every one from his own place.** They had separate homes, and probably lived at some considerable distance from one another. **Eliphaz the Temanite.** There was an Eliphaz, the son of Esau by his wife Adah, who had a son Teman (Gen. xxxvi. 4; 1 Chron. i. 35, 36); but it is not supposed that this can be the person here intended. The name Teman did not become geographical until the descendants of this Eliphaz's son had multiplied into a tribe, when they gave name to the portion of Arabia which they inhabited. This tract seems to have been either a part of Edom, or in its immediate vicinity (Gen. xxxvi. 42, 43; Jer. xlix. 7, 8, 20; Ezek. xxv. 13; Obad. 8, 9), but cannot be located with accuracy. The Temanites were celebrated for their wisdom, as we learn from Jeremiah, who says (xlix. 7), "Concerning Edom, thus saith the Lord of hosts; Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished?" Job's friend was probably among their wisest men at the time; and his discourses certainly show a considerable knowledge of human nature. They do not, however, solve the riddle of the universe. **And Bildad the Shuhite.** Bildad is a name which does not occur elsewhere in Scripture, neither is there any other mention of Shuhites. Conjecture has identified the Shuhites with the Saccæi of Ptolemy ('Geograph.,' v. 15), whom he places in the neighbourhood of Batanæa and Trachonitis. But the Saccæi are unheard of till Ptolemy's time, and seem to be a tribe of very small importance. Perhaps Bildad belonged to the people known to the Assyrians as the **Tsukhi**, or **Sukhi** ('Records of the Past,' vol. i. p. 14), who dwelt on the Middle Euphrates from about Anah to Hit ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. pp. 66, 67). **And Zophar the Naamathite.** Zophar, or rather Tsophar, is another unknown name. There was a Naamah, a city, in south-western Judæa (Josh. xv. 41), to which Zophar may have belonged, though probably a region, rather than a city, is here intended. **For they had made an appointment together;** or, *agreed together*, by message or letter probably. **To come to mourn with him and to comfort him.** A good intention, at any rate, and one agreeable to the apostolic injunction to us to "weep with them that weep" (Rom. xii. 15). That they failed to carry out their intention (ch. xvi. 2; xxi. 34) was owing to a want of judgment, and, perhaps, in part, to a want of love.

Ver. 12.—**And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not.** Job was seated on an ash-heap outside his dwelling (ver. 8). The three friends, who had probably met by agreement at some point near his residence, and drew nigh together, saw the figure at some distance, and looked to see who it was. But Job was so disfigured by the disease that they failed to recognize him. **They lifted up their voice, and wept.** In the clamorous manner of Orientals (comp. Herod., ii. 14; iii. 119; viii. 99; ix. 24; and Æschylus, 'Persæ,' *passim*). **And they rent every one his mantle** (see the comment on ch. i. 20), **and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven** (comp. Josh. vii. 6; 1 Sam. iv. 12; 2 Sam. i. 2; xiii. 19; Neh. ix. 1; Ezek. xxvii. 30; Lam. ii. 10; and see also Homer, 'Il.,' xviii. 22—24; Helioder, 'Hist. Æth.,' i.).

Ver. 13.—**So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights.** Professor Lee supposes that this is not to be taken literally. "It means," he says, "that they sat with him a considerable length of time before they opened the question discussed in this book, not that they sat precisely seven days and seven nights, and said not so much as one word to him" ('The Book of the Patriarch Job,' p. 194). But the period of "seven days" was appropriate to mournings (Gen. i. 10; 2 Sam. xxxi. 13; Ezek. iii. 15), and if they could stay with him one day and one night without speaking, why not seven? Food would be brought them, and they might sleep rolled up in their *begeds*. The long silence may be accounted for by the fact that "among the Jews," and among Orientals generally, "it is a point of decorum, and one dictated by a fine and true feeling, not to speak to a person in deep affliction until he gives an intimation of a desire to be comforted" (Cook). So long as Job kept silence they had to keep silence, at least so far as he was concerned. They might speak to any attendants who drew near, and they might speak one to another. Note the words which follow: **And none spake a word unto him.** None spake *to him;* but no etiquette imposed complete silence on them. **For they saw that his grief was very great.** So great that he could not as yet bear to be spoken to.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*A new trial moved for.* I. THE OLD OCCASION RETURNED. 1. *The gathering of the sons of God.* The recurrence of this celestial scene reminds us of: (1) the immutable sovereignty of Jehovah, who, on this second occasion as on the first,

still appears enthroned amidst the principalities and powers of heaven—the devils also being subject to him (cf. 1 Pet. iii. 22); (2) the permanence of moral obligation in the heavenly world and amongst angels as well as on the earth, neither lapse of time nor change of circumstances having the slightest effect in releasing God's intelligent creatures from the bonds of responsibility; and (3) the constancy and cheerfulness with which the inhabitants of the upper world delight to do God's holy will—an example of obedience proposed for the study and imitation of believers (Matt. vi. 10). 2. *The reappearance of the adversary.* If, on the former occasion, the entrance of Satan amongst God's celestial sons might permissibly be regarded as an impertinent intrusion, in the present instance his return must be held as having taken place in accordance with a tacit understanding that, in due course, he should appear to report the result of his experiment with the patriarch, which, perhaps, may explain the introduction of the words, "to present himself before the Lord," omitted from the account of the first assembly.

II. THE OLD CONTROVERSY RESUMED. 1. *The patriarch's enemy interrogated.* "From whence comest thou?" Note (1) God's universal cognizance of things that transpire on earth (ch. xxviii. 10, 24; xxxiv. 22); (2) God's perpetual surveillance of the devil in his movements; and (3) God's constant watchfulness against his attacks (Rev. iii. 10). 2. *The patriarch's piety commended.* "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" (see homiletics on ch. i. 1, 8). Whether or not containing "a covert sneer at the baffled adversary," the question reminds us of: (1) God's faithfulness towards his people. Nothwithstanding all that had occurred, Job was still God's servant, and God as ready to own him for his servant as when the patriarch was rejoicing in the fulness of prosperity (Isa. xliv. 21; liv. 10). (2) God's judgment concerning his people. God can always distinguish between a man and his surroundings. The Omniscient judges no one by his material environment, but by the character of his heart (1 Sam. xvi. 7; 2 Sam. vii. 20; Ps. vii. 9). (3) God's affection for his people. As Job's afflictions had not destroyed his piety, so neither had they alienated God's love. Never in the day of calamity does Jehovah renounce his saints, but rather, because of tribulation, clings to them with fonder affection (1 Sam. xii. 22; Ps. xci. 15; Rom. xi. 2; 2 Tim. ii. 19; Rev. ii. 9). 3. *The patriarch's sincerity attested.* (1) The Divine satisfaction with the patriarch. "He still holdeth fast his integrity." Constancy in piety is a rare jewel in the saint's casket, lends a special lustre to his other virtues, is ever highly prized by its possessor, and never fails to elicit Heaven's commendation. The Divine approbation also, besides being an ample recompense for all the saint's trials (Rom. viii. 18), is the only sure test of genuine religion (2 Cor. x. 18), the greatest honour a saint can receive (Matt. x. 32), and the final portion of those who hold fast their integrity to the end (Mal. iii. 17; Rev. iii. 5). (2) The Divine indignation against Satan. "Although thou movedst me to destroy him." See the widely differing estimates of trouble taken by God and Satan. What the devil called a touch God calls a swallowing up: that marks the tenderness of God's heart. Note the different relations in which God and Satan stood to Job's affliction—God acting, and the devil tempting; marking God's sovereignty, but Satan's responsibility. "God's afflicting of his people is (so to say) a blowing of the bellows to kindle his displeasure against wicked instruments (Isa. xlvii. 5, 6; Zech. i. 15)" (Hutcheson). (3) The Divine sorrow about himself. "Thou movedst me . . . without cause." Indicating the reluctance with which God in any case proceeds against a saint (Lam. iii. 33), and the regret which he felt in this case, since he knew so well there was no sufficient reason for entertaining a suspicion against the patriarch's piety. Let it teach us that "though all men have sins enough to be the meritorious cause, yet oftentimes sin is not the moving cause of their afflictions" (Caryl).

III. THE OLD CALUMNY REVIVED. Job's victory in the previous conflict is by the devil: 1. *Tacitly admitted.* Satan finds it impossible to repel the statements advanced by Jehovah concerning his servant. Saints should study to live so that their piety cannot be contradicted, however much it may be aspersed by Satan and wicked men, and that God, when he speaks in commendation of their integrity, may be justified. 2. *Reasonably explained.* On the ground that the trial was not severe enough. "Skin for skin," etc.—a proverb, which, however explained (see Exposition), practically charges the patriarch with unnatural barbarity in disregarding the loss of his children

since his own skin was saved, as well as with intense and revolting selfishness in making the supreme consideration, in all his thoughts and calculations, the preservation of his own life. 3. *Wholly undervalued.* As in his (the devil's) estimation, proving nothing and contributing nothing to the solution of the grand problem in debate. Hence he does not hesitate to suggest that the matter should a second time be submitted to the ordeal of trial.

IV. THE OLD PROPOSITION REPEATED. "But put forth thine hand now;" which demand was certainly: 1. *Presumptuous;* considering by whom it was made, Satan, and to whom it was addressed, Jehovah; thus showing the illimitable pride of the devil (Isa. xiv. 12, 13, 14). 2. *Unnecessary;* remembering the person against whom it was directed, and the issue of the preceding trial to which he had been subjected. 3. *Cruel;* seeing that Job had already been afflicted by the double stroke of bankruptcy and bereavement, and this was a request that God would aggravate his misery by laying his hand upon his person. But who would ever look for humane and tender feelings in a devil? 4. *Malignant;* when regard is had to its object and motive—the latter being hostility to God and hatred of piety; the former the overthrow of Job's religion and the damnation of Job's person.

V. THE OLD PERMISSION RENEWED. "Behold, he is in thine hand." The patriarch was again delivered up into the power of the adversary. 1. *Sovereignly;* God having a perfect right to dispose of the persons of his people, no less than their properties. 2. *Really;* to be tried in whatever manner his Satanic ingenuity might devise, always, of course, within the prescribed limits. 3. *Immediately;* from this time forward being rendered accessible to the hostile assaults of the adversary. Yet: 4. *Reservedly;* with certain restrictions as to his life, which was not to be taken from him. And also, one cannot help thinking: 5. *Confidently;* without the slightest apprehension of an unfavourable issue to the trial, so high was the estimation in which God held his servant.

Learn: 1. Concerning the devil. That he is seldom satisfied with only one attempt against the virtue of a saint; that he is exceedingly unwilling to admit himself defeated on the field of spiritual conflict; and that he ever plants his fiercest batteries against the citadel of a saint's integrity. 2. Concerning the saint. That he need hardly anticipate a long period of exemption from either trials or temptations; that whatever calamities befall him, he should labour to discern God's providential hand in their occurrence; and that he may confidently trust God will not give him over completely to the devil. 3. Concerning God. That though he may suffer his saints to be tried, he does not cease to love them; that though he may lengthen Satan's chain, he doesn't loosen it; and that, though he may sometimes listen to Satan's charges against the saints, he never believes them.

Ver. 4.—*The value of life.* I. MORE VALUABLE THAN MATERIAL POSSESSIONS. 1. In *origin;* being the breath of God's Spirit, while they are only the work of God's hand. 2. In *nature;* being conscious of its own existence, while they are only dead, insensate things. 3. In *capacities;* being possessed of intellect, reason, conscience, will, while they have only properties and qualities peculiar to matter. 4. In *design;* being intended for the conscious enjoyment of God, while they can never consciously enjoy, but only obediently and passively glorify, their Maker.

II. LESS VALUABLE THAN SPIRITUAL POSSESSIONS. 1. In *character;* being a natural endowment, while these are essentially gifts of grace. 2. In *usefulness;* without these being a failure so far as realizing its appropriate end is concerned, whereas these enhance the dignity and capabilities of life. 3. In *happiness;* life with grace being immensely more enjoyable than mere existence without it. 4. In *duration;* life being doomed to decay and dissolution, while the riches of the soul endure for ever.

LESSONS. 1. Prize life as a gift of God. 2. Adorn life with the grace of God. 3. Use life for the glory of God. 4. Return life (when it is called for) into the hands of God.

Ver. 4.—*Satan's proverb.* I. THE IMPORT OF IT. That a man will part with everything about him to save his life.

II. THE FALSEHOOD OF IT. 1. Men will part with all outward things to save life.

2. Some men will even part with a good conscience to save life. 3. But there are those who would rather die than renounce their integrity.

Vers. 7—10.—*The patriarch's second trial.* I. THE TWOFOLD ASSAULT UPON THE PATRIARCH. 1. *The infliction of a loathsome disease.* (1) Its *author.* Satan. That diseases generally come through violation of hygienic laws is matter of everyday observation and of special scientific affirmation. But that Job's malady had a diabolic origin, as had also many of the physical ailments that prevailed in the East about the time of Christ, must be accepted on the ground of revelation. And as in Christ's day Beelzebub was permitted to wield a larger influence than usual over men's bodies, that the power of Christ in destroying the works of the devil might be the more conspicuously displayed, so the exceptional ability of Satan to produce bodily malady in Job's case existed solely for a special purpose. It would therefore be contrary to good theology as well as sound science to ascribe the "ills that flesh is heir to" to diabolic rather than to natural causes. (2) Its *nature.* "Sore boils;" supposed, and with probability, to have been a malignant form of elephantiasis, a disorder having many of the characteristics of leprosy. From incidental allusions scattered throughout the poem, it appears to have been an exceedingly painful disease, accompanied in its early stages by severe bodily itching (ch. ii. 8; ix. 17, 18), and attended in its progress with extreme debility, and utter prostration of mind as well as body, leading to disturbed slumbers, terrifying dreams, and even suicidal temptations (ch. vi. 4, 11, 14; vii. 4, 13, 14). A quickly spreading disease, rapidly covering the body with pustules, or boils, sometimes from head to foot (ch. ii. 7; vii. 5). A certainly corrupting disease, producing emaciation, and causing rottenness in the flesh and bones (ch. xiii. 28; xvi. 8; xxxiii. 21). A truly loathsome disease, rendering the wretched sufferer an object of disgust even to his nearest relatives and friends (ch. xix. 13—19), and ultimately, though not immediately, a mortal disease (ch. xvi. 22; xvii. 1; xxx. 23). (3) Its *design.* To try the patriarch (*a*) by wearing out his strength, and so rendering him more accessible to the entrance of diabolic temptations; (*b*) by making him an object of abhorrence to mankind, and so in a manner cutting him off from human sympathy; and (*c*) by leading him to regard his malady as a special visitation from Heaven, and so tempting him to entertain harsh thoughts of Jehovah. 2. *The injection of a vehement temptation.* (1) The time when it was made. Not at the beginning of his malady, but after it had somewhat developed, when his strength was impaired, his nerves were unstrung, and his mind was depressed, and when, no longer permitted to enter the dwellings of men, he sat himself down upon the mezbele, or ash-heap, outside his dwelling—an object of loathing and disgust to passers-by. (2) The person through whom it was directed. Not the devil himself, since then it would scarcely have acquired the force of a temptation; nor even a friend like Eliphaz, Bildad, or Zophar—counsellors who afterwards fared rather badly at Job's hands; but she who of all on earth was his nearest and dearest—his wife, the bride of his youth, the mother of his noble sons and fair girls now dead, the companion of his joys and sorrows. Beyond question, it was politic to attack the patriarch through his wife; and probably for this reason she was spared—not because having her was a greater trial to the good man than losing her would have been, but because the devil wanted a tool against her husband (cf. Adam's temptation through Eve). (3) The *counsel* which was offered. "Bless God" (*sc.* for the last time; *i.e.* "renounce him"), "and die!" perhaps words of wifely sympathy wrung from her loving bosom by the cruel sufferings which had been heaped upon her husband; certainly words of passionate vehemence calculated to bear down the opposition of a sufferer growing every day feebler through incessant pain; and words of much plausibility, suggesting a thought which seemingly had much in its favour, that his sufferings were to be ascribed purely to his religion; but also words of essential wickedness, since not only was the thought they suggested untrue, but the advice itself was wrong.

II. THE TWOFOLD VICTORY OF THE PATRIARCH. 1. *The inroad of physical disease he met with patient submission.* "He took a potsherd and scraped himself withal." Indulging in no complaints against Providence for afflicting him, and, when the malady had so far developed that his presence became offensive to his friends and neighbours, quietly retiring to the ash-heap. Admirable meekness! Exquisite patience! Incom-

parable submission! "In all this Job sinned not with his lips." 2. *The entrance of wifely temptation he encountered with:* (1) *Deserved rebuke.* "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh." Language distinctly bearing that the popular estimate of Job's wife, which makes her to have been a sort of Oriental shrew, is incorrect, implying as it does that the patriarch was surprised to hear her talk so much out of character, not like a saint and the wife of a saint as she was, but like one of the foolish or ungodly women. Carried away by the tumultuousness of her womanly feeling, in a moment of passionate thoughtlessness she had lost her self-control, and given utterance to desperate words, which were such as to call for censure; and the faithful husband, much as he loved his wife, and laden as he was himself with misery, did not shrink from administering the needful admonition. (2) *Lofty resignation.* "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" The voice, not of stoical indifference, or of heartless despair, or of cold, callous, reluctant acquiescence in a fate which cannot be escaped, but of intelligent and cheerful submission to a providence which he recognizes to be at once righteous and good. "In all this Job sinned not with his lips."

Learn: 1. That God's saints in this world have sometimes to endure trial upon trial. 2. That periods of protracted suffering are spiritually more dangerous than sharp and sudden strokes of greater severity. 3. That the fiercest trials often arise at unexpected moments, and from least anticipated quarters. 4. That the most painful temptation a good man can experience is the temptation to renounce his religion. 5. That Satan's mercies (*e.g.* in sparing Job's wife) have always somewhat of cruelty in them. 6. That the greatest outward blessings may sometimes prove a snare—Job's wife, and Adam's. 7. That it is perilous for good men or women to give way to passion. 8. That in times of violent emotion a strong guard should be set upon the door of the lips. 9. That good people may sometimes give very bad advice. 10. That the devil's prime aim in tempting men is to make them renounce God, and die. 11. That God's people should on no account let go their integrity. 12. That those who have been recipients of God's mercies should not repine when for their good he changes the dispensation.

Vers. 9, 10.—*Job and his wife.* I. A FOOLISH WOMAN.
II. A FAITHFUL HUSBAND.
III. A THANKFUL SAINT.
IV. A SUBMISSIVE SUFFERER.

Vers. 9, 10.—*Four voices.* I. THE VOICE OF FOLLY. "Curse God, and die."
II. THE VOICE OF REBUKE. "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh."
III. THE VOICE OF GRATITUDE. "We receive good at the hand of the Lord."
IV. THE VOICE OF SUBMISSION. "Shall we not receive evil?"

Vers. 9, 10 (along with Gen. iii. 1—6).—*Job and Adam: a parallel and a contrast.* I. A PARALLEL. 1. Both were tempted. 2. By Satan. 3. Through their wives. 4. To renounce their allegiance to God.

II. A CONTRAST. 1. In the times of their temptation. Adam when at the summit of felicity; Job when in the depth of misery. 2. In the modes of their temptation. Adam, assailed by the thought that God had unjustly deprived him of good; Job, by the suggestion that God had unrighteously afflicted him with evil. 3. In the results of their temptation. Adam fell; Job stood. See (1) in Adam the representative of all men; and (2) in Job the foreshadowing of the God-Man.

Vers. 11—13.—*The patriarch's third trial; or, the coming of the friends.* I. THE HONOURABLE NAMES THEY BORE. 1. *Eliphaz the Temanite.* Probably a descendant of Teman, the son of Eliphaz, the son of Esau by his wife Adah (Gen. xxxvi. 10, 11; 1 Chron. i. 35, 36); belonging to the race of Teman, which extended over a considerable portion of Arabia, about midway between Palestine and the Euphrates; very likely the oldest of the three friends. 2. *Bildad the Shuhite.* Perhaps sprung from Shuah, the youngest son of Abraham by Keturah (Gen. xxv. 2), and residing in a district of Arabia, not far from the Temanite country; may be reasonably supposed the second oldest of the friends. 3. *Zophar the Naamathite.* Otherwise unknown except through

this book; though, from his acquaintance with Bildad, Eliphaz, and Job, it may be inferred he also was a person of distinction. Probably all three were, like the patriarch in his prosperity, powerful Arabian sheiks.

II. THE EXCELLENT CHARACTERS THEY POSSESSED. 1. *Points of agreement.* (1) *Intellectual ability.* Without alleging that all three stood upon the same platform in respect of mental calibre (which they did not, Eliphaz holding unmistakably the pre-eminence), it is apparent that they all were thinkers of no mean capacity. It is a special ornament to men in high social position to be possessed of corresponding mental faculties; besides immensely adding to their personal enjoyment and public usefulness (cf. Eccles. x. 16). (2) *Religious principle.* Unquestionably good men, who not only revered Jehovah, but practised the Divine will so far as they understood it. They were likewise sincerely desirous of promoting Job's highest welfare, while they unfeignedly sympathized with him in his appalling trouble. If we cannot quite adopt their speculative and religious formulas, any more than we can commend their wisdom or kindness in lecturing the patriarch as they did; on the other hand, it is due to them not to estimate their characters from the gall and wormwood outpoured on their devoted heads by Job, when stung to madness through their reproaches. (3) *Mistaken views.* All three were equally astray in the fundamental doctrine they propounded in the course of their debate with the patriarch, viz. that suffering was so indissolubly associated with sin that the one was the measure of the other—a theory which Job strenuously combats throughout the poem; thus giving rise to what we designate the second problem of the book, viz. as to the precise relation subsisting between sin and suffering as they appear on earth. 2. *Points of difference.* (1) Eliphaz, a man of erudition, a person given to profound spiritual reflection, a seer who discerned spirits, dreamed dreams, and enjoyed intercourse with the unseen world, may be held to represent *the prophet of the period.* (2) Bildad, of smaller build and narrower vision, a strong traditionalist in religion, with a profound veneration for the ancients, who accepted his theology from his ancestors without putting ugly questions as to its truth, and was prepared, by quoting maxims and citing proverbs of hoary antiquity, to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, was probably designed to typify *the sage of the time.* (3) Zophar the Naamathite, an echo of his friends as to sentiment, as to manner more boisterous and arrogant than either, full of commonplaces and conventional dogmas, which he enunciated with imposing dignity and tremendous authority, may be regarded as *the good man of the day*, the vulgar but sincere formalist, who says sharp and bitter things, and always means what he says, as well as says what he means (Cox).

III. THE MELANCHOLY TIDINGS THEY RECEIVED. How they learnt the news of Job's evil fortunes is not related, but the fact that they did reminds us of: 1. *The rapidity with which evil tidings usually spread;* since it was obviously not long before the report of their friend's calamities reached their ears. 2. *The organic unity of society;* which renders it impossible for any one to either suffer or rejoice alone (cf. 1 Cor. xii. 26). 3. *The special susceptibility of friendly hearts* for learning of others' woes.

IV. THE MUTUAL APPOINTMENT THEY MADE. A token of: 1. *Lively interest in the patriarch's welfare.* Seeing they must have communicated with each other concerning their neighbour's evil hap, thus showing they were not indifferent to what had occurred. 2. *Loving sympathy with the patriarch's distress.* For they meant to mourn with him and to comfort him, not to treat him to a mere call of ceremony. 3. *High appreciation of the patriarch's worth.* Since they planned to go together to the scene of sorrow, which, if it did spring from a due regard to their own dignity as princes, was perhaps also traceable to their sense of what was owing to the rank and worth of their old friend. It says much for the three neighbours that they did not neglect Job now that he was a poor, diseased leper.

V. THE FERVENT EMOTION THEY DISPLAYED. 1. *Tearful sympathy.* Catching a sight of their former neighbour, whom they had known and revered in his prosperity, now sitting on the ash-heap, outside his house, and hardly recognizing, in the emaciated features on which they gazed, the noble form of the quondam prince whose glory outshone the radiance of all his contemporaries, they lifted up their voices and wept. Orientals are proverbially more emotional and lachrymose than phlegmatic Occidentals; but still it must have been an affecting spectacle to behold the three

great princes moved to tears by the patriarch's distress. 2. *Genuine amazement.* "They rent every one his mantle." A symbol of horror and astonishment, as in the case of Jacob (Gen. xxxvii. 34), Joshua (vii. 6), Ezra (ix. 3), Caiaphas (Matt. xxvi. 65). 3. *Profound sorrow.* "They sprinkled dust upon their heads towards heaven;" *i.e.* threw handfuls of dust into the air, as the Arabs still do, that it might fall upon their heads, in token that they were deeply moved by the troubles and calamities that had fallen on their friend.

VI. THE PECULIAR ATTITUDE THEY ASSUMED. It is unnecessary to suppose that they were absolutely silent, but merely that they spake nothing *to him* during all that period, certainly not in any way alluding to the cause of his distress. And this silent attitude may have been expressive of (1) *ceremonial propriety*, if this was the customary manner of Oriental mourning, which is doubtful; but was more probably dictated by (2) *delicate sensibility*, which forbade them to intrude upon the solitude of a sorrow so overpowering as that which they beheld; and (3) *reverential awe*, as seeing in the patriarch one upon whom the hand of God was visibly laid (cf. Gen. xxxiv. 5; Lev. x. 3; Ps. xlvi. 10; Ezek. iii. 15); if it did not also spring from (4) *rising suspicion*, the thought beginning to thrust itself into view, which indeed, according to their philosophy, could not long be repressed, that the agonized and wretched sufferer before them must have been, notwithstanding his previous high reputation for piety, a hypocrite at bottom, whose disguised insincerities and secret iniquities had at length drawn down upon him the just judgment of a holy and incensed God.

Learn: 1. That good men may often misunderstand God's truth, misconstrue God's providence, and misjudge God's people. 2. That good men should always study to be distinguished for sympathy towards the suffering and sorrowing. 3. That good men who aspire to be brothers of consolation should not forget that silence is sometimes more soothing than speech. 4. That good men should never cherish secret suspicions of those whom they seek to comfort.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Renewed assaults and temptations of the adversary.* The first scene in this drama of affliction has closed, and a fresh one opens, bringing, however, no happy change, no alleviation, but rather an aggravation of the hero's woe. A second time the adversary of mankind appears in the heavenly court to launch his malicious shafts of accusation against the servant of God. His purpose is now more intent, his aim more deadly, than ever. But we, as spectators, can see a bright light still steadily shining above the cloud in that unfailing favour and kindness of the Eternal, who cannot, will not, desert his own. Looking more closely to the particulars, we see—

I. THE PITY OF GOD FOR HIS SUFFERING SERVANTS. (Vers. 1—3.) Jehovah looks down and beholds "his servant Job," as he stands unshaken amidst a very hurricane of calamity, holding to his integrity as something dearer than life; and he condescends to expostulate with the accuser. Has not the trial gone far enough? Is not the test that Job has already undergone sufficient to satisfy the most sceptical observer of his truth? Must the furnace be heated still another degree? But the adversary is not content; and it would appear that, if further trial is demanded, the demand is not to be resisted, according to the laws of heaven. The moral government of the world may require this. Thus, while the pity of God would relieve from further suffering, his righteousness—which is his adherence to fixed law—may require its continuance, until every doubt concerning a particular character be solved. But the language ascribed to the heavenly Father is, meanwhile, full of the tenderest compassion. There is individualizing regard. There is recognition of integrity and innocence. There is profound sympathy. We are reminded of the touching words of Ps. ciii., "He knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust."

II. In opposition to this, we observe THE MALIGNANT PERSEVERANCE OF THE DEVIL. 1. *His specious plea against Job.* (Vers. 4, 5.) In the form of a proverb he launches a keen insinuation: "Skin for skin;" like after like; one thing after another will a man give for dear life. Job has only made a barter after all. He loses all his property; but

then he has that left which outweighs all the rest. The loss of goods teaches him to prize the health which is left. He feels the greatness of this blessing as he never felt it before. Any circumstance which teaches us the worth of a common blessing is so far an advantage to us. An eminent living man has said that, given health, we have no right to complain of anything in the world. Job, then, has only been half tempted after all; and the trial will only run its full course when it has assailed this last great, chief blessing—his health of body and of mind. Such is the "case" of the devilish prosecutor against Job. 2. *The final test permitted.* (Vers. 6—8.) The All-disposer grants the permission: "He is in thy power; but spare his life!" And then a sudden poison strikes through the sufferer's blood; he becomes from head to foot a mass of disease and loathsomeness, sits in ashes, scraping himself with a potsherd, to allay the fearful irritation of his malady. His mind is, of course, deeply affected by the illness of his body. Natural hope is extinct. It is a life in ruins. Yet that Divine and immortal principle we call the soul is still intact, still glimmers like a bright spark amidst the embers of a dying fire.

III. TEMPTATION IN THE GUISE OF AFFECTION. (Vers. 9, 10.) And now what remains of conscious life is to know one further shock; and the hand of woman, the voice of a wife, is employed to urge the tottering sufferer over the brink on which he sits, into despair and total renunciation of faith and God. Then his wife said to him, "Dost thou still hold fast to thine innocence? Say farewell to God, and die!" 1. This is a second signal instance in which, in the Old Testament, *woman plays the part of the tempter.* There is instruction in this pointed fact. Woman is the weaker vessel, in mind as in body. She has less firmness of intellectual texture. Her weakness as well as her strength lies in feeling. She is quick in impulses, both of good and of evil. She represents passion, and man represents strength. On the whole, she is less capable of strong, profound, patient convictions, less able to take a large view of questions, to look beyond the present and immediate aspects of things. Here is the picture of a lively temper, quick to feel resentment at pain or gratitude for good; but a shallow understanding, unused to meditation and reflection on the deeper meanings of life. Her language is that of haste and passion. But this serves to bring out by contrast the calm, reflective piety, the convictions established by lifelong thought and experience of her husband. 2. *The rebuke of Job to his wife.* (1) "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women;" that is, thy language is like that of a heathen, not of one who has been trained in the knowledge and worship of the true God. The heathen turn fickly from one god to another as pleasure and pain or the caprice of fancy may suggest. For their gods are but idols, creatures of their own imagination, which they take up and cast down as children with their toys. But there is only *one* God for me! And that God, the eternally Wise and Good in all that he gives, in all that he withholds! (2) *There are two sides of life,* and the one must be taken along with the other. Here, too, the language of manly reasonableness and of intelligent piety speaks out. Life is a garment woven of both pleasure and pain, of seeming good and evil. The one conditions the other. All experience teaches that constant happiness is the lot of none. Why, then, should I expect to be an exception? Surely we are but crude scholars in life's great school, so long as we think we are entitled to immunity from any particular form of suffering. We are still children who think they have a right to their own way, and are astonished to find themselves withstood. "Who told thee thou hadst a right to be happy? Art thou a vulture screaming for thy food?"

> "Couldst thou, Pausanias, learn
> How deep a fault is this!
> Couldst thou but once discern
> Thou hast no right to bliss!"

Here, then, the weakness of distrust and the folly of despair in the human heart, represented by Job's wife, stand opposed to the nobleness and grandeur of a fathomless confidence in the Eternal. God is the Author at last of all we suffer. Is that a reason for forsaking God? No, replies faith; it is a reason for reposing more entirely upon his everlasting arms. 'If my bark sinks, 'tis to another sea."—J.

Vers. 11—13.—*A picture of friendship.* In this short section we have a beautiful

picture of true friendship in its prompt sympathy, its ready offices. The three intimate friends of Job, on hearing of his troubles, arrange to visit him and offer the comfort of their presence and condolence. We are reminded—

I. OF THE BLESSING OF FRIENDSHIP. Sympathy is the indispensable need of the heart. It deepens the colour of all our pleasures; it throws a gleam of light athwart our deepest gloom. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice; and weep with them that weep." Our joys do not burst into flower till they feel the warm atmosphere of friendship. Our heaviest griefs only cease to be crushing when we have poured our tale into the ear of one we love. One of the humblest, yet best offices a friend can render to a sufferer is to be a good listener. Draw him out; get him to talk; movement and change of mind are what he needs. Exertion, if only the exertion of speech, will do him good. Do not pour upon him a cataract of well-meaning but stunning commonplaces. Imitate the kindness of Job's friends, but not their want of tact and perception. Let him only feel that in your presence he can relieve himself of all that is on his mind, and will not fail to be kindly understood.

II. SEASONABLE SILENCE IN THE PRESENCE OF SORROW. On the arrival of the friends, seeing the heart-rending condition of the noble chieftain, whom they had last seen in the height of his health and prosperity, now sitting in the open air, banished by disease from his dwelling, defaced by that disease beyond recognition, an utterly broken man, they express their grief by all the significant gestures of Eastern manners —weeping, rending their clothes, sprinkling dust upon their heads. They then take their places by his side, and keep a profound and mournful silence for a week, as Ezekiel did when he visited his countrymen captives by the river Chebar. What exquisite manners are taught us in the Bible! And the great superiority of its teaching in this respect over the common teaching of the world is that it founds all manners upon the heart. It is truth, love, sympathy, which can alone render us truly polite, refined, and delicate in our relations to others, teaching us always to put ourselves in thought in the other's place. "There is a time to keep silence." In great grief we recognize the hand of God, and he bids us be still and own him. Our smaller feelings bubble, our deeper ones are dumb. There are times when reverence demands silence, and a single word is too much. Leave the sufferer alone at first. Let him collect himself; let him ask what God has to say to him in the still, small voice that comes after the earthquake and the storm. "Sacred silence, thou that art offspring of the deeper heart, frost of the mouth, and thaw of the mind!" Sit by your friend's side, clasp his hand, say simply, "God comfort you, my brother!" In the earlier stage of a fresh and sudden grief this will be enough. We cannot doubt that the wounded heart of Job was greatly comforted by the silent presence of his sympathizing friends. It was better than all their spoken attempts at consolation. Let us thank God for friendship and for true friends; they are messengers from him. "God, who comforteth them that are cast down, comforted me by the coming of Titus!"—J.

Vers. 1—10.—*The severer tests of faith.* Job has triumphed in the severe ordeal. His possessions, his servants, his family, have been torn from him. In the bitterness of his sorrow he has "rent his mantle," and shown the signs of his humiliation by cutting off the hair of his head. But in the paroxysms of his grief he has "held fast his integrity;" he "sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." So far he has passed through the fire unscathed, and belied the false accusations of the adversary. But further trials are at hand. It is in accordance with the spirit and purpose of the book to represent the lowest condition of human sorrows. Besides loss of possessions and loss of his beloved children, Job must needs be subjected to the loss of health—to a dire and painful and loathsome disease. All this is aggravated by the unwise taunts and advice of his wife, and the prolonged and irritating accusations and false views of his friends. It is a condition of extreme suffering unrelieved by any human consolations. Job is alone in his sufferings, unsustained, his pain even increased by the very voices that should have brought comfort to him. Up to the time of his friends' visit Job has remained unmoved in his uncomplaining integrity. "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." The test to which he was subjected by the severe and reproachful and unhelpful words of his friends is presented in its detailed relation throughout the book. We learn—

I. THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR EVEN THE RIGHTEOUS MAN TO SUFFER IN THE EXTREMEST DEGREE. It is one part of the purpose of the book to illustrate this truth for sufferers in all time, to make known that "many" may be "the afflictions of the righteous."

II. THAT THE PURPOSE OF THESE EXTREME AFFLICTIONS IS THE TESTING AND PERFECTING OF VIRTUE, which, even in the case of the righteous, is necessarily imperfect. Reading through this book, it would appear that the work of Satan is to test virtue. Satan is called "the agent of probation." He displays a malignant and antagonistic spirit. But whatever may seem to be the motives on the one side, it is obviously the Divine purpose to make the testing an occasion of blessing to him who is tested. "When he is tried he shall receive a crown of life." Satan must be considered as a servant of the most high God, whose agency is employed in the spiritual discipline of the righteous. The conditions of temptation to evil are so intimately identified with all those of the human life, that we can only think of them as a necessary part of the present constitution under which human life is held. By it virtue is exposed to injury; but in its fires virtue is purified and perfected.

III. THAT THE TRIUMPH OF VIRTUE IN RESISTING TEMPTATION TO EVIL AND TO IMPATIENCE UNDER THE OPPRESSION OF PAIN, IS THE UTMOST TRIUMPH OF THE HUMAN SOUL, AND ENSURES THE HIGHEST REWARD. He who subjects the delicate life to the fierce blast of evil will not so expose it as needlessly to endanger its highest interests. Temptation does not appeal to the virtue of the heart, but to its remaining faultiness, which it exposes for destruction, and so proves its own beneficent action.

IV. In the history of Job we further learn that EVEN LOFTY VIRTUE MAY BE BOWED DOWN, AND SHOW SIGNS OF WEAKNESS BEFORE FINALLY TRIUMPHING.

V. We also learn THE WISDOM OF PATIENTLY SUBMITTING TO THE TRIALS OF LIFE, HOWEVER SEVERE. Rebelliousness brings no ease to the troubled spirit. The only alternative offered to Job was, "Curse God, and die." The better course is to retain integrity, to sin not, nor charge God foolishly.—R. G.

Vers. 11—13.—*Human impotence in presence of great sorrow.* The prompting of pure and faithful friendship leads Job's friends to hurry to his help. They "come to mourn with him and to comfort him." When yet afar off they lift up their eyes and behold their friend. But, alas! disease has wrought so great a change in him that they know him not. Then "they lifted up their voice, and wept." In their wild, ungoverned passionate grief "they rent every one his mantle," and seizing the dust of the ground they cast it in the air toward heaven, and let it fall on their heads in token of their grief. Thus with signs of deep suffering in sympathy with their friend they cast their cry with the sand upwards to heaven. Then, with great skill, the writer indicates the helplessness of men in the presence of overwhelming sorrow. "They sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great." So the sorrow that extorted the wild cry of pity closed the lips of consolation. We behold the men staggered by the bitterness of their friend's lot. He cannot help himself, and they cannot help him. How true a picture of all deep sorrow! It is to be said by every severe sufferer as by the typical One, "Of the people there was none with me;" for even tender, loving sympathy cannot penetrate to the depths of another's sufferings. With these feelings we gaze on the sufferer, feeling how painful it is to be unable to extend a helpful hand or to speak an effectual word. It is humiliating to us. It is abasing to our pride.

I. THE CAUSES OF OUR IMPOTENCE IN PRESENCE OF SEVERE SUFFERING ARE: 1. Our inability to descend to the depth of the sorrow of another. It is only as we ourselves are sufferers that we can know what others feel. We must have drunk of the same cup if we would know its bitterness. 2. But even though we have suffered as we see others suffer, no words, even of the tenderest pity, can effectually relieve the mourner. Hollow human words, words of merely pretended sympathy, only wound the sufferer more deeply; while words of true friendship, cooling and cheering as they may be, can take up no part of the burden. For a time they draw off the mind of the sufferer from his sorrow, but it returns as a flowing tide.

II. THE PAINFULNESS TO A TRUE FRIEND OF CONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE EFFECTUALLY

TO AID THE SUFFERER. Days or hours of silence are days or hours of keen suffering to the faithful friend unable to stanch the wound, to abate the fever, to restore the lost possession or the lost friend. By all we are driven to—

III. THE TRUE AND ONLY EFFECTUAL SYMPATHIZER, THE GOD-MAN, who, having suffered, and having power to descend to the lowest depths of the human heart, and having the Divine resources at command, the power to inspire the word of consolation and supporting strength; and who, measuring the need of the sufferer, can abate the severity of bodily pain or mental anguish. To the sufferer the welcome of this honest sympathy opens the door for the incoming of the true Healer and Comforter and Helper, who can give strength to the feeble, and, above all, can sanctify sorrow and calamity to higher ends, and make all things work together for good. He can brighten hope and sustain faith and strengthen patience, can soothe the fretted spirit, and give peace and joy and life.—R. G.

Ver. 4.—"*Satan's old saw*" (Browning). Satan was defeated in the first trial, but not convinced. With persistent malignity he proceeded to suggest a more severe test. It was no fault of his that the first test, hard as it was, had not gone to the utmost extremity; for he had been expressly limited by the words, "Only upon himself put not forth thine hand" (ver. 12). He had gone to the full length of his tether, but that had not satisfied him; so he must apply for a larger privilege of mischief-making. He requests permission to touch the person of Job, either quoting or coining the proverb which Browning has called "Satan's old saw."

I. THE FORCE OF THE PROVERB. Take it how you will—that a man will sacrifice a less vital part to save a more vital part, holding up his arm to shelter his head; or that he will give the lives of his cattle, slaves, children, to save his own body's skin; or that he will sell hide after hide of precious skins from his warehouse, *i.e.* all his property, for his life—the proverb plainly means that a man will make any sacrifice to save his life. 1. *There is an instinct of self-preservation.* Here we come to an impulse of nature. When in a state of nature all creatures try to save their own lives at any cost. Even the would-be suicide, when once he finds himself drowning, screams for help, and clutches madly at the rope that is flung to him. Accordingly, juries usually bring in a verdict predicating an unsound mind in the case of any one who has succeeded in taking his own life. Now, this instinct of self-preservation is a gift from the Author of nature; it is innocent because Divine, and powerful because primitive. 2. *Life is a first condition of all experience and possession.* If a man loses his life he loses his all. He may sacrifice many things for the sake of one coveted end—selling all he has to buy one pearl of great price; he may risk his life on a great venture; but if he loses his life he can obtain nothing in return. "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own life?" (Matt. xvi. 26). 3. *Life is seen to be supremely valued.* Starving men become cannibals. In the siege of Jerusalem women boiled their own children for a last meal, natural affection itself being sacrificed to the instinct of self-preservation. Desperate men sell their lives dearly.

II. THE FALSITY OF THE PROVERB. We must be on our guard how we quote texts from Scripture. This is especially important in the Book of Job, where the form is dramatic. The proverb before us is in Scripture; yet it is not from God, but from the devil. This very fact should make us suspicious about it. It looks like truth, but it comes from the "father of lies." 1. *It denies the higher life.* Satan refers to a natural instinct. But that instinct does not cover the whole of our being. His lie is the more deadly because it is the exaggeration of a truth, or rather because it is the statement of one truth which needs to be qualified with another truth. Bishop Butler has taught us that human nature in its fulness includes conscience. But conscience may go against the lower part of our nature. The higher life may dominate and suppress the instincts of the lower. 2. *It ignores the fact of self-sacrifice.* Satan uttered his saw as though it were a generalization from wide experience. We may have our fine theories as to how things ought to be; he will tell us how he finds them really existing in the world. The devil only perceives the lower life, only perceives the selfish side of man. He is the "spirit that denies," because he is blind. But self-sacrifice is as much a fact as self-preservation. The cross is its great witness. The good Shepherd giving his life for the sheep is the triumphant refutation of Satan's old saw. So in

a secondary way are Job in his fidelity, and every martyr and hero and Christ-like man.—W. F. A.

Vers. 7, 8.—*Job's leprosy.* Satan has now obtained permission to go a step further, and lay his hand on the person of God's servant. He uses the new privilege with skilful ingenuity, selecting the most horrible and loathsome disease, and smiting Job with the worst form of leprosy—elephantiasis.

I. THE MISERY OF THE INFLICTION. 1. *It touches the man himself.* Hitherto the blows have fallen on his outer world, though, indeed, they have come very near to him in striking his children. Still, he has not felt them directly. Satan has drawn a marked line between these external troubles and personal troubles (vers. 4, 5). Now he crosses the line. Every man must feel what touches himself, though some may be too callous, too unimaginative, or too unsympathetic fully to appreciate what is outside them. No man can feel his brother's toothache as acutely as he feels his own. 2. *It lays hold of his body.* Bodily pain is not the worst form of suffering. A broken heart is infinitely more pitiable than a broken skin. Still, bodily pain has this about it, that it cannot be denied or eluded. It is a very tangible and unquestionable fact. 3. *It is loathsome and disgusting.* Elephantiasis makes its victim an object of repulsion, hideous to behold, shunned by all his fellows. Job had been a prince among men, living in universal respect. He now comes down, not only to poverty, but also to a condition of visible degradation and disgust. To the man of sensitive feelings shame is worse than pain. 4. *It is hopeless.* Elephantiasis was thought to be incurable. Job took no medical remedies. He only retired to his ash-heap, seeking temporary alleviations. The worst agony can be endured with some patience if there is a prospect of cure; but even a milder complaint becomes intolerable if there is no hope of escape.

II. THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE SUFFERER. The most significant thing about the narrative here is that so little is said about the behaviour of Job. As yet we have no word from him under his fearful malady. The silence is eloquent. 1. *Great suffering stifles thought.* This is a merciful provision of Providence. We could not bear both to feel acutely and to think profoundly at the same time. There is a sort of mental anodyne in fearful bodily pain. Its paroxysms act as an anæsthetic to the finer feelings of the soul. When the worst of the bodily pain is over the mind recovers itself; but at first it is stunned and crushed into numbness. 2. *True fortitude accepts alleviations of suffering.* Job does what little he can to relieve the intolerable torments of his disease. He has no idea of attitudinizing as a martyr. Small sufferers may try to make the most of their pains, foolishly nursing them, and obviously playing for pity. This is not the case with the great tragic heroes. The depth of their sufferings are known only to God. 3. *Bitter distress seeks solitude.* Job retired to the ashes. His complaint made this action necessary; his mood must also have welcomed the retirement. In bitter distress the soul would be alone—yet not alone, for God is present as truly among the ashes as in the gorgeous temple.—W. F. A.

Ver. 9.—*Husband and wife.* I. THE WIFE'S TEMPTATION. 1. *Its source.* Job is now tempted by his own wife—by her who is nearest to him, and who should be almost his second self. Chrysostom asks, "Why did the devil leave him his wife?" and replies, "Because he thought her a good scourge by which to plague him more acutely than by any other means." Certainly the temptation which comes through one whom we love is the most powerful. Christ met the tempter in a favourite disciple. It is the duty of love not simply to sympathize, but also to give good counsel; it is its error only to show sympathy by aggravating the evil tendencies of a trouble. 2. *Its excuse.* Men have been too hard on Job's wife for this one foolish saying of hers, forgetting how huge was her affliction. Indeed, a great injustice has been done her, and while sympathy and admiration have been lavished on the husband, the partner in distress has scarcely received a glance of pity. But his troubles were her troubles. She had been in affluence, the happy mother of a happy family. Now she is plunged into poverty and misery, bereft of her children, with her once honoured husband in disease and corruption. Is it wonderful that she should utter one hasty, impatient word? 3. *Its point.* We cannot say that Job's wife urged him to *curse* God; for she may have meant, "renounce God." At all events, let him give up the struggle and

commit suicide. It is the Stoic's advice. Others since have advised euthanasia in unbearable sufferings. It needed a brave heart to resist such an appeal. Only those who have been plunged into the lowest depth know the fearful inducement to despair of life and go—

"Anywhere, anywhere, out of the world."

II. THE HUSBAND'S REPLY. 1. *Its reprimand.* Job quietly tells his wife that she is talking like one of the foolish or ungodly women. (1) There is patience in this reprimand; he does not angrily repudiate her hasty advice. (2) It is discriminating. Job sees at once the defect. His wife has forsaken her higher plane of living, and fallen down to conventional ideas of the world. There was this excuse for her, however, that her conduct was not without precedent, though the precedent was not worthy to be followed. (3) It is generous. Job delicately hints that her words are unworthy of her. He implies that she is not herself one of the foolish women. Often the best and most effective reprimand is an appeal to a person's self-respect. 2. *Its resignation.* (1) It recognizes God as the Source of all things. Job does not seem to be aware that Satan has a hand in his calamities. He attributes them wholly to God. Thus he fails to see one side of the dread mystery of iniquity. Yet there was truth in what he said. Nothing happens but by God's permission. (2) It admits the justice of God's dealing. How fair is Job! And how unfair are many men in accepting boundless mercies without a thought of gratitude, and then shrieking with rage at the first twinge of adversity! If we struck the balance between our blessings and our troubles, should we not find the former vastly outweighing the latter? And if we accept the blessings from God, should we not be prepared to take the reverse of them also? 3. *Its self-restraint.* "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." It is uncharitable of the Targum to add, "But in his thoughts he already cherished sinful words." If thoughts of rebellion were beginning to rise—and Job was but mortal—the brave man silenced them. It is much to learn how to "be still."—W. F. A.

Vers. 11—13.—*Job's comforters.* We now enter on a new scene, one that prepares for the main action of the drama. Hitherto the court of heaven, the roving errands of Satan, the personal and domestic afflictions of Job, have engaged our attention. Now the light of the larger human world is let in on this scene. Job is not in purgatory, shut off from companionship of living men. Indeed, his greatest trouble is yet to come from the blundering conduct of that companionship.

I. TROUBLE SHOULD COLLECT FRIENDS. We see very much of the faults of Job's three friends in the course of the poem. Let us be fair to them, and recognize their good points. They were true friends; they did honestly desire and attempt to render to Job all the consolation that was in their power. They aimed at being "friends in need." False friends fall off in the hour of trouble. Such a spectacle as that of Job on his dung-heap would not invite the crowd of sycophants that swarms about the table of the great man. No doubt Job had been pestered with plenty of such pretended friends in the old days of his fame. Doubtless one blessing among his many calamities was that he was now relieved of their presence. But three genuine friends still hold to him and seek him out in the time of his deepest distress. It is well to go to the house of mourning. But few are they who know how to conduct themselves when there.

II. SYMPATHY IS THE BEST COMFORT. The three friends were amazed at the sight which presented itself. They were prepared to see trouble, but no imagination could picture so huge a distress as that of Job. It needed to be witnessed to be believed. The sight of it calls forth natural sympathy. Although the decorous Orientals proceeded at once to adopt the conventional forms of mourning, there is every reason to believe that their sympathy was genuine and heartfelt. It is only the heart made callous by selfishness that is incapable of sympathy. In this most Divine attribute of human nature we may recognize the root of what is most fruitful in good. Sympathy is the spring of all the most helpful service, and when the service is impossible, the sympathy itself is consoling; for it is much to know that friends feel with us in our trouble.

III. SYMPATHY MAY BE SHOWN IN SILENCE. Those seven days and seven nights of silence are a sublime spectacle. Job's comforters began well. It would have been good for their reputation if they had gone home at the end of the week. Then they would

have been known as model comforters instead of becoming bywords for tormentors. We often make a mistake in thinking we ought "to say something." Great distress should hush hasty words. There are times when the gentlest words sound harsh on pained ears. What is wanted in trouble is not advice, but sympathy; and this is best shown by the unbidden tear, the silent pressure of the hand, the look of love. We feel a sad separation from one who is in great sorrow, for sorrow is naturally lonely. Only Christ can perfectly enter into it. He needs no words.—W. F. A.

SECTION II. CH. III.—XIV. FIRST COLLOQUY BETWEEN JOB AND HIS FRIENDS.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

The "Historical Introduction" ended, we come upon a long colloquy, in which the several *dramatis personæ* speak for themselves, the writer, or compiler, only prefacing each speech with a very few necessary words. The speeches are, one and all of them, metrical; and are well represented in the Revised Version. The first colloquy extends from ch. iii. 3 to ch. xiv. 22.

Ver. 1.—**After this opened Job his mouth.** The first to take the word is Job, as, indeed, etiquette made necessary, when the visit paid was one of condolence. It can only be conjectured what the feelings were which had kept him silent so long. We may, perhaps, suggest that in the countenances and manner of his friends he saw something which displeased him, something indicative of their belief that he had brought his afflictions upon himself by secret sins of a heinous character. Pharisaism finds it very difficult to conceal itself; signs of it are almost sure to escape; often it manifests itself, without a word spoken, most offensively. The phrase, "opened his mouth," is not to be dismissed merely as a Hebraism. It is one used only on solemn occasions, and implies the utterance of deep thoughts, well considered beforehand (Ps. lxxviii. 21; Matt. v. 2), or of feelings long repressed, and now at length allowed expression. **And cursed his day**; "cursed," *i.e.*, the "day of his birth." Some critics think that "cursed" is too strong a word, and suggest "reviled;" but it cannot be denied that "to curse" is a frequent meaning of קָלַל and it is difficult to see in Job's words (vers. 3—10) anything but a "curse" of a very intense character. To curse one's natal day is not, perhaps, a very wise act, since it can have no effect on the day or on anything else; but so great a prophet as Jeremiah imitated Job in this respect (Jer. xx. 14—18), so that before Christianity it would seem that men were allowed thus to relieve their feelings. All that such cursing means is that one wishes one had never been born.

Vers. 2, 3.—**And Job spake, and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born.** An idle wish, doubtless; the vague utterance of extreme despair. Days cannot perish, or, at any rate, one day cannot perish more than another. They all come, and then are gone; but no day can perish out of the year, which will always have its full complement of three hundred and sixty-five days till time shall be no more. But extreme despair does not reason. It simply gives utterance to the thoughts and wishes as they arise. Job knew that many of his thoughts were vain and foolish, and confesses it further on (see ch. vi. 3). **And the night** in which it **was said**; rather, *which said.* Day and night are, both of them, personified, as in Ps. xix. 2. **There is a man child conceived.** A *man* child was always regarded in the ancient world as a special blessing, since thus the family was maintained in being. A girl passed into another family.

Ver. 4.—**Let that day be darkness**; *i.e.* let a cloud rest upon it—let it be regarded as a day of ill omen, "carbone notandus." Job recognizes that his wish, that the day should perish utterly, is vain, and limits himself now to the possible. **Let not God regard it from above**; *i.e.* let not God, from the heaven where he dwells, extend to it his protection and superintending care. **Neither let the light shine upon it.** Pleonastic, but having the sort of force which belongs to reiteration.

Ver. 5.—**Let darkness and the shadow of death.** "The shadow of death" (צַלְמָוֶת) is a favourite expression in the Book of Job, where it occurs no fewer than nine times. Elsewhere it is rare, except in the Psalms, where it occurs four times. It is thought to be an archaic word. **Stain it**; rather, *claim it*, or *claim it for their own* (Revised Version). **Let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.** The hot, stifling "blackness" of the khamsin wind is probably meant, which suddenly turns the day into night, spreading all around a thick lurid darkness. When such

a wind arises, we are told, "The sky instantly becomes black and heavy; the sun loses its splendour, and appears of a dim violet hue; a light, warm breeze is felt, which gradually increases in heat till it almost equals that of an oven. Though no vapour darkens the air, it becomes so grey and thick with the floating clouds of impalpable sand, that it is sometimes necessary to use candles at noonday" (Russell, 'Ancient and Modern Egypt,' p. 55).

Ver. 6.—**As for that night.** The night, that is, of Job's conception (see above, ver. 3). **Let darkness seize upon it.** The Revised Version has *thick darkness*, but this is unnecessary. **Let it not be joined unto the days of the year.** According to the Massorites' pointing, we should translate, "Let it not rejoice among the days of the year;" and so the Revised Version. But many of the best critics prefer the pointing which is followed by the LXX. and by King James's translators. The succeeding clause strongly supports this interpretation. **Let it not come into the number of the months** (comp. ver. 3, and the comment on it). Job *wishes* the day of his birth and the night of his conception to be utterly blotted out from the calendar; but, aware that this is impossible, he subsides into a milder class of imprecations.

Ver. 7.—**Lo, let that night be solitary; or, *sterile*;** "let no one be born in it." **Let no joyful voice come therein;** literally, *no song*. Perhaps the meaning is, "Let no such joyful announcement be made," as that mentioned in ver. 3.

Ver. 8.—**Let them curse it that curse the day.** Very different explanations are given of this passage. Some suppose it to mean, "Let those desperate men curse it who are in the habit of cursing their day," like Job himself (ch. iii. 1) and Jeremiah (xx. 14). Others suggest a reference to such as claimed power to curse days, and to divide them into the lucky and the unlucky. In this case Job would mean, "Let the sorcerers who curse days' curse especially this day," and would thus seem, if not to sanction the practice, at any rate to express a certain amount of belief in the sorcerers' power. The second clause has also a double interpretation, which adapts it to either of these two suggested meanings (*vide infra*). **Who are ready to raise up their mourning.** This is an impossible rendering. Translate (with the Revised Version), *who are ready to rouse up leviathan.* "Rousing leviathan" may be understood in two ways. It may be regarded as spoken in the literal sense of those who are rash enough and desperate enough to stir up the fury of the crocodile (see the comment on ch. xli. 1), or in a metaphorical sense of such as stir up to action by their sorceries the great power of evil, symbolized in Oriental mythologies by a huge serpent, or dragon, or crocodile. On the whole, the second and deeper sense seems preferable; and we may conceive of Job as believing in the power of sorcery, and wishing it used against the night which he so much dislikes.

Ver. 9.—**Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark;** *i.e.* "let not even the light of a star illuminate the morning or evening twilight of that night; let it be dark from beginning to end, uncheered even by the ray of a star." **Let it look for light, but have none.** Again a personification. The night is regarded as consciously waiting in hope of the appearance of morning, but continually disappointed by the long lingering of the darkness. **And let it not see the dawning of the day;** rather, as in the margin and in the Revised Version, *let it not behold the eyelids of the morning* (compare Milton's 'Lycidas,' "Under the opening eyelids of the morn," and Soph., 'Antigone,' Ὦ χρυσοέης ἀμέρας βλέφαρον).

Ver. 10.—**Because it shut not up the doors of my mother's womb;** literally, *of my womb;* i.e. "of the womb which bare me." By a stretch of imagination, the night is supposed to have power to open or shut wombs, and is blamed for not having shut up the womb in which Job was conceived. **Nor hid sorrow from mine eyes;** *i.e.* "and did not so prevent all the sorrows that have befallen me."

Ver. 11.—**Why died I not from the womb?** "*From* the womb" must mean, "as soon as I came out of the womb," not "while I yet remained within it" (comp. Jer. xx. 17, "Because he slew me not *from the womb*"). Many of the ancients thought that it was best not to be born; and next best, if one were born, to quit the earth as soon as possible. Herodotus says that with the Trauri, a tribe of Thracians, it was the custom, whenever a child was born, for all its kindred to sit round it in a circle, and weep for the woes that it would have to endure now that it was come into the world; while, on the other hand, whenever a person died, they buried him with laughter and rejoicings, since they said that he was now free from a host of sufferings, and enjoyed the completest happiness (Herod., v. 4). Sophocles expresses the feeling with great terseness and force: Μὴ φῦναι τὸν ἅπαντα νικᾷ λόγον· τὸ δ', ἐπεὶ φανῇ, βῆναι κεῖθεν ὅθεν περ ἥκει πολὺ δεύτερον, ὡς τάχιστα ('Œd. Col.,' 1225—1228): "Not to be born is best of all; once born, next best it is by far to go back there from whence one came as speedily as possible." Modern pessimism sums up all in the phrase that "life is not worth living." **Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?** As so often, the

second clause of the distich repeats the idea of the first, merely varying the phraseology.

Ver. 12.—**Why did the knees prevent me?** *i.e.* "Why did my mother take me on her knees and nurse me, instead of casting me on the ground, where I should have perished?" There seems to be an allusion to the practice of parents only bringing up a certain number of their children (see Rosenmüller, 'Scholia in Vit. Test.,' vol. v. p. 101). **Or why the breasts that I should suck?** *i.e.* "Why were breasts offered to me, that I should suck them? How much better would it have been if I had been allowed to perish of inanition!"

Ver. 13.—**For now should I have lain still and been quiet.** "In that case, I should now (נָחָה) have been lying still and resting myself," instead of tossing about, and being full of restlessness and suffering." **I should have slept.** The life in the intermediate state is called "sleep," even in the New Testament (Matt. ix. 24; John xi. 11; Acts vii. 60; 1 Cor. xv. 18, 51, etc.). Job, perhaps, imagined it to be, actually, a sound, dreamless slumber. **Then should I have been at rest;** literally, *then* (אָז) *would there have been rest for me.*"

Ver. 14.—**With kings and counsellers of the earth.** As a great man himself, nobly born probably, Job expects that his place in another world would have been with kings and nobles (see Isa. xiv. 9—11, where the King of Babylon, on entering Sheol, finds himself among "all the kings of the nations"). **Which built desolate places for themselves.** Some understand "restorers of cities which had become waste and desolate;" others, "builders of edifices which, since they built them, have become desolate;" others, again, "builders of desolate and dreary piles," such as the Pyramids, and the rock-tombs common in Arabia, which were desolate and dreary from the time that they were built. The brevity studied by the writer makes his meaning somewhat obscure.

Ver. 15.—**Or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver.** This may either mean simply, "princes who were rich in silver and gold during their lifetime," or "princes who have gold and silver buried with them in their tombs." It was the custom in Egypt, in Phœnicia, and elsewhere throughout the East, to bury large quantities of treasure, especially gold and silver vessels, and jewellery, in the sepulchres of kings and other great men. A tomb of a Scythian king in the Crimea, opened about fifty years ago, contained a golden shield, a golden diadem, two silver vases, a vase in electrum, and a number of ornaments, partly in electrum and partly in gold (see the author's 'Herodotus,' vol. iii. p. 59, 3rd edit.). Another Scythian tomb near the Caspian, opened by the Russian authorities, contained ornaments set with rubies and emeralds, together with four sheets of gold, weighing forty pounds. A third, near Asterabad, contained a golden goblet, weighing seventy ounces; a pot, eleven ounces, and two small trumpets. The tombs of the kings and queens in Egypt were so richly supplied with treasure that, in the time of the twentieth dynasty, a thieves' society was formed for plundering them, especially of their golden ornaments (Brugsch, 'History of Egypt,' vol. i. p. 247, 1st edit.). The tomb of Cyrus the Great contained, we are told (Arrian, 'Exp. Alex.,' vi. 29), a golden couch, a golden table set out with drinking-cups, a golden bowl, and much elegant clothing adorned with gems. Phœnician tombs, in Cyprus especially, have recently yielded enormous treasures (Di Cesnola, 'Cyprus,' pp. 310—316). If the "gold" and "silver" of the present passage refer to treasures buried with princes and kings, we must understand by the "houses" of the second clause their tombs. The Egyptians called their tombs their "eternal abodes" (Diod. Sic., i. 51).

Ver. 16.—**Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light.** This is added as another way in which Job might have escaped his misery. Though conceived and brought to the birth, he might have been still-born, and so have known no suffering.

Ver. 17.—**There.** The word has no expressed antecedent, but the general tenor of the passage supplies one. "There" is equivalent to "in the grave." **The wicked cease from troubling;** *i.e.* "cease from their state of continual perturbation and unrest" (comp. Isa. lvii. 20, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt"). This is their condition, so long as they live; nothing satisfies them; they are always in trouble themselves, and always causing trouble to others. In the grave alone do they rest, or seem to rest. **And there the weary be at rest;** literally, *the weary in strength*, or "in respect of strength;" *i.e.* those whose strength is utterly exhausted and worn out. Here Job undoubtedly alludes to himself. He looks to the grave as his only refuge, the only hope he has of recovering peace and tranquillity.

Ver. 18.—**There the prisoners rest together.** "There those who in life were prisoners, condemned to work at enforced labours, enjoy sweet rest together." **They hear not the voice of the oppressor;** rather, *of the taskmaster* (comp. Exod. iii. 7; v. 6, where the same word is used). The taskmaster continually urged on the wearied labourers with such words as those of Exod.

v. 13, "Fulfil your works, fulfil your daily tasks." In the grave these hated sounds would not be heard.

Ver. 19.—**The small and great are there**; *i.e.* "all are there, the small and great alike;" **for**—

> "Omnes eodem cogimur, omnium
> Versatur urna serius ocius
> Sors exitura, et nos in æternum
> Exilium impositura cymbæ."
> (Hor., 'Od.')

And the servant is free from his master; rather, *the slave* (עֶבֶד).

Ver. 20.—**Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery?** Why, Job asks, is the miserable man forced to continue on the earth and see the light to-day? Why is he not sent down at once to the darkness of the grave? Surely this would have been better. Man often speaks as if he were wiser than his Maker, and could have much improved the system of the universe, if he had had the arranging of it; but he scarcely means what he says commonly. Such talk is, however, foolish, as is all captious questioning concerning the ways of God. The proper answer to all such questioning is well given by Zophar in ch. xi. 7, 8, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell (*Sheol*); what canst thou know?" **And life unto the bitter in soul** (see the comment on ver. 11, *ad fin.*).

Ver. 21.—**Which long for death, but it cometh not**; literally, *which wait for death*, anxiously and longingly (comp. Ps. xxxiii. 20). **And dig for it more than for hid treasures**; *i.e.* "seek it more earnestly than even they seek who dig for hid treasures." As Professor Lee remarks, "From the great instability of all Eastern governments, treasures were in Eastern countries often hid away" ('Book of Job,' pp. 200, 201). And hence treasure-seeking became a profession, which was pursued with avidity by a large number of persons. Even at the present day Orientals are so possessed with the idea, that they imagine every European, who is eager to unearth antiquities, must be seeking for buried treasure.

Ver. 22.—**Which rejoice exceedingly**; literally, *to exultation*, or "to dancing;" *i.e.* so that they almost dance with joy. **And are glad, when they can find the grave.** Job speaks as if he knew of such cases; and, no doubt, the fact of suicide proves that among men there are some who prefer to die rather than live. But suicides are seldom altogether in possession of their senses. Of sane men it may be doubted whether one in a thousand, however miserable, really wishes to die, or is "glad when he can find the grave." In such thoughts as those to which Job here gives expression there is something morbid and unreal.

Ver. 23.—**Why is light given to a man whose way is hid?** "Obscured," that is, "darkened," "placed under a cloud" (comp. ver. 20, where the sentiment is nearly the same). **And whom God hath hedged in.** Not in the way of protection, as in ch. i. 10, but of obstruction and confinement (comp. ch. xix. 8 and Hos. ii. 6). Job feels himself confined, imprisoned, blocked in. He can neither see the path which he ought to pursue nor take steps in any direction.

Ver. 24.—**For my sighing cometh before I eat**: literally, *before my meat*; i.e. "more early and more constantly than my food" (Professor Lee). **And my roarings are poured out.** The word translated "roaring" is used primarily of the roar of a lion (Zech. xi. 3; comp. Amos iii. 8); secondarily, of the loud cries uttered by men who suffer pain (see Ps. xxii. 1; xxxii. 4). (On the loud cries of Orientals when suffering from grief or pain, see the comment on ch. ii. 12.) **Like the waters**; *i.e.* freely and copiously, without let or stint. Perhaps the loud sound of rushing water is also alluded to.

Ver. 25.—**For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me**; literally, *for I fear a fear, and it comes upon me.* The meaning is not that the affliction which has come upon him is a thing which Job had feared when he was prosperous; but that now that he is in adversity, he is beset with fears, and that all his presentiments of evil are almost immediately accomplished. The second clause, **And that which I was** (rather, *am*) **afraid of is come unto me**, merely repeats and emphasizes the first (see the comment on ver. 11).

Ver. 26.—**I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came.** Some Hebraists give quite a different turn to this passage, rendering it as follows: "I am not at ease, neither am I quiet, neither have I rest; but trouble cometh" (see the Revised Version, and compare Canon Cook's rendering in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 29, "I have no peace, nor quiet, nor rest; but trouble cometh"). Professor Lee, however, certainly one of the most eminent of modern Hebraists, maintains that the far more pregnant meaning of the Authorized Version gives the true sense. "If I rightly apprehend," he says, "the drift of the context here, Job means to have it understood that he is conscious of no instance in which he has relaxed from his religious obligations; of no season in which his fear and love of God have waxed weak; and, on this account, it was the more perplexing that such a complication of miseries had befallen him" ('The Book of Job,' pp. 201, 202);

and he translates the passage (Ibid., p. 121), "I slackened not, neither was I quiet, neither took I rest; yet trouble came." Job's complaint is thus far more pointedly terminated than by a mere otiose statement that, "without rest or pause, trouble came upon trouble."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*The stricken patriarch's lament:* 1. *Deploring his birth.* I. DELIBERATE DISCOURSE. 1. *The time.* "After this;" *i.e.* after the seven days' silence, after waiting, perhaps, for some expression of sympathy from his friends, perhaps also after discerning no mitigation in his misery—an indication that Job spoke not under the influence of some sudden paroxysm of grief, but with fixed resolve and after mature consideration. Language that is passionate may also be deliberate; and although hasty words are sometimes more excusable than composed utterances, as a rule it is wiser and better, especially when under strong emotion, to be "swift to hear, but slow to speak" (Jas. i. 19). 2. *The manner.* "Opened Job his mouth." The usual Hebrew formula for intimating the commencement of a speech; this may also mark, in accordance with Oriental custom, the grave composure and solemn stateliness with which Job began his address, as well as hint at the exceptional character of his discourse. Already, since the beginning of his troubles, he had twice opened his mouth to bless God and justify his ways; never until now had he opened his mouth to curse.

II. IMPASSIONED ELOQUENCE. 1. *The sublimity of Job's language.* "There is nothing in ancient or modern poetry equal to the entire burst, whether in the wildness and horror of its imprecations, or the terrible sublimity of its imagery" (Goode). "There is indeed a tremendous bulk and heat in his words; his imagination has Titanic grasp and violence in it. All nature's powers he translates into living things" (Davidson). 2. *The naturalness of Job's language.* Even on the hypothesis that the verses contain rather the formulated conceptions of the author than the *ipsissima verba* of Job, one cannot but feel the dramatic suitability of both their thought and language to the situation, as well as to the individual to whom they have been assigned. It does not strike one as too lofty for a man of the intellectual calibre of Job; nor does it appear to be inappropriate as a vehicle for the burning thoughts that were then struggling for utterance within his grief-laden soul. 3. *The influence of Job's language.* "The boldest and most animated poets of Jerusalem made it the model of their threnodies or grief-songs, whenever uttered in scenes of similar distress" (Goode; cf. Lam. iii. 1—20; Jer. xx. 14—16; Ezek. xxx. 14—18; xxxii. 7—9, etc.). Among the instances in which modern poetry has been indebted to the imagery of the present chapter, may be mentioned Shakespeare, 'King John,' act iii. sc. 1; act iii. sc. 4; 'Macbeth,' act ii. sc. 4.

III. WILD IMPRECATION. 1. *The day of his birth* is in general terms execrated: "Let the day perish wherein I was born" (ver. 3); meaning, let it be erased from the calendar of existence, let it be filled with misery, buried in obscurity, and loaded with dishonour, or let it be blotted out from all remembrance. After which in detail he prays that it may be: (1) Enshrouded in darkness (ver. 4); unillumined by the light of heaven, which imparts loveliness to all mundane things—an imprecation conversely reminding us of the value of light. (2) Abandoned by God (ver. 4), who, while interesting himself in all his other creatures, should never ask after it. "Job's wish of darkness had done his day no great hurt, unless he had taken the eye of God from it also" (Caryl). God's favour is the greatest blessing of the creature; and neither day nor man can be truly happy from which that favour is withdrawn. (3) Reclaimed by death (ver. 5): "Let darkness and deathshade claim it"—redeem it as a stray portion of their original kingdom, which had wandered into the realms of light, and carry it back to its primeval abode. Adhering to the metaphor which compares the light of day to a captive escaped from the prison-house of darkness, we may remember by whose power it was that the light was first liberated (Gen. i. 3), and whose hand it is that still directs it to the ends of the earth (ch. xxxvii. 3). We may note too that we have a better Kinsman than Job's day had—one who can buy us back, not like it, from light to darkness, but from darkness to light. (4) Haunted by terrors: "Let the blackness of the day terrify it" (ver. 5); as if it were a living thing cowering and shrinking in abject

horror before troops of black omens continually occurring on it, such as eclipses, unnatural obscurations, pestilential vapours, dark storm-clouds; meaning, let it be a day to inspire terror in all beholders. The human soul is easily alarmed by unusual phenomena; but why should it when God is in them (Ps. xcvii. 1—5)? 2. *The night of his conception* he likewise anathematizes in general terms (ver. 3); after which, personifying it, he measures out for it too a series of detailed imprecations, imploring that it might be: (1) Excluded from the calendar; being overtaken by the surging waves of primal darkness, seized and carried back upon its ebbing tide to "chaos and old night," so that it should never join in the choral procession of the days and months that compose the year (ver. 6)—a foolish curse, since the blotting out of the night could have no effect upon his sorrow. (2) Destitute of gladness; "sitting in solitary, unrelieved gloom, nothing living and rejoicing in life coming from its womb, while other nights around it experience a parent's joy, and ring with birthday rejoicing" (ver. 7)—a cruel curse, which sought to transfer his own misery to others. (3) Cursed by enchanters, those who by their incantations can bring calamities on days otherwise propitious, rousing up leviathan (whether the crocodile, as the emblem of evil, or the dragon, *i.e.* the constellation of the serpent, as the enemy of the sun and moon, *vide* Exposition) to swallow it up (ver. 8)—a superstitious curse, showing that good men are not always so enlightened as they should be. (4) Doomed to darkness; always trembling on the verge of daylight, but never beholding the eyelids of the dawn (ver. 9)—a presumptuous curse, since it thought to arrest a divinely appointed ordinance.

IV. ASTOUNDING SELFISHNESS. 1. *Thinking nothing of the happiness of others.* (1) Neither of his mother's joy in his birth, who doubtless rejoiced over his advent into life, as Sarah did over Isaac's, as Elisabeth did over John's, and as every mother worthy of the name does over her babe's; who probably, in the exultation of the moment, named him Job ("Joyous"), and experienced a fresh thrill of gladness every time she paused to note his opening manhood and his ripening piety;—of all which she would have been bereft had Job not been born. (2) Nor of the interest of others in his birthday, not, perhaps, because it was his, but because it was their own, or their children's, or their parents', or their friends'; and why should they have all their happiness blighted because Job counted it a terrible misfortune that he had been ushered into life? 2. *Thinking continually upon the misery of himself.* The sole reason for his tremendous imprecation is the fact that on that particular day (and night) he had entered on his miserable career of existence. Suffering and sorrow, which are sent, and supposed, to render men sympathetic, not unfrequently result in selfishness, especially when conjoined with impatience, which is "ordinarily a great ponderer of griefs, because they are ours, little weighing the troubles of others" (Hutcheson).

V. RASHNESS APPROACHING TO WICKEDNESS. 1. *Its extenuations.* Much to be ascribed to (1) the emotional nature of Orientals; (2) the comparatively unenlightened age in which Job lived; (3) the extreme severity, multiplicity, and continuance of his troubles; and (4) the provocation he may have received from the reproachful and suspicious looks of his friends. 2. *Its aggravations.* With every disposition to palliate Job's offence, it is impossible to acquit him of sin; for (1) he immoderately indulged his sorrow, which, though natural in itself, and at times becoming, and even sanctioned by religion, should yet never be permitted to exceed (1 Cor. vii. 30); (2) he overstepped the bounds of propriety in speech, employing phrases and terms full of passion as well as force, whereas saints should exercise restraint upon their tongues as well as tempers (Ps. cxli. 3; Col. iv. 6; Titus ii. 8); (3) he used the language of imprecation, which became not a good man (Rom. xii. 14), and was a frequent mark of bad men (Ps. x. 7; cix. 18); (4) if he cursed not God, he execrated God's gift, his birthday, thus showing himself guilty of presumption in denouncing what God had blessed (Gen. i. 28; Ps. cxxvii. 3), and of ingratitude in despising what God had bestowed, viz. life (Gen. ii. 7; Acts xvii. 28); (5) he did all this knowingly and deliberately (ch. iii. 1); and (6) without regard to the interests of others.

Learn: 1. That a good man may stand long, and yet at length show symptoms of falling. "Be not highminded, but fear." 2. It is specially to be deplored when great gifts are employed for sinful purposes. Upon every talent should be inscribed, "Holiness to the Lord!" 3. That the tongue is a world of iniquity when it is set on fire of hell. "Behold,

how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" 4. That every creature of God is good, and to be received with thanksgiving; even birthdays, for which saints should bless God while they live. 5. That though sins may be palliated, they still require to be pardoned; excuses do not cancel guilt. 6. That from the greatest depth of wickedness into which a child of God can fall, he may ultimately be recovered. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Vers. 11—19.—*The stricken patriarch's lament: 2. Bewailing his life.* I. THE DESPISED GIFT—LIFE. In bitterness of soul, Job not only laments that ever he had entered on the stage of existence at all, but with the perverse ingenuity of grief which looks at all things crosswise, he turns the very mercies of God into occasions of complaint, despising God's care of him: 1. *Before birth.* "Why died I not from the womb?" *i.e.* while I was yet unborn; surely a display of monstrous ingratitude, since, if God did not protect the tender offspring of men prior to their birth, it would be impossible that they should ever see the light (contrast Ps. cxxxix. 13). 2. *At birth.* "Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?" To which he might himself have returned answer: (1) Because of God's sovereign will; man being God's creature (Gen. v. 1; Deut. iv. 32; ch. x. 8; xii. 10; xxvii. 3; xxxiii. 4), and God ever doing according to his will among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of earth (ch. ix. 12; xii. 9; xxxiii. 13). (2) Because of God's great power, the hour of birth being a time so fraught with peril to a tender babe as well as to a suffering mother, that only God's watchful guardianship can account for a child not dying as soon as it is born (ch. xxxi. 15; Ps. lxxi. 6). (3) Because of God's spontaneous kindness; life being a gift to the bestowal of which God can be moved by nothing but his own free favour, as Job afterwards acknowledged (ch. x. 12). 3. *After birth.* "Why did the knees prevent"—*i.e.* anticipate—"me? or why the breasts that I should suck?" (ver. 12). To which, again, he might have responded that man is so helpless in infancy that without the safe shelter of a father's arms and the strong support of a father's knees, as well as the warm nest of a mother's bosom and the rich consolations of a mother's breasts ("consolationes lactis humani," Augustine, 'Confessions,' bk. i. ch. vi.), he must inevitably perish. That God has provided these for man is a signal proof of the Divine wisdom and loving-kindness. That any should despise them is a mark of thoughtlessness, if not of depravity (cf. Ps. xxii. 9, 10; lxxi. 5, 6).

II. THE LOST BLESSING—THE GRAVE. Thus undervaluing God's great gift of life, he proceeds to depict a blessing of which he foolishly as well as sinfully supposes himself to have been deprived in consequence of having entered on the stage of existence, viz. the peaceful repose of the grave, in which he should have enjoyed: 1. *Perfect rest.* "Now should I have lain still," like one reclining on his couch after the labours of the day—death being compared to a night of resting after the day of working life (Eccles. ix. 10; Ps. civ. 23; Rev. xiv. 13). "And been quiet"—at peace, withdrawn from every kind of trouble and annoyance—the grave being a place of absolute security against every form of temporal calamity (vers. 17, 18; Eccles. ix. 5). "I should have slept"—death being often likened to a sleep (John xi. 11; Acts vii. 60; xiii. 36; 1 Thess. iv. 13; v. 10). "Then had I been at rest;" my sleep being untroubled, a profound slumber unvisited by dreams—the rest of the grave being, especially for the good man, a couch of the most peaceful repose (Gen. xv. 15; Eccles. xii. 5; ch. vii. 21; xxx. 23), in comparison with which Job's maladies and miseries allowed him neither rest nor quiet. 2. *Dignified companionship.* "Then had I been at rest with kings and counsellors of the earth," etc. Enjoying a splendid association with the great ones of the earth, now lying in their magnificent mausoleums, instead of sitting, as I presently do, on this ash-heap, in sublime but sorrowful isolation, an object of loathing and disgust to passers-by. The human heart, in its seasons of distress, longs for society, in particular the society of sympathetic friends; and sometimes the loneliness of sorrow is so great that the thought of the grave, with its buried millions, presents to the sufferer a welcome relief. However obscure, isolated, miserable, the lot of a saint on earth, death introduces him to the noblest fellowships—of his fathers (Gen. xv. 15; xxv. 8); of "the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. xii. 23); of the Saviour (Luke xxiii. 43; Phil. i. 23). 3. *Absolute equality.* Whereas he was now spurned by his fellows, he would then, had he died in infancy, have attained to as much glory as the

aforesaid counsellors, kings, and princes, who, notwithstanding their ambitious greatness, which had led them to construct gorgeous sepulchres and amass untold hoards of wealth, were now lying cold and stiff within their desolate palaces. Behold the vanity of earthly greatness!—monarchs mouldering in the dust (Isa. xiv. 11; Ezek. xxxii. 23). See the impotence of wealth—it cannot arrest the footsteps of death (Jas. i. 11; Luke xvi. 22). Note that death is a great leveller (Eccles. ii. 14, 16; Ps. lxxxix. 48; Heb. ix. 27), and the grave a place where distinctions are unknown (ver. 19; Eccles. iii. 20). 4. *Complete tranquillity.* "As a hidden untimely birth I had not been, and as children that have never seen the light" (ver. 16; cf. Eccles. vi. 4, 5); unconscious and still as non-existence itself, as those "upon whose unopened ear no cry of misery ever fell, and on whose unopened eye the light, and the evil which the light reveals, never broke;" a tranquillity deeper (and, in Job's estimation, more blessed) than that of those who only attain rest after passing through life's ills—a doctrine against which both the light of nature and the voice of revelation protest (vide homily on ver. 16). 5. *Entire emancipation.* A perfect cessation from all life's troubles, and a final escape from the exactions of his unseen oppressor. "There the wicked cease from troubling," etc. (vers. 17—19; cf. Eccles. ix. 5—10)—a sentiment, again, which is only partially correct, *i.e.* so far as it relates to the ills of life.

LESSONS. 1. God's best gifts are often least appreciated. 2. Men frequently mistake ill for good. 3. What we have not commonly appears more desirable than what we have. 4. "Better is a living dog than a dead lion." 5. The grave is a poor place for a man to hide his sorrows in. 6. It is better to bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of. 7. It is well to scrutinize keenly all that we either think or say in trouble. 8. There is a greater sin than despising the gift of temporal existence, viz. despising the offer of eternal life.

Vers. 13—19.—*The grave.* I. A REGION OF IMPENETRABLE DARKNESS.
II. A REALM OF UNBROKEN SILENCE.
III. AN ABODE OF DEEP TRANQUILLITY.
IV. A BED OF PEACEFUL SLUMBER.
V. A WORLD OF ABSOLUTE EQUALITY.
VI. A PLACE OF UNIVERSAL RENDEZVOUS.
VII. A HOUSE OF TEMPORARY LODGING.
LESSONS. 1. Humility. 2. Contentment. 3. Diligence. 4. Watchfulness.

Ver. 16.—"*To be or not to be.*" I. AGAINST BEING AND IN FAVOUR OF NOT-BEING. 1. Life is little other than a capacity for suffering affliction. 2. At the best, life is so short, and man's powers so feeble, that nothing he undertakes can attain to perfection. 3. In every instance life involves the terrible necessity and painful experience of dying. 4. Life always carries in its bosom the possibility of coming short of everlasting felicity.

II. IN FAVOUR OF BEING AND AGAINST NOT-BEING. 1. Life in itself is a thing of pure enjoyment. 2. Man's powers, though imperfect, are susceptible of infinite improvement. 3. The day of existence, whether long or short, affords a noble opportunity for serving God. 4. The fact that one is born gives him a chance, by being born again, of attaining to salvation and eternal life.

LESSONS. 1. Notwithstanding all the miseries of human life, it is better to have been born than to have remained in non-existence. 2. Notwithstanding all its brevity and imperfection, life is worth living. 3. Because of all its hardships and sorrows, it should be given up with resignation when God recalls it to himself.

Vers. 20—26.—*The stricken patriarch's lament: 3. Desiring his death.* I. DOLEFUL LAMENTATION. Job pitifully wails forth that his soul was in bitterness because of: 1. *The miseries of life.* Which he depicts as: (1) inward trouble; not merely bodily pain, but mental anguish, bitterness of soul (ver. 20); the acutest form of all distress (Prov. xviii. 14; cf. 'Macbeth,' act v. sc. 3). (2) Constant trouble, which came to him as regularly as his daily bread: "My sighing cometh before I eat" (cf. Ps. lxxx. 5; Isa. xxx. 20). (3) Abundant trouble, like the gushing forth of waters: "My roarings are poured out like the waters" (ver. 24)—a frequent image for affliction (cf. 2 Sam. xxii. 17; Ps. xlii. 7; lxxxviii. 7). (4) Paralyzing trouble, terror overtaking him the moment he

thought of it: "I feared a fear, and it came upon me" (ver. 25; cf. "He that but fears," etc., 'Henry IV.,' pt. 2, act i. sc. 1). (5) Superfluous trouble; *i.e.* his misery had not sprung upon him revelling in sinful and luxurious ease, which might have afforded some justification for so appalling a visitation as had overtaken him; but when already he was a stricken man, another and a greater sorrow leapt forth upon him: "I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came" (ver. 26). 2. *The perplexities of providence.* To these he alludes when he describes himself as a man "whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in" (ver. 23). The term "way" is often put for course of life (Ps. i. 6; Prov. iv. 19; Isa. xxvi. 7; Jer. x. 23); and a man's way may be said to be hid (*i.e.* to himself) when either its future character is concealed from his perception, or the reason for its present shape is not understood. Now, to all men a veil inscrutable separates the future, the immediate no less than the remote, from the present (Prov. xxvii. 1; Jas. iv. 14). The special ground of complaint felt by Job was, not so much that he had been subjected to adversity, but that he could not discern the reason of God's mysterious dealings with him; that his sufferings so engirt him like a lofty wall, that he not only knew not which way to turn, but that he failed to discover any way to turn. The like perplexity has frequently been experienced by God's people (cf. Jer. xii. 1; Ps. xlii. 5; lxxiii. 2; Lam. iii. 7). But it is unreasonable to expect that God's ways should be perfectly patent to the finite understanding. Man cannot always fathom the purposes or comprehend the plans of his fellow-creatures: how much less should he think to gauge the counsel of him whose wisdom is "fold over fold" (ch. xi. 6); or discern the reason of every dark dispensation that is measured out by him whose judgments are a great deep (Ps. xxxvi. 6)! Hence God charges his saints, when they see that clouds and darkness surround his throne, that his footsteps are in the sea, and that his way is not known, to preserve their souls in patience, to decline to be perplexed, and to calmly trust their present way and future course to him who always walketh in the light, and who, out of the greatest entanglements and darkest riddles of life, is able to evolve his own glory and their good (Ps. xxxvii. 5; Isa. xxvi. 3, 4; Rom. viii. 28).

II. QUERULOUS EXPOSTULATION. "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery," etc? (vers. 20, 23). The interrogation indicated: 1. *Astonishing presumption* on the part of Job, not only in questioning the Supreme, seeing that he giveth no account of his doings unto any, and least of all to men (ch. xxxiii. 13; Ps. xlvi. 10; Jer. xviii. 6; Dan. iv. 35); but much more in addressing to him such a question, which practically meant—Why should a man be sent into this world? or, if sent into it, why should he be kept in it, unless his existence is to be always encircled with the radiance of prosperity, and exhilarated with the wine of joy, and unless he is to be assisted both to pierce the veil of futurity and to penetrate the overshadowing clouds of the present? 2. *Monstrous ingratitude;* in first depreciating what, after Christ and salvation, is God's highest gift to man, viz. existence; in forgetting the manifold blessings he had enjoyed during the former period of his prosperity; and in overlooking the fact that he had some good gifts remaining still. But men are prone to forget past mercies (Ps. ciii. 2; cf. 'Troilus and Cressida,' act iii. sc. 3), and to appreciate what they have not more highly than what they have. True thankfulness magnifies the gifts it has received, and does not grudge that the great Giver still reserves something to bestow (cf. 'Timon of Athens,' act iii. sc. 6). 3. *Extraordinary ignorance;* in not discerning that the ultimate end and chief aim of life are not to render men happy, but to make them holy; not to make them wise as the gods (Gen. iii. 5), but to form them into sons of God (Heb. ii. 10); and that these sublime purposes may be secured as well through adversity as through prosperity. But perhaps the absence of gospel light should explain and extenuate in Job's case what in ours would be reprehensible in the extreme.

III. MELANCHOLY EXULTATION. Job's vehement longing for death bespoke: 1. *An intense pressure of misery.* Seeing that life is essentially joyous (Eccles. xi. 7), that men naturally cling to life above every earthly possession (ch. ii. 4), and that the intrinsic worth and happiness of life are a thousandfold increased by the addition of Heaven's favour, it indicates an amount and degree of wretchedness transcending ordinary experience when a man yearns for life's extinction, exults in the prospect of dissolution, would be blithe to find a grave, however humble or obscure—

"Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurl'd,
Anywhere, anywhere out of the world."
(Hood, 'Bridge of Sighs.')

They who find life's calamities in any measure tolerable have reason to bless God for laying on them no heavier burden than they are able to bear, and for imparting to them strength to bear the burden which he does impose. God's grace alone keeps men from sinking beneath the weight and pressure of life's ills. Contrast with Job's present state of mind that of St. Paul in the Roman prison (Phil. i. 23). 2. *An utter extinction of hope.* "The miserable hath no other medicine, but only hope"—hope that things will eventually improve; that the clouds of adversity will yet give place to the fair sunshine of prosperity; but even this the patriarch appears to have abandoned. It would be incorrect to affirm that Job had absolutely lost his hold on God; but of hope in a return to health and happiness he had none. Yet in this Job erred—erred two ways: in thinking himself at the worst, which he was not; and in despairing of recovery, which he should not. It is seldom so sad with any one that it could not be sadder; and it is seldom so bad that it cannot be improved. All things are possible with God, and God reigneth; therefore *nil desperandum* either in nature or in grace. 3. *A sad want of faith.* Had Job been able calmly to trust himself and his future to God, it is certain he would not have so inordinately longed for death. He would have reasoned that neither the miseries of life nor the perplexities of providence were a sufficient reason for God's cancelling the grant of life, or for a saint seeking the relief of death; since: (1) God has an absolute right to dispose of his creatures as he may. (2) No man has a claim on God for complete exemption from trouble. (3) Affliction in some shape or another is every man's desert in this world. (4) The higher purposes of life may be secured better through adversity than through prosperity. (5) It is not certain that escape from misery would in every instance be attained by escape from life. (6) And it is possible for bodily calamity and mental trouble and soul-anguish to pass away before the end of life, while life once withdrawn can never be restored.

Learn: 1. Men are apt to think there is no reason for that for which they can see no reason. 2. The best gifts of God may become burdensome to their possessors. 3. Some look for death, but cannot find it; death ever finds those for whom it looks. 4. Afflictions are commonly accompanied by much darkness, which faith only can illumine. 5. Though a man's way is sometimes hid from himself, it never is concealed from God.

Ver. 20.—*Two marvels that are no mysteries.* I. LIVING MEN ARE OFTEN MISERABLE. 1. *Surprising;* when we consider (1) that men are the creatures of a loving God; (2) that their Creator designed them for happiness; (3) that the most abundant provision has been made for their felicity. Yet: 2. *Not inexplicable;* when we remember (1) that men are sinful creatures, and deserve to be miserable; (2) that men carry the true source of misery within themselves, in their sinful hearts; and (3) that men not unfrequently neglect that which alone can remove their misery—God's grace and Christ's blood.

II. MISERABLE MEN OFTEN CONTINUE LIVING. 1. *Astonishing;* if we reflect upon (1) the frailty of life, and the ease with which it may be terminated; (2) the heaviness of that burden of sorrow it is sometimes called to support; (3) the intensity with which sufferers not unfrequently long for death. Still: 2. *Not insoluble;* if we recollect (1) how they are kept in life by the power of God; and (2) why they are kept in life, viz. (*a*) to glorify God, by exhibiting his power in sustaining them, and his grace in giving them opportunity to improve; (*b*) to benefit themselves, by allowing time for suffering, if possible, to perfect them in obedience; and, supposing this end attained, (*c*) to instruct their fellows how to bear and how to profit by affliction.

Ver. 23 (along with ch. i. 10).—*The two hedges; or, the hedge of prosperity and the hedge of adversity.* I. IN WHAT THEY COMPARE. 1. In being planted by God. Job's prosperity was from God; his adversity was not without God. 2. In encircling the saint. Job was equally a pious man in both positions. 3. In being both removable. If Job's prosperity was exchanged for adversity, his adversity was afterwards succeeded by prosperity.

II. IN WHAT THEY CONTRAST. 1. In the frequency of their setting. Adversity a more frequent experience than prosperity. 2. In the comfort they afford. Prosperity a hedge of roses; adversity of thorns. 3. In the effects they produce. Prosperity more dangerous to a man's spiritual interests than adversity.

III. IN WHAT THEY SUGGEST. 1. That God's hand is in everything. 2. That the saint's good may be advanced by everything. 3. That the devil's arrows shoot at everything.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—26.—*The eloquence of grief.* This book, so entirely true to nature, presents here one of the darkest moods of the grief-stricken heart. The first state is that of paralyzed silence, dumbness, inertia. Were this to continue, death must ensue. Stagnation will be fatal. The currents of thought and feeling must in some way be set flowing in their accustomed channels, as in the beautiful little poem of Tennyson on the mother suddenly bereaved of her warrior-lord—

"All her maidens, wondering, said,
She must weep or she must die."

A period of agitation ensues when the mind resumes its natural functions; and the first mood that succeeds to silent prostration is that of bitter resentment and complaint. As we hail the irritability of a patient who has been deadly sick as the sign of returning convalescence, so we may look upon this petulance of grief when it finds at length a voice. We do not blame; we pity, and are tender towards the irritable invalid whose heart we know to be in its depth patient and true; and he who knows the heart better than we do is forbearing with those wild cries which suffering may wring from even constant and faithful bosoms like Job's. We may read these words of passion with consideration if God can listen to them without rebuke. There are three turns in the thought here expressed.

I. THE SPIRIT OF MAN IN REVOLT FROM LIFE. *Curses on the day of his birth.* (Vers. 1—10.) There seems to be some reference to the ancient belief, which we find in later times among the Romans, in unlucky or ill-starred days. Such a day, to the sufferer's present feeling, must have been the day of his birth. But he will learn better by-and-by. He cannot see things rightly through the present medium of pain. True religion teaches us—the Christian religion above all—that no "black" days are sent us from him who causes his sun to shine on the evil and the good. It is only ill deeds that make ill days. We have met with Job's complaint again and again in different forms. Men and women have complained that they were brought into the world without their consent being asked, and sometimes passionately exclaim, "I wish I had never been born!" Let us admit what our calm and healthy judgment dictates—these feelings are morbid and transitory; and they are partial, because they represent only one, and that an extreme, mood of the ever-changing mind. We must take our morning, not our midnight, moods if we would know the truth about ourselves. The instinct which leads us to keep birthdays with joy and mutual congratulation should instruct us in our debt of thankfulness: "Thanks that we were men!"

II. THE IRRATIONALITY OF DESPAIR. (Vers. 11—19.) But such wishes against the inevitable and for the impossible, the mind, even in the paroxysm of despair, feels to be absurd. It sinks to a degree less irrational in the next wish that an early death had prevented all this misery. Would that a frost had nipped the just-blown flower (vers. 11, 12)! Yet this mood is only a shade less unreasonable than the former. For does not the instinct which leads us all to speak of death in infancy and early childhood as "untimely, premature," rebuke this fretfulness, and witness to the truth again that life is a good? And does not the common aspiration after "length of days," so marked in the Old Testament, supply another argument in the same direction? Job will yet live to smile, from out of the depths of a serene old age, at these passionate clamours of a turbulent grief. Again, he passes into the contemplation of death with pleasure, with a deep craving for its rest. He describes, in simple, beautiful language, that final earthly resort, where agitated brains and restless hearts find at last peace (vers. 17—19).

Such a sentiment, again, is common to the experience of suffering hearts, is deeply embedded in the poetry of the world. But how far more common and frequent the happy, healthy mood which finds a zest and relish in the mere sense of existence, in the simple, natural pleasures of every day! The longing for the rest of the grave is the mood of intense weariness and disease; and it is counteracted by the mood of restored health, which longs for activity, even in heaven. Well has that poet, who has entered so deeply into all the phases of modern sadness, sung—

"Whatever crazy Sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Hath ever truly longed for death.
'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant;
Oh, life, not death, for which we pant;
More life and fuller, that we want."

III. INTERROGATION OF LIFE'S MYSTERIES. (Vers. 20—26.) Once more, from longing for death, the distressed mind of the sufferer passes to impatient questioning. Why should life, if it is to be given to any, be given to sufferers who desire death? why should it be given to *him* who can find no rest, who is ever in dread of fresh woes? This complaint, again, is natural, but it is not wise. We are impatient of pain; we should otherwise have no quarrel with the mystery of being. But pain is a great fact in the constitution of the world; it is there; it is there evidently by Divine appointment; it cannot be glozed over nor explained away. The wisdom of piety is in reconciling ourselves to it as the dispensation of God, in submitting to it as his will, supporting it with patience. Then, "though no affliction for the present be joyous, but grievous, yet afterward it will yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb. xii. 11). In hope let us—

"Strain through years
To catch the far-off interest of tears."

To the question of Job the answer is—Suffering is the signet of a majestic being. The light of eternity, falling athwart our tears, forms a rainbow prophetic of our glorious destiny. But the final and most significant of all answers is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is the union of highest life with extremest suffering. Born to suffer, and by suffering to be made perfect, the Lord Jesus Christ supplies for them that trust in him a power by which they can rise out of the mysterious darkness of pain, believing that what is tried, even as by fire, shall be found unto praise and honour and glory at his appearing. The study of this paroxysm of extreme pain of mind will be instructive if it help us to govern any similar moods which may arise in our own minds.

LESSONS. 1. There is a natural and precious relief from mental pain in words.

"Poor breathing orators of miseries!
Let them have scope; though what they do impart
Help nothing else, yet they do ease the heart."

2. God, our gracious Father, is not offended by our sincerity. Greater than our hearts, he knows all things. This book and many of the psalms teach us a childlike piety by repeating words in which sufferers poured forth all their complaints as well as thanksgivings into the ear of him who misunderstands nothing. 3. There is an exaggeration in all the moods of depression. We are prone to overstate the ills of life, and to forget the numberless hours of joy in which we have instinctively thanked God for the blessing of existence. 4. The very intensity and exaggeration of such moods point forward to a reaction. They will not continue long in the course of nature. God has mercifully so constructed this fine mechanism of body and mind that these extremes bring their own remedy. Patience, then. The hour is darkest that is nearest the dawn. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."—J.

Vers. 1—12.—*Human infirmity revealed in deep affliction.* Frail is the heart of man. With all its heroism, its endurance and power, yet the stout heart yields and the brave spirit is cowed. The strongest bends beneath the heavy pressure. But if the human life is to be truthfully presented, its failures as well as its excellences

must be set forth. It is an evidence that the writer is attempting an impartial statement, and in the midst of his poetical representations is not led away to mere extravagance and exaggeration in depicting the qualities of the righteous man. Job's strength of heart receives a shock. He is in the whirlpool of suffering and sorrow. He will recover himself in time; but for the present he is as one who has lost his balance. Let it not be forgotten how severe the strain upon him is. His possessions have been torn from him; his family stricken down by death; his body is the seat of a fierce and foul disease; his friends are powerless to help him. No wonder that "his grief was very great." Out of that grief springs his wail of complaint—the cry of a spirit overburdened. This is an instance of what may escape from the lips of a strong and good man under the pressure of unusual affliction. In judging the cry of sorrow or forming our estimate of the character of him who raises it, we must remember—

I. THAT IT DOES NOT ACCURATELY REPRESENT THE UTTERANCE OF A CALM UNBIASSED JUDGMENT. The sufferer is so liable to be unmanned at such an hour. There is too vivid a perception of the pains of life for the cry to be an accurate judgment on life itself.

II. THAT IT IS THE EXPRESSION OF THE SOUL'S FEELINGS IN THE EXTREMITY OF ITS CIRCUMSTANCES. And although the true test of strength is in an ability to bear the heaviest pressure, yet that perfection of virtue by which the severest strain can be borne with calmness is only an uncommon experience; if, indeed, it can ever be found but in the Perfect One.

III. THE INHERENT HUMAN FRAILTY. In this instance Job, "the perfect man and upright," falls behind the one absolute Example of patient endurance of the severest sufferings. Job, judged by the ordinary standard of human life, must be pronounced a model of patient endurance. The inherent weakness, the true mark of humanity, is apparent here. The world needed one "greater than Job" as its typical Example of patience.

IV. But in all we may also learn THE USELESSNESS OF THAT CRY OF SORROW WHICH DEMANDS THE IMPOSSIBLE. In quietness and self-composure Job would not have cried thus. Reason is not always supreme. In moments of great suffering her authority is assailed, impaired, even sometimes lost.

In our judgment upon the cries of our frail brethren, we must, therefore, extend our utmost charity, make every allowance for the extreme conditions of which they are the expressions; and in our own habit of life accustom ourselves so to receive our minor afflictions that we may be tutored to comport ourselves rightly under the extremest pressure.—R. G.

Vers. 13—19.—*The grave a rest.* In the toil and sorrow of life men long for rest. They lighten the toils and brighten the darkness of the present by the hope of repose and gladness in the future. Without such a hope life's burdens would be much heavier than they are; and in some cases almost insupportable. As the worn labourer longs for the rest of the even-tide, so does the over-wrought spirit of the sad desire the rest of the grave. It is proper to consider if this is a healthy, a just, a well-grounded desire. To the grave men of widely different characters look for rest. Let us think of the grave—

I. AS LONGED FOR BY THE WEARY. "Then had I been at rest." This is not always to be commended. The present is our time for toil. These are the hours of the day. They that sleep should sleep in the night. It is not a Christian spirit to wish life shorter. Rather should we ask for grace to be faithful, even unto death. Resignation, obedience, hope, will check the desire to diminish the term of life. What is suicide but the adding violence to this desire? For our change we must wait.

II. AS THE ONLY REST KNOWN TO THE IGNORANT. By Christian teaching and discipline we learn where the spirit may find rest; and we are encouraged to wait for the end of our toil. But the ignorant know nothing of this good hope.

III. THE GRAVE BRINGS NO REST TO THE UNFAITHFUL. He owns rest who does a day's work. To him that rest is sleep. To the idler death will bring no rest. It will change the conditions and surroundings of life. But it is a dire delusion to suppose that the spirit, in putting off the garment of the flesh, will escape from all toil. Its

burdens are within itself, not in the fleshy tent. All sensation is in the mind during the bodily life, and all the sad weariness of the spirit, springing from consciousness of disobedience, that spirit carries with it. The sting of punishment for the wicked pierces the spirit; often through the flesh, it is true. But the sting is not left in the flesh, to be cast off when the body is laid down. The weapons of the spiritual foe penetrate beyond the clothes. The wicked deluded in life is deluded by death. Some long so eagerly for death that they rush through the thin veil that separates them from the regions of the dead. But it is rushing from darkness to light. It is rushing into the presence of the All-seeing One whose apprehended judgment upon life is the severest of all punishments.

IV. THE REST OF THE GRAVE IS A TRUE REWARD TO THE FAITHFUL. Fidelity in toil has its reward in rest. To the faithful ones it is sweet. But not as a mere cessation of activity. 1. It ends for them the time of exposure to temptation. 2. It marks the limits of probation. 3. It exchanges warfare for triumph; hard toil for honourable repose; danger for safety; the cross for the crown. 4. It brings the perfectness of all blessing in the everlasting life and the fulness of joy which are promised to the obedient and the pure.—R. G.

Vers. 20—26.—*The unanswered question.* From the lips of Job words escape which prove how deeply he suffered. "Why?" is ever on the lips of men when they consider God's hidden work. But he giveth none account of his ways. Clouds and darkness are round about him. Happy the man who at all times is persuaded that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. The question here proposed by Job is the unanswered question running through the whole book. Until all is accomplished, the design of the process is unexplained. That the afflictions of Job had some other purpose than merely to respond to Satan's appeal, none will deny; but what the purpose was is not stated in words. The whole story alone explains it. New Testament readers have light upon the mystery of human suffering denied to the saints of old. But with all the light and teaching granted, a veil of mystery still hangs over all. Partial answers may, however, be found. The demand of Job is unreasonable. It amounts to requiring that all who suffer should be permitted at once to end their sorrows in the silence of the grave. In other words, that none should suffer. "Why is life given unto the bitter in soul?" It is the cry of a sufferer distracted by his pain. Reasons why death should not come immediately to him that longs for it may be readily given. Let our thoughts rest on the purposes that are obviously answered by pain.

I. SUFFERING ARISES FROM THE INFRINGEMENT OF SOME NATURAL LAW, EITHER WILFULLY OR IGNORANTLY DONE. Pain, therefore, is the guardian of the life, giving sharp warning of disobedience or of ignorant exposure to wrong. How often would life be sacrificed in ignorance were not pain to declare the departure from the path of safety!

II. PAIN FORMS AN ELEMENT OF THAT TESTING OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT BY MEANS OF WHICH CHARACTER IS DEVELOPED. Patience, bravery, faith, resignation, hope, and obedience, and many other graces that adorn the human spirit, are called into play and strengthened by the sharp severities of pain. It is a means of growth.

III. Afflictions, if not directly imposed by a Divine hand, are USED AS MEANS OF SPIRITUAL CORRECTION, INSTRUCTION, AND GOVERNMENT. The great law finds its application here, "It is for chastening that ye endure." A wise father disciplines his loved son, not suffering him to run wild. So the Lord, the true Father, "dealeth with" men "as with sons."

IV. The true end of all suffering is thus found in the GROWTH, THE SANCTITY, THE CULTURE, AND PERFECTING OF THE SOUL. "That we may be partakers of his holiness."—R. G.

Ver. 1.—*The curse of despair.* Job had endured bravely up to this moment. But when his courage broke down his despair swept all before it like an avalanche. Existence itself then seemed only a curse, and Job thought it a matter of regret that he had ever been brought into the world. In his despair he cursed the day of his birth.

I. THE CAUSES OF THE CURSE. Job was no mere dyspeptic pessimist. His utterance of despair was not simply bred from the gloom of a discontented mind. Nor was he a

hasty, impatient man who rebelled against the first sign of opposition to his will. The curse was wrung out of him by a most terrible conjunction of circumstances. 1. *Unparalleled calamities.* He had lost nearly all—not property only, but children; not outside things only, but health and strength. He was bereft of almost everything in the world that promised to make life dear. Why, then, should he value it any longer? 2. *Long brooding over trouble.* Job did not speak in haste. For seven days he had been sitting dumb with his three silent companions—dumb, but not unconscious. What an array of thoughts must have passed through his mind while he thus suppressed all utterance! Benumbed at first, perhaps, his mind must have gradually roused itself to take in all the truth. Thus he had time to realize it. Nothing is worse than to suffer without being able to do anything to meet and conquer our trouble. Action is a powerful antidote to despair. Inaction intensifies pain. Thought and imagination add tremendous horrors of the mind to the greatest external and bodily troubles. 3. *Sympathy.* The kind presence of his friends broke down Job's self-restraint. Men can bear in solitude with calmness; but sympathy opens the wells of emotion. This is best, for the heart that does not let out its pent-up feelings will break with concealed agony.

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE CURSE. 1. *Its bitterness.* Satan said, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life" (ch. ii. 4). Now Job unconsciously answers the superficial word of the accuser, though from an unexpected point of view. Life itself may become so cruel as to be not worth living, as to be a curse rather than a blessing. But the trouble must indeed be great that can thus conquer and reverse a primary instinct of nature. The exceeding bitterness of future punishment will be that the life which has become dead, and yet which is not unconscious, must still be endured. 2. *Its humiliation.* Job cursed his day, only his day; he did not curse his God, nor the universe. He did not vent his agony in rage against the whole order of things. He confined it to his own miserable existence. At worst he only complained that he had been brought into being; he did not complain that the general order of the world was unjust. Here is a token of humility, patience, self-control. Weak sufferers rail against all things in earth and heaven. They take their experience as a sign of universal mismanagement. It is, indeed, difficult not to judge the universe by our own feelings. 3. *Its mistake.* Job's despair was very excusable. Yet it was an error. It was an outbreak of impatience, though sadly provoked and bravely limited. No man is able to judge of the worth of his own life. The life which is miserable to its owner may yet be serving some high Divine purpose, may yet be a blessing to mankind. This was the case with Job's. We cannot know the use and value of life till we see it as a finished whole and from the other side of the grave.—W. F. A.

Ver. 14.—*The pyramids.* The rock-tombs, mausoleums, and pyramids, which are most striking features of Eastern and especially of Egyptain architecture, are noted by Job with some feeling of envy. It is not that the splendour of these strange works excites his admiration. His thought dwells rather on their desolation, but this desolation is brought out the more vividly by contrast with their vastness and original magnificence. To be associated with such imposing embodiments of the idea of death is just the most enviable goal of despair. Job thus directs our attention to the pyramids. Let us note their significant features.

I. THEIR USE. What was the object of the builders of these monstrous structures? For a long while men regarded the question as an insoluble riddle. Some suggested that the pyramids contained mystic prophecies shaped in symbolical measurements of architecture. Others saw in them astronomical records and libraries of science. But whatever subsidiary ends they may have served, it is now generally agreed that the primary object of the pyramids was to serve as tombs for their builders. Thus they emphasize the importance of death. We strive to banish the thought of our end; the Egyptians kept it most prominently before their eyes. We toil for the present ministry of life; the Egyptians toiled for the dead. A Pharaoh spent far more in constructing a home for his corpse than in building a palace for his present life. Here was a strange perversion of the idea that we should prepare for death and look forward to existence beyond.

II. THEIR VASTNESS. The great Pyramid of Gizeh was one of the wonders of the

world, and already of hoary antiquity when the Book of Job was written. It is now certainly the most stupendous structure that has ever been built. 1. *A sign of patient toil.* Thousands of poor slaves must have been sacrificed to the construction of such a building. There is scarcely any limit to the results that may be produced by unremitting labour. 2. *A proof of concentration of effort.* Only a Pharaoh could build a pyramid in those old days. It needed the master of a nation to gather together the materials and the workmen. The greatest works come from combination of efforts. The highest spiritual efforts must not be in isolation. We must learn to unite and concentrate our spiritual service.

III. THEIR DESOLATION. These pyramids were "desolate places" from the first. They were never beautiful. The dismal use to which they were put must always have given to them an atmosphere of gloom. They were and are the most enduring structures in the world; yet their polished surface has been stripped off, and on near approach they appear like massive ruins. They were designed to preserve the mummied remains of their masters in safety; but their secret chambers are emptied, robbed by unknown hands of their carefully concealed contents. We cannot disguise the fact that death is desolation. We may build a splendid tomb, but it will only cover loathsome corruption. We cannot cheat death and decay by any earthly device. True immortality cannot be found on earth. But the Christian looks forward to a more solid and enduring home than any pyramid—to "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."—W. F. A.

Ver. 17.—*The peace of the grave.* I. TROUBLE ANTICIPATES THE PEACE OF THE GRAVE. There is a famous picture of Orcagna's in the *Campo Santa* at Florence, representing Death suddenly appearing in a motley crowd of men and women, and producing the most opposite effects. The rich, the young, and the gay flee in terror; but the poor, the miserable, and the sick stretch forth arms of longing welcome to their deliverer. When life is despaired of, death is sweet. Seeing that all must die, this is some compensation for the inequalities of life. The sleep of the tired toiler is deep and calm; and the footsore pilgrim on life's highway looks forward at times to his final rest with unspeakable eagerness. He can endure in view of the delicious repose which he sees beyond all his sufferings—a repose, however, which has no attraction for the healthy and happy. It is only a false sentimentalism that leads vigorous young people to apply the well-known words of the text to themselves.

II. WICKEDNESS IS AT THE ROOT OF THE TROUBLE THAT MAKES THE PEACE OF THE GRAVE DESIRABLE. Job's first thought is that the wicked cease from troubling in the land of the dead. There the captive no longer hears the odious voice of his oppressor. Injustice and heartless selfishness make a hell of this earth, which would be a very paradise if all men lived in the atmosphere of 1 Cor. xiii. It is horrible to think how often man's cruelty to man has turned the natural love of life into a yearning for the release of death. Certainly this wrong cannot continue beyond the grave. And yet there is a deeper and more personal truth. Our own sin is our greatest trouble. Too often we are ourselves the wicked who trouble our own hearts.

III. CHRISTIANITY OFFERS SOMETHING BETTER THAN THE PEACE OF THE GRAVE. We must remember that we have not here a complete Divine oracle concerning the future. Job is merely giving utterance to his despair. There is a certain truth in what he says, but it is not the whole truth. It is true that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9). But Christ offers more than negative relief from the troubles of this life. He brings to us eternal life. To the Christian death is not sinking into silence for ever, but sleeping in Christ to awake in a new resurrection-life. Job looked forward to the still grave. We can anticipate the blessed heaven.

IV. THE CHRISTIAN HOPE RESTS ON MORE THAN THE EXPERIENCE OF DEATH. To die was all that Job hoped for; to die as an embryo dies who has never known life seems to him far better than to drag out such a weary existence as he now sees before him. Thus the mere dying and ceasing to be are enough. But for the larger Christian hope more is needed. Death is not the door to heaven; Christ is that Door. There is no certain road to peace through death; for death may lead to darker distress in a future of banishment from God. There is no peace in the "outer darkness," but "weeping and gnashing of teeth." For future rest even, and for the life eternal which is better than rest, we have to be born from above, and to be walking on earth in the footsteps

of Christ. If we are doing this, it is not for us to long for death, but to "work while it is day; for the night cometh, wherein no man can work."—W. F. A.

Ver. 19.—*Death, the leveller.* No thought is more hackneyed than the idea that the present inequalities of life end at death. Yet the practical significance of this idea is never fully realized and acted on. Let us consider its lessons. What does death the leveller teach us?

I. IT TEACHES HUMILITY. The master of an empire will soon own but six feet of soil. The worms will shortly feed on one to whom princes bowed as slaves.

"O mighty Cæsar! dost thou lie so low?
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure?
But yesterday the word of Cæsar might
Have stood against the world: now lies he there,
And none so poor to do him reverence."

II. IT WARNS AGAINST INJUSTICE. The oppressor's sway is but brief. After a few swift years the rod will fall from his hand, and he will lie exactly on a level with the oppressed. How will he face his victims when he and they are in equal state? Christ bids his disciples make themselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that at the end they may receive them into everlasting habitations. There is a generous way of using money and influence that helps to win true friends among our brethren. They who have acted in the opposite way must expect a friendless future.

III. IT ENCOURAGES PATIENCE. The injustice is but temporary. The hard servitude will cease with death. The slave may look forward to his complete liberation. Hope may be the present inspiration of those whose lot is the most bitter, if only they can be assured of a portion in the life beyond the grave.

IV. IT POINTS TO HIGHER THAN EARTHLY THINGS FOR TRUE GREATNESS. If there were nothing above the words of our text, Job's thought would suggest a cynical contempt for all ambition and aspiration, because, if all must end at last in the low plain of death, nothing can be of permanent value. But if there is another world, the collapse of this world should urge us the more to store our treasures in that heavenly region. This does not mean that we are simply to live in preparation for the future beyond death; for we may have heaven in the present life; but it means that we should find true greatness in heavenly things, in spiritual grace and service.

V. IT CALLS US INTO TRUE BROTHERHOOD. Why should we wait for death to abolish the shams and pretensions, the unjust claims and cruel oppressions, of earth? The large liberty of the future should be a type and pattern for more fair dealings in the present. Already we might begin the process of liberation and justice which death will ultimately accomplish. We need not resort to the violent levelling processes of the anarchist. Nihilism is not Christianity. But it is incumbent upon us to do all that is in our power to establish a state of society which recognizes the brotherhood of man.—W. F. A.

Ver. 23.—*The mystery of limitations.* Job here refers to two kinds of limitations—limits to knowledge and limits to power. Each is mysterious and perplexing.

I. THE MYSTERY OF LIMITED KNOWLEDGE. There are many kinds of knowledge that are of no immediate and practical importance to us. It would satisfy our curiosity if an answer could be found for our inquiries about such subjects; but it is by no means necessary that an answer should be forthcoming, and we can very well be content to go on without it. But the case is very different where we have to do with our own lives and their course of experience. Here the mystery is as perplexing and distressing as it is profound and insoluble. This is just Job's trouble. His way is hid. 1. *The meaning of the present is not seen.* The events that happen are so contrary to expectation and apparently to reason. Changes seem to happen like the aimless shiftings of a kaleidoscope. Useless troubles appear to fall upon us. Undeserved calamities seem to assail us. 2. *The prospect of the future is obscure.* If we could discern a happy issue out of our troubles, they might be endured with equanimity. But perhaps, as in Job's case, it is often impossible to see whither they are leading us. There is no bow in the cloud. 3. *The discipline of life is conducted in mystery.* Assuredly there is a purpose

in the mystery, though we cannot see it. It would be bad for us to know all. Job could not have proved his disinterested devotion so effectively as he did prove it if he had known that the eye of the universe was on Satan's experiment of which he was the subject. God trains us in faith by means of obscurity. In the mean time he does not leave us. Our way may be hidden, but it is known to God. He is able to lead us safely over the darkest paths.

II. THE MYSTERY OF LIMITED POWER. 1. *Human faculties are limited.* They must be, or we should be infinite beings, i.e. we should be as God. But if there are necessarily some bounds to our power, we have only a question of degree when we are considering where this boundary is set. Still, the weak man wonders why he is not strong. Why should not the pigmy be a giant? Why should not the commonplace man have the intellect of a Plato? Why cramp him with a small mind? This is all mysterious, as it seems to bring injustice. But God only expects according to what is given, and surely there are some who cannot be trusted with the powers which others are capable of using. 2. *Human circumstances are limited.* A man has great powers; but he is hedged in. How hard this seems! If only he were at liberty what grand feats would he perform! So the poor man thinks he would do wonders if he were but a millionaire. But we have all to learn that "he shall choose our inheritance for us," because he knows us better than we know ourselves. Meanwhile the very hedge has its good effect. Satan had complained that God had set a hedge about Job (ch. i. 10) for protection. Job apparently sees another hedge, and thinks it a hindrance. But may not the hindrance be a protection? The river runs the swifter when its channel is narrowed. There is a gathering of strength from the concentration of effort that limited circumstances require. There is an inspiration in difficulty. If we all had perfect liberty and power, we should lose the bracing discipline which now helps to train us. Finally, observe, no hedge set up by God can keep us from our true mission or our rightful heritage. Job did not fail, but, on the contrary, did his great life's work the better through the mysterious cramping of his circumstances.—W. F. A.

Vers. 25, 26.—*Fears confirmed by facts.* Job complained that he was not foolishly confident in his prosperity, and so courting a reverse of fortune by pride and presumption. On the contrary, he was anticipating the possibility of evil and walking in fear. His action, as it appears in the opening verses of the book, shows us a man of an anxious temperament (ch. i. 5). He thinks it hard that trouble should come to him who has feared it. This may be unreasonable in Job; but it is quite natural, and not at all inexplicable. Inconsistent as it may seem, our very anticipation of evil is unconsciously taken as a sort of insurance against it. Because we are prepared to expect it we somehow come to think that we should not receive it. Our humility, foresight, and apprehension are unconsciously treated as making up a sort of compensation which shall buy off the impending evil. When they turn out to be nothing of the kind we are sadly disappointed.

I. OUR WORST FEARS MAY BE REALIZED. 1. *On earth.* Anxious people are not *ipso facto* saved from trouble. The world does contain great evils. The ills of life are not confined to the imagination of the despondent. They are seen in plain prosaic facts. 2. *After death.* The fear of death will not save from death, nor will the fear of hell save from hell. A person may have very dark views of his impending fate, and, if he deserves it, he may find that it is quite equal to his fears. Nothing can be more disastrous than the notion that the expectation of future punishment is only the dream of a scared conscience. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" is a great fundamental law of nature.

II. THE RIGHT WAY TO DISPEL FEARS IS TO REMOVE THEIR GROUNDS. To soothe fears without touching the facts which justify them is the height of folly. The facts remain, however much we may be hoodwinked into disregarding them. Salvation is not to be got by means of any manipulation of the sinner's fears. Sin is the fundamental cause of all ruin, and the justification of men's worst fears. The one necessity is to remove the sin; then the fears will vanish of their own accord. The sickening letters from condemned criminals, who are quite sure that they are going straight from the gallows to heaven, although they give no sign of genuine penitence for sin, reveal a very unwholesome style of religious instruction. Surely the chief business of a

Christian teacher is not to lull the fears of an alarmed conscience, and induce a condition of placid resignation. Hypnotism would do this more effectively; but to be hypnotized into placidity is not to be saved. If, however, men learn to confess their sins, and to loathe themselves on account of those sins, then indeed the gospel of Christ assures perfect redemption for all who turn to him in faith. When this is the soul's experience fear may be banished. Trouble, indeed, may come. But it is useless to anticipate it. It is better to take our Lord's advice, and "be not anxious for the morrow."—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

Job having ended his complaint, Eliphaz the Temanite, the first-named of his three friends (ch. ii. 11), and perhaps the eldest of them, takes the word, and endeavours to answer him. After a brief apology for venturing to speak at all (ver. 2), he plunges into the controversy. Job has assumed that he is wholly guiltless of having given any cause for God to afflict him. Eliphaz lays it down in the most positive terms (vers. 7, 8) that the innocent never suffer, only the wicked are afflicted. He then passes on to the description of a vision which has appeared to him (vers. 12—21), from which he has learnt the lesson that men must not presume to be "more wise than their Maker."

Ver. 1.—**Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said** (see the comment on ch. ii. 11).

Ver. 2.—**If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved?** rather, *If one assay a word against thee, wilt thou be angry?* Eliphaz feels that what he is about to say will be unwelcome, and, as it were, apologizes beforehand. Surely Job will not be angry if a friend just ventures a word. **But who can withhold himself from speaking?** Let Job be angry or not, Eliphaz *must* speak. It is impossible to hear such words as Job has uttered, and yet keep silence. God's wisdom and justice have been impugned, and must be vindicated.

Ver. 3.—**Behold, thou hast instructed many; or,** *corrected many.* When others have been afflicted and murmured, thou hast corrected them, and shown them that they were suffering only what they deserved to suffer. In so doing, **thou hast strengthened the weak hands;** "given moral strength," *i.e.*, "to those who were morally weak," upheld them, saved them from impatient words and hard thoughts of God.

Ver. 4.—**Thy words have upholden him that was falling.** Many a man, just on the point of falling, has been stopped in time by thy wise words and good advice to him. This is a strong testimony to Job's kindliness of heart, and active sympathy with sufferers during the period of his prosperity. **And thou hast strengthened the feeble knees;** literally, *the bowing knees* — those that were just on the point of collapsing and giving way through exhaustion or feebleness (comp. Isa. xxxv. 3).

Ver. 5.—**But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest.** Now it is *thy* turn—calamity has come upon *thee*, and all that thou wert wont to say to others is forgotten. The wise physician cannot heal himself. Instead of receiving thy chastisement in a right spirit, thou "faintest," or rather, "thou art angry, art offended"—as the same verb is also to be translated in the second verse. There is a tone of sarcasm about these remarks, which implies a certain hardness and want of real affection in the speaker, and which cannot but have been perceived by Job, and have detracted from the force of what Eliphaz urged. If one has to rebuke a friend, it should be done with great delicacy. Our "precious balms" should not be allowed to "break his head" (Ps. cxli. 6). **It toucheth thee, and thou art troubled;** or, *perplexed*—"confounded."

Ver. 6.—**Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?** Translate, with the Revised Version, *Is not thy fear of God thy confidence, and thy hope the integrity of thy ways?* The verse is composed, as usual, of two clauses, balancing each other; and the meaning seems to be that, if Job is as convinced of his piety and uprightness as he professes to be, he ought still to maintain confidence in God, and a full expectation of deliverance from his troubles. If he does not, what is the natural inference? Surely, that he is not so confident of his innocence as he professes to be.

Ver. 7.—**Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent?** The heart of the matter is now approached. Job is called upon to "remember" the long-established moral axiom, that only evil-doing brings down upon men calamities, and that therefore, where calamities fall, there must be

precedent wickedness. If he does not admit this, he is challenged to bring forward examples, or even a single example, of suffering innocence. If he does admit it, he is left to apply the axiom to himself. **Or where were the righteous cut off?** Was the example of "righteous Abel" (Matt. xxiii. 35) unknown to Eliphaz? And had he really never seen that noblest of all sights, the good man struggling with adversity? One would imagine it impossible to attain old age, in the world wherein we live, without becoming convinced by our own observation that good and evil, prosperity and adversity, are not distributed in this life according to moral desert; but a preconceived notion of what ought to have been seems here, as elsewhere so often in the field of speculation, to have blinded men to the actual facts of the case, and driven them to invent explanations of the facts, which militated against their theories, of the most absurdly artificial character. To account for the sufferings of the righteous, the explanation of "secret sins" was introduced, and it was argued that, where affliction seemed to fall on the good man, his goodness was not real goodness—it was a counterfeit, a sham—the fabric of moral excellence, so fair to view, was honeycombed by secret vices, to which the seemingly good man was a prey. Of course, if the afflictions were abnormal, extraordinary, then the secret sins must be of a most heinous and horrible kind to deserve such a terrible retribution. This is what Eliphaz hints to be the solution in Job's case. God has seen his secret sins—he has "set them in the light of his countenance" (Ps. xc. 8)—and is punishing them openly. Job's duty is to humble himself before God, to confess, repent, and amend. Then, and then only, may he hope that God will remove his hand, and put an end to his sufferings.

Ver. 8.—**Even as I have seen;** rather, *according as I have seen*—so far, that is, as my observation goes (see the Revised Version, which is supported by Professor Lee and Canon Cook). **They that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same** (comp. Prov. xxii. 8; Hos. viii. 7; x. 13; Gal. vi. 7, 8). The words translated "iniquity" and "wickedness" express in the original both moral and physical evil. Men sow the one and reap the other. Eliphaz extends this general rule into a universal law, or, at any rate, declares that he has never known an exception. He has not, therefore, been grieved and perplexed, like David, by "seeing the ungodly in such prosperity" (Ps. lxxiii. 3). He would seem not to have been a man of very keen observation.

Ver. 9.—**By the blast of God they perish;** rather, *by the breath of God*, as in ch. xxxvii 10. The word used (נְשָׁמָה) means always, as Professor Lee observes, "a slight or gentle breathing." The slightest breath of God's displeasure is enough to destroy those against whom it is directed. **And by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed.** Here "blast" would be better than "breath," for רוּחַ is a stronger word than נְשָׁמָה. Similarly, יִכְלֶה is a stronger word than יֹאבֵדוּ. The breath kills, the blast utterly consumes, transgressors.

Ver. 10.—**The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken.** Wicked men, especially oppressors, are often compared to lions in Scripture (see Ps. vii. 2; x. 9; xvii. 12, etc.; Ezek. xix. 3, 5; Nah. ii. 12; Zeph. iii. 3, etc.). The meaning of Eliphaz is that, within his experience, all classes of wicked men, young, or old, or middle-aged, weak or strong, have received in this life the reward of their iniquity. However fiercely they might roar, however greedily they might devour, their roaring has died away, their teeth have been broken in their mouths, vengeance has lighted on them in some shape or other; they have paid the penalty of their transgressions. Five classes of lions seem to be spoken of in this and the following verses: (1) the whelp (ver. 11); (2) the half-grown lion, just able to make its voice heard; (3) the young full-grown lion (*cephîr*); (4) the lion in full maturity (*ariyeh*); and (5) the old lion which is growing decrepit (*laish*). To these is joined (ver. 11) *labi*, "the lioness." Lions are still frequent in the Mesopotamian region ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. pp. 39, 221), though no longer found in Palestine, nor in Arabia.

Ver. 11.—**The old lion perisheth for lack of prey.** The human counterpart of the "old lion" is the oppressor whose strength and cunning begin to fail him, who can no longer carry things with a high hand, enforce his will on men by bluster and threats, or even set traps for them so skilfully that they blindly walk into them. Political charlatans whose *rôle* is played out, bullies whose nerve is beginning to fail, card-sharpers whose manual dexterity has deserted them, come under this category. **And the stout lion's whelps;** rather, *the whelps of the lioness* (see the Revised Version). **Are scattered abroad.** Even the seed of ill-doers suffer. They are involved in their parents' punishment (see Exod. xx. 5). Eliphaz darkly hints that Job may have been among the class of oppressors, or (at any rate) of transgressors, and that the untimely fate of his children may have been the consequence of his evil-doings.

Vers. 12—21.—Eliphaz proceeds to narrate a spiritual experience of a very strange and striking character. It was night, and he had fallen asleep, when suddenly he was, or seemed to himself to be, awake. A horrible fear came over him, and all his limbs trembled and quaked. Then a spirit seemed to pass before his face, while every hair on his body rose up and stiffened with horror. It did not simply pass across him, but stood still, in a formless form, which he could see but not clearly distinguish. There was a deep hush. Then out of the silence there seemed to come a voice, a whisper, which articulated solemn words. "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man," etc.? Supernatural visitations were vouchsafed by God to many besides the chosen people—to Laban, when he pursued Jacob (Gen. xxxi. 24), to Abimelech (Gen. xx. 6), to the Pharaoh of the time of Joseph (Gen. xli. 1—7), to his chief butler (Gen. xl. 9—11), and his chief baker (Gen. xl. 16, 17), to Balaam the son of Beor (Numb. xxii. 12, 20; xxiii. 5—10, 16—24; xxiv. 3—9, 15—24), to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. ii. 28—35; iv. 1—32), and others. The method and manner of these visitations raise a multitude of questions which it is impossible to answer, but are convincing evidence to all who believe Scripture to be true, that communications can pass between the spiritual and material worlds of a strange and mysterious character. The communication to Eliphaz may have been a mere vision, impressed upon his mind in sleep, or it may have been actually brought to him by a spiritual messenger, whom he could dimly see, and whose voice he was privileged to hear. Modern pseudo-science pronounces such seeing and hearing to be impossible. But poets are often clearer-sighted than scientists, and Shakespeare utters a pregnant truth when he says—

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Ver. 12.—**Now a thing was secretly brought to me**; rather, *a word* (or, *a message*) *was brought to me stealthily*. **And mine ear received a little thereof**; rather, *a whisper thereof* (see the Revised Version, and comp. ch. xxvi. 14, and the Vulgate, which gives *susurrus*). As the form of the vision was not distinct to Eliphaz's eyes (ver. 16), so neither were the words which were uttered distinct to his ears. He thinks himself able, however, to give the sense of them (see vers. 17—21).

Ver. 13.—**In thoughts from the visions of the night**; literally, *in the perplexities of the visions of night*; i.e. "in that perplexing time when—how, they know not—visions come to men." The word translated "thoughts" occurs only here and in ch. xx. 2. **When deep sleep falleth on men.** Something more than ordinary sleep seems to be meant—something more approaching to what we call "trance" (comp. Gen. ii. 21; xv. 12; 1 Sam. xxvi. 12, where the same word is used).

Ver. 14.—**Fear came upon me, and trembling**; compare the "horror of great darkness" which fell upon Abraham (Gen. xv. 12). Our nature shrinks from direct contact with the spiritual world, and our earthly frame shudders at the unearthly presence. **Which made the multitude of my bones to shake**; or, *which made my bones greatly to shake* (so the LXX., Professor Lee, and others).

Ver. 15.—**Then a spirit passed before my face.** It has been argued (Rosenmüller) that "a breath of air," and not "a spirit," is intended; but, in that case, how are we to understand the expressions in the following verse: "it stood still," "the form thereof," "an image"? A *breath* of air, the very essence of which is to be in motion, cannot stand still, nor has it any "form," "appearance," or "image." Granted that the Hebrew *ruakh* (רוּחַ) may mean—like the Greek πνεῦμα, and the Latin *spiritus*—either an actual spirit, or a breath, a wind, it follows that, in every place where it occurs, we must judge *by the context* which is meant. Here certainly the context points to an actual living spirit, as what Eliphaz intended. Whether a spirit really appeared to him is a separate question. The whole may have been a vision; but certainly the impression left on Eliphaz was that he had had a communication from the spirit-world. **The hair of my flesh stood up.** Not the hair of his head only, but every hair on his whole body, stiffened, bristled, and rose up on end in horror (see the comment on ver. 14).

Ver. 16.—**It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof.** Canon Cook quotes, very appositely, Milton's representation of Death as a fearful shape,

"If shape it could be called that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,
Or substance might be called that shadow seemed."

An image was before mine eyes; or, *an appearance* (LXX., *μορφή*). There **was silence**; or, *a hush*—"status aëris nullo motu turbati, et tranquillissimus" (Schultens). **And I heard a voice, saying.** After a while the silence was broken by a voice, which whispered in Eliphaz's ear (comp. ver. 12).

Ver. 17.—**Shall mortal man be more just than God?** Is it to be supposed that the ways of God can be rightly criticized and condemned by man? Surely not; for then man must be more penetrated with the spirit of justice than the Almighty. If our thoughts are not as God's thoughts, it must be our thoughts that are wrong. **Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?** Equally impossible. God alone is absolutely pure. The best man must be conscious to himself, as Isaiah was (Isa. vi. 5), of uncleanness.

Ver. 18.—**Behold, he put no trust in his servants**; rather, *he putteth no trust*, or *he putteth not trust*. The "servants" intended are those that minister to him directly in heaven, the members of the angelic host, as appears from the parallelism of the other clause of the verse. Even in them God does not trust implicitly, since he knows that they are frail and fallible, liable to err, etc., only kept from sin by his own sustaining and assisting grace (comp. ch. xv. 15, where Eliphaz expresses the same belief in his own person). **And his angels he charged with folly**; rather, *chargeth*. The *exact* meaning of the word translated "folly" is uncertain, since the word does not occur elsewhere. The LXX. renders by *σκολιόν τι*, "crookedness;" Ewald, Dillmann, and others, by "error." The teaching clearly is that the angels are not perfect—the highest angelic excellence falls infinitely short of God's perfectness. Even angels, therefore, would be incompetent judges of God's doings.

Ver. 19.—**How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay!** rather, *how much more doth he not put trust in them that inhabit houses of clay!* i.e. "earthly bodies," bodies made out of the dust of the ground (Gen. ii. 7; comp. ch. xxxiii. 6). **Whose foundation is in the dust**; *i.e.* "whose origin was the dust of the ground," which were formed from it and must return to it, according to the words of Gen. iii. 19, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou must return." Which **are crushed before the moth.** This is somewhat obscure. It may mean, "which are so fragile that a moth, a fly, or other weak creature may destroy them," or "which are crushed with the same ease with which a moth is crushed and destroyed."

Ver. 20.—**They are destroyed from morning to evening.** Human bodies undergo a continuous destruction. From the moment that we are born we begin to die. Decay of powers is coeval with their first exercise. Our insidious foe, Death, marks us as his own from the very first breath that we draw. Our bodies are machines wound up to go for a certain time. The moment that we begin to use them we begin to wear them out. **They perish for ever.** The final result is that our "houses of clay" perish, crumble to dust, disappear, and come to nothing. They "perish for ever," says Eliphaz, repeating what he believed the spirit of ver. 15 to have said to him; but it is not clear that he understood more by this than that they perish and disappear for ever, so far as this life and this world are concerned. **Without any regarding it.** No one is surprised or thinks it hard. It is the lot of man, and every one's mind is prepared for it.

Ver. 21.—**Doth not their excellency which is in them go away!** "Their excellency" (יִתְרָם) would seem to mean that which is highest in them—their spirit, or soul. It does not make much difference if we translate, with the Old Testament Revisers "their tent-cord," since that would be merely a metaphor for the soul, which sustains the body as the tent-cord does the tent. What deserves especial remark is that the "excellency" does not perish; it goes away, departs, or is removed. **They die, even without wisdom**; literally, *not in wisdom*; i.e. not having learnt in the whole course of their lives that true wisdom which their life-trials were intended to teach them.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11.—*Eliphaz to Job: the opening of the second controversy*: 1. *The relation of suffering to sin.* I. A COURTEOUS EXORDIUM. Eliphaz, the oldest and wisest of the friends, adopts an apologetic strain in replying to Job's imprecation, representing the task assumed by him as: 1. *Painful to Job*; which it certainly was. In circumstances even the most favourable, it requires no little grace to receive admonition with equanimity; not to speak of counting it a kindness and esteeming it an excellent oil (Ps. cxli. 5), and embracing its dispenser with affection (Prov. ix. 8); and much more when that admonition is not only felt to be undeserved, but spoken at a time when the soul, crushed beneath the burden of its misery, wants sympathy rather than reproof, and when, besides, the reproof is unfeeling in its tone and somewhat flavoured with self-complacency

on the part of the giver. If to hear and accept rebuke be a sign of grace (Prov. xv. 5) and a pathway to wisdom (Prov. xv. 32) and honour (Prov. xiii. 18), it is much more a mark of tender piety and fine Christian sagacity to be able to speak the truth in love (Eph. iv. 15), and to rebuke with long-suffering (2 Tim. iv. 2). Reproof that lacerates seldom profits. 2. *Distasteful to himself* (*Eliphaz*). Charity dictates that the best construction, rather than the worst, should be put upon the conduct of the Temanite. Hence, instead of pronouncing his language coarse, haughty, arrogant, and violent, we regard it, especially in the introduction, as characterized by delicacy and consideration, hinting, as it manifestly does, that Eliphaz had entered on the office of Mentor to his friend with reluctance; and certainly an office so fitted to give pain, and so apt to produce harmful results, should never be engaged in except with palpable tokens of grief. 3. *Required by conscience.* "But who can withhold himself from speaking?" The impulse which Eliphaz confessed was not the kindling heat of poetic fire, but the moral constraint of duty. (1) Duty to God (Lev. xix. 17). A safe rule never to distribute censure except when so impelled. Only "compulsion from our own spirit should not be mistaken for impulsion from God's." Men who never speak but under a sense of duty, seldom speak unkindly or in vain. (2) Duty to Job (Prov. xxvii. 5). Unless satisfied of our own sincerity in aiming at the good of those we censure, it is better to be silent; nay, it is wrong to speak. (3) Duty to himself (Prov. xxviii. 23). The light possessed by Eliphaz would have made silence on his part both a gross dereliction of duty and an indirect participation in the sin of Job. If, therefore, he would keep his conscience clean, he must "assay to commune with his friend."

II. A GENEROUS COMMENDATION. The piety of Job was acknowledged by Eliphaz to have been: 1. *Conspicuous.* "Behold!" Eminent piety can usually speak for itself, always secure attention, and seldom fails to elicit commendation. Even so should Christians let their light shine (Matt. v. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 12). 2. *Philanthropic.* Job's piety was not simply intellectual and emotional, but also practical, aiming at the good of others. Like the great Exemplar (Matt. xx. 28; Acts x. 38), of whom in some respects he was a type, this Arabian patriarch went about doing good (ch. xxix. 12—17). So Christ instructs his followers to do (Matt. x. 42; Luke x. 37; John xiv. 15; 1 Cor. xiv. 1; Gal. v. 14; Col. iii. 12—14). Where works of faith and labours of love are entirely absent, there is ground to suspect that genuine religion is not present (Gal. v. 22; Jas. i. 27; 1 John iii. 17). 3. *Manifold.* (1) Instructing the ignorant (ch. xxix. 21—23), giving counsel as a prince or magistrate in the gate, or as a friend and leader supplying directions for daily duty. (2) Correcting the wayward—according to another translation—by either the infliction of penalties for wrong-doing or the administration of judicial reprimand. (3) Sustaining the weak, upholding the sinking and fainting heart by kindly sympathy, and strengthening the feeble knees and hands by helpful succour. 4. *Habitual.* The tenses of the verbs indicate customary actions and lifelong habits. Isolated good deeds do not necessarily proceed from gracious hearts; there can be no better evidence of saintship than a lifetime of holy walking.

III. A DELICATE INSINUATION. 1. *That Job's piety had failed where it ought to have stood.* "But now it is come upon thee and, thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled" (ver. 5). Either (1) an expression of sincere astonishment that Job, who had so often and so efficiently ministered consolation to others, should have proved faint-hearted when like trouble fell upon himself,—reminding us that it is easier to preach patience than to practise it, that they who counsel others should strive to illustrate their own precepts, and that the world is never slow in remarking the deficiencies of good men; or (2) an utterance of keen invective (if we adopt the uncharitable view of Eliphaz's language), as if he meant to taunt Job with doing the very thing for which he had so piously admonished others, exhibiting the same craven spirit in adversity against which he had warned them,—an interpretation which, if it is correct, reminds us that good men are long in getting rid of their corruptions, that grace often finds a lodging in strange quarters, that the Horatian maxim of seeing and approving better things and yet following worse was not unknown to Eliphaz any more than to Paul; but on either hypothesis (3) the record of a frequent experience, Job having been neither the first nor the last who has felt himself unequal to the task of practising what he has tried to preach. 2. *That Job's confidence had stood where it ought to have failed.* "Is not thy fear thy confidence? And thy hope, is it not the uprightness of thy ways?" (ver. 6).

(1) Perhaps implying that Job had been previously resting with complacent satisfaction on his religious character, and deriving hope of Divine favour from the elevation of his piety, which, if Job had been doing, he had been living in egregious error, since "by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh living be justified;" but the statement of Eliphaz was a gratuitous slander, which one good man should always be careful in circulating, saying, or even thinking about another, since God alone can read the heart. (2) Insinuating that this previous confidence on the part of Job had been ill grounded, inasmuch as his piety could not have been sincere, in which case Job must have been guilty of hypocrisy; but this, again, was a mere inference on the part of Eliphaz, and in point of fact was incorrect. (3) Directing Job to find encouragement and hope in a return to the fear of God and to moral rectitude of life—an advice which, as addressed to Job, was not required, and, as given by Eliphaz, was a pure impertinence.

IV. A FALLACIOUS PHILOSOPHY. 1. *That good men never perish.* "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" (ver. 7). (1) An unkind statement, even if it had been true; considering Job's situation. If there is "a time to speak," there is also "a time to be silent;" and though it is unquestionably wrong to suppress or tamper with the truth, there is nothing in religion that requires one to proclaim all the truth irrespective of circumstances, or even to present truth under any circumstances in its most repulsive forms. (2) An incorrect statement, as well as an unkind one. It was contradicted by the plainest facts of history, as Job maintained, and as the least competent observer might have perceived (Gen. iv. 8; Acts ii. 22, 23; Heb. xi. 37). Those who undertake to comfort sufferers, and those who propound philosophies of affliction (or, indeed, of anything), should be careful to adhere to truth. 2. *That bad men always perish.* "Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" (ver. 8); in which may be noted: (1) The graphic description of wicked men, who are depicted (*a*) metaphorically as ploughing iniquity and sowing wickedness, alluding, perhaps, to the deliberate purpose, mental activity, steady perseverance, onward progress, and eager expectation with which great criminals contrive and carry out their nefarious schemes; and (*b*) analogically, being likened to a lion passing through the successive stages of its development, and increasing as it grows in strength, ferocity, and violence. (2) The melancholy overthrow of wicked men, who are consumed (*a*) in accordance with the natural laws of retribution, reaping the whirlwind where they have sown the wind (Prov. xxii. 8; Hos. viii. 7; x. 13; Gal. vi. 7, 8); (*b*) by the express visitation of God, perishing (as Job's children did, is what he means) by the blast of God, and before the breath of his nostrils; and (*c*) to the complete extinction of their former greatness, the providentially overtaken and divinely punished transgressor being compared to an old lioness, once formidable and powerful, roaring and devouring, but now lying helpless and impotent, toothless and voiceless, dying for lack of prey, and abandoned even by her whelps. (3) The amount of truth in the representation, which is correct in so far as it describes individual cases; as *e.g.* the antediluvians, the cities of the plain, Adonibezek (Judg. i. 7), Belshazzar (Dan. v. 22, 30), Herod (Acts xii. 23); but incorrect in so far as it claims to be of universal application.

Learn: 1. To cultivate the habit of politeness of speech. Courtesy is a dictate of religion as well as an element of virtue. 2. To commend where we can, and reprove only where we must. To detect goodness in others is a higher attainment than to espy faults. 3. To beware of trusting in self-righteousness, as much after conversion as before. The saint's trust should never be in himself, but always in his God. 4. To be cautious in making general deductions from what may, after all, be isolated facts. One man's observation does not afford a basis broad enough for the construction of a philosophy of life. 5. To think about the harvests we shall reap before commencing to plough and sow. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Vers. 6—8.—*Affliction.* I. THE SOURCE OF IT. 1. *Negatively.* (1) It comes not without a cause. "The curse causeless shall not come" (Prov. xxvi. 2). (2) It comes not for any cause; *i.e.* by haphazard, by accident, since the whole universe is under the dominion of law (Matt. x. 29). (3) It comes not from a material cause; it springs not from the ground; it is not the result of a man's terrestrial environment.

2. *Positively.* (1) It comes from within man himself; it is the fruit of his own sin. (2) It comes in accordance with universal moral law, which connects sin and suffering together as cause and effect. (3) It comes as an inseparable concomitant of man's nature. Man, when he is born, finds himself introduced into a scene of trouble.

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF IT. 1. *Universal.* It is the portion, not of one man, or a few, or even of many, but of the race. It forms a portion of the birthright of humanity. 2. *Certain.* It is absolutely unavoidable. As surely as the sparks ascend, so surely will those sinful passions rage that entail suffering and misery. 3. *Perpetual.* Meeting man upon the threshold of his birth, it accompanies him throughout life till its close.

III. THE ESCAPE FROM IT. 1. *Not by refractory rebellion.* Not by behaving like the fool, or like Job, who cursed his day, and fumed and fretted against his misery. 2. *But by patient submission.* "Humble thyself beneath the hand of God, and he shall lift thee up."

Vers. 12—21.—*Eliphaz to Job: 2. A message from the spirit-world.* I. THE DEVOUT SEER. 1. *Reposing on his couch.* A modern poet (Robert Buchanan, 'Book of Orm.,' i.), depicting how "in the beginning, ere time grew," the beautiful Maker of all things drew around his face, which has ever since been invisible to mortal eye, the wondrous veil of the firmament, represents that face as closest pressed in the daytime, when the sky is clearest, adding that at nightfall, when the darkness deepens and the stars swim out, and the evening wind begins to blow like the breath of God, that veil is backward drawn. It more, however, accords with universal experience that the unseen world seems in closest proximity to the human soul when it looks down through "the star-inwrought luminous folds of the wondrous veil." That the light of garish day has a tendency, by shutting man into his own little world, to shut out from his apprehension the infinitudes above, is not more certain than it is that the finite spirit becomes more quickly conscious of the supernatural amidst the darkness and silence of night, than when these have been succeeded by the radiance and turmoil of day. 2. *Wrapt in meditation.* If day be the season for labour, unquestionably night is the time most congenial for the exercise of thought, especially for revolving the great problems of religion. As David meditated on God in the night-watches (Ps. lxiii. 6), and Asaph communed with his heart in the night, his wakeful spirit making diligent search into those brooding mysteries which oppressed his waking hours (Ps. lxxvii. 6), and as a Greater than either spent whole nights among the Galilæan hills in prayer to God (Luke vi. 12), so Eliphaz had "thoughts from the visions of the night." 3. *Raised into ecstasy.* Disengaged from the activities and disturbances of waking existence, and soothed by the calming influences of night, the meditative prophet fell into a deep sleep, not simply such a profound slumber as steeps the senses in oblivion to all outward things, but such a supernatural repose as Adam was cast in before the creation of Eve (Gen. ii. 21), and Abraham at the making of the covenant (Gen. xv. 12), and Daniel on the banks of the Ulai (Dan. viii. 18), in which, while for the time the human spirit is severed from its physically conditioned life, it is yet in the innermost depths of its being possessed of a conscious existence—a mode of being perhaps as nearly approaching what man's disembodied state will be as anything we can think of. 4. *Visited by revelations.* The deep sleep just described having been that into which prophets and others were cast when about to receive Divine communications (cf. Abraham, Gen. xv. 12; Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 12; Dan. ii. 19; Peter, Acts x. 10; Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3). Eliphaz the entranced was honoured by a visitation from the unseen world of ghosts.

II. THE FORMLESS SPECTRE. 1. *The premonition of its coming.* "Fear came upon me, and trembling" (ver. 14). Even good men are not always able to contemplate the supernatural with self-possession (cf. Matt. xiv. 26; Luke xxiv. 37). That man should evince a horror of visitors from the spirit-world is a melancholy proof of his fall. Innocence would not be discomposed by knowing that "millions of spirits walk this air, both when we wake and when we sleep" (Milton). But sinful man, being out of harmony with the Supreme Spirit and the entire circle of creation, universally feels afraid of the unseen world by which he is surrounded (cf. 'Macbeth,' act iii. sc. 4). 2. *The manner of its coming.* Gliding suddenly out of the darkness in which the entranced seer lay, flitting softly and noiselessly along upon the still, supernatural atmo-

sphere with which the chamber was filled, moving steadily up till it came in full view of the dreamer's open eye, it stood! The sleeper saw and was perfectly conscious of its presence, could discern there was an image, a dim shadowy nebulous appearance, but felt altogether incompetent to analyze its features. Yet there is no reason to suppose that, like Macbeth's sword, this formless spectre was "a false creation, proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain" ('Macbeth,' act ii. sc. 1). The Sadducees denied the existence of spirits (Acts xxiii. 8); but the language of Christ (Luke xxiv. 39) implies that they were wrong, though, of course, it does not sanction either the ancient superstitious belief in ghost-stories or the modern delusion of spirit-rapping. 3. *The effect of its coming.* The terror of anticipation felt by Eliphaz deepened into a nameless horror, in which "the hair of his flesh stood up" (ver. 15), "like quills upon the fretful porcupine" ('Hamlet,' act i. sc. 5), or rather like nails or spikes upon a wall, each individual bristle stiffening itself into a cold and chilling isolation. 4. *The accompaniment of its coming.* A still, small voice fell upon his ear, like a dead and stealthy whisper (cf. 1 Kings xix. 12).

III. THE SHADOWY VOICE. 1. *A clear demonstration of the sinfulness of man.* (1) A question proposed: "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" (ver. 17). A great question, which, read as it stands (Calvin, Davidson, Cox, etc.), may be described as (*a*) searching, going down into the foundations of man's being, inquiring into the ideas he possesses of moral excellence and spiritual integrity, as well as the measures and degrees in which those ideas have been realized in his own personal existence; (*b*) elevating, lifting man up into the serene altitudes of absolute purity in which God dwells, and setting him down with the dimmed lustre of his imperfect goodness beside the clear white light of God's ineffable rectitude; (c) discriminating, neither confounding the two things, man's righteousness and God's, as if they were one and the same, nor mistaking the one for the other, as if they almost rivalled one another in their splendour, but distinguishing each from the other as essentially diverse and apart, God's righteousness and holiness being inherent, perfect, eternal, while that of man is derived, immature, capable of increase and diminution, mutable, and subject to decay; and (*d*) challenging, demanding of sinful man whether he would dare to exalt himself, in respect of justice and purity, above the supreme God, his Maker? Formally, perhaps, no one would be guilty of the immeasurable presumption implied in asserting that he was equal to this; yet practically every sinner makes the claim of having stricter ideas of moral and spiritual integrity than God, when he impeaches either the equity of the Divine dealings with, or the justness of the Divine sentence of condemnation against, himself. (2) A premiss stated: "Behold, he puts no trust in his servants, and his angels he charges with folly [or, 'imputeth to them wrong']" (ver. 18). The impious assumption that the creature might surpass the Creator in moral purity, the ghost quickly disposes of by showing that the former cannot possibly equal the latter, and this he does by establishing the moral inferiority to God of even the highest intelligences, the unfallen angels who serve him day and night in his celestial temple. Even they, beings of exalted dignity and radiant goodness, when brought up alongside of the light inaccessible and full of glory of the Divine character, appear to have their lustre tarnished. Whence the next step is inevitable. (3) A deduction made: "How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay!" (ver. 19). If man is inferior to the angels, then much more is he inferior to God; and man's inferiority to angels the spirit next proves. 2. *An affecting representation of human frailty.* Contrasted with the angelic race, man is depicted as a creature (1) whose origin is mean, being characterized as a dweller in a clay house, whose foundation is in the dust (ver. 19), the allusion being to his corporeal frame, which, being composed of material elements, incontestably proclaims his inferiority; (2) whose duration is short, he being an ephemerid who is "crushed before the moth" (ver. 19) and "destroyed from morning to evening" (ver. 20), *i.e.* in the course of a single day; (3) whose importance is small, he being regarded with such contempt, not only by higher orders of intelligence, but by the members of his own race, that he is allowed to die unheeded, "to perish for ever without any regarding it" (ver. 20); (4) whose glory is evanescent, whatever grandeur or excellency man may attain on earth passing away with him when he dies: "Doth not their excellency which is in them go away?" (ver 21); and (5) whose failure is conspicuous, man commonly dying as he was born,

"without wisdom," *i.e.* without having attained to more than the alphabet of knowledge. Yet, affecting as this picture of man is, it is only half true. It exhibits only one aspect of man's nature and condition. If a dweller in a house of clay, man is yet of Divine origin, being the breath of God's Spirit, and an immortal whose existence shall not be counted by years, and of such importance in the universe that God parted with his Son in order to effect his redemption, and whose true glory (Isa. lx. 19) shall never fade, and whose ultimate attainment to wisdom shall be made good in a brighter and better world.

Learn: 1. That heaven is never far removed from the pious. 2. That those who think most about God obtain most communications from God. 3. That even good men may long remain, through fear of death and the unseen world, subject to bondage 4. That Divine voices seldom speak in tempests and hurricanes, but mostly in still, small voices. 5. That God, being higher than the highest, should be regarded by all his creatures with reverence and fear. 6. That man, even at his best state, is altogether vanity. 7. That, in the judgment of Heaven, no life is successful that terminates without having attained to wisdom.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*Eliphaz and Job: forgotten truths called to mind.* However misapplied to his particular case may have been the speeches of Job's friends, there can be no dispute concerning the purity and the sublimity of the great truths for which they here appear as spokesmen. If not well directed to Job, they may be well directed to us. Each of the friends represents a certain aspect of the truths which relate man to God. In the speech of Eliphaz the main position taken is that man, in his ignorance and sinfulness, must be silent in presence of the all-just and all-holy God.

I. COMPARISON OF PAST WITH PRESENT EXPERIENCE. (Vers. 1—6.) Job is reminded of what he was, and asked to account for what he is. 1. *The appeal to memory.* A bright, a radiant memory it was. He had been the director of many—"guide, philosopher, and friend" to young and old in the perplexities of life. Again, he had been the comforter of the sorrowful and the weak; had strengthened the hands that hung down and the feeble knees; had led in straight paths the feet of those who erred. It is a beautiful picture of an amiable, benevolent, God-like career. He had not, like many, to look back upon a barren waste, a selfish and misspent life, but upon one filled with "deeds of light." Thanks to God if any man can turn in the hour of despondency to memories so fair and green! 2. *Expostulation with his present mood.* How is it, then, now that pain and grief have touched his own person, that he is so utterly cast down? Why not apply the medicine and the balm for your own disease and hurt which were found so healing in the case of others? If the remedy was ever good for them, 'twas because it was first good for you. If the counsel and the comfort you were wont to offer to the sick and sad had not been proved by you, it was of no avail to press them upon others. But if they accepted it and were blessed, why can you not now prescribe for your own malady? "Physician, heal thyself." "Sink in thyself, then ask what ails thee at that shrine!" 3. *Appeal to the power of religion and to the consciousness of innocence.* The sixth verse would be better rendered, "Is thy religion [fear of God] not thy confidence? thy hope the innocence of thy ways?" Religion is a great mainstay in all the storms of the soul. So long as a man can say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good," he has a support which nothing can move. But so also is conscious integrity a grand spring of comfort, because of hope—"hope that reaps not shame." To sow the seeds of virtue in health and activity is to reap the harvest of hope in illness, enforced idleness, in weakness, and in death. Hope is the kind nurse of the ailing and the old; and why is Job without the angelic ministry of her presence now? Let us put these questions of Eliphaz to ourselves.

II. INFERENCES FROM SUFFERING. (Vers. 7—11.) These Eliphaz proceeds to draw, Job still remaining silent at his first appeal. The inference is that there has been guilt to account for these great troubles. And the inference is justified by an appeal to the great teacher, experience. 1. General experience proves that *calamity points to guilt. As a rule,* it is not good men who sink, nor upright hearts that are utterly overwhelmed.

There are, or seem to be, exceptions of which the philosophy of Eliphaz takes no account. But, indeed, how slight are upon the whole these seeming exceptions to the grand moral rule! As in grammar, so in life, the exceptions may be found, on closer examination, only to enlarge and illustrate our conception of the rule. 2. *The teaching of experience is supported by that of nature.* (Ver. 8.) The laws of nature are constant. Every reaping implies a previous sowing, every harvest is the offspring of the early labour of the year. Therefore—this is the rigid reasoning of Eliphaz—this trouble of his friend implies a previous sowing in the fields of sin. It is the rough, broad statement of a sublime principle in the government of God. It is given without exceptions, but it will be time enough to look at the exceptions when we have first mastered the rule. 3. *Pictures from nature, which illustrate this moral law.* (Vers. 9, 10, 11.) Nature flashes back her light upon those truths which we have first learned from experience and conscience. Two such pictures are here sketched. One is that of the violent blast from heaven, which breaks the rotten tree, hurls the dry leaves into the stream, scatters the worthless chaff. Such is the fate of the worthless man, the mind devoid of principle and therefore of vitality and worth. The other picture—and it is less familiar, and perhaps still more powerful—is that of the fierce lion, toothless, vainly roaring, perishing at last for lack of prey, its young ones all dispersed! Such, again, is the fate of the bold, bad man. To this end his devouring lusts have brought him. The appetite for sin continuing to the last—the food of appetite, nay, the very power to enjoy, at last withdrawn. Where, in the compass of so few lines, can we find so powerful an illustration of the wages and the end of sin? Side by side with this powerful image we may place some other pictures in which Scripture represents the doom of the unprincipled and godless man. He is like the chaff before the breeze, like the juniper in the desert, unwetted by the refreshing dew of heaven, like the tree all flourishing to-day, to-morrow feeling the stroke of the woodman's axe, or like the dross which is consumed in the furnace where the true gold brightens, like the rapidly burning tow, or like a dream when one awakes—an image, the unreality of which is destined to be discovered and scorned.—J.

Ver. 12—ch. v. 7.—*The oracle in a dream of the night.* Here we have the narration of one of those revelations in visions of the night, through which man so frequently learned in the elder time to know the will of the Eternal. Every line of the description is significant and impressive.

I. THE ASSOCIATIONS OF THE NIGHT. 1. It is the season of *solitude.* In the daytime we have many to keep us company, to encourage us, it may be, in false or idle thoughts, or divert us from those that are serious. Now at last we are alone, and must stand face to face with self, with truth, with God. 2. It is the season of *silence.* There is no noise, no confusion, drowning the still, small voices which otherwise might be heard. 3. It is the time of *darkness.* The eye is no longer filled with sights that divert the fancy and unbend the fixity of the mind's direction. Pascal says that the reason why men pursue field sports and other amusements with so much eagerness is that they may fly from themselves, which is a night that none can bear. But the darkness, throwing a veil above the bright outer world, flings the man back upon himself, forces him into the inner chamber of conscience. Happy those who have learned to employ the wakeful hours in self-communion and in communion with God, and who find that "night visions do befriend, while waking dreams are fatal."

II. THE STILLNESS OF GOD'S VOICE. This is a thought made very prominent in the description, as in the revelation to Elijah on Horeb—the calmness and gentleness of the voice of the Unseen and the Divine. Eliphaz says the word "stole" upon him, and it was a "gentle sound" his ear received (ver. 12). It was a "whispering voice" (ver. 16), like the *susurrus*, or rustling of the leaves of a tree in the quiet air of night. For all who willingly listen, the voice of the great Father of spirits is calm, quiet, gentle, though strong and awful. Only upon the stubborn ear and obdurate heart does it peal in the end with thunder and menace.

III. THE EFFECT UPON THE HUMAN HEART OF GOD'S VOICE. (Ver. 14.) It cannot be heard without awe and without terror. One tone of that voice vibrating through the whole consciousness awakens instantly all the sense of our weakness, our ignorance, and our sin. And here we have all the physical symptoms faithfully described which testify

to the agitation of the soul in presence of the Unseen. There is a trembling and quivering of the whole frame in every limb. The hair stands on end. A materialistic philosophy, which either denies or ignores man's relation to the Unseen, can never explain away these phenomena. They are involuntary witnesses to the reality of that power which besets us behind and before, which is "closer to us than our breathing, nearer than hands and feet," from which we cannot flee.

IV. THE APPARITION. (Vers. 15, 16.) It is well to note in what vague and awful touches the presence of the Divine is hinted. A spirit passes before the sleeper—it stands still—but its form, its features, cannot be exactly discerned. There is the like vagueness in Moses' vision, and in that of Isaiah in the temple. For no man can look upon the face of God, no man can receive aught but the dimmest and faintest impression of that inexpressible form. These descriptions yield us lessons as public teachers. They remind us that a tone of reserve, a simplicity of description, not overpassing the reverential bounds of Scripture, the suggestion of a vast background of mystery, should accompany all that we venture to speak to men concerning God.

V. THE ORACLE. (Vers. 17—21.) It is a solemn rebuke to that spirit which Eliphaz thought he discerned in his friend—the assumption of innocence and righteousness in the presence of God. "For there is not a just man upon earth, which doeth good and sinneth not" (Eccles. vii. 20). Its contents may be summed up in the words of the psalm (cxliii. 2), "In thy sight shall no man living be justified." Its meaning is echoed in such words as these: "Righteous, O God, art thou in thy judgments" (Jer. xii. 1); "Let God be true, and every man a liar, as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Rom. iii. 4). There is no privilege of question, of criticism, of reproach, or complaint when man approaches the works of God. His part is to understand and to submit. The right of criticism implies some equality of knowledge; but how can this subsist between the creature and the Creator? "Who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Rom. ix. 20). Criticism is silenced in the presence of overwhelming superiority. There are a few great works even of human art before which the tongue of cavil and fault-finding is hushed. Who dares to sit in judgment on the sculptures of a Phidias, or the paintings of a Raphael, or the poems of a Shakespeare? Admiration, study, have here alone place. At least, in these mere human works, the presumption ever is that the master is right and the critic is a fool. How much more must this be so in the relation between the ignorant creature and the omniscient Creator? But in the oracle, this great truth is supported, not by a comparison of ignorant man with great geniuses, but by a comparison of men with angels. They are the immediate servants of the Most High; they stand nearer to him than man. Yet they are imperfect, unworthy of the full confidence of their Divine Lord, liable to error and mistake. How much more so man, who is conscious of sin as they are not—sin that disturbs his judgment, that clouds his perceptions! Again, the angels enjoy a life ever vigorous and young, that knows not decay nor death! But man inhabits a house of clay, an earthly tabernacle; he wears a "muddy vesture of decay," and lives on "this dim spot of earth." He is an ephemeral creature, living from dawn to sunset; easily crushed like a moth; living in dense ignorance, amid which death suddenly surprises him. This, it is true, is not the only aspect of human life. All is comparison. If man's spiritual nature be contrasted with the shortness of his life and the feebleness of his powers, it rises into grandeur by the comparison. But if his mere intellect be brought into contrast with the Infinite Intelligence, then he must needs sink into insignificance. A true comparison will either teach us faith and hope, or humility; and both lessons are derived from the nearer view of the profounder knowledge of the greatness of God.

VI. INFERENCES FROM THE ORACLE. 1. *The idleness of complaints against God.* (Ch. v. 1.) For the very angels, should Job apply to one of them, would in the consciousness of their relation to the Supreme, adopt no complaint of the kind. 2. *Such complaining spirit is the sign of a fatal folly.* (Vers. 2, 3.) 'Tis a sin which, if indulged, will slay the sinner. And here follows another powerful picture of the dread fatality attending upon the fool—upon him who would in thought and life nourish a quarrel with Heaven. He may for a time appear prosperous and firmly rooted, but the doom will fall upon him and his house. "*I* knew such a case," says Eliphaz, with emphasis.

"Not blinded by the outward dazzle of his future, I, in abhorrence of his character, predicted his downfall; and it has come to pass. His sons, feeling all the weight of a father's guilt, are thrust aside, and can obtain no justice at the hands of their fellows (ver. 4). Those whom the father had oppressed seize, as in the hunger and thirst of the 'wild justice' of revenge, upon the property of the sons; they ravage and despoil, and snatch the vainly guarded harvest even from among the thorns" (ver. 5).

CONCLUDING LESSON. There is a cause of every human suffering, and that cause is not *external*, but *internal* (vers. 6, 7). Not *external*. Not accidental. Not like the weed that springs from the earth, and which can be rooted out at will. But *internal*. The cause of man's sufferings is deeply seated in his nature. He is born to suffer. He is a native of the territory of woe. As certain this as any physical law—as that sparks should fly upward, and that stones should fall. Vain, then, these murmurs against the course and constitution of things. Whatever is, is best. If sorrow be a great part of our destiny, resignation is our wisdom and our duty. And he who has learned calmly to bow before the inevitable, and to submit to law, is prepared to listen to those sweet consolations which Eliphaz proceeds to unfold from the nature of him whose will is to bless, not curse; who follows out, by the very means of pain and sorrow, the eternal counsels of love.—J.

Vers. 1—6.—*The teacher tested.* Throughout the words of Job's friends many truths are to be found both accurately stated and beautifully illustrated; but in many cases—almost generally—a wrong application of them is made. The friends designing to be comforters do, through imperfect views of the mystery of human suffering, indeed become accusers, and make the burden heavier which they proposed to lighten. But the words now under consideration are perfectly true. He who had formerly been the instructor of many, and the strengthener of them of feeble knees, is now himself smitten, and he faints; he is touched and troubled. The lesson is therefore to the teacher who can pour out words of instruction to others, and to the comforter who aims at consoling the sorrowful. His principles will one day be tested in his own experience, and he will in his own life prove their truthfulness or their falsity. Eliphaz insinuates, if he does not actually affirm, Job's failure. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed;" and the wise teacher will become a learner in presence of these words. We may, then, say—

I. TRUTH MAKES ITS GREATEST DEMANDS ON ITS EXPOSITORS. They ally themselves with it. They proclaim it. They declare their faith in it. They vouch for it. The more really a man is a teacher the more is he a disciple. It is the perfect alliance of the teacher with the truth he teaches that gives him power over others in its exposition. Upon him, then, the greatest demand is made that the truth he has affirmed should find its highest illustration in his own life—that his life should not give the lie to his lips. It is thus that—

II. THE TEACHER OF TRUTH HAS THE BEST OPPORTUNITY OF BECOMING ITS MOST EFFECTUAL EXPOSITOR. Eliphaz could not yet see how Job, holding fast his integrity, would present a brilliant example of the truthfulness of his doctrine. To expound truth with the lips is possible to the simulator and hypocrite. He may say, and do not. He may declare the authority of a truth, and contradict that authority and his own saying by disobedience. Such were the Pharisees of our Lord's time. From them truth received the highest homage by verbal acknowledgment, but they proved themselves untrue and unfaithful disciples of truth by the discredit they threw upon it by their disobedience to its requirements. The teacher of truth, making the truth his own by a thorough embrace of it, and a real and unfeigned sympathy with it, teaches more by his life than by his lips; for the one men discredit, but the other is undeniable. Fidelity in the teacher is the highest proof of his faith in his doctrine, and by it he pays the utmost tribute to the doctrine that he is able to pay.

III. THE SUPREME DUTY OF THE TEACHER IS FIDELITY TO HIS DOCTRINE. By his faithfulness his scholars are confirmed in their belief and steadfastness. It is a black crime for a man to proclaim a truth or a teaching that affects the life and hope of his fellow-men, and yet prove a traitor to it by unfaithfulness. The foundations of the hope of many have been shaken and even uprooted by such conduct. By how much the truth a man proclaims is important, by so much is the responsibility of his own treat-

ment of that truth great. Job was a bright example of fidelity, though severely tried.

IV. THE HONOURABLENESS OF A FAITHFUL ADHESION TO A GREAT TRUTH. He who links himself with great truths is exalted by them. They honour him who honours them. They bring him to glory and true renown.—R. G.

Vers. 7—11.—*The consequences of evil-doing.* The New Testament teaching is, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." It is precisely as the present verses. "They that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same." So does the testimony of the ages warn evil-doers. This rule is inevitable; it is just; it is natural; it is admonitory.

I. THIS ORDER IS INEVITABLE. He who has ordained the laws of nature, fixed, calm, indestructible, has also ordained that the doer of evil shall reap the fruit of his ill-doing. An inevitable Nemesis follows the steps of every offender against Divine laws. Sooner or later judgment is passed. No skilfulness can evade the omnipotent rule. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." Minutely did our Lord lay down the same teaching: "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." One may as well try to throw off the law of gravitation. It holds us all fast in its firm grip. So does this Divine law framed by the same hand.

II. THIS LAW IS JUST. The wise and holy Ruler of all—"the Creator of all worlds, the Judge of all men"—will do right, does do right in the administrations of his holy laws. He is not vindictive. His anger is holy anger; his wrath is as truly just as his love is tender. He has laid the foundations of human life in righteousness. He is just; for he rendereth to every man according to his deeds. Without doubt he takes note of all the circumstances in which every one is placed, and neither accuses the guiltless nor excuses the guilty. Men find in their own acts the cause of their sufferings, and the justification of the righteous judgment of God. In every breast the most painful conviction will be the assurance of the perfect righteousness of the Divine ways, and the justice of every Divine infliction. The inward reflection of the Divine judgment of condemnation is the most painful of all judgments.

III. THE OPERATION OF THIS LAW IS PERFECTLY NATURAL. Consequences follow causes with the same regularity of law in the moral as in the material world. A wrong thought gives a wrong bias to the mind, and leaves it so much the more liable to be influenced in a wrong direction; so of every word or deed of evil. Each wrong act is a seed cast into the ground, and it bears its fruit after its own kind to him who sows it. Of evil, good cannot spring up. So every man by his wrong-doing treasures up for himself wrath against the day of wrath. He receives his reward in his character, in the condition of mind and life to which he is reduced by evil or elevated by goodness.

IV. THIS LAW IS ADMONITORY TO ALL. There is no escape by mere law from the ill consequences of any bad act. The inevitable consequences which follow all wrong-doing should warn men off from forbidden paths. "By the blast of God they perish" is the warning threat against the sowers of wickedness and them that "plough iniquity." Though men rage as the fierce lions, their roaring is broken; they perish, and their seed is scattered abroad.—R. G.

Vers. 12—21.—*The condemnation of man in presence of the Divine holiness.* With a figure of great boldness and grandeur Eliphaz urges his words upon Job. He is trying to illustrate the great principle of the righteous retributions of the Divine government. In the visions of the night there appeared a spirit to pass before his face, and in the dead silence he heard a voice saying, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" It cannot be. And the vision of Eliphaz finds its fulfilment in Job himself, who in the end is bowed down to the earth in self-abasing shame and condemnation.

I. ALL MEN MUST OF NECESSITY BE SELF-CONDEMNED IN PRESENCE OF THE DIVINE HOLINESS. Alas! we are all sinful; our best deeds are faulty, and the element of sinfulness mingles with all our acts as truly as the element of imperfectness. We cannot stand in the presence of the absolutely Perfect One. Even the rudest vanity must be appalled and humbled in his sight.

II. THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE DIVINE HOLINESS A SALUTARY CHECK TO SELF-CONFIDENT BOASTING. In the absence of a true and lofty standard of right, men boast themselves of their goodness. Measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, they are led to the proud assumption of fancied righteousness. The standards are faulty; even the faulty ones, therefore, reach them. He is wise who can say, "But now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

III. THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE DIVINE HOLINESS A STIMULUS TO LOWLY, HUMBLE, RELIGIOUS FEAR. This fear is the beginning of wisdom; and the highest attainments of wisdom do not depart from this fear. It is the beginning and the consummation of holy wisdom.

IV. THE PUREST AND MOST EXALTED BEINGS ARE ABASED IN THE DIVINE PRESENCE. "His angels he charged with folly." How much more, therefore, the children of the dust—"them that dwell in houses of clay"!—R. G.

Ver. 1.—*Eliphaz the visionary.* After Job has broken the seven days' silence, each of his friends assays to comfort him, with that most irritating form of consolation—unsolicited advice. Although, perhaps, some of the critics have thought they detected greater differences between the three friends than are really apparent from the narrative, we cannot but notice certain distinctive features. What they have in common is more pronounced than their points of difference. Thus they all three are friends of Job, who really desire to show their sympathy and help the sufferer. They all tender unasked counsel. They all assume an irritating position of superiority. They all adhere to the prevalent dogma that great calamity is to be accounted for as the punishment of great sin. They all believe in the justice of God and his readiness to forgive and restore if Job will but confess his sins and humble himself. But they manifest certain interesting differences. The first friend to speak is Eliphaz, who appears as a seer of visions.

I. THERE ARE MEN WHO SEEM TO BE NATURALLY IN AFFINITY WITH THE SPIRITUAL WORLD. All men are not able to see the sights with which these men are familiar. They are the seers of visions. Too often such men are visionaries and nothing else. They are so wrapt up in the excitement of their experiences of another world that they have no interest or capacity left for the discharge of present earthly duties. It would go ill with us if there were many such unpractical people among us. But even these men have their sphere, and there are higher visionaries to whom we should be profoundly grateful. It is a great descent from Paul the apostle in the third heavens to "Sludge the medium" at a *séance*. The follies of spiritualism should not blind us to the revelations of true seers. Even the half-mad visions of a Blake have given the world some wonderful fruits of imagination, that would never have grown on the stock of conventional worldly experience.

II. TRUTH IS NOT ALWAYS FOUND WITH THE SEER OF VISIONS. God's seer will see God's truth. If the veil is lifted from before the unseen world, some genuine revelations must appear. God has given us truths of the Bible in some cases through the visions of his prophets. But the mere affirmation of a vision is no voucher for the truth of what is said. The seer may be a deceiver, he may be a deluded fanatic, or he may see a vision of "lying spirits." Therefore what he says must be tested, and should not be accepted on the mere authority of his vision. Here was the mistake of Eliphaz, who thought to overawe and silence Job by the recital of his vision. It is safer to turn from all such pretensions to the clear "word of prophecy" and the historical revelation of Christ. Our religion is based, not on visions, but on historical facts.

III. IT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO CULTIVATE SYMPATHY WITH THE UNSEEN WORLD. If we are not visionaries, we need not be materialists. Though we do not look for spiritualistic manifestations, we need not be Sadducees who believe in no spirits. There is a vision of God for the pure in heart, which can deceive none, and which is the inspiration of this world's highest service.—W. F. A.

Ver. 2.—*Irrepressible speech.* Eliphaz says, "Who can withhold himself from speaking?" He utters his own sentiment, but it is a very common one—far more common than the honest admission of it with which Eliphaz justifies his address to Job.

I. IRREPRESSIBLE SPEECH SPRINGS FROM VARIOUS INFLUENCES. Sometimes it is difficult to find words. What, then, are the things that break open the fountains of speech? 1. *Natural temperament.* Some are naturally loquacious, others as naturally taciturn. No man is responsible for his original constitution; his responsibility begins with his use of it. 2. *Wealth of ideas.* It is not only verbal fluency that runs into a volume of speech. One who thinks much will have the materials for talking much. Coleridge meditated deeply; Macaulay read enormously, and remembered all he read; and both were great talkers. 3. *Depth of feeling.* Passion gives eloquence to the least gifted person. Sympathy will seek for words. So the long contemplation of Job's sufferings urged Eliphaz to speak. 4. *Provocation.* Eliphaz was shocked at Job's cursing the day of his birth. Unable to enter into the tragic depths of the sufferer's grief, he could easily perceive the highly improper tone of the language used. Controversy rouses the least beautiful, but often the most vigorous, kind of eloquence. 5. *Vanity.* To many people there is a strange charm in the sound of their own voices.

II. IRREPRESSIBLE SPEECH MAY BE A SOURCE OF GREAT EVIL. The talker rarely seems to consider how keen a weapon he is wielding. He does not appear to remember that his words are like arrows, and that the bow drawn at a venture may inflict a mortal wound; that they are as seeds which may spring up and bear bitter fruit long after the sower has forgotten when and where he threw them broadcast over the earth. Certain points in particular need to be noticed. 1. Irrepressible speech lacks due *reflection.* It is hasty and ill-judged. Thus it may say far more than the speaker intended, and it may even convey a very false impression. Spoken without due thought, the hurried word may make a suggestion which mature consideration would utterly repudiate. Words lead to deeds, and thus irrepressible speech becomes an unalterable act. "Volatility of words," says Lavater, "is carelessness in actions; words are the wings of actions." 2. Irrepressible speech is likely to be *inconsiderate of the feelings of others.* Surely Job's three comforters could not have known what cruel barbs their words were, or they would scarcely have tormented the sufferer as they did. It is so easy to wound with the tongue, that if we talk hastily and without thought, it is most likely that we shall do so even without intending it. 3. Irrepressible speech is a *slight on the mission of silence.* Those seven days of silence served as a healing ministry, or at least they were days of unadulterated sympathy on the part of the three friends. Why, then, should the good men change their tactics? Evidently they had not enough faith in silence. 4. Irrepressible speech *needs the preservation of Divine grace.* Great talkers should especially look for help from above, that their speech may be "seasoned with salt." He who spake as never man spake is a model of wise, laconic utterance. To be safe in the use of the tongue we need to be much in company with Christ, often in converse with Heaven.—W. F. A.

Vers. 3—5.—*The teacher at fault.* After one brief word of apology for breaking the seemly silence of mourning, Eliphaz plunges *in medias res*, and at once commences to reproach Job by reminding him of his former conduct, and contrasting his present state with it as an evidence of glaring inconsistency. Job could teach others how to conduct themselves, but no sooner is the test brought home to himself than he fails. The teacher cannot pass the examination for which he has been preparing his pupils.

I. THE MISSION OF INSTRUCTING OTHERS IS ONE OF HONOUR AND USEFULNESS. No greater work can be conceived than that of forming character. Thomas Carlyle pointed out the absurdity of heaping honours on the soldier which we deny to the schoolmaster. He thought the cane was a token of greater dignity than the sword. There is no happier result of a life's work than to see those one has influenced growing in wisdom and goodness and strength of character. It was well, indeed, that Job was one who strengthened the weak. This was wholly good, whatever might be his subsequent character.

II. HE WHO INSTRUCTS OTHERS IS EXPECTED TO FOLLOW HIS OWN PRECEPTS. The eyes of the world are upon him; his own scholars watch him narrowly. Teaching which is not backed up by example soon becomes quite ineffective. The Christian minister can often do more good by his exemplary life than by his most excellent sermons. If his walk and conversation among men do not adorn the gospel he proclaims, they will mar and mutilate it. The world refuses to separate the preacher from

the man. It declines to believe that clerical vestments transform a slovenly, shifty, self-indulgent person, whom no one can respect, into a herald from heaven. The Sunday school teacher whose business reputation is low has no right to expect that his lofty words will train up a noble life in the young people whom he instructs.

III. IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE AN INSTRUCTOR OF OTHERS AND YET FAIL ONE'S SELF. The charge of Eliphaz was unfair, for it took no account of the unparalleled troubles of Job—none had been tried like this man—or rather it assumed that he must have been an exceptionally bad man or he would not have suffered such a tremendous reverse of fortune. Thus it suggested that the venerated leader and teacher had been a hypocrite all along. This was doubly unfair. It is possible to have been in earnest while teaching, and yet afterwards to fall before unexpected temptations without having been a hypocrite; for good men are fallible, and no one knows how weak he is till he has been tried. Moreover, in the present case the teacher had not fallen as his censor supposed. Still, there is great force in his warning. Unfortunately, the world is not wanting in men to whom it is only too applicable. There is a great danger of delusion in the faculty of teaching. All of us who instruct others are tempted to confuse our knowledge with our attainments, and our language with our experience. Thus intellectual and professional familiarity with holy things may be mistaken for that vital communion with them which perhaps is not to be found accompanying it. There has only been one perfect Teacher whose conduct was as lofty as his instructions. All others may well learn to walk humbly while teaching the most exalted lessons.—W. F. A.

Ver. 8.—*A true principle falsely applied.* We have now reached the kernel of the controversy with which Job and his friends are to be engaged. While—as the prologue shows—the primary purpose of the Book of Job is to refute Satan's low, sneering insinuation implied in the words, "Doth Job serve God for nought?" and to prove that God can and does inspire disinterested devotion, the long discussion among the friends is concerned with the problem of suffering, and the old orthodox notion that it was just the punishment of sin, showing the inadequacy of that notion, and the deep mystery of the whole subject. Now we are introduced to this perplexing question. It comes before us in the form of a principle that is undoubtedly true, although the application of it by Job's friends turned out to be egregiously false.

I. THE TRUTH OF THE PRINCIPLE. 1. *This is communicated in the New Testament* by St. Paul, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7). 2. *This is in accordance with experience.* Eliphaz had seen it. We need not suppose that he had been deceived by some strange hallucination. We must all have observed how men make or mar their own fortunes. We know what will be the end of the career of the idle and dissipated. We are constantly watching the triumph of diligence and prudence. 3. *This is after the analogy of nature.* Then the harvest is according to the sowing, and it is determined by absolute laws. But there is no chaos in the human sphere. Moral causation works there as strictly as physical causation in the outer world. There is no escaping from the natural consequences of our deeds. He who sows the wind will most assuredly reap the whirlwind. 4. *This is just.* Job's friends were right in feeling that the wicked ought to suffer and that the good ought to be blessed. The attempt to evade the great law of causation in the spiritual sphere is as immoral as it is futile. Why should any one expect to be saved from the harvest which he has himself sown?

II. THE FALSE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE. The whole Book of Job demonstrates that Job's friends were wrong in applying this principle to the case of the patriarch. But why was it not applicable? 1. *They anticipated the harvest.* The harvest is the end of the world. Some firstfruits may be gathered earlier; often we see the evil consequences of misdeeds ripening rapidly. But this is not always the case. Meanwhile we can judge of no life until we have seen the whole of it. In the end Job reaped an abundant harvest of blessings (ch. xlii. 10—17). 2. *They ignored the variety of causes.* It is a recognized rule of logic that while you can always argue from the cause to the effect, you cannot safely reverse the process and reason back from the effect to the cause, because the same effect may come from any one of a number of causes. Job might bring calamity on himself, and if he did wrong he would bring it—in the long run. But other causes might produce it. In this case it was not Job,

but Satan, who brought it. It was not the husbandman, but an enemy, who sowed tares in the field. 3. *They mistook the nature of the harvest.* The man who sows iniquity will not necessarily reap temporal calamity. He will get his natural harvest, which is corruption, but he may have wealth and temporal, external prosperity on earth. And the man who sows goodness may not reap money, immunity from trouble, etc.; for these things are not the natural products of what he sows. They are not "after its kind." But he will reap "eternal life." Nothing that had happened to Job indicated that he would not gather that best of all harvests.—W. F. A.

Vers. 12—16.—*An apparition.* The visionary now tells the thrilling tale of his vision. He thinks that he will overawe Job with a message from one who was no mortal man. All the details and circumstances of the vision are graphically narrated, that the horror of it may add to the weight of its authority.

I. THE REALITY OF THE APPARITION. There is every reason to believe that Eliphaz spoke in good faith. He does not appear before us as a deceiver, though he is certainly capable of making a great mistake. Therefore it cannot be doubted that he narrated his genuine experience. But then we may naturally ask—What did really happen? 1. *Possibly a subjective illusion.* The apparition may have been only a creature of the visionary's excited imagination. "Seeing" should not be always "believing." We are not justified in invariably trusting our senses. A diseased or a merely disordered brain will evolve visions. Perhaps without derangement the brain's very exaltation may help it to create phantasms. 2. *Possibly a real spiritual manifestation.* It is not scientific to deny the possibility of any such thing. Science is growing conscious of the endless varieties of existence and of the boundless potentialities of nature. We cannot say that there are no spirits but our own, nor can we say that no other spirits ever do make themselves manifest to men. There may be no external, material presence; the spiritual contact may be internal, and the vision thrown out from it through the brain of the seer; and yet there may be a *something* in contact with the soul—a real spiritual presence.

II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE APPARITION. 1. *In solitude.* The thing was "secretly brought to" Eliphaz. Some may say, as there were no spectators to check the accuracy of his vision, the whole scene was a delusion. But on the other hand, solitude would be most suitable for a revelation of the other world. The pressure of earthly things shuts out the very thought of the unseen. 2. *In the night.* Here, again, the darkness of the material surroundings might give an opportunity for the appearance of the immaterial. 3. *In meditation.* "In thoughts from the visions of the night." This shows that Eliphaz was in a condition to receive spiritual impressions. The extraordinary writings of Lawrance Oliphant indicate that some kind of peculiar experience is attained by those who think themselves into the preparation necessary for it. This may only lead to the quagmire of "Spiritualism." But it is too much for a "Philistine" scepticism to say that *no* good influences have ever come in this way.

III. THE EFFECT OF THE APPARITION. 1. *A shock of terror.* Eliphaz describes most graphically the horror of his experience. The figure was vague, shapeless, nameless, impersonal, and described by the visionary as "It." He felt something pass him, his limbs trembled beneath him, his hair stood up on end! Men dread the supernatural. Some attribute this dread to the guilt of conscience; but the strange, the unknown, the unnatural, suggest fearful possibilities of danger. It is happier to live in the sunshine with children and flowers than in gloom with ghosts. The pursuit of "Spiritualism," even if it is not following a delusion, entails an unhealthy and melancholy fascination. 2. *A voice of truth.* "It" gave Eliphaz a message. God has revealed truth in dream and vision. The message of the apparition was great and important. Yet that message was not new; and it was liable to misapplication by Eliphaz. We shall be very foolish if we forsake Christ and the Scriptures for spirit-voices—which now generally appear to talk nonsense in bad grammar. It is foolish to make conscience and reason subject to any unauthenticated vision.—W. F. A.

Vers. 17—21.—*A message from the unseen.* The apparition spoke, and this is what "It" said. No one can gainsay the truth of the words uttered. The only question is

how they applied to Job. Eliphaz assumed that Job's position was thereby condemned. Leaving this out of account, however, we may see how lofty, true, and important the words that came in the Temanite's vision were.

I. THE OBVIOUS FACTS. One would have thought that no ghost was wanted to make such self-evident facts as are here narrated clear to everybody. As we look at the vision of Eliphaz we are tempted to suspect a pompous pretentiousness in it. And yet, though the facts referred to are obvious and unquestionable, they cannot be too impressively insisted on or too profoundly felt. Therefore it may be well that they are brought before us shrouded in the awe of an apparition. These facts concern the littleness of man compared with the greatness of God. At the end of the poem God himself appears and brings them home to Job with a force that is not found in the vision of Eliphaz, partly because God's dealings with Job himself are wise and fair, while the conduct of Eliphaz is unreasonable and unjust. Note three regions in which man's littleness is contrasted with God's greatness. 1. *Moral.* One man may be more pure or more just than another man. But who can surpass God? Before him the best men shrink and own their utter unworthiness. 2. *Intellectual.* Some men are more discerning and wise than others, but the height of human capacity is but folly before God. 3. *Vital.* Man's life is frail and brief. His ephemeral existence is as nothing compared to the eternity of God. All these truths are trite; their importance lies in the application of them.

II. THEIR JUST EFFECTS. The tremendous mistake people make is to admit the obvious facts, and then to live exactly as if they did not exist. But if they are they should have great effects upon conduct. Note some of the results they should work in us. 1. *Humility.* We may not understand God, but we should not venture to judge One so infinitely greater than ourselves. Reverence is our right attitude before the mysteries of Providence. 2. *Contrition.* We may defend ourselves among men, but we cannot do so in the presence of God. Not only can we conceal nothing from God—we should not wish to do that—but further, we see a higher standard in God than that which prevails among men, and judged by that standard the saint is a sinner. 3. *Patience.* God is infinitely just; he knows all; he cannot fail. We do not know what he is doing, nor why he acts. But we can wait. 4. *Trust.* This goes beyond patience. We have a right to confide in so just, wise, and strong a God. His greatness strikes terror in the rebellious soul; but when one is reconciled to God, that very greatness becomes a mighty, invincible rock of refuge. 5. *Obedience.* Our duty is to do more than submit without a murmur, and wait patiently for God. He is our Master, our King, and our business is to follow his great authority. Sin is self-will, pride, distrust, disobedience. The Christian life is one of active service; it is treading humbly in the way which our infinite God assigns to us. His greatness justly commands implicit obedience.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

Vers. 1—27.—Eliphaz, having narrated his vision, and rehearsed the words which the spirit spoke in his ear, continues in his own person, first (vers. 1—7) covertly reproaching Job, and then (vers. 8—27) seeking to comfort him by the suggestion that, if he will place himself unreservedly in the hands of God, it is still possible that God may relent, remove his chastening hand, deliver him from his troubles, and even give him back all his former prosperity. The anticipation is in remarkable accordance with the ultimate event (ch. xlii. 10—17), and shows that Eliphaz, if not a prophet in the higher sense, is at least a sagacious interpreter of God's ways with men, and can very happily forecast the future.

Ver. 1.—**Call now, if there be any that will answer thee**; rather, *call now; is there any that will answer thee?* What aid, that is, wilt thou invoke, if thou turnest away from God, and reproachest him? Thinkest thou to find any one in heaven or earth to answer to the call and come to thy assistance? Utterly vain is any such hope. **And to which of the saints wilt thou turn?** By "the saints" are meant in this place "the holy angels" (comp. ch. xv. 15; Ps. lxxxix. 7; Zech. xiv. 5). The question, "To *which* wilt thou turn?" seems to imply that there was already in Job's time some knowledge

of individual members of the angelic host, such as Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, etc., though we have no mention of any names of angels in Scripture until the time of Daniel (viii. 16; ix. 21). That invocation of angels was an actual practice in Job's age is, however, scarcely proved by this passage.

Ver. 2.—**For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one.** For "wrath" and "envy" others suggest "vexation" and "impatience" (Lee), or "vexation" and "jealousy" (Revised Version). The connection of thought seems to be, "For thou art quite foolish enough to let thy vexation and impatience prompt thee to such a course, which could only lead to thy destruction." Eliphaz is quite sure that trust in any other beside God, and appeal to any other against God, is utter folly, sinful infatuation, and must lead to the ruin of whoever indulges in it. Thus the invocation of angels receives no countenance from him, but the contrary.

Ver. 3.—**I have seen the foolish taking root.** The "I" is emphatic. "*I myself* have seen," etc. What Eliphaz had seen was that folly, *i.e.* sinful infatuation, was always punished. It might seem to prosper: the foolish man might seem to be taking root; but Eliphaz was not deceived by appearances—he saw through them, he knew that there was a curse upon the man's house, and so pronounced it accursed. And the ruin which he had foreseen, it is implied, followed. **But suddenly;** rather, *immediately, without hesitation.* **I cursed his habitation;** *i.e.* "pronounced it accursed, declared that the curse of God rested upon it."

Ver. 4.—**His children are far from safety.** The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. Eliphaz makes covert allusion to the death of Job's children (ch. i. 19). Feeling, however, that he is on delicate ground, he goes on into details which in no way fit their case. **And** (he says) **they are crushed in the gate;** *i.e.* they are oppressed, crushed, by litigations. The house once smitten of God, human beasts of prey enter in; claims are made against the children; lawsuits commenced; all the arts of chicanery set in motion; every effort made to strip them of their last penny. (For the sense here assigned to "the gate," see ch. xxix. 7 and xxxi. 21.) **Neither is there any to deliver them.** No one intercedes on their behalf, undertakes their defence in the courts, or makes any effort to avert their ruin. This picture of legal oppression accords very closely with what we know of the East in all ages (comp. Isa. i. 17, 23; iii. 14, 15; v. 23; x. 2, etc.). Oriental cowardice causes men to shrink from casting in their lot with those whom Misfortune has marked as her own.

Ver. 5.—**Whose harvest the hungry eateth up.** Covetous men rush in and "eat up" all that the family possesses, thus bringing it to the extreme of poverty and want. **And taketh it even out of the thorns.** Vain is any protection that may be devised. As hedges, even of the prickly pear, do not keep out a band of plunderers, so there is no obstacle which those bent on robbing them will not overcome. **And the robber swalloweth up their substance;** or, *the thirsty;* i.e. those who thirst after it.

Ver. 6.—**Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.** There is a tacit reference to what was said in ch. iv. 8. Affliction and trouble are not chance products of spontaneous growth. They only spring up when men have prepared the ground for them, and planted in it an evil seed.

Ver. 7.—**Yet man is born unto trouble.** Yet still, in point of fact, man is born to trouble. He has a corrupt nature, and always sins more or less. Each sin brings him into trouble, since it entails on him a punishment. **As the sparks fly upward;** literally, *the sons of flame.* Some suppose "meteoric flashes" to be meant: others suggest, "ignited arrows." But many good Hebraists maintain the rendering of the Authorized Version (see Buxtorf, 'Lexicon,' p. 757; Rosenmüller, 'Scholia,' vol. v. p. 165; Canon Cook, 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 34).

Ver. 8.—**I would seek unto God;** rather, as in the Revised Version; *but as for me, I would seek,* etc.; *i.e.* if the case were mine, if I were afflicted as thou art, I would not betake myself to any of the angels (see ver. 1), but would cast myself wholly upon God. It is necessarily implied that Job had not done so. **And unto God would I commit my cause** (comp. Ps. xxxvii. 5; Prov. xvi. 3).

Ver. 9.—**Which doeth great things and unsearchable.** These are reasons why Job should "seek unto God." "Great things are those which he has done." There is none like unto him. His ways are "unsearchable;" no one may think fully to search them and seek them out (comp. ch. ix. 10; xxxvii. 5; Ps. cxlv. 3; Rom. xi. 33). It may be that, if Job will appeal to him, a result will follow that at present seems impossible. For he doeth **marvellous things without number** (comp. Ps. xl. 5; lxxii. 18; lxxvii. 14; cxxxvi. 4). Eliphaz proceeds to mention some of them.

Ver. 10.—**Who giveth rain upon the earth.** To the dweller in the parched regions of South-Western Asia rain is the greatest of all blessings, and seems the greatest of all

marvels. When for months and months together the sun has blazed all day long out of a cloudless sky, when the heaven that is over his head has been brass, and the earth that is under him iron (Deut. xxviii. 33), a great despair comes upon him, and that it should ever rain again seems almost an impossibility. Where is the rain to come from? From that cruel, glaring sky, which has pursued him with its hostility week after week, and month after month? Or from that parched earth in which, as it seems, no atom of moisture is left? When God at length gives rain, he scarcely believes his eyes. What? The blessed moisture is once more descending from the sky, and watering the earth, and quickening what seemed dead, and turning the desert into a garden! All Eastern poetry is full of the praises of rain, of its blessedness, of its marvellousness, and of its quickening power. Very naturally Eliphaz, in speaking of God's marvellous works of mercy, mentions rain first, as, within his experience, one of the chief. **And sendeth waters upon the fields.** This is either the usual pleonastic repetition of the second hemistich, or (perhaps) a reference to the fountains and rills of water, which spring into being as a consequence of the rain.

Ver. 11.—**To set up on high those that be low.** God's physical blessings are intended to subserve moral ends. He gives his rain, both the former and the latter, to raise up men from despair, to enable them to see in him a God of mercy as well as a God of vengeance; and with the same object, after withholding it from us for a while, he pours into our parched hearts the dew of his Holy Spirit. **That those which mourn may be exalted to safety;** or, "raised to safety" (Lee).

Ver. 12.—**He disappointeth the devices of the crafty;** or, *frustrateth*—makes them of no effect (comp. Ps. xxxiii. 10; Isa. viii. 10). Some suppose Eliphaz to insinuate here that Job's apparent wisdom has not been true wisdom, but cunning or craft, and that therefore God has brought it to nought. But to us it rather seems that he enunciates a general sentiment, and a true one. He is giving examples of the "marvellous things" which God does (ver. 9), and naturally enumerates among them his victories over the craft and cunning of his adversaries (comp. Isa. xliv. 25). **So that their hands cannot perform** their **enterprise;** literally, *and their hands accomplish nothing solid.* No substantial result is effected by all their scheming.

Ver. 13.—**He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.** Men are, as Shakespeare says, "hoist with their own petard." They "fall into their own nets together" (Ps. cxli. 11), while the godly, their intended prey, "escape them." And this is God's doing—it is his providence which brings it to pass. **And the counsel of the froward is carried headlong;** or, "put to confusion" (Lee).

Ver. 14.—**They meet with darkness in the daytime** (comp. Deut. xxviii. 29 and Isa. lix. 10). The metaphor expresses the bewilderment of the crafty, when they find their schemes foiled, and all their subtlety of no avail. Suddenly their light goes out; they know not what to do, or which way to turn; "their way is hid" (ch. iii. 23); they are baffled, perplexed, confounded. **And grope in the noonday as in the night** (comp. ch. xii. 25). A variant form of the preceding hemistich.

Ver. 15.—**But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth;** rather, *from the sword of their mouth;* i.e. from their cruel and destructive words (Ps. lvii. 4; lxiv. 3; Prov. xii. 18), which cut "like a sharp razor" (Ps. lii. 2). By calumny, innuendoes, lies, fraudulent representations, and the like, the ungodly work, perhaps, more injury than by their actions. **And from the hand of the mighty.** God delivers the poor both from their words and from their deeds.

Ver. 16.—**So the poor hath hope.** With the fall of each crafty oppressor, the poor man's hopes revive. He feels that "God ruleth in Jacob, and unto the ends of the world" (Ps. lix. 13). He recognizes the fact that the Almighty "maintains the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor" (Ps. cxl. 12), that he is "a Refuge for the oppressed, a Refuge in times of trouble" (Ps. ix. 9). **And iniquity stoppeth her mouth** (comp. Ps. cvii. 42). Either "the oppressors themselves are struck dumb, recognizing the fact that God is against them;" or "those who perversely question God's ways are struck dumb, seeing his retributive justice." If we understand the passage in the latter sense, we may see in it a reproof of Job's murmurs against his treatment by God (ch. iii. 11—26).

Ver. 17.—**Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth!** This "opens," as Professor Lee observes, "a new view of the subject." Hitherto Eliphaz has regarded afflictions as simply punitive. Now it occurs to him that they are sometimes chastisements. The difference is that punishment has regard only to the past, to the breach of the moral law committed, and the retribution which has to follow it. Chastisement looks to the future. It aims at producing an effect in the mind of the person chastised, at benefiting him, and raising him in the scale of moral being. In this point of view afflictions are blessings (see Heb. xii. 5—11). Recognizing this, Eliphaz suddenly bursts out with the acknowledgment, "Happy is

the man [or, 'blessings on the man'] whom God correcteth!" (comp. Prov. iii. 11, 12; Ps. xciv. 12; 1 Cor. xi. 32). He suggests to Job the idea that his sufferings are not punishments, but chastisements—that they may be but for a time. Let him receive them in a proper spirit; let him humble himself under them, and they may work altogether for his good, his latter end may surpass his early promise. **Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.** Words quoted by the authors of Proverbs (iii. 11), and of the Epistle to the Hebrews (xii. 5), and well deserving to be laid up in the recollection of all faithful souls. They remind us that God's chastenings are blessings or the contrary, *as we make them.* Accepted humbly, they improve men, exalt the moral character, purge it of its dross, and bring it nearer to the perfection at which God would have us aim (Matt. v. 48). Rejected, chafed against, received with discontent and murmurings, they injure us, cause our characters to deteriorate, sink us instead of raising us in the moral scale. Job was now undergoing the ordeal—with what result remained to be determined.

Ver. 18.—**For he maketh sore, and bindeth up.** Metaphors drawn from the healing art. He "maketh sore"—applies the scalpel and the cautery when and where they are needed; and then, after a while, "bindeth up"—employs his lint and bandages; in both cases alike seeking the good of the sufferer. **He woundeth, and his hands make whole** (comp. Deut. xxxii. 39; Hos. vi. 1).

Ver. 19.—**He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven** (comp. Amos i. 3, 6, 9, 11, 13, "For three transgressions . . . and for four"). An idiomatic way of expressing an indefinite number. **There shall no evil touch thee;** *i.e.* no *real* evil, nothing calculated to do thee *real* hurt. All affliction is "for the present grievous;" but if it "afterward yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby" (Heb. xii. 11), it does not do us harm, but good.

Ver. 20.—**In famine he shall redeem thee from death.** Famine appears throughout the whole of Scripture as one of God's severest chastisements (see Lev. xxvi. 19, 20; Deut. xxviii. 22—24; 2 Sam. xxi. 1; xxiv. 13; 2 Kings viii. 1; Ps. cv. 16; Isa. xiv. 30; Jer. xxiv. 10; Rev. xviii. 8). Ezekiel speaks of "the sword, the *famine,* the noisome beast, and the pestilence," as God's "four sore judgments" (Ezek. xiv. 21). Miraculous deliverances from famine are related in Gen. xli. 29—36; 1 Kings xvii. 10—16; 2 Kings vii. 1—16. **And in war from the power of the sword.** In war God protects whom he will, and they seem to have charmed lives. They are covered with his feathers, and safe under his wings (Ps. xci. 4).

Ver. 21.—**Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue** (comp. Ps. xxxi. 20). God will also protect his own from "the scourge of the tongue," *i.e.* from calumny, from abuse, from bitter words (see the comment on ver. 15). **Neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh;** rather, *of devastation.* "*Shód* (שֹׁד) populationes, prædationes, calamitosas tempestates, terræ motus, ruinas, incendia, mala omnia vastitatem inducentia, amplectitur" (Schultens).

Ver. 22.—**At destruction** (rather, *devastation*) **and famine;** rather, *dearth.* The word is not the same as that used in ver. 20, but a weaker one. **Thou shalt laugh;** "Thou shalt *smile*" (Lee). **Neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth.** "The beasts of the earth"—*i.e.* destructive and ferocious wild beasts, like the Indian "man-eaters"—are enumerated among God's "four sore plagues" (Ezek. xiv. 21; comp. 2 Kings xvii. 25). In ancient times they were sometimes so numerous in a country that men were afraid to occupy it.

Ver. 23.—**For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field;** *i.e.* there shall be peace between thee and all the rest of God's creation, even "the stones of the field," against which thou shalt not dash thy foot (Ps. xci. 12); and if the senseless stones are thus in league with thee, and refrain from doing thee hurt, much more mayest thou be sure that **the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.** For they are not altogether senseless, and will in some sort understand that thou art under God's protection, and not to be molested by them (comp. Hos. ii. 18, where God promises to make a covenant between his people and "the beasts of the field, the fowls of heaven, and the creeping things of the ground," that so they may "lie down safely"). A misplaced ingenuity seeks to find either six or seven forms of calamity in the enumeration of vers. 20—23; but there appear to be really only five: (1) famine; (2) war; (3) calumny; (4) devastation; and (5) noisome beasts. The expression used in ver. 19—"six, yea, seven"—means, as already explained, an *indefinite* number.

Ver. 24.—**And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace;** rather, *thy tent;* i.e. thy habitation, whatever it may be. Thou shalt feel assured of peace in thy dwelling, since God's peace will rest upon it. **And thou shalt visit thy habitation;** or, *thy fold* (see the Revised Version). **And shalt not sin;** *and shalt miss nothing* (Revised Version). The exact meaning is very uncertain. Professor Lee renders, "Thou shalt not err;" Schultens, "Thou shalt not be disappointed of thy desires;"

Rosenmüller, "Thou shalt not miss thy mark."

Ver. 25.—**Thou shalt know also that thy seed** shall be **great.** Little by little Eliphaz passes from a general description of the blessedness of those faithful ones who "despise not the chastening of the Almighty" (ver. 17) to a series of allusions which seem specially to touch Job's case. Without claiming prophetical inspiration, he ventures to promise him in the future "the exact reverse of all that he had experienced" in the past—"a safe home, flocks untouched, a happy and prosperous family, a peaceful old age" (Cook). The promises may have sounded in Job's ears as "a mockery" (ibid.); but it is creditable to the sagacity of Eliphaz that he ventured to make them. **And thine offspring as the grass of the earth.** The ordinary symbols for multitudinousness—the sand of the sea, and the stars of heaven—are here superseded by an entirely new one, "the grass of the earth." Undoubtedly it is equally appropriate, and perhaps more natural in a pastoral community.

Ver. 26.—**Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age** (comp. Gen. xv. 15; xxv. 8; xxxv. 29). Professor Lee translates, "Thou shalt come to thy grave *in honour*." But, on the whole, the rendering of the Authorized Version may well stand. The expression used occurs only here and in ch. xxx. 2. **Like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season**; literally, *is lifted up*. The shocks of corn were lifted up, and placed on a cart, for transfer to the barn or the threshing-floor. The emphasis, however, is on the closing words, "in his season." Eliphaz promises Job that he will reach a good ripe old age, and not die untimely. (For the result, see ch. xlii. 17.)

Ver. 27.—**Lo this, we have searched it, so it is.** Eliphaz does not claim to be delivering a Divine message, or in any way stating results which he has learnt from revelation. Rather is he declaring what he has "searched out;" *i.e.* gathered with much trouble from inquiry, observation, and experience. He is, however, quite confident that he has arrived at a true conclusion, and expects Job to accept it and act upon it. **Hear it, and know thou it for thy good;** literally, *for thyself*. Make the knowledge, *i.e.*, which I have communicated to thee, thine own. Professor Lee observes, "There is nothing in all this savouring of any asperity, as far as I can see, beyond the anxieties of true friendship. The sentiments delivered from ver. 17 to the end of the chapter are not only most excellent in themselves, but perfectly applicable to Job's case; and were, in the event, made good in every respect. It is true, we have not much sympathy expressed for Job's bereavements and afflictions. And, in this respect, Eliphaz was, no doubt, to blame" ('Book of the Patriarch Job,' p. 216).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Eliphaz to Job*: 3. *The history of a fool.* I. THE FOOL'S CHARACTER. 1. *An impious fool.* The mental and moral portrait of the *aevil* (ver. 2) is minutely outlined in the Book of Proverbs, as distinguished by contempt of true wisdom (Prov. i. 7), talkativeness (Prov. x. 8), self-conceit (Prov. xii. 15), irritability of temper (Prov. xii. 16), pride (Prov. xiv. 3), fretfulness against God (Prov. xix. 3), sinfulness of thought (Prov. xxiv. 9), etc., most of which qualities were, in the judgment of Eliphaz, possessed by the *aevil* whom he depicted, who was probably Job. 2. *A moral simpleton.* The *potheh* is also sketched in Proverbs, as one who is easily seduced by temptation (Prov. ix. 14—18) and flattery (Prov. vii. 7); who is destitute of any power of self-restraint, credulous of what he hears (Prov. xiv. 15), and heedless of danger (Prov. xxvii. 12). According to Eliphaz, he is also marked by envy.

II. THE FOOL'S ISOLATION. 1. *Unheeded by God.* "Call now, if there be any that will answer thee" (ver. 1); perhaps meaning ironically, "You had better prepare an indictment against the Deity." Practically, implies Eliphaz, this is what the sinner does who storms at the Divine dispensations towards him. All sin is more or less an impeachment of the Divine righteousness and equity (Gen. iii. 1). Yet so utterly wild and extravagant is the idea of a puny, sinful creature like man entering the lists against God; so immeasurably foolish as well as presumptuous the imagination that Infinite Purity and Wisdom can be arraigned with any hope of success, that the speaker represents the sinner's clamorous outcries as ringing unheeded and unheard through the silent heavens. The Ineffable Supreme gives no indication that he is so much as conscious of his accuser's presence; neither replying himself nor commissioning another to appear in his behalf. The silence of Heaven, frequently misconstrued by the sinner (Ps. l. 21), if indicative of the Divine patience and clemency, is no less eloquent of the

Divine security against, and Divine contempt for, the sinner. 2. *Unassisted by his fellow-creatures.* "To which of the holy ones," saints or more probably angels, "wilt thou turn?" *i.e.* in order to procure help in thine outrageous suit against the Almighty. Eliphaz assumes that wicked men and fallen angels could not, while with equal confidence he asserts that good men and holy angels would not, assist a fool in any such presumptuous enterprise. The language graphically portrays the sinner's impotence against God (Isa. xxvii. 4).

III. THE FOOL'S MISERY. 1. *Consumed with chagrin.* "Wrath killeth the foolish man." The term "wrath" includes in its signification inward vexation at one's own wretched lot. It is the opposite of that calm, quiescent, submissive meekness which a good man strives to evince in adversity, and which was exemplified by David (Ps. xxxix. 9), St. Paul (2 Cor. vi. 9, 10), and Job (ch. i. 21). 2. *Eaten up of envy.* "Envy slayeth the silly one." Fretfulness as regards one's own particular condition is commonly associated with envy at the good (real or supposed) of others. As only a sincerely good man can heartily rejoice in the prosperity of his neighbour, so is it only a bad man, a moral weakling, who allows himself to be irritated thereby. David (Ps. xxxvii. 1), Asaph (Ps. lxxiii. 2), and St. Paul (Rom. xiii. 13; Gal. v. 21), warn against this supreme manifestation of folly. 3. *Devoured by rage.* "Wrath [passion] killeth the foolish man." The prominent idea in the term "wrath" is that of indignation against the Arbiter of human destiny. It is the object of Eliphaz to depict at once the supreme unhappiness of the fool as the victim of his own evil passions, and the appalling destiny of the fool which is that of a moral suicide; his destruction, when it comes, being not so much inflicted by the stroke of God's hand as wrought out by the inward violence of his own sinful lusts—a melancholy illustration of the autonemesis of sin.

IV. THE FOOL'S OVERTHROW. 1. *Unexpected.* Destruction springs upon the poor fool when least anticipated, when, having struck down his roots and sent forth his branches, he appears to be flourishing like a green bay tree (Ps. xxxvii. 35), and to have attained to a position of conspicuous prosperity, of great power, and absolute security (1 Sam. xxv. 37; Luke xii. 20; Acts xii. 23). 2. *Sudden.* In an instant the scene changes, and the fair tree of his prosperity stands scorched and blasted, leafless and bare. "Suddenly I cursed his habitation;" *i.e.* I beheld it cursed. This has sometimes been true, as Asaph testifies (Ps. lxxiii. 20), and as facts witness (Nebuchadnezzar, Haman, Herod, the two Napoleons), though not always (Ps. xvii. 14; lxxiii. 4). 3. *Visible.* The approach of the fool's fall, seldom apprehended by himself, is commonly foreseen by others. "Suddenly I cursed his habitation;" meaning that the moment Eliphaz beheld the foolish one taking root, he pronounced his homestead cursed; he could anticipate nothing for him but a speedy and swift engulfment in dark misfortune. So in the moral, no less than in the material, world, "coming events cast their shadows before." 4. *Complete.* The fool's overthrow extends to: (1) His family. "His children are far from safety." Reduced to straitened circumstances in consequence of their father's ruin, they mutually "crush each other in the gate;" *i.e.* consume each other in vexatious litigation, thus sharing in the punishment, while they follow in the steps, of their wicked parent. Nor does their misery excite the sympathy, or provoke the friendly interference, of onlookers. "Neither is there any to deliver." If it is prudent not to meddle with the strife of others (Prov. xxvi. 17), it is still doubtful if good men should be indifferent to the calamities of others, even though they are wicked (Prov. xxiv. 11). (2) His possessions. The famished thief, prowling about the fool's farmyard, picks up whatever he can lay hands on, and, emboldened by the desolation he beholds, carries off the well-stacked grain. Though no man's property can be said to enjoy an absolute immunity from thievish depredations (Matt. vi. 19), yet it is certain that wicked men's treasures are peculiarly liable to decay (Jas. v. 3). Only the good man's treasures in the heavens are permanently safe. Then "the robber swalloweth up [literally, 'the snare gapeth for'] his substance;" *i.e.* wicked schemers lie in wait to pounce upon his property, concerting measures to carry off what little has been left by the hungry thieves. When thief robs thief, then the devil gets his own. "When the soul of the wicked desireth evil, then his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes" (Prov. xxi. 10). 5. *Righteous.* The calamity which overtakes the fool is not an accident or unfortunate mischance, not the production of earth and its physical

constitution (ver. 6), but the inevitable result of a law under which man, as a moral being, has been placed, viz. that if he sin, he shall suffer as certainly as the sparks fly upward.

Learn: 1. There is no appeal for man against the judgments of a holy God. 2. When God forsakes a sinner, all the saints on earth (as well as angels in heaven) forsake him too. 3. The greatest enemy a sinner has is himself. 4. Rage against God's judgments is more dangerous to a soul than are the judgments themselves. 5. Neither permanence nor prosperity is a certain mark of goodness, since foolish men may take root. 6. The prosperity of fools is a great trial to saints. 7. The curse of the Lord is in the habitation of the wicked. 8. Outward good things are no mark of the Divine favour. 9. When fathers eat sour grapes, the children's teeth are set on edge. 10. Men frequently fail to enjoy that upon which they have bestowed much labour. 11. God often uses the wicked to punish the wicked in this life. 12. Man's sufferings do not spring from his surroundings, but from himself. 13. The suffering condition of man is incontestable evidence of a fall.

Vers. 8—16.—*Eliphaz to Job:* 4. *The saint's confidence in God.* I. THE SAINT'S CHARACTER DESCRIBED. 1. *Negatively.* By way of contrast to the ungodly, who are depicted as (1) crafty, *i.e.* persons who cunningly concoct schemes against either God, Christ, or their neighbours (Ps. ii. 2; Acts iv. 25—28); (2) strong, *i.e.* violent, ferocious sinners, who use their swords as wild beasts their mouths, for devouring, eating up, God's people as bread (Ps. xiv. 4). 2. *Positively.* Exhibiting them as (1) humble (ver. 11), *i.e.* depressed or cast down, prostrated by affliction and, in consequence, dejected in spirit—a common experience with God's people; (2) mourning (ver. 11), *i.e.* going in squalid garments, expressive of penitential sorrow and self-abasement, and wherever grace exists it excites such emotions in the heart; (3) poor (ver. 16), *i.e.* weak, feeble, thin, slender, too destitute of strength to be able, and too gentle and patient to care, to resist the assaults of the ungodly. The three above-mentioned characteristics may be compared with the persons specified in the first three Beatitudes —the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek (Matt. v. 3—5).

II. THE SAINT'S GOD EXTOLLED. 1. *As a God of power.* (1) Essentially great; *El* (ver. 8) denoting God as the Strong or Mighty One, and suggesting a contrast to the feebleness of the saint, and the violence of the saint's oppressor above alluded to. (2) Perpetually active; the omnipotence of God being not merely a potential ability residing in his infinite nature, but a vital energy continually proceeding forth in active operation (John v. 17). (3) Endlessly diversified; the plural *Elohim* (ver. 8) pointing out the totality of his variously manifested nature, and his wonders being declared to be beyond computation—a statement whose correctness not even the discoveries of science have disproved. (4) Infinitely marvellous are the great things he performs, transcending the highest efforts of the human intellect to explain, understand, or even compute (ch. ix. 10; xi. 7; xxxvi. 26; Ps. cxlv. 3). 2. *As a God of benevolence.* Operating: (1) In the realm of nature; *e.g.* by sending rain upon the earth—a miracle of Divine power and wisdom (ch. xxviii. 26)—to water the face of the thirsty soil, and cause the rivers to overflow their banks upon the pasture-grounds, to render them fruitful—a miracle of Divine goodness (Ps. lxviii. 9; Jer. v. 24; Acts xiv. 7); that he might deliver men from dismal apprehensions as to prospective failure in the promised harvest, and convert their doleful vaticinations into triumphant hallelujahs—a miracle of grace and compassion (Ps. cxlvii. 8). (2) In the sphere of humanity; *e.g.* by (*a*) confounding the crafty,—exploding their schemes, neutralizing their actions, outwitting their cunning, precipitating their purposes, so causing their best-concocted devices to appear structures of consummate folly, and themselves to look like stupid bunglers, as helpless and perplexed as men stumbling in the darkness of night (examples: the tower-builders of Babel, Gen. xi. 1—9; Potiphar's wife, Gen. xxxix. 1—23; Ahithophel, 2 Sam. xv. 31; Haman, Esth. vii. 10); (*b*) rescuing the poor,—delivering them from the hands of their enemies (*e.g.* the Israelites from Egypt, Exod. xviii. 10; St. Peter from Herod, Acts xii. 11; St. Paul from Nero, 2 Tim. iv. 17), inspiring them with hope, and not only silencing their calumniators and oppressors, but sometimes striking them dumb with horror and amazement at God's manifest interposition on behalf of his suffering servants.

III. THE SAINT'S CONFIDENCE DECLARED. 1. *Emphatically.* "Nevertheless I would" do so and so. As Eliphaz delicately insinuated that Job was a fool, so here he does not hesitate to propose himself as the perfect model of a wise man. No doubt this resulted from want of modesty on the part of Eliphaz; but still, overlooking this, the bold, unhesitating character of his avowal is not altogether unworthy of imitation. God's saints and Christ's followers should never be ashamed to confess their confidence in God, or avow their attachment to Christ (Matt. v. 16; x. 32; Rom. i. 16). 2. *Sincerely.* "But I—I would seek unto God; unto God would I commit my cause." The speaker signifies that his trust in God was no mere lip-profession, but a heart-emotion which would lead him, if circumstanced as Job was, to have recourse to God, and to commit his cause to the Godhead in prayer and in the exercise of faith. And certainly, if God should be sought for at all times (1 Chron. xvi. 11), he should specially be resorted to in time of trouble (Ps. l. 15)—"for counsel and direction *in* it; for comfort and support *under* it; for grace to glorify God *by* it; for deliverance in God's own time and way *out* of it; for the spiritual benefit and improvement intended *through* it" (Robinson). 3. *Hopefully.* Though not affirmed at the outset, it is clearly expressed at the end. "So," *i.e.* by going to God and committing one's cause to him, "the poor hath hope;" God having revealed himself as the Hearer, and therefore as the Answerer, of prayer (Exod. xxii. 27; 1 Chron. xxviii. 9; ch. xii. 4; xxii. 27; Ps. xxxiv. 17; xxxvii. 5; Matt. xxi. 22; Phil. iv. 6); and this being sufficient ground for the saint's confident expectation that God will interpose for his succour and salvation.

Learn: 1. It is not enough to simply reprove those whom we believe to have erred, we must likewise instruct them how to amend. 2. The best thing to do with trouble of any sort is to carry it to the throne of grace, and leave it there. 3. There is no God like the saint's God, the saint's enemies themselves being judges. 4. God has given men and saints the highest reason to trust him: the first, the wonders of nature; the second, the marvels of grace. 5. The weakness of God is stronger than men, while the foolishness of God is wiser than men. 6. If God can turn the daylight into darkness round his enemies, he can also turn the darkness into light round himself and his people. 7. God can rescue his people from the greatest perils, from the mouth of the grave, and from the jaws of hell. 8. It is no vain thing to hope in God, since we are saved by hope, and God loveth them that hope in his mercy. 9. The tongues of wicked men, however they may now blaspheme the Name and revile the children of God, will yet be effectually put to silence. 10. When Christ comes at last to save his poor ones, the ungodly world will stand speechless and self-condemned.

Ver. 8.—*Seeking unto God.* I. WHAT IT PRESUPPOSES. 1. Belief in the existence of God (Heb. xi. 6). 2. Consciousness of need (Jas. i. 5). 3. Desire for Divine assistance (Ps. lxiii. 1).

II. WHAT IT IMPLIES. 1. A realization of God's nearness to the soul (Ps. cxlv. 18). 2. A solicitation of God's help for the soul (Matt. vii. 7; Heb. iv. 16). 3. An acceptation of God's provisions for the soul (Matt. v. 6).

III. WHAT IT PRODUCES. 1. Inward composure (Isa. xxvi. 3). 2. Hopeful expectation (Ps. xlii. 11). 3. Ultimate salvation (Ps. xxxvii. 5; Prov. xvi. 3; ch. xxii. 27).

Learn: 1. The grace of God in permitting men to seek him. 2. The wisdom of men in availing themselves of this permission.

Ver. 9.—*The great works of God.* I. THE CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE. A signal display of Divine power and wisdom.

II. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD. A striking evidence of the Divine omniscience and omnipresence.

III. THE REDEMPTION OF THE RACE. A sublime revelation of Divine grace and compassion.

Ver. 10.—*Rain.* I. GOD'S CREATURE. 1. Made by God (ch. xxviii. 26; xxxviii. 28; Jer. xiv. 22). 2. Sent by God (Ps. lxv. 10; lxviii. 9; Jer. v. 24). 3. Withheld by God (1 Kings xvii. 1; Amos iv. 7; Zech. xiv. 17).

II. EARTH'S SERVANT. 1. Cleansing the atmosphere. 2. Fertilizing the soil. 3. Filling the rivers. 4. Moderating the heat.

III. MAN'S TEACHER. 1. A symbol of truth (Deut. xxxii. 2; Isa. lv. 10). 2. An emblem of grace (Ps. lxviii. 9; Hos. vi. 3; Ps. lxxii. 6). 3. A picture of prosperity (ch. xxix. 23).

Learn: 1. To value the gift (1 Kings viii. 36). 2. To fear the Giver (Jer. v. 24) of rain.

Ver. 16.—*The poor man's hope.* I. GREAT IN ITS EXPECTATIONS. Looking for salvation.

II. DIVINE IN ITS ORIGIN. Being implanted by God.

III. FIRM IN ITS FOUNDATION. Resting, not upon his own piety or strength, but upon God's gracious interposition on his behalf.

IV. PRESENT IN ITS ENJOYMENT. The poor hath hope; it forms a principle within them now.

V. SUSTAINING IN ITS OPERATION. Upholding in trouble.

VI. CERTAIN IN ITS END. Arriving at ultimate fulfilment.

Vers. 17—27.—*Eliphaz to Job: 5. The blessedness of chastening.* I. CHASTENING—ITS NATURE. 1. Its *subject.* Man, as a fallen being; for, though affliction cannot always be connected with particular transgressions as their immediate punishment, it is still true that man's sinfulness is the fundamental reason of his being subjected to correction. 2. Its *Author.* God. A thought full of comfort to the chastened; since, God being just, their correction will never be allowed to exceed their deserts; being merciful, it will never be administered with undue severity; being wise, it will never be inflicted without an adequate design; and being powerful, it will never fail, where piously accepted, to accomplish its end. 3. Its *instrument.* Calamity, trouble, affliction, such as Job had experienced, and such as men undergo on earth. Those who suffer may derive consolation from the thought that the rod which smites them is not in the devil's hand (except by Divine permission) or in the hand of blind, unfeeling fate, but in the hand of a loving and sympathetic God. 4. *Its purpose.* Man's reformation. It is doubtful if any of the sufferings of this life are purely punitive and judicial, while there is reason to believe that all are corrective and remedial in their design. According to Eliphaz, they are meant to chastise man for his iniquity, to bring him to repentance, and to reduce him to obedient submission under God (cf. ch. xxxiii. 17, 19; Ps. xciv. 12, 13; Prov. iii. 11; Heb. xii. 7—11).

II. CHASTENING—ITS IMPROVEMENT. 1. *The wrong use of affliction.* To despise it. Men do so when they (1) turn from it with aversion, loathing it as a nauseating physic, and evincing repugnance to submit themselves to its infliction; (2) receive it with indignation, raging against God for smiting them, challenging his goodness, impeaching his integrity, and questioning his wisdom in so plunging them into tribulation; (3) bear it with impatience, murmuring against its painfulness, fretting over its continuance, and inordinately longing for its removal; (4) regard it with contempt, esteeming it as useless and unprofitable, and making no attempt to either find out or fall in with God's special purpose in their correction; and (5) issue from it in impenitence, with the heart no softer and the spirit no humbler than when it was cast into the furnace. Such failure to improve the Divine chastisement, while common in the case of wicked men, is also not impossible to good men. 2. *The right use of affliction.* To receive it (1) with meek submission, recognizing our need of Divine chastisement in consequence of sin still remaining in us, if not in visitation for actual wickedness performed by us, and acknowledging the sovereignty and righteousness of God in laying on us such rebukes; (2) with patient endurance, remaining dumb and opening not our mouths, because God has done it (Ps. xxxix. 9), or, if we do speak, adopting the language of Eli (1 Sam. iii. 18), of Job (ch. i. 21), of St. Paul (Acts xxi. 14), or of Christ (Matt. xxvi. 39); (3) with holy gratitude, remembering the gracious purpose God has inseparably connected with affliction (Rom. v. 3, 4; viii. 28; Heb. xii. 11), and the representation he has given of affliction as a token of his love (Rev. iii. 19; Heb. xii. 6); and (4) with intelligent co-operation, seeking, so far as in us lies, by self-examination, by repentance and faith, by laying aside every known sin, and by praying against all sin, to further God's gracious designs in our correction.

III. CHASTENING—ITS CONSOLATION. 1. *Divine healing.* (1) The wounds requiring

to be bound up and healed are those lacerations of spirit, painful and deep, which have been previously inflicted by the hand of God through the sharp instrument of affliction. That these wounds, however keen and incisive, are not designed to be mortal or suffered to continue open, but, after accomplishing their purpose, are to be closed should prove a source of comfort to the saint. (2) The Physician by whom the binding up and healing are to be effected is God, as Eliphaz declares (ver. 18), and David testifies (Ps. ciii. 3), as Jehovah himself promised (Exod. xv. 26), and as Christ taught (Matt. ix. 12; Luke iv. 18, 23). This a second ground of comfort for the chastened spirit; since God, having caused the wounds, will best understand how to cure them, and God never makes a sore that he cannot heal, or inflicts a stroke that he cannot mend; and since God is possessed of all the qualities that are needful to constitute a successful chirurgeon, having "an eagle's eye,—an all-seeing eye, seven eyes of providence and wisdom to look through our sores, and into all our distempers; a lady's hand, soft and tender, to dress our wounds and pain us little; and a lion's heart,—infinite courage and strength of spirit, to undertake the most ghastly wounds or swollen, putrified sores" (Caryl). (3) The bandages employed in the operation are the doctrines, promises, and consolations of the gospel [(Ps. cvii. 20). 2. *Divine protection.* Generally, from whatever troubles may assail, from six, ay, from seven, *i.e.* from all possibilities of trouble; then particularly from: (1) Public calamity (ver. 20). From famine, by causing the earth to yield its increase so as to avert famine (Ps. lxvii. 6), by miraculous interposition so as to support in the midst of famine (Exod. xvi. 15, manna; 1 Kings xvii. 14, the widow's barrel; 1 Kings xix. 7, Elijah's feast), by spiritual consolations should his people die of famine (Hab. iii. 17); and from the sword, by removing occasions of war, by shielding while engaged in lawful war (if he so please in his wisdom), and by conducting safely out of war. (2) Private wrong (ver. 21). From slander, by enabling the good man to escape it through blamelessness of character and life, as Daniel (vi. 5); or by vindicating him against it through some favourable turn in providence (Ps. xxxvii. 6), as was the case with Jeremiah (xx. 10, 11); or through miraculous interposition, as happened to the three Hebrew children (Dan. iii. 25); or by rewarding him on account of it should it bring him hurt, as he did with St. Stephen (Acts vi. 11); and from violence, *i.e.* the injuries and injustices perpetrated by the strong against the weak, not by preventing them altogether, for it is implied that they will come, but by keeping the soul from sinking under them through terror. (3) From personal misfortune; such as hunger, *i.e.* private destitution; and violence, *i.e.* ravages of wild beasts on personal property; God enabling the saint, instead of regarding these with stoical indifference, to triumph over them as a means of effecting his highest good (Rom. v. 3), since all things, even the stones and the wild beasts, will be in league with him, and contribute to his peace (Rom. viii. 28). 3. *Divine blessing.* (1) Health. "Thou shalt know that it is well with thy tent;" *i.e.* the inhabitants of thy home will be in safety from others, in harmony amongst themselves, and, generally speaking, in the enjoyment of peace and felicity. Domestic happiness—one of the greatest blessings a good man can enjoy. (2) Prosperity. "Thou shalt oversee thy household, and not err," or "count thy cattle, and miss none." The success attending ordinary avocations comes from God; yet it cannot now, as then, be deemed a proof of Divine favour, though it is still true that piety tends to sharpen the mind's faculties, and to increase the hand's diligence, thereby making godliness profitable for this life as well as that which is to come. (3) Posterity. "Thy seed will be many," and "thine offspring like the grass of the land." A numerous family one of the blessings of the old, a gracious family one of the blessings of the new, dispensation (Isa. xliv. 3—5). (4) Length of days. "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full [ripe] age," indicating many years of living, so many as to fully mature the graces of the soul (Ps. xcii. 14) and to satisfy the saint's desire for living (Ps. xci. 16)—a promise first made to Abraham (Gen. xv. 15), and afterwards given generally to the godly (Ps. xci. 16); a promise also whose fulfilment is promoted by holy living (Prov. iii. 16; Ps. xxxiv. 12). (5) A peaceful death. "Thou shalt come to thy grave," willingly, quietly, peacefully, feeling dissolution to be no curse. (6) An honoured burial. "As the shock of corn is carried in its season" so shalt thou be reverently and respectfully consigned to the tomb. A peaceful grave and a decent burial esteemed by Orientals, who regarded the want of them as a token of Divine anger, which it sometimes was (Deut. xxviii. 26; Jer. xxii. 18, 19; xxxvi. 30).

Learn: 1. "Happy are we if we receive chastening; for then God dealeth with us as sons." 2. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but rather grievous; nevertheless afterwards it bringeth forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness." 3. The soonest way to escape from chastening is to "hear the rod and him who hath appointed it." 4. It is better to be chastened as God's children than condemned as God's enemies. 5. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but God delivereth him out of them all." 6. The best alliance against the ills of life is the friendship of the living God. 7. If God be for his people, nothing can be really against them.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 8—27.—*Refuge from trouble in the thought of God.* Conclusion of Eliphaz's address. His language suddenly changes into a gentler strain. It is like the clearing of a dark sky, revealing once more the deep blue; or the bend of a stream which has been flowing through a stern gorge, now broadening out into a sunlit lake.

I. THE GREATNESS AND BENEFICENCE OF GOD. (Vers. 8—16.) Let men turn to him for comfort and for strength. It is a bright gem of description. 1. *God is the Supreme.* (Ver. 8.) Let men look no lower than to the Highest. With him is the final appeal. He is Judge of all the earth. Clouds and darkness are round about him; but justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. 2. He is *the great Worker.* His *scale and sphere of operation* is wonderful, past finding out. "His way is in the sea, his path in the great waters, his footsteps who has known?" The grandeur and marvel of his deeds are seen: (1) *In nature.* (Ver. 10.) One phenomenon is mentioned only as typical, in all important respects, of all the other tokens of his power in nature. It is the blessed gift of rain. For nothing in an Oriental clime speaks more powerfully to the senses and the feelings than this inestimable boon. Many other Scriptures witness this. "He gives the early and the latter rain;" "comes down like rain upon the mown grass," and "as showers that water the earth." 'Tis he who causes the refreshing showers to fall upon the fields of both the just and the unjust. The French peasants say, as they watch the rain falling on their vineyards, "Voici le vin qui descend du ciel!" "Here comes down the wine from heaven!" But what good things do not come down from heaven in the rain from the ever-blessing God? (2) *In human life.* In this broad field, common experience gains many a lesson of the same kind. Not one of the traits in this exquisite description of which the intelligent observer cannot say, "This is true to life!" He is seen to be the Exalter of the lowly and the sorrowful (ver. 11). Who has not had brought home to him in many an instance the sense of this truth in the course of life? What tales of obscure and lowly worth rising into eminence; of deserted widows and orphans finding springs of help and succour marvellously opened to them in the hour of need can we not all tell? And we take delight in these narratives because they convince us that the constitution of life is not the mere mindless machinery which godless thinkers would make it out to be. We see that selfish craft and cunning are in the end disappointed and baffled (ver. 12). Lies and cheats do not prosper long. The proverbs of the world bear their witness; common experience stamps them with the mark of truth. And this, too, is no accident, but the result of the righteous operation of God. We see that men overreach themselves and fall by their own snares (ver. 13). "Vaulting ambition doth o'erleap itself, and falls on t'other side." And the sight gives us a deep pleasure, whatever pity we may feel for the victim of his conceit and folly, because here again we receive a communication of the will of God. We see self-confident men plunged into perplexity, infatuated, unable to steer their path aright, though the light is full and clear about them (ver. 14). There is a judicial blindness to be observed in certain cases; so that those who, in the pursuit of passion or interest, have extinguished conscience, become at last unable to see even their own interest, and make suicidal mistakes. Here, too, is the finger of a higher Power. 3. *The object of Divine operation.* (Vers. 15, 16.) In both nature and human life it is one—*to lessen suffering, to protect innocence, to deliver from violence and persecution.*

II. THE BLESSING OF DIVINE CHASTISEMENT. (Vers. 17—27.) From the general

evidences of the beneficence of God, we come down to one special and peculiar form of it. He is good to us in our pains as well as in our pleasures. His power is exercised to purify and chasten as well as to destroy. The recognition of this truth is one of the leading features of Scripture revelation. How different from the gloomy creed of the most enlightened heathen concerning suffering sent from heaven! He felt the wrath of his gods, but he never knew their blows as signs of a secret and remedial love. Where there is no belief in supreme righteousness, suffering must always be without relief. The blessedness here described is both *internal* and *external*. 1. *Internal.* The man is blessed (1) who recognizes his sufferings as corrections. Then their worst bitterness passes; despondency is cheered; hope dawns in the heart. He is blessed (2) who rejects not the warnings which they bring. He willingly takes the medicine, and submits to the direction of the heavenly Physician. But they aggravate their sufferings and inflame their ills who know they are being corrected, yet refuse to take the Divine hint for amendment; who are like the stubborn horse or ass chafing at the bit, resisting the guidance of the rein. He is blessed (3) who yields himself up implicitly to the Divine treatment, suffers his evils to be expelled, his follies to be plucked up by the roots. He is blessed (4) because he is thus brought into the deeper knowledge and fellowship of God. To know God as the Almighty Benefactor is one step in religion; to know him as the Almighty Chastiser is another and a higher. And this is never reached except through suffering, the deeper consciousness of sin, struggles with self, a higher purity, and a deeper peace. 2. *External.* The man at peace with himself and with God seems to bear a charmed life (ver. 19). (1) *He is defended from outward evils.* (Vers. 20—22.) He passes through seas of trouble, and rides upon the crest of each advancing wave; passes through fire, and it hurts him not. The greatest outward calamities are mentioned, only to show how he rises superior to them all. "Famine." The histories of Elijah, of the widow of Zarephath, of the temptation of Jesus Christ, all illustrate the grand truth that man's strength is derived, not from bread alone, but directly from the Word and will of God. The truth is a general one. It is that expressed by St. Paul that, though the outward man perish, the inward man may be renewed day by day. "The power of the sword," "devastation," "famine," "wild beasts," form the catalogue of the ills most common and most dreaded in ancient times. None of these can harm the man who is reconciled to God. The truth again is general, and admits of a twofold application. In the first place, history is full of the providential escapes of good men, in which every discerning mind will see the hand of God. But there are exceptions. No law of nature is set aside. The sword of the foe, the tooth of the lion, is not blunted, nor is the body hardened against hunger. Good men, like others, perish from these causes. But here the truth applies in another way. The souls of the martyrs flee to the altar of heaven (Rev. vi. 9), or are borne from the scene of suffering to that of rest, as Lazarus to the bosom of Abraham. In either case they are unharmed and happy in God. But another evil, more keenly felt in more civilized times, is the "scourge of the tongue." Slander—

> "Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue
> Outvenoms all the worms of Nile; whose breath
> Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie
> All corners of the world—kings, queens, and states,
> Maids, matrons—nay, the secrets of the grave
> This viperous slander enters."

From this fearful scourge the blessed man is hidden, protected. Good men are often attacked, but cannot be destroyed, by slander. They do not feel it as do the consciously guilty. They, in the beautiful words of the psalm, are kept "secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." The slanderer does service to the upright man in the end by forcing him into a position of self-defence, or of silent dignity, which brings the true qualities of his character into a clearer light. (2) *He is favoured with outward good.* (Vers. 23—27.) The stones that afflict the fields with barrenness, the devouring beasts, seem to be in secret pact with him and refuse to do him harm. This is poetry wrapping up truth. We are reminded of the beautiful ode of the Roman poet (Horace, i. 22), where, dwelling on the theme that innocence is its own protection, its own arms, he tells us of the wolf that fled from him all unarmed in the Sabine wood. The whole picture

is that of the quiet pastoral life which we love to associate with innocence and the protection of Heaven. There is comfort in his tent; when he visits his pastures, no head of cattle is missing (for this is perhaps the true meaning of the latter clause of ver. 24). Children and children's children spring up around him; till he comes to his end crowned with silver hair, like the ripe sheaf carried home to the garner. With this description compare the noble ninety-first psalm. Eliphaz emphatically declares (ver. 27) this to have been his experience. It was a picture drawn from life. We cannot doubt that it was realized in numberless instances in those early conditions of life; nay, it is so still. It hardly comes within the scope of such poetry to recognize the actual or seeming exceptions. And if we do not see the universal truth of the description of the good man's career, we must recollect that life is a far more complicated and many-sided affair with us. It is far more difficult to trace the connection of cause and effect in the various courses of men. And we have this immense advantage over this early teacher—that we have a clearer view, a firmer belief of the extension of man's career into eternity. All that appears exceptional and opposed to the laws of life laid down by Eliphaz, we doubt not, will be compensated and redressed in a future state.—J.

Vers. 1—5.—*The lot of the foolish.* By a skilful turn of thought, Eliphaz exhibits the consequences of human folly—

I. AS THEY AFFECT THE LIFE OF THE INDIVIDUAL FOOLISH ONE. "Wrath killeth and envy slayeth" him. By his folly he excites the wrath or the envy of others, or his folly leads him into deadly courses.

II. AS THEY AFFECT HIS LOT AND CONDITION. His prosperity, even if it begin, is but of temporary duration. If he take root, suddenly his habitation is cursed.

III. AS THEY AFFECT HIS FAMILY. His children are in danger—"far from safety." They are condemned by the judge sitting in the gate; are crushed, and are not found. "The seed of the wicked shall be cut off."

IV. AS THEY AFFECT HIS SUBSTANCE. He soweth, but a stranger reapeth his harvests; his toil may be productive, but a "robber swalloweth" his substance. Dark is the picture thus presented of the judgments which fall upon the ungodly, the foolish, and the vain. If Eliphaz intended this to be a reflection upon Job, it was unmerited and uncalled for. The Divine judgment upon Job was, "My servant Job, a perfect and an upright man." Eliphaz argued from the particular to the general. However true it may be that the foolish suffers, it is not equally true that every sufferer is foolish. This was the error in Eliphaz's mode of arguing. It is a common error. We know it may be said, "He whom thou lovest is sick."—R. G.

Vers. 6, 7.—*The common lot.* "Man is born unto trouble."

I. IT IS AN INEVITABLE RESULT OF HIS EXPOSED CONDITION.

II. IT IS EVIDENTLY A PART OF THE PRESENT ORDER OF THINGS. But—

III. IT IS DUE TO THE DERANGEMENT OF THE RIGHT RELATIONS OF MAN TO HIS GOD, TO HIS NEIGHBOUR, TO THE WORLD AROUND. "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust; neither doth trouble spring out of the ground."

IV. IT IS GRACIOUSLY USED AS A MEANS OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE, CORRECTION, AND DEVELOPMENT. We now know that that which we endure is for chastening—for that culture which every wise father seeks to secure for his sons. And when the afflictions are "not joyous, but grievous," even then "God dealeth with us as with sons." He takes up the sad and dark and painful things of our life, and uses them as instruments for our discipline, "that we might be partakers of his holiness." Most assuredly we may know that "the peaceable fruits of righteousness" are yielded to them who patiently endure these afflictions when they are "exercised thereby."

Let us, therefore, learn: 1. Not to be surprised if "trouble" overtakes us. We are born in a land where it is very plentiful. 2. To see to it that our afflictions come of our frailty, not of our folly. 3. Patiently to await the end, when he shall have wrought out his purpose, who maketh "all things work together for good to them that love him."—R. G.

Vers. 8—16.—*God the true Refuge in affliction.* "I would seek unto God." Wisely

did Eliphaz urge his friend to seek refuge in the only true and safe resort. "Under his feathers shalt thou trust." In the midst of all sorrows—

"God is the Refuge of his saints,
When storms of sharp distress invade;
Ere we can offer our complaints,
Behold him present with his aid."

To seek this Refuge men are encouraged by—

I. THE GREATNESS OF THE DIVINE POWER. He "doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number." Of these beautiful illustrations are to be found on every hand—in heaven, earth, the deep seas, in the processes of nature, in the government of men.

II. THE DIVINE BENEFICENCE. His rich gifts made freely to the sons of men. "He giveth rain upon the earth," which is at once a precious gift and a symbol of all blessings in its abundance, diffusion, preciousness, freeness to all. "He is kind to the evil and the unthankful, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust."

III. THE DIVINE CONTROL OVER MEN. Especially illustrated in his dealing with the wicked. He takes compassion on the needy. "He setteth on high those that be low." He brings down the haughtiness of the foolish. He "disappointeth the devices of the crafty"—taketh the wicked in their own deceit.

IV. THE DIVINE PITIFULNESS FOR THE POOR is a further encouragement to men to find their Refuge in God. He guardeth the poor and the feeble. He saveth him from the sword of their mouth, their cruel words, and from the hand of the mighty. The Divine Help of the poor, men have sung in all ages. "So the poor hath hope;" "The poor committeth himself unto thee." In this Refuge he is safe. The day of his trouble passes away. A Divine hand, unseen, upholds him while the pressure is heavy. Of the poor, as of the sparrows, it must be said, "God feedeth them." If men knew the loving-kindness of the Lord, and his great pitifulness, they would put their trust in him more willingly, and would find help and comfort.—R. G.

Vers. 17—23.—*The blessedness of the Divine correction.* This was known even in early times, but only fully taught in New Testament times. It is a great encouragement to men to bear pain and sorrow to know that the Lord afflicts. "He maketh sore," but "he bindeth up;" "he woundeth," but his "hands make whole again." Being a Divine correction, a chastisement from his hand will be—

I. A WISE CORRECTION. A good purpose will always be held in view. "Not willingly," "not for his pleasure," does he afflict. His aim is to promote our good—"that we may be partakers of his holiness."

II. A GRACIOUS CORRECTION. Mercy will temper it. "He remembereth we are but dust."

"He will no load of grief impose
Beyond the strength that he bestows."

If he brings low in affliction, it is that he may exalt in honour. If he takes away earthly possessions, it is that he may supplant them with heavenly. He weans the heart from the love of the temporal, that he may fix it on the eternal. It is, therefore—

III. A BENIGN CORRECTION. Happy fruits follow it. If he afflicts, he heals. He delivers in six, yea, seven troubles. He redeems the famishing from death. He hides from the scourge of the tongue. He screens from the stroke of destruction. He draweth men into good ways; then, when they please the Lord, he maketh even their enemies to be at peace with them. Beautifully is this illustrated: "Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee." He who keeps the commandments of God is in harmony with the whole kingdom of God.

This encourages to patience under trials. 1. It is the Lord's chastisement. 2. It is controlled and regulated by a Divine hand. 3. It has a wise and worthy end in view. 4. It cometh to its blessed fruition in the sanctity and perfectness of human character. —R. G.

Vers. 24—27.—*The final consequences of the Divine chastisement.* He who in mercy

afflicts, or in equal mercy takes up the evils and ills of life, and, using them as his own instruments, transmutes them into means of grace and blessing, will, after he has tried his servants by their exposure to the storms and pains of life, give them "a desired end." Sooner or later they see "the end of the Lord"—the end the Lord had in view. In these verses the happiest consequences are declared to follow those chastisements which the Lord bestowed during the process of suffering and exposure.

I. CONTENTMENT AND PEACE SHALL REIGN IN THE HOME. God quiets the hearts of his children, and though heavy trials assail them, he prepares rest and peace for them. In how many instances is this daily seen! The evil exhausts itself. God puts his hand upon it and arrests it. His exposed ones he leads back to safety and repose, and, as was fulfilled in Job's case, of which Eliphaz unconsciously predicts, he blesses them at last. Like worn veterans, they return at last to receive honour, acknowledgment, and rest. Precious are the final days of the truly tried; the life is matured, the character chastened and perfected, the experience of life is enlarged.

II. BLESSING SHALL ABIDE UPON THE OFFSPRING. "Thy seed shall be great . . . as the grass of the earth;" yea, even though half the sorrow were caused by that very seed. The Lord will lead the wanderers back, will punish and correct and reclaim. Many a one out of his stony griefs raises a Bethel. The testimony of godly fidelity on the part of the parent speaks in its silence to the offspring, and in the end produces its good results. Every godly man has the best ground for hoping that the blessing of the Lord will be also upon his offspring.

III. IN THE FULNESS OF AGE AND THE RIPENESS OF CHARACTER, LIFE SHALL CLOSE. So the tried one receives into himself, at last, the whole result of the Divine discipline. The history is complete, the work of the day finished, the journey ended, the character formed. All the history of life is written in the cultured, matured life; in the character gained; in the honour won. Faithful unto death, the struggling one receives the crown of life. In ripeness of judgment and attainment all the fruit of the patiently endured tribulation is found. The *man* is made. His pains, his perils, his watching and prayer, his diligence in duty and patience in suffering, all go to make up the perfected life which is his own to inherit. The exposed grain has grown through all dangers, has grown by all changes—in the heat and cold, the light and the darkness, the rain and the shine. "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season." Let every one search this out, hear it and know it for his good.—R. G.

Ver. 3.—"*The foolish taking root.*" I. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR THE FOOLISH TO TAKE ROOT. "The foolish," in biblical phraseology, are worse than people of weak intellect; they are always regarded as morally degenerate. Their folly is the opposite to the wisdom of which the beginning is "the fear of the Lord." Though lacking in moral fibre as well as in mental stamina, such people still often contrive to achieve an astonishing amount of success in life. 1. *They may be favoured by circumstances.* In this world men are not wholly dependent upon their own character and conduct. There is a general tide of prosperity that sweeps strong on its flood many who have had no hand in originating it. There is good fortune as well as misfortune, and the one is often as little deserved as the other. 2. *They may be helped by Providence.* God's grace is always greater than our deserts. He would win us by his goodness. The foolish man should see that this goodness of God is designed to lead him to repentance (Rom. ii. 4). Sometimes, however, the Divine temporal favour is in reality a method of judgment, a sunshine that ripens the effects of folly, so that they may appear in their fulness at the hastening harvest-time. 3. *They may assist themselves.* There is a kind of prosperity which good and wise men scorn, not being able to stoop to the degradation which leads to it. Then bad and foolish men step in, and, though grovelling in the dust, succeed in grasping some of the so-called good things of life. Much outward prosperity is not directly dependent on moral qualities. A man may be skilful in money-making without being either a saint or a philosopher.

II. ALTHOUGH THE FOOLISH MAY TAKE ROOT, THEY WILL NOT BEAR GOOD FRUIT. We may be surprised at their temporal prosperity, but it is only temporal. For a while they live and grow, not simply flourishing a moment like a plucked flower that must soon fade, but actually striking roots into the ground, and thus strengthen-

ing their position and drawing nourishment to themselves. Still, at best, it is only the rooting in the soil that is thought of. This is but the first stage. Eliphaz was quite right in his surmise that the last stage would be very different, although he was in error as to the time, circumstances, and character of the great *dénouement*. 1. *No good fruit will follow.* The foolish stock can only bring forth fruit of folly; and if it grows luxuriantly, it will not bear any better products. Its size will only multiply and coarsen its natural issue. Let bad and foolish men advance unimpeded as far as possible in their earthly prosperity, yet of real soul-prosperity they will have none, for they have not in them the life from which this springs. 2. *The flourishing prosperity will come to an end.* These noxious plants must be finally rooted up if they are not struck down earlier by the thunderbolts of judgment. Rapid growth is no promise of long endurance. The mistake of the old world was to look for the judgment on earth. It may come here. But if it does not, it is certain to come hereafter; for God is wise and good and almighty. Therefore beware of the delusion of temporal insanity. Look to the end. Look to the quality of the success attained. Let this be what Christ approves; *i.e.* like his success, which was victory through the cross. Then a fruitful root will sprout out of a "dry ground" (Isa. liii. 2).—W. F. A.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Inevitable trouble.* I. TROUBLE DOES NOT COME CASUALLY AND WITHOUT DUE CAUSE. It is not like a weed that springs up by the wayside. This might seem to be the case, because it arrives so suddenly and so unexpectedly, and because there does not appear to be any rule that governs its advent at one place rather than another. But Eliphaz is rightly persuaded that it is not the effect of chance. We have good reasons for agreeing with him thus far. 1. *All things are subject to law.* Chance is only a name for our ignorance. When we do not see a cause we imagine that the event has happened casually. But as we pursue our inquiries further we find that there are no stray events outside the great bond of Divine order. 2. *All things are arranged by Providence.* Here is another answer to the doctrine of chance. Not only is there law; there is also a supreme Administrator of law. God's hand is unseen, but not a pawn moves unless his fingers are upon it; or if it be said that this leaves no scope for man's free-will, still it may be asserted that, the infinite mind of God seeing the whole game, the end from the beginning, he can always so arrange that ultimately his designs shall be fully executed.

II. TROUBLE COMES FROM WITHIN, NOT FROM WITHOUT. It does not spring out of the ground. Man is born to it. There is something in human nature that predisposes him to trouble. Just as the sparks fly up by nature, so the soul of man suffers by nature. It is an attribute of the human constitution to be subject to suffering. 1. *Susceptibility to suffering is natural.* The callous are the unnatural. The soul that never grieves is hard and dead. We are made to be sensitive to pain, just as we are made to hear sounds and see the light. 2. *Trouble is born with us.* Sin begets suffering. The sin of the parent descends in calamities on his children, who inherit the harvest of his misdeeds. The fall of man and the general sinfulness of the race ensure a certain amount of suffering to every innocent child who is born into the world. Nevertheless, do not take refuge with the fatalist. The trouble has a cause. Seek this and master it.

III. TROUBLE IS UNIVERSAL AND INEVITABLE. Some have more than others. There are men to whom the lines have fallen in pleasant places, yea, they have a goodly heritage. One such had been Job. But his hour of trouble came, and then it proved to be an hour of unprecedented calamity. Though men suffer differently, all suffer—if not in body or estate, yet in mind and soul; if not in sunny youth, yet in overcast manhood; if not in visible adversity, yet in inward distress. This does not mean that men are *always* suffering, nor that there is *more* pain than joy in life. 1. *We should not be surprised at meeting with trouble.* Many people irrationally imagine that they are to be exceptions to the universal experience. When painful facts reveal their delusion they are overwhelmed with amazement and disappointment. It would be better to be prepared to expect what is part of the common lot of man. 2. *Trouble which cannot be avoided may yet be cured.* The true resort should be neither to stoical indifference nor to impotent despair. There is no gospel in the assertion that trouble is universal. But there is a gospel which deals with the fact. Christ comes to give us power to

utilize trouble as discipline, and ultimately to conquer it, so that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17).—W. F. A.

Vers. 8—16.—*Seeking unto God.* As usual, the advice of Eliphaz is excellent in the abstract. The error is in the particular way of applying it to Job. Here is the sting of it. But its general truth is always instructive. This is certainly the case with the recommendation to "seek unto God."

I. INQUIRE WHAT IT IS TO SEEK UNTO GOD. 1. *It begins with remoteness from God.* We have lost God if we have to seek him, as we need not think of finding what we already possess and enjoy. God is lost by sin; but the sense of God's presence is often deadened by the oppression of sorrow and by the intrusion of worldly scenes. 2. *It means an earnest effort of the soul.* We are not to wait for God to come to us, but to "seek unto" him. This requires the mind and will. We have to be watchful to note any indications of his presence, and active in pressing forward towards him. 3. *It implies that God can be found.* It is useless to seek for that which is hopelessly lost or absolutely unattainable. If we seek, we must expect to find. This process would be folly in the eyes of the Agnostic. Now, the encouragement is that others have sought and found God. They have seen him, not with bodily vision, indeed, but with true spiritual experience. Job himself did seek God, and he found him at last; for he exclaimed, in a magnificent burst of thankful gladness, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee" (ch. xlii. 5). 4. *It leads to confidence.* It is useless to seek God out of mere curiosity. We have much to do with him when we find him. But first of all we must place entire confidence in him, confessing to him our sin and our sore need.

II. CONSIDER THE ENCOURAGEMENTS THAT INVITE US TO SEEK UNTO GOD. The author of the Book of Job is a great lover of nature. Scenes from the physical world, more especially in its majesty and grandeur, fill his spacious canvass in later stages. Here we come upon the first burst of that glory of nature which shines out with ever-increasing volume as we proceed through the book. This leads on to the wonderful deeds of providence. Notice some of the points to which Eliphaz calls attention. 1. The (1) *greatness*—"doeth great things;" (2) the *mystery*—"and unsearchable;" and (3) the *variety* of God's works in nature—"marvellous things without number" (ver. 9). Therefore he must be able to help us all in all kinds of trouble. 2. The *graciousness* of God in his milder works. This is illustrated by the phenomenon of rain (ver. 10). "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass" (Ps. lxxii. 6). Therefore "the bruised reed will he not break," etc. (Isa. xlii. 3). 3. God's *goodness to the lowly.* He sets up on high those that be low (ver. 11). Therefore to be humiliated is to have a special reason for expecting his help. 4. His judgments in *defeating the crafty* (vers. 12—14). His very wrath brings mercy to the oppressed. The poor man cannot escape from his unjust oppressor; but God can bring deliverance. With him is the final court of appeal, and there right is always rendered, there the rich have no favour and the cunning no opportunity of cheating justice. 5. God's *deliverance of the poor and helpless.* He is "a just God and a *Saviour*," and he delights to reveal himself in the activity of grace redeeming and recovering his suffering children. With such manifestations of the power and goodness of God in nature and providence the troubled soul may well seek unto him for deliverance.—W. F. A.

Ver. 17.—*The happiness of chastisement.* I. THERE IS A HAPPINESS IN CHASTISEMENT. The sentence looks paradoxical. No chastisement can be pleasant while it is being endured, or it would cease to be chastisement. Where, then, does its happiness reside? 1. *Chastisement is a proof of God's care.* "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Heb. xii. 6). Therefore to be chastised is to receive a token of God's love. Now, surely we ought to be willing to bear a good deal of suffering if we can only obtain so valuable a token as this. If God did not chastise us he would not be treating us as true sons (Heb. xii. 8). Our very immunity would thus be a proof of God's desertion of us—a most miserable and hopeless condition. 2. *Chastisement is designed to effect purification.* It may not lead to this end, and it will not do so unless we co-operate submissively and penitently. Eliphaz saw as much, and there-

fore, although he was applying these truths in an irritatingly mistaken way, he, rightly enough from his standpoint, urged Job to seek God's mercy in penitence that he might thus benefit by his chastisement. To be purged from sin is better than to be made rich, comfortable, externally happy. It is true blessedness, though at first experienced amid tears of sorrow. 3. *Chastisement leads to joy.* Afterwards it brings forth the "peaceable fruit of righteousness." We count a man happy who is on the road to a great good. He may enjoy it already by anticipation. At all events, he is to be congratulated on his destiny, as one congratulates the heir of great estates. The Christian may be congratulated if he can say with St. Paul, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18).

II. IT IS THEREFORE BOTH WRONG AND FOOLISH TO DESPISE CHASTISEMENT. It is wrong, because we ought to submit with humility to whatever comes from the hand of God; and it is foolish, because contempt will destroy the efficacy of chastisement, which needs to be felt if it is to be effective, and which blesses us through our humility and contrition. A proud and haughty bearing under chastisement defeats the ends of the gracious ordinance. We see here how diametrically opposite the enlightened Hebrew view of suffering is to that of the Stoic. Both views regarded pain as not the evil thing that most men took it to be; both demanded patience and courage from the sufferer. But Stoicism inculcated contempt for suffering. Thus it engendered Pharisaic pride. The scriptural idea—in the Old Testament as well as the New—is rather to lead us to attach more importance to suffering than the thoughtless give to it, not that we may magnify the sensations of distress, but that we may let the trouble have its full work in our souls. 1. We may despise the chastisement when we *make light of it.* 2. The contempt may be shown by *denying its meaning or use.* 3. It may also be experienced by *rebelling against chastisement.* In this last case we do not regard the trouble as slight. But we do not reverence the holy purpose with which it is sent. Our wild resistance shows contempt for the character of our affliction. Christ is the model Sufferer, who deserved no chastisement, and yet who was "led as a lamb to the slaughter," and was thus made perfect through sufferings (Heb. ii. 10).—W. F. A.

Ver. 23.—*In league with nature.* Eliphaz argues that, if Job will but submit himself to the ordinances of God, nature itself will be his ally, and the very stones that obstruct his plough, and even the beasts that ravage his flocks, will become his auxiliaries. Here the seer of visions has touched on a great truth. To be in harmony with the Lord of nature is to be in league with nature.

I. WE ARE NOT NATURALLY IN LEAGUE WITH NATURE. This is a paradox in form, yet it is a transcript of experience. The experience is peculiar to man. All other things find their habitat congenial to them. Man alone discovers himself to be as an alien among foes—stones, weeds, vermin, beasts of prey, cruel winds, tempests, earthquakes, frustrating his designs. Two very different causes may account for this discord. 1. *Our natural greatness.* We are a part of nature, yet we are above nature. In our higher self we cannot be content to take our share with the beasts that perish. Our aspirations lift us out of agreement with the life that is lived by plants and animals. 2. *Our sinful fall.* We are meant to be above nature, ruling over it. By sin we have fallen below nature, and it has trampled on us. The master has become the slave and victim of his servant.

II. IT IS GOOD TO BE IN LEAGUE WITH NATURE. So Eliphaz implies by his promise to Job of this condition as a reward for contrite submission. The Bible nowhere teaches a Manichæan horror of nature. All God's works are good and deserve to be appreciated by us. Neither do we learn from Scripture to entertain a monkish horror of nature. The inherent innocence of every natural power and action is suggested by the biblical description of creation. Therefore we shall make a great mistake if we think we are to escape from the tyranny of nature either by flight or by warfare. We cannot escape from nature if we would. Though we crushed our nature, it would arise and reassert itself. But, supposing our flight or our warfare were successful, that we could absolutely leave or completely extirpate nature, we should only find our lives maimed and impoverished; for nature is part of us, and is intended to be our useful servant.

III. WE CANNOT FORM A SUCCESSFUL LEAGUE WITH NATURE BY DESCENDING TO

THE LIFE OF NATURE. The sophistry of so-called naturalism tells us that we can. But it is deceptive, christening bestiality with the name of nature. The nature to be imitated is Wordsworth's nature, not Zola's. But Wordsworth's nature is the type and prophecy of the spiritual that is higher than nature. Merely to follow natural impulses is to become swinish, not human, partly because the lower impulses of nature are the most violent, and partly because we have aggravated those impulses by sin.

IV. SUBMISSION TO GOD MAKES NATURE IN LEAGUE WITH US. God is the Master of nature, and as we learn to do God's will, nature, which also ultimately does his will, turns to aid us. Physically, the forces of nature work for those who obey the laws of God in nature, and it is to be noted that to obey those laws is a very different thing from being a slave to natural impulses; *e.g.* the laws of health do not agree with the indulgence of appetite. Spiritually, our obedient submission to God compels the adverse forces of nature to work for our good as instruments of discipline. This was not sufficiently clear to Eliphaz, who made too much of temporal prosperity, and thought that to be the invariable lot of the good man. But the Book of Job reveals it. Thus nature ministers to man when man serves God.—W. F. A.

Ver. 26.—*God's harvest home.* We have here a characteristic Old Testament picture of the completed life of the aged servant of God. He is rewarded for his fidelity, not merely by having nature as a minister of his prosperity during his active days, but by having his time prolonged to a ripe old age, and his whole career rounded and finished so that at last he is taken up like a shock of corn to God's harvest home.

I. LET US CONSIDER THE IDEA OF A COMPLETE LIFE. 1. *The truth of the Old Testament idea.* The Jews were no pessimists. They were far from the sickly Buddhist dream of *Nirvana*. With them life was sweet, and long life a blessing. Was not this a true and healthy conception? Life is a gift of God; it is a source of great natural joy: it is a precious talent, offering rich opportunities for service. It is good to live. Though it may please God to pluck the bud before it has opened, or to remove the blossom before it has matured the fruit, we should feel that there is a great blessing in his sparing a life for full, ripe fruit-bearing. 2. *The supplement of New Testament revelation.* The gospel has enlarged the scope and value of life. It has shown us that no human life can be complete in a brief earthly existence. It has promised life eternal for the fulness of being and of service. Now we can see that life is good and blessed indeed.

II. LET US OBSERVE THE BLESSEDNESS OF A RIPE LIFE. Old age is compared to a shock of corn. We have "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." This full corn ripens into the gold of harvest. In the perfect old age we see the corn come to maturity. It has attained all that it can attain. The discipline of life is for the maturing of souls. Old men should be richer in grace than young men, and a certain mellowness should mark the character of the aged Christian. Unfortunately, this is not always seen. Sometimes the beauty and enthusiasm of youth give place to a chill and narrow formalism. Instead of ripening, the soul withers. Instead of rich juices, it has the vinegar of cynicism. This is distinctly wrong. It points to a life's mistake and failure. But the possibility of so unfortunate an issue bids us all be on our guard against it. It warns us to avoid the danger, and it urges us to use the grace of God so that we may ripen and grow mellow.

III. LET US ANTICIPATE THE HARVEST INGATHERING OF A COMPLETE AND RIPE LIFE. The shock of corn is gathered in. This is necessary to preserve it; for if it were left on the field it would rot in the dank autumn. An earthly immortality would be no blessing. But God calls his aged servants out of the world in which their service is complete and which can no longer minister to their further ripening. Yet the ingathering is not the end. The wheat is not heaped up to be burnt, but stored in the granary for food and for seed. God gathers his servants home in safety, sheltered from all storms and frosts of winter. Then the true purpose of their lives begins to be seen. All the rest was but the preparation for the harvest; and the harvest itself was only undertaken in view of future usefulness. The old man has not finished his life when he lays down his grey head to die. Then he is about to begin to live; then the largest fruitfulness of his soul's experience is about to be utilized. The harvest joy is the joy of the future. Souls are gathered home to God that they may minister to life and blessedness in ages yet unseen.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VI.

Ch. vi. and vii. contain Job's reply to Eliphaz. In ch. vi. he confines himself to three points: (1) a justification of his "grief"—*i.e.* of his vexation and impatience (vers. 1—7); (2) a declaration that the destruction with which he has been threatened (ch. iv. 9—11, 21; v. 2), is exactly the thing which he most longs for (vers. 8—13); and (3) a retort upon his friends, whom he regards as having all spoken by the mouth of Eliphaz, and whom he reproaches with their want of sympathy (vers. 14—23), and with the weakness of their arguments (vers. 24—30).

Vers. 1, 2.—**But Job answered and said, Oh that my grief were throughly weighed!** rather, *my anger*, or *my vexation*—the same word as that used by Eliphaz when reproaching Job, in ch. v. 2. Job wishes that, before men blame him, they would calmly weigh the force of his feelings and expressions against the weight of the calamity which oppresses him. His words may seem too strong and too violent; but are they more than a just counterpoise to the extreme character of his afflictions? The weighing of words and thoughts was an essential element in the Egyptian conception of the judgment, where Thoth held the balance, and in the one scale were placed the merits of the deceased, in the other the image of Ma, or Truth, and his fate was determined by the side to which the balance inclined ('Ritual of the Dead,' ch. cxxv.; Wilkinson, 'Ancient Egyptians,' vol. v. p. 252). **And my calamity laid in the balances together.** My calamity placed in one scale, and my vexation in the other, and so weighed, each against each.

Ver. 3.—**For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea** (comp. Prov. xxvii. 3, "A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both;" see also Ecclus. xxii. 15). **Therefore my words are swallowed up**; rather, as in the Revised Version, *therefore have my words been rash*. Job here excuses without justifying himself. The excessive character of his sufferings has, he declares, forced him to utter rash and violent words, as those wherein he cursed his day and wished that he had never been born (ch. iii. 1, 3—11). Some allowance ought to be made for rash speech uttered under such circumstances.

Ver. 4.—**For the arrows of the Almighty are within me** (comp. Ps. xxxviii. 2, "For thine arrows stick fast in me"). So Shakespeare speaks of "the slings and *arrows* of outrageous fortune" for calamities generally. The metaphor is a very common one (see Deut. xxxii. 23, 42; Ps. vii. 13; xxi. 12; xlv. 5; Lam. iii. 13, 14). **The poison whereof.** Poisoned arrows, such as are now employed by the savage tribes of Central Africa, were common in antiquity, though seldom used by civilized nations. Ovid declares that the Scythians of his time made use of them ('Tristia,' i. 2). **Drinketh up my spirit**; rather, *my spirit drinketh up*. Job's spirit absorbs the poison that festers in his wounds, and therefore loses control over itself. This is his apology for his vehemence; he is well-nigh distraught. He adds, **The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.** Besides actual pains and sufferings, he is assailed by fears. God's terrors, *i.e.* all the other evils that he has at his disposal, are drawn up against him, as it were, in battle array, and still further agitate and distract his soul. What further troubles may not God bring upon him?

Ver. 5.—**Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass?** literally, *over grass*; i.e. when he has grass under his feet, and has consequently no cause of complaint. Job means to say that his own complainings are as natural and instinctive as those of animals. (On the species of wild asses known to Job, see the comment on ch. xxxix. 5.) **Or loweth the ox over his fodder?** The lowing of the ox, like the braying of the wild ass, is a complaint—a sign of distress and discomfort.

Ver. 6.—**Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?** or, *that which is insipid*. Many critics suppose that in this and the following verse Job reproaches Eliphaz with the insipidity of his remarks, and declares that his soul refuses to touch such loathsome food. Others regard him as still speaking in his own defence, and justifying his expressions of disgust by the nauseous character of the food which had been put before him; *i.e.* of the treatment which he has received. Either explanation produces a good sense; but perhaps the former is the more natural. **Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?** So our Revisers; and so Dillmann and Canon Cook. Professor Lee suggests "the whey of cheese" for "the white of an egg;" others, "the juice of purslaine." We have certainly no other evidence that eggs were eaten in primitive times.

Ver. 7.—**The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat**; rather, as in the Revised Version, *my soul refuseth*

to touch them; they are as loathsome meat to me. The doubt remains whether Job is speaking of the arguments of Eliphaz, or of the series of afflictions which have befallen him. Either explanation is possible.

Ver. 8.—**Oh that I might have my request!** Here the second point is taken up. Eliphaz has threatened Job with death, representing it as the last and most terrible of punishments (ch. iv. 9, 20, 21; v. 2). Job's reply is that there is nothing he desires so much as death. His primary wish would have been never to have been born (ch. iii. 3—10); next to that, he would have desired an early death—the earlier the more acceptable (ch. iii. 11—19). As both these have been denied him, what he now desires, and earnestly asks for, is a speedy demise. It is not as yet clear what he thinks death to be, or whether he has any hope beyond the grave. Putting aside all such considerations, he here simply balances death against such a life as he now leads, and must expect to lead, since his disease is incurable, and decides in favour of death. It is not only his desire, but his "request" to God, that death may come to him quickly. **And that God would grant me the thing that I long for;** literally, *my expectation*, or *wish*. The idea of taking his own life does not seem to have occurred to Job, as it would to a Greek (Plato, 'Phædo,' § 16) or a Roman (Pliny, 'Epist.,' i. 12). He is too genuine a child of nature, too simple and unsophisticated, for such a thought to occur, and, if it occurred, would be too religious to entertain it for a moment. Like Aristotle, he would feel the act to be cowardly (Aristotle, 'Eth. Nic.,' v., *sub fin.*); and, like Plato (*l.s.c.*), he would view it as rebellion against the will of God.

Ver. 9.—**Even that it would please God to destroy me;** or, *to crush me* (Revised Version)—"to break me in pieces" (Lee). **That he would let loose his hand;** or, *put forth his hand*—"stretch it out against me threateningly." **And cut me off.** "Cut me off *bit by bit*" (Lee); comp. Isa. xxxviii. 12, where the same word is used of a weaver, who cuts the threads of his loom one by one, until the whole is liberated and comes away.

Ver. 10.—**Then should I yet have comfort.** First, the comfort that the end was come, and that he would be spared further sufferings; and further, the still greater comfort that he had endured to the end, and not denied nor renounced his trust in religion and in all the "words of the Holy One." Professor Lee sees here "the recognition of a future life, expressed in words as plain and obvious as possible" ('Book of the Patriarch Job,' p. 223). But to us it seems that, if the idea is present at all, it is covered up, latent; only so far implied as it may be said to be implied in all willingness to die, since it may be argued that even the most wretched life possible would be preferred by any man to no life at all, and so that when men are content to die they *must* be expecting, whether consciously or not, a life beyond the grave, and be sustained by that expectation. **Yea, I would harden myself in sorrow: let him not spare;** rather, *yea, I would exult in anguish that did not spare.* However great the pain that accompanied his death, Job would rejoice and exult in it, since by it his death was to be accomplished. **For I have not concealed the words of the Holy One;** rather, *for I have not denied*, or *renounced*. It would be a part of Job's satisfaction in dying that he had not let go his integrity. Rather he had held it fast, and not renounced or abandoned his trust in God and in religion. "The words of the Holy One are the commands of God, however made known to man" (Canon Cook).

Ver. 11.—**What is my strength, that I should hope?** Eliphaz had suggested that Job might recover and be restored to his former prosperity (ch. v. 18—26). Job rejects this suggestion. His strength is brought too low; it is not conceivable that he should be restored; he cannot entertain any such hope. **And what is mine end, that I should prolong my life?** rather, *that I should stretch out my spirit.* Job cannot look forward to such an "end" as Eliphaz prophesies for him; therefore he cannot bring himself to wait on with patience.

Ver. 12.—**Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh of brass?** It would require a man to have a body of brass, and strength like that of rocks, for him to be able to endure the ravages of such a disease, and yet to recover from it. Job cannot pretend to either.

Ver. 13.—**Is not my help in me?** rather, *Is it not that I have no help in me?* (Revised Version). Job feels that, instead of having exceptional strength of constitution to enable him to bear up against his exhausting malady, he is absolutely without strength. All his vital power is used up. There is no help in him. **And is wisdom driven quite from me?** rather, *Is not soundness driven quite from me? Tushiyah* seems to mean here "strength of constitution"—that internal soundness which resists the inroads of disease, and sometimes triumphs over the most serious maladies. Whatever reserve of this kind he may have possessed by nature, it is now, Job feels, altogether lost and gone from him.

Ver. 14.—**To him that is afflicted pity should be showed from his friend.** Job begins here the third head of his reply to Eliphaz, in which he attacks him and his companions. The first duty of a comforter

is to compassionate his afflicted friend, to condole with him, and show his sympathy with his sufferings. This is what every one looks for and expects as a matter of course. But Job has looked in vain. He has received no pity, no sympathy. Nothing has been offered him but arguments. And what arguments! How do they touch the point? How are they anything more than a venting of the speaker's own self-righteousness? Let them fairly consider his case, and point out to him where he has been blamable. **But he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty**; rather, *even though he forsake the fear of the Almighty*, or *else might he forsake the fear of the Almighty*. Job certainly does not mean to admit that he has renounced the fear of God, and become an apostate from religion; but only to assert, either, that, even had he done so, his friends ought still to have shown him kindness, or else that their not showing him kindness is the very way to drive him to apostasy.

Ver. 15.—**My brethren**; *i.e.* "my three friends," Eliphaz, who has spoken; Bildad and Zophar, who by their silence have shown their agreement with him. **Have dealt deceitfully as a brook**; *i.e.* "a winter torrent"—a "wady," to use the modern Arab expression. These watercourses are characteristic of Palestine and the adjacent regions. "During the winter months," says Dr. Cunningham Geikie, "they are often foaming rivers; but in the hot summer, when they would be of priceless value, their dry bed is generally the road from one point to another. The water rushes over the sheets of rock as it would from the roof of a house, and converging, as it descends, into minor streams in the higher wadies, these sweep on to a common channel in some central valley, and, thus united, swell in an incredibly short time into a deep, troubled, roaring flood, which fills the whole bottom of the wady with an irresistible torrent . . . The streams from Lebanon, and also from the high mountains of the Hauran, send down great floods of dark and troubled waters in spring, when the ice and snow of their summits are melted; but they dry up under the heat of summer, and the track of the torrent, with its chaos of boulders, stones, and gravel, seems as if it had not known a stream for ages. So Job's friends had in former times seemed as if they would be true to him for ever; but their friendship had vanished, like the rush of the torrent that had passed away" ('The Holy Land and the Bible,' vol. i. pp. 123—125). **And as the stream of brooks they pass away**; or, *the channel*; i.e. the wady itself. Canon Cook well says on this, "The simile is remarkably complete. When little needed, the torrent overflows; when needed, it disappears. In winter it does not fertilize; in summer it is dried up. Nor is it merely useless; it deceives, alluring the traveller by the appearance of verdure, promising refreshment, and giving none."

Ver. 16.—**Which are blackish by reason of the ice.** Job seems to have seen wadys where, in the winter-time, the water was actually frozen into hard black ice. This scarcely occurs now in the countries bordering on Palestine; but may have occurred in the region where Job dwelt, formerly. "Dark, turbid water" can scarcely be intended. And **wherein the snow is hid.** Some suppose *melted* snow to be meant; but the deep wadies in the Hauran and elsewhere would easily conceal snowdrifts.

Ver. 17.—**What time they wax warm, they vanish: when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place** (see the passage quoted from Dr. Geikie in the comment on ver. 15).

Ver. 18.—**The paths of their way are turned aside**; rather, as in the Revised Version, *the caravans that travel by the way of them turn aside.* It seems impossible that the streams can be intended, since their paths are never "turned aside"—they simply shrink, fail, and dry up. But nothing is commoner than for caravans short of water to go out of their way in order to reach a wady, where they expect to be able to replenish their water-skins. If they are disappointed, if the wady is dry, they may be brought into great straits, and may even possibly perish. (For a probable instance, where dependence on a wady would, but for a miracle, have led to a great disaster, see 2 Kings iii. 9—20.) **They go to nothing, and perish**; rather, *they go up into the waste, and perish.* Having vainly sought water in the dry wady, they ascend out of it, and enter the broad waste of the desert, where they too often miserably perish.

Ver. 19.—**The troops of Tema looked.** The Tema were an Arab tribe descended from Ishmael (Gen. xxv. 15). They are generally conjoined with Dedan (Isa. xxi. 13, 14; Jer. xxv. 23), another Arab tribe, noted for carrying on a caravan trade. Both tribes probably wandered, and occupied at different periods different portions of the desert. The name, Tema, may linger in the modern city and district of *Taymâ*, on the confines of Syria, and upon the pilgrim-route between Damascus and Mecca. The "troops of Tema" probably looked for the "caravans" of ver. 18 to arrive in their country; but they looked in vain. The desert had swallowed them up. **The companies of Sheba waited for them.** (On "Sheba," see the comment upon ch. i. 15.)

Ver. 20.—**They were confounded because they had hoped.** Shame and confusion of face came upon them in consequence of their

vain hope. In the same way, Job implies, he is ashamed of having looked for compassion and kindness from his friends. He should have been wiser and have known better. **They came thither, and were ashamed.** They not only hoped, but acted on their hope—let it turn them aside from their way (ver. 18) and bring them to ruin.

Ver. 21.—**For now ye are nothing.** Like the dried-up torrents, the comforters had come to nought; were wholly useless and unprofitable. Another reading gives the sense. "Ye are like to them"—"ye comforters," *i.e.*, "are like the winter torrents, and have misled me, as they misled the caravans." **Ye see my casting down, and are afraid.** Here Job penetrates to the motive which had produced the conduct of his friends. They had come with good intentions, meaning to comfort and console him; but when they came, and saw what a wreck he was, how utterly "broken up" and ruined, they began to be afraid of showing too much friendliness. They thought him an object of the Divine vengeance, and feared lest, if they showed him sympathy, they might involve themselves in his punishment.

Ver. 22.—**Did I say, Bring unto me?** The meaning is probably—If this be the case, if ye are afraid of helping me, why have ye come? Did I ask for your aid? No. I neither requested you to bring me anything for myself, nor to make a present to any one on my behalf; much less did I call upon you to deliver me out of the hand of my enemies, to chastize the Chaldeans and the men of Sheba (ch. i. 15, 17), and recover from them my property. No; I asked nothing at all of you; but when you came voluntarily, I did expect your pity (ver. 14). **Or, Give a reward for me of your substance?** *i.e.* give a present on my behalf to some influential person, who might thereupon take up my cause and befriend me. There is no need of supposing a "bribe" to be meant.

Ver. 23.—**Or, Deliver me from the enemy's hand?** rather, *from the hand of the violent man.* **Or, Redeem me from the hand of the mighty?** literally, *of the oppressor* (see the Revised Version). Job had not called on his friends to do any of these things. He had not worn out their patience by asking now for this, and now for that. But he had expected their compassion, and this was denied him.

Ver. 24.—**Teach me, and I will hold my tongue.** Job is willing to be taught, if his friends have any instruction to give. He is willing to be reproved. But not in such sort as he has been reproved by Eliphaz. *His* words were not "words of uprightness." **Cause me to understand wherein I have erred.** Point out, that is, in what my assumed guilt consists. You maintain that my afflictions are deserved. Point out what in my conduct has deserved them. I am quite ready to be convinced.

Ver. 25.—**How forcible are right words!** literally, *words of uprightness.* Such words have a force that none can resist. If the charges made by Eliphaz had been right and true, and his arguments sound and just, then Job must have yielded to them, have confessed himself guilty, and bowed down with shame before his judges. But they had had no such constraining power. Therefore they were not "words of uprightness." **But what doth your arguing reprove?** literally, *What doth your reproving reprove?* That is—What exactly is it that ye think to be wrong in me? At what is your invective aimed?

Ver. 26.—**Do ye imagine to reprove words?** or, *Do ye propose?* "Is it your intention?" Am I to understand that you blame nothing in my conduct, but only the words that I have spoken? *i.e.* the words recorded in ch. iii. **And the speeches of one that is desperate,** which are **as wind;** or, *whereas the speeches of one that is desperate, are but as wind;* literally, *for the wind*—spoken to the wind, for the wind to take hold of them and bear them away. Therefore not worth a reproof.

Ver. 27.—**Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless;** rather, *on the fatherless would ye cast lots* (comp. Joel iii. 3; Obad. 11; Nah. iii. 10). Job means to say they are so pitiless that they would cast lots for the children of an insolvent debtor condemned to become slaves at his death (see 2 Kings iv. 1; Neh. v. 5). **And ye dig a pit for your friend;** or, *ye would make merchandise of your friend,* as in the Revised Version. Job does not speak of what his friends had done, but of what he deems them capable of doing.

Ver. 28.—**Now therefore be content, look upon me;** rather, *be pleased to look upon me.* Professor Lee translates, "Look *favourably* upon me." But this addition is unnecessary. What Job desires is that his friends would look him straight in the face. Then they would not be able to doubt him. They would see that he was telling the truth. **For it is evident unto you if I lie;** rather, *it will be evident unto you,* etc. Others render the passage, "For surely I shall not lie to your face" (Schultens, Canon Cook, Revised Version).

Ver. 29.—**Return, I pray you;** *i.e.* "go back upon my case: reconsider it." And then, **Let it not be iniquity;** or, *let there be no iniquity;* i.e. let no injustice be done me. **Yea, return again, my righteousness is in it.** If my cause be well considered, it will be seen that I am in no way blameworthy.

Ver. 30.—Is there iniquity in my tongue? (see ver. 26). Job now justifies his words, which previously he had admitted to have been "rash" (ver. 3). Perhaps he intends to distinguish between rashness and actual wickedness. **Cannot my taste discern perverse things?** *i.e.* I see no perversity or wickedness in what I have said. If there were any, I think I should discern it. The reasoning is somewhat dangerous, since men are not infallible judges, not being unprejudiced judges, in their own case. Job's ultimate verdict on himself is that he has "uttered that which he understood not" (ch. xlii. 3)—wherefore he "abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes" (ch. xlii. 6).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—13.—*Job to Eliphaz:* 1. *Apologies and prayers.* I. A DESPERATE MAN'S DEFENCE. 1. *Job's calamities surveyed.* (1) Their weight. Heavier than the sand of the seas. Employed elsewhere to depict what is innumerable (Gen. xxii. 17; Ps. lxxviii. 27) and immeasurable (1 Kings iv. 29; Jer. xxxiii. 22), the sand upon the seashore is here selected to set forth the notion of incomparable weight (Prov. xxvii. 3). Like the ocean beach stretching away measureless and oppressive, the sorrow of the patriarch was intolerably burdensome. Scripture designates as burdens afflictions and temporal calamities of all sorts, whether of individuals (Ps. lv. 22; 2 Kings ix. 25) or of nations (Isa. xv. 1; xvii. 1; xix. 1). Yet more crushing and intolerable even than these is the burden laid by sin upon awakened and sensitive souls (Ps. xxxviii. 4). (2) Their intensity. Likened to the wounds of poisoned arrows, with a multitude of which Job describes himself as transfixed, not in body only, but in spirit too. Arrows are put in Scripture for afflictions, calamities, judgments, which, like them, are often swift (Zech. ix. 14), unexpected (Ps. xci. 5), sharp (Ps. xlv. 5), difficult to be removed (Ps. xxxviii. 1, 2), and deadly, especially when sent in wrath (Deut. xxxii. 42). (3) Their effect. Exhausting; the venom shot into Job's veins setting them on fire, corrupting his blood, inflaming his flesh, enfeebling his spirit, and generally producing a sensation of constantly increasing weakness; terrifying, inspiring his trembling heart with ghostly alarms and paralyzing fears, which seemed to gather round him like a troop of pale spectres from the outlying posts of God's dominions, and to marshal themselves like a sable host against him; nauseating, causing his soul to revolt against them as the stomach turns sickly at the sight of loathsome food. (4) Their origin. From God. This was the principal aggravation of the patriarch's misery. So long as a sufferer can see God's face, the heaviest load of calamity will not crush him; but when God's favour appears to be withdrawn, the spirit sinks like lead in the mighty waters (ch. ix. 13). 2. *Job's grief justified.* (1) Compared with his calamities, it was not extravagant. His heated words (ver. 3) had not been disproportioned to the misery which had given them expression. Not balancing the two things his friend had unjustly accused him of—impatience and rage. Weighed together, the overwhelming character of his sorrow would "swallow up" his words as a wholly inadequate utterance of his grief. That Eliphaz failed to estimate accurately the intensity of Job's sufferings was natural, since no man can put himself exactly in another's place, and only the heart that suffers can know its own bitterness (Prov. xiv. 10). Yet charity should have moved him to judge with leniency, and speak with tenderness of, a grief whose cause he did not comprehend. At the same time, it is hardly doubtful that Job's misery did not warrant the appalling outburst of ch. iii.; but men at all times (and especially in affliction) are readier to excuse themselves than others. (2) Considered in itself, it was not unnatural. It was not without cause. Even the senseless ass and the stupid ox were wise enough to hold their tongues when placed in circumstances of asinine and bovine felicity; *i.e.* when they had plenty of food; and surely he had as much discernment as these irrational creatures, and could distinguish whether he was miserable or happy, and cry out or be silent accordingly. Then having a cause, it was likewise irrepressible, it being as impossible for him not to complain as it was for a person to eat what was unsavoury or tasteless without making wry faces and giving vent to his displeasure.

II. A MISERABLE MAN'S PRAYER. 1. *Job's urgent request.* "Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for!" (ver. 8)—that thing being death (cf. ch. iii. 21). Job longed for death as a release from his sufferings

(ch. iii. 13); Elijah, under a sense of weariness and disappointment (1 Kings xix. 4); Jonah, in a fit of rage and self-conceit (Jonah iv. 8); St. Paul, through ardent longing for heaven (Phil. i. 23); Christ, through vehement desire after man's salvation (Luke xii. 50). 2. *Job's pitiful entreaty.* "Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off" (ver. 9). That Job does not think of taking his own life, although often strongly tempted to do so by his peculiar malady (ch. vii. 15, 16), although death was the paramount desire of his heart, and although he professed himself free from anxiety about the future, was a proof, not only of Job's regard for the sanctity of life, and of his clear recognition of God's proprietorship in that life, but also of his own moral integrity, and of the intensity with which he still shrank from the perpetration of known sin. 3. *Job's melancholy plea.* "Then should I yet have comfort" (ver. 10). The mere anticipation of a speedy dissolution would not only cause him to forget his misery, it would thrill him with extreme delight; yea, if God would but assure him that every stroke was hastening his end, he would bear without a murmur the most unsparing affliction that might be laid upon him. 4. *Job's twofold motive.* (1) No fear of death. "For I have not concealed the words of the Holy One" (ver. 10). Had Job been apprehensive of meeting God, he would not so earnestly have longed, or so vehemently entreated, to be removed. The only thing that could have damped his exultation in the prospect of death would have been uncertainty about his future. But of this he was devoid, since he had not concealed, *i.e.* had not denied or neglected, but openly had practised, the words of the Holy One. (2) No hope of life. "What is my strength, that I should hope? and what is mine end, that I should prolong my life?" (ver. 11). It was impossible that his strength, which was not that of stones or of brass (ver. 12) could hold out much longer, and therefore idle in Eliphaz to speak, or him to think, of restoration. Nay, supposing he should recover, it could only be for so short a period that it was not worth while fostering expectation of it. But in point of fact, all natural power of rallying had departed from him, and nought remained that could be matured into health again (ver. 13). Job clearly judged in this matter on the principles of sense and reason, forgetting that all things were possible with God, that God can raise a feeble man up from the very brink of the grave (Isa. xxxviii. 10—20), ay, even from the dead (contrast the faith of Abraham, Rom. iv. 19; Heb. xi. 19), and that God delights to perfect his strength in human weakness (2 Cor. xii. 9).

Learn: 1. Though religion requires sufferers to submit to God's chastisements, it does not oblige them to yield to man's unjust accusations. Job sinned not in replying to Eliphaz. 2. It is extremely hard to hold the balance evenly between the soul's calamities and the heart's griefs, whether in ourselves or others. Job blamed Eliphaz for not justly weighing his sufferings and his sorrow, while practically Eliphaz censured Job for a like offence. 3. Though it is a sore trial to a good man in affliction to miss the sympathy of friends, it is incomparably more painful and distressing to lose the sense of God's favour, not to speak of experiencing the frowns of God's anger. Shaddai's arrows and Eloah's terrors were infinitely harder for Job to bear than Eliphaz's insinuations. 4. The best of men are "poore sillie creatures" when God presseth them with judgments, quite incompetent to bear the shock of outward calamity unless God shall hold them up. Job's standing upright in the midst of such a tempest of tribulation as swept around him was a proof, not of man's strength, but of God's grace. 5. It is no sin to long for death, provided we wait God's time for its coming. Job, though urgent for release from his sufferings, would not be released by any hand but God's. 6. The best way to overcome the fear of death is to have a comfortable outlook into the future. Job was not afraid of dying, because not afraid of meeting God. 7. The best preparation for both death and eternity is not to conceal from our vision, but to hide within our hearts, the words of the Holy One.

Vers. 14—30.—*Job to Eliphaz*: 2. *Reproofs and retorts.* I. UNKINDNESS REPROVED. The behaviour of Eliphaz (and his friends) was: 1. *Unnatural.* Compassion for a suffering fellow-creature, much more for a friend, was a dictate of humanity (ver. 14). The condition of Job pre-eminently claimed pitiful consideration. He was not only melting away, bodily and mentally, but spiritually he was in danger of "forsaking the fear of the Almighty," *i.e.* losing his hold on God, on God's love and favour towards him.

self, and, as a consequence, on his integrity before and confidence in God (cf. Ps. xxxviii. 6; lxix. 2). The withholding of sympathy from one in his condition was a deplorable dereliction of duty and a manifest token of unfeeling barbarity. 2. *Inconsistent.* Besides being a dictate of nature, the law of kindness is one of the plainest precepts of religion (Lev. xix. 18; Zech. vii. 9; Luke x. 37; Rom. xii. 10—15; Jas. i. 27), and its fulfilment one of the surest marks of moral and spiritual perfection (Ps. cxii. 4; Prov. xxxi. 26; Rom. xiii. 8; Col. iii. 14; 1 Pet. i. 22; 1 John iv. 12). The absence, therefore, of pity on the part of Eliphaz and his friends argued them destitute of genuine religion, or, according to another reading of the clause, showed them to be "forsaking the fear of Shaddai." 3. *Injurious.* A third interpretation understands Job to say that Eliphaz's lack of sympathy had rendered it more difficult for him, Job, to believe in the kindness of his heavenly Friend—was, in fact, enough to cause him to forsake the fear of the Almighty. Earthly relationships were undoubtedly designed to be helpful for the right understanding of God's relationship towards men; a father's love to be an emblem of that of the Divine Father (Deut. viii. 5; Ps. ciii. 13; Matt. vii. 11); a friend's pity to interpret that of the Elder Brother (Prov. xviii. 24). Hence the responsibility of so fulfilling these relationships that men shall be assisted rather than hindered on their heavenward way. 4. *Disappointing.* Eliphaz and his friends had deceived Job like a brook (ver. 15), like the dried-up water of a mountain wady. The image, applied by Job to his brethren (ver. 21) consists of four parts. (1) The winter torrent, noisy and full, turbid and swollen by thick blocks of floating ice and fast-falling flakes of snow, rushing down the precipitous ravine, and attracting by its loud roar and white foam the attention of desert travellers as they pass (ver. 16),—an emblem of the loud and profuse protestations of friendship which were made by Eliphaz and his companions at a time when Job did not require them, and which gave promise of long continuance, like the waters of the brook. (2) The dry river-bed in summer-time, from which the streams have vanished, leaving only heaps of shingle or piles of boulders (ver. 17),—an emblem of the quickness and completeness with which the loud-mouthed protestations of Job's friends had disappeared, having gone to nothing, like the winter torrent, the hot sun that had shrivelled them up being Job's deplorable and ghastly condition (ver. 21). (3) The desert caravans turning aside in search of the water they had formerly observed, being still attracted by the unusual brightness and verdure of the wadys (vers. 18, 19),—an emblem of the eagerness and confidence with which Job had anticipated sympathy and succour from his friends. (4) The consternation of the travellers, going up into the waste and perishing, being confounded at the miserable disappointment of their sanguine expectations, and ashamed that they had put their trust in what was so proverbially treacherous (ver. 20),—an emblem of the utter collapse of Job's hope and expectation from the coming of his friends. 5. *Unreasonable.* Job had not asked them for any great evidence of friendship, neither to relieve his sufferings by charitable gifts, nor to repair his losses by munificent contributions from their personal property, nor to restore his ruined fortunes by recovering them from the Chaldeans and Sabeans, as Abram delivered Lot and his goods from the hands of Chedorlaomer (Gen. xiv. 14). Simply he had craved their sympathy—a small enough boon, which would not have much impoverished them; and yet even that they had withheld. Jonathan dealt otherwise with David (1 Sam. xxiii. 16).

II. INSINUATION REPELLED. The imputation which underlay the whole harangue of Eliphaz, Job resented as: 1. *Unproved.* "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred." A perfectly reasonable demand, since conviction should always precede condemnation. So Christ challenged his countrymen first to convince him of sin (John viii. 46). And it is manifestly absurd to expect that men will listen to admonitions who are unconscious of having committed faults. Even God does not exhort to repentance without having first demonstrated man's guilt. The first function of the Holy Spirit is to convince the world of sin (John xvi. 8). Job's language also indicative of an honest and ingenuous mind. Willingness to be taught is a sign of humility and a token of sincerity. "A man that is willing to be taught is in a better condition than many who are able to teach. It argues a holier temper of the heart to be willing to be taught than to be able to teach. And it is far worse to be unwilling to learn than not to be knowing" (Caryl). 2.

Ungenerous. While words of uprightness, *i.e.* honest speech, plain dealing, even reproof when necessary, had a force which Job could not resist, a pertinency he could not challenge, and a pungency he could not fail to feel and acknowledge, their language had been wholly mean and contemptible, fastening as it did on the despairing utterances of a poor wretch half-crazed with grief, which common consent allows should be regarded as wind, or given to the wind, as idle, meaningless, shifting, and therefore not to be too closely criticized, far less made the basis of a charge of guilt. And Job's contention was substantially correct. Words thrown off in a hasty moment, under the influence of strong passion, are not always a perfectly safe and reliable index to the character of the soul, at least when judged by man. God alone is competent to estimate man's moral and spiritual condition by his words (Matt. xii. 37). All others should be guided by charity in interpreting the speech of agonized men (1 Cor. xiii. 5). 3. *Heartless.* The men who could so make him an offender for a word were in Job's estimation capable of any baseness, such pitiless and inhuman ruffians as would "enslave an orphan for his father's debt, and then cast lots whose he should be" (Cox), or barter their dearest friend for pelf. Probably Job overstrained the case against Eliphaz and his companions; but men have perpetrated the villainies described, as *e.g.* the brethren of Joseph (Gen. xxxvii. 28) and Judas (Matt. xxvi. 15). 4. *Untrue.* Job requests his friends to look into his face and say whether he did not carry the refutation of their slanders in his countenance (ver. 28). The face is commonly a mirror to the soul. The glory of a pure soul shines through the face, illuminating, refining, etherealizing it; just as the moral gloom that enshrouds a wicked soul leaves its impress on the countenance, rendering its features coarse, brutal, sordid, revolting. There are faces that proclaim the depravity of the soul within as certainly as there are noble countenances that bear their own certificate of truth, sincerity, moral honesty, and spiritual refinement. 5. *Unfair.* The friends had started with a prejudice against Job, and, as a consequence, their decision had not been impartial. Accordingly, he invites them to renew their investigation, but on other principles and presuppositions: "Return, I pray you; let there be no unfairness, and my righteousness will be found to stand" (ver. 29). 6. *Insulting.* Their insinuation practically charged Job with being a moral imbecile, who had no capacity to discriminate between right and wrong—an assumption he resented with the utmost vigour (ver. 30), maintaining that, as surely as his palate could distinguish meats, his moral sense could discern right and wrong in the matter of his sufferings, and generally in the providential government of the world of which he next proceeds to speak. The capacity to distinguish between right and wrong is the highest function of intelligence, and is as certainly capable of perversion and obscuration through wilful ignorance and sin as susceptible of education and refinement through Christian instruction and practical holiness.

Learn: 1. The duty of sympathizing with the suffering and sorrowful. Nature prompts to it; religion enjoins it; humanity claims it; the afflicted expect it. 2. The danger of putting stumbling-blocks in the way, to either keep men or withdraw men from the fear of God. 3. The folly of trusting in either princes or men's sons, seeing that man's goodness is commonly (except where grace intervenes) as transient as his greatness. 4. The painfulness of being deceived by any, but especially by those we trust. 5. The certain disappointment of those who look to failing brooks for the water of eternal life. 6. The wickedness of censuring for sins that have been neither proved nor admitted. 7. The liability of man to error, and the only sure and certain pathway to truth, viz. a spirit of humble docility. 8. Truth is less dependent on argumentation than men are apt to suppose, being generally its own best witness.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The sufferer's self-justification.* (Ch. vi., vii.) We have seen that Eliphaz's counsels, though well-meant, were ill-timed. They were *right words*, but not *fitly spoken* as to person, time, and place. They cause the poor sufferer to wince afresh instead of soothing his pain. The tumult of his spirit is now aggravated into a very tempest of woe. The human spirit is a thing of moods. We have watched the

marvellous changes that pass over the surface of a lake beneath a tempestuous sky. And such are the rapid changes of pain that now pass over the mind of Job, relieved here and there by flashes of calmer reflection, of faith and hope. The picture is instructive, teaching us how feeble and unstable a thing is the human mind, and how deeply it needs to look out from itself for a sure support in the Eternal. Let us briefly take note of these moods. Not without profit shall we try to understand them if we thereby cultivate that deeper sympathy with our brethren in adversity which Job seemed to demand at the hand of his friends in vain.

I. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE IMMENSITY OF SUFFERING. (Vers. 1—14.) There are times when every nerve of the sensitive organization seems to be turned into a channel of pain; when the creature, instead of basking in the brilliant ether of unbounded joy, is submerged in a boundless ocean of misery. "All thy waves and billows have gone over me." It is with this feeling that Job exclaims, "Would that a term, a measure, a weight, might be applied to my sufferings!" A day, an hour, of such woe seems as an eternity!

II. THE FEAR OF SINNING WITH THE TONGUE. Ver. 3, which appears to mean, "Therefore my words idly bubbled," like the impatient cries and reproaches of little children against the parents whom they love! But this is the only definite sin of which Job is conscious. And he prays that he may be delivered from it in this trying hour. So said the psalmist, "I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue." Let Christians imitate this example. Let them bridle their tongues with holy reverence, and cast upon them as a spell the prayer of Jesus in the garden.

"Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
Forgive them when they fail in truth,
And in thy wisdom make me wise!"

III. THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF HIS SUFFERINGS TRACED TO GOD. (Ver. 4.) It is *his arrows* which have fastened themselves with poisonous inflammation in his breast; his host of terrors that have beleaguered his soul. Though in such extreme moments it is hard to reconcile our sufferings with the goodness of God, it is well to hold firmly to the clue of Divine causation. That which has not come causelessly will not causelessly remain. This is the one crevice through which light steals into the dungeon: "God is in all I suffer."

IV. APOLOGY FOR HIS COMPLAINTS. (Vers. 5—7.) They are true to nature. God has given to all animals their natural voice of pleasure and of pain. And these voices express natural tastes and repugnances. The ox and the ass are silent at the well-filled stall. It is only when unsavoury food is offered that we hear the cries of complaint. And what an unsavoury mess is this which his friends would place before him, in their rigid application to him of the doctrine that his suffering witnesses his guilt!

V. DEATH CRAVED AS A BOON. (Vers. 8—13.) The very thought of it excites a frantic joy. Whereas Eliphaz had spoken of deliverance from death as one of the privileges of the blessed man, and of its lingering approach in a happy old age, Job would crave a speedy dismissal as the last boon which he feels entitled, in a clear conscience, to ask of God! "I have not denied the words of the Holy One; I shall not pass, an impenitent, rejected soul; grant me this last, this speedy favour, to die!" If such a state of mind excites our keenest pity, what shall we think of the condition of those Buddhists or pessimists among the heathen and ourselves, who have built a doctrine upon this horror-stricken mood, and teach that the highest good for man is absorption in some Nirvana of dreamless, unconscious nothingness? Truly, the gospel of Christ is the only remedy for these melancholy aberrations. M. Naville says that the impassioned earnestness of Lacroix, the great Indian missionary, which he had listened to in earlier years, was only fully understood by him when subsequent study had acquainted him with the gloomy beliefs of the Oriental world.

VI. CONFESSION OF UTTER WEAKNESS AND DESPONDENCY. (Vers. 11—13.) He has neither strength nor patience to look forward to the end which is to reward endurance. Sooner or later death must be the end; and why not sooner rather than later? But weakness cannot wring from his tortured breast the confession of a guilt which conscience refuses to own. He has not denied the words of the Holy One. His heart has

been true to God. This consciousness is still a kind of strength in weakness, and enables him to ask this last boon at God's hands—a speedy death.—J.

Vers. 14—21.—*The illusions of friendship.* Oh, how sweet and blessed at this hour would the ministries of true friendship be! Job, in the shipwreck of fortune and of health, is like a poor swimmer clinging to a spar or fragment of rock with ebbing strength, looking vainly for the lifeboat, and the strong, rescuing arms of friends and saviours. Instead of this, his friends stand aloof, and lecture and lesson him on the supposed folly which has steered his bark upon the breakers. Here we see in one glance the greatest danger to which a human soul can be exposed, and the greatest service one human being can render another.

I. THE GREATEST HUMAN PERIL. What is it? The loss of life? Not in the common sense of those words. For the loss of life in this world is not necessarily the loss of the soul. The loss of worldly goods? Still less; for a man's life consisteth not in these. The loss of family, of reputation, of health? All these may be repaired; but the loss of God is irreparable. The mangled tree may sprout again, and send forth vigorous suckers from its root; but how if that root itself be extirpated from its holding? It is the horror in the prospect of losing reverence, trust—of losing God—that now looms upon the patriarch's soul. We need only refer to the twenty-second psalm—to those words quoted by our Saviour in the agony on the cross—to remind ourselves of the fearfulness of this last trial to every godly soul.

II. THE GREATEST HUMAN MINISTRY. It is to do something to save a sinking brother from such a fate. A cheerful faith is infectious. A noble courage will thrill in the vibrations of sympathy to another's soul. And this is, then, the best office our friends can discharge for us in our greatest troubles. Let them remind us by their words, their prayers, their looks, their tones, of God. Let them not throw a new burden upon our drooping consciousness by reminding us of what we are or are not, but relieve us by telling us of what he is and ever will be—the Refuge and Strength of them that seek him. And this may be a fitting place to speak generally of—

III. THE QUALITIES OF FRIENDSHIP. By a beautiful image Job describes the failure of friendship. An unfaithful or unintelligent friend is like a brook swollen with snow and rain in spring-time, but dried in its channel under the scorching heat of summer. The poet says of one who has been lost to his sorrowing companions by death—

> "He is gone from the mountain,
> He is lost to the forest,
> Like a summer-dried fountain,
> When our need was the sorest!"

The pathos of those words is, alas! applicable to living but absent or unsympathetic friends. There is nothing more beautiful or more useful in all the world than true friendship. Perhaps as "all other things seem to be symbols of love, so love is the highest symbol of friendship." But for the service of friendship there must be: 1. *Constant affection.* The equal flow of a deep river, not the intermittent gushings of a fickle fountain. 2. *Habitual sympathy.* We must feel *with* our friend so long as he is our friend. There are crimes which will break up this holy tie. Connivance at guilt can be no part of this sacred covenant. But so long as I can call my friend my friend, I must bear with his infirmities, "not make them greater than they are." How unhappy the knack of seeing all that can be said against our friend, with blindness to all that can be urged in his favour! We dread the coming of these "candid friends," so called. If there are unpleasant truths, let him hear them from another's lips than ours. Let not the troubles of those we own by this sacred name be made occasions for airing the conceit of our superior wisdom, or indulging a vein of moralizing, but for unlocking all the treasures of our heart. 3. *Lively imagination.* Want of imagination, or, in other words, dulness and stupidity, is a great defect for general social intercourse. Men quarrel and fly asunder because they do not understand one another. They do not use the faculty of imagination to "put themselves in another's place." And what may hinder general intercourse may be a fatal bar to friendship. "I am not understood:" what commoner complaint? Yet what is this high faculty given us for, but that, under the guidance of Christian love, we may identify another heart with our

own, appropriate all its sorrowful experiences, and think and speak and feel towards others, as well as do unto them, as we would they should do unto us? But these demands for an ideal friendship are not, after all, to be satisfied by frail human nature. Let us, then, think: 4. These qualities of friendship can be only *fully found in God.* The Divine Friend!—he whose unfailing, self-replenished love alone is equal to supply the thirst of our hearts, whose sympathy is that of One who knows us better than we know ourselves; who numbers our hairs, and gathers our tears into his bottle; who needs to exercise no imagination in order to realize our condition, because he *knows!* O God! greater than our hearts, whose knowledge is the measure of thy sympathy, whose sympathy is fed from the eternal well-spring of thy love; God manifested in Jesus Christ; thou only art the Friend of our sorrow, the Sustainer of our help.

LESSONS. May we listen with humble obedience to the voice which says to us, "Henceforth I call you friends"! As life wears, and many shallow torrents of earthly kindness are dried, may we experience more profoundly thy never-wasting fulness!—J.

Vers. 22—27.—*Friendship: its rights and its disclaimers.* In his agonized yearning for sympathy and tenderness, Job further appeals to the conscience and memory of his friends, seeking to put an end to this lacerating contention, and to be reconciled to them in peace.

I. DISCLAIMERS. True friendship disclaims the right to be exacting. We have no right to lay a tax on the property, or time, or energy of those whom we desire to grapple to us as with hooks of steel. All must be spontaneous, voluntary, free, in the mutual offices of friendship. There are a few noble hearts, indeed, with whom every benefit is a reason for another. Shakespeare has drawn the sublime picture of such a one in his 'Merchant of Venice,' who stops not short at the loan of goods, but pledges his very flesh for his friend. But the counterpart is not to be found in actual life. God is he who alone invites our largest asking, wearies not of our urgency, giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not. The life laid down for us is the pledge that we cannot claim too much from him. The gospel does not fail to point us to the frailty of human nature, even in its noblest moods, in order to set in contrast the illustrious sacrifices of Christ for us. Job had not asked for gifts of substance from his friends to redeem him from durance, or for any other purpose. He had been wiser than to kill the tender plant of mutual good will by unseasonable exactions. And let us read ourselves the lesson that nothing will more surely or speedily break our happiest ties than to allow the hand we offer in affection to be put forth to buy, to traffic, to exact.

II. CLAIMS. But we have great rights and privileges in friendship. These the patriarch insists upon now. He has a *right* to good words, which are worth much and cost little. He has a right, so long as he is regarded as a friend, to have the truth of his own statements accepted. He has a right to confidence. In distress he is entitled to tenderness, compassion, and efficient guidance by those whose minds are calm and unimpaired by woe. And above all, perhaps, just now, the right of self-defence is most precious, which these advisers seem obstinately to deny. How often is this tragedy enacted! We condemn good men, honest hearts, unheard; we refuse them a fair hearing. They do not easily explain themselves, or we, with our preoccupations and prejudices, are slow to understand. There may be greater ability to defend one's self against the accusations of bitter foes than against the misconceptions of intimate friends. In fact, this is one of those severe trials in relation to our equals of which a recent preacher has so finely discoursed (Mozley, 'University Sermons').

III. SELF-DEFENCE. Against what fault or sin are these monotonous and harsh reproofs directed? Is it against Job's evil deeds? But they are not specified, and Job denies that they have been done. There is no keener injustice than vague attacks on a man without specification of the exact nature of the charges. Is it the present language of Job? True, hasty words may have escaped him; he fears it; but is the language of health and joy to be tested by the same measures, weighed in the same scales, with that which pain and intense distress extort from the lips? Job knows his heart has not been unfaithful to his God, whatever cries of agony and despair have been borne upon the wind. The whole section thus contains a pathetic appeal to the human conscience for human love; and it teaches us indirectly, but with great feeling, the duties of friendly ministry to others in their distress.

LESSONS. 1. Calm guidance, healthy suggestions for the morbid intelligence. 2. The "sweetness" (ver. 25) of right words of tender sympathy. 3. Abstinence from argument in such circumstances which only irritates and never soothes. 4. Considerate listening to explanations. 5. Hearty acceptance of honest self-vindications. In all these particulars we have bright examples set us by our blessed Saviour, who never broke the bruised reed nor quenched the smoking flax. By such methods of ministry we are to earn and prove the holy name of friend to our brethren, and lead men to believe that God has angels of blessing in human shape passing about the worn paths of misery in this world.—J.

Vers. 1—13.—*A true estimate of grief under the severities of affliction.* Even the strong man cries for help and release. Job, in his extreme sufferings, desires that a fair judgment may be formed of them and of his complaint. Put this into one scale, and them into the other, and behold which of them is the lighter. Thus he describes them—

I. THE INSUFFERABLE WEIGHT OF HIS AFFLICTION. It is as the unknown weight of the sand of the seashore. Affliction is truly as the pressure of a great weight upon the frail body. The idea of patience is gained from bearing up under a load. Heavy is the load, indeed, under which this servant of the Lord is bowed down. It is not to be estimated. No onlooker can determine it. Therefore should judgment be withheld when from the life of the sufferer there escapes the sigh of complaint. He only knows his sufferings; and he may know that his cry does not fully represent them. The untouched observer but hears the cry, and cannot put that into comparison with a pain that he feels not, and the measure of which pain the cry is supposed to represent. How shall a just judgment, therefore, be given?

II. THE KEENNESS OF THE PANG OF HIS SUFFERINGS. They pierce as doth an arrow; and are as poisoned arrows; and as arrows shot forth by no feeble arm, but by the Almighty. They penetrate to the inner spirit. The strength of their burning poison drinks up—burns up his spirit. He does not encounter a feeble foe. "The terrors of God set themselves in array" against him. Is it wonderful that his words are hasty? Is there not a cause? "Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass?"

III. THE ABHORRENT CHARACTER OF THE THINGS WITH WHICH HE HAS TO DO. "That which my soul refused"—from which I turned away in disgust—I am compelled to take as my daily bread. Yea, that which should give me comfort, even my refreshing food, is loathsome to me. Sadly does he thus represent the nature of the foul disease that cleaveth to him. The onlookers are pained, but they taste it not. To him it is as his food.

IV. HE FURTHER DESCRIBES HIS SUFFERING CONDITION AS SO SAD THAT HE LONGS FOR DEATH. "That it would please God to destroy me!" How low is life reduced when there seems to be no release but in the grave! Worn to the earth, this sufferer cries for an end to be put to his pains. He has not strength to bear up patiently under the weight of them. He cannot desire prolonged life; for what shall the end of it be? Weary, indeed, is that spirit that craves rest in the tomb. Job feels himself so utterly powerless, that continued endurance is impossible to him. He little knew that he could survive all—that he could yet pass through all, and bear honour to God, and perceive in the end the testimony of the Divine approbation. To him it was true, and he would prove it, though the words had not fallen on his ear, "With man it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." Job's history, therefore, illustrates the sufficiency of the Divine grace to sustain men beneath the uttermost pressure of sorrow.—R. G.

Ver. 14.—*The claims of the suffering on the pity of friends.* Job's friends come to condole with him. They are staggered by the severity of his sufferings, and remain silenced before him. When they open their lips they seem not only to try to account for the affliction, but they also appear to be anxious to justify their own inability to comfort their suffering friend. Their words add to Job's heavy affliction instead of lightening his burden, and he cries out in his bitterness, "To him that is afflicted pity should be showed from his friend." To whom should the suffering one turn if not to his friend? We see at once, in such circumstances, a friend's duty and a friend's demand.

I. A FRIEND'S DUTY. 1. The true office of friendship is to enter fully into the circumstances of the friend; not to be indifferent to them, and therefore ignorant. True affection will inquire gently, wisely, and with care into the state, and the need, and the sorrow, and the hopes of the object of its attachment. Not for meddlesome curiosity, but from loving interest the friend's heart will open to take in the tale of sorrow, even the words of complaint. 2. True friendship will lovingly sympathize. The eager pleading of the casual beggar strikes upon the closed ear of the stranger. No chord of pitiful sympathy vibrates, and no hand of help is outstretched. But to the appeals of friendship the heart opens; warm sympathy is stirred. The fluttering spirit finds rest on the bosom of a friend. It is a duty one friend owes to another to show the utmost pitifulness of spirit—a pitifulness that should ripen to loving sympathy. No hardening of the heart, no refusal to be patient, no selfishness, can be found in the breast of the true friend. 3. True friendship will be ready with its help, springing forth with spontaneous eagerness to aid and comfort. It is possible for the friend to stick closer than a brother; and he shows the true spirit of a friend who, feeling perfectly at one with his loved companion, renders willing help to him. 4. The friendship which stimulates to pitiful and loving help in need rejoices also in the joy, the prosperity, and well-being of him to whom it cleaves. The two lives are one. David and Jonathan illustrate this, and happily a thousand examples are around us daily. He that findeth a true friend findeth a precious possession—a prize whose worth cannot be estimated.

II. FOR THIS LOVING SYMPATHY AND PITIFUL HELPFULNESS EVERY ONE MAY MAKE HIS JUST AND REASONABLE DEMAND ON HIS FRIEND. Friendship has its duties of fidelity, of kindness, and help; of confidence, trust, and good will. It has also its claims. It is a silent, mutual compact—each preparing to give that which it demands of the other; each expecting that which it knows it can bestow. It is the supreme satisfaction of true friendship that either of its members may turn to other in the confident, unquestioning assurance of meeting with true sympathy, with an open hand and a warm heart. For this friendship looks, and this it is justified in expecting. A faithful friend's love faileth not; for "a friend loveth always." Even his very "wounds" are "faithful." Happy he who has found a friend in whom he can place the whole faith of his heart; and who is ready to reciprocate the same full, thorough, and trustworthy affection!

1. The wisdom of seeking a friend. 2. The law: "He that would have friends must show himself friendly."—R. G.

Ver. 25.—*The power of right words; or, complaining stayed by instruction.* Job has hitherto met with no comfort from those who came "to mourn with him, and to comfort him." From the inutility of their powerless words he turns aside with the bitter reflection on his lips, "How forcible are right words!" Words charged with truth, with great views of things, with tender sympathy, heal and guide and comfort the perplexed and saddened soul; while the words of false friends pierce as goads. Truth at all times is worthy of trust. The spirit, worn and weary, may rest in it and find peace. *Consider the power of truth*—the force of right words—

I. IN RESOLVING THE ENTANGLEMENTS OF ERROR. Truth is the right, the straight, line which reveals and thereby condemns the crooked departures. Its own clear, calm utterance resolves the confusion of tortuous commingled error. It is by the simple statement of truth that the wrong of error is discovered and rebuked. Loudness of denunciation cannot contradict error, or unravel it, or expose it. Nor will mere logical demonstration; noise will not destroy darkness; nor will the gloom be illuminated by proving it to be darkness. But the quiet shining of the lamp will scatter the shades of black night. So truth in its own simplicity and realness effectually and alone disperses the gloom and guides the feet of the wanderer through the tangled path of error. Such words Job had not yet found. But the good Teacher was not far away; and finally Job was led to the open plain and the clear light and the straight way.

II. RIGHT WORDS ARE FORCIBLE IN THE PRESENCE OF DEEP SORROW. So Job thought. It was for such words he pined. He longed for the teaching that would bring him comfort, and not for the accusations that would make his burden heavier and his heart sadder. There is a deep truth relating to all human affliction. Looked at only as a derangement of human happiness, it is devoid of that completeness of view that would constitute it a truthful one. But looked at as a Divine correction, a

discipline, a sharp warning or departure from law, and a just punishment for such departure; and looked at as under the control of the Almighty Father, it is seen to be invested with a momentous character, and to be inflicted for the wisest and best purposes. Right words on it bring the mind to peace. They are forcible to counsel and to comfort; to warn of danger, to guide to safety, to console in suffering. Happy the sufferer who has an interpreter at hand, who with right words can unveil the mystery, and make clear the ways of God to man!

III. RIGHT WORDS ARE FORCIBLE IN THE ADJUSTMENT OF DISTURBED RELATIONS OF LIFE. They are wise words and kind. Even enemies are overcome by them. The right word is a word in harmony with the truth. Spoken with lips that speak truth habitually, and from a heart where truth finds its home, they carry conviction. They win the ear and the confidence of the listener. They have a force peculiar to themselves. They command. They are strong and cannot be shaken. They pierce, as doth an arrow, when they are words of condemnation founded on truth; and they comfort, and heal, and restore, and readjust, when they are spoken in kindness. The wise man searches for right words, and, having found them, speaks them in all simplicity. And the seeker after truth, or rest, or comfort welcomes them. They bear help on their wings, and are as reviving as the beams of the morning.—R. G.

Ver. 2.—*Scales for misery.* At length Job has an opportunity to reply to his friend's harangue, and he at once touches on its weak point by implication. Eliphaz has not been sufficiently sympathetic; he has not duly appreciated Job's "abysmal and boundless misery." His wise precepts may apply to some extent to the afflictions of ordinary men, but they are vitiated by his failure to enter into the abnormal distresses of Job. The cursing of his day, which has been wrung out of Job by very anguish of soul, is misjudged by his censor, because the awful depth of that anguish is not appreciated. Therefore Job longs for some scales by which his misery may be weighed, that the lack of appreciation by Eliphaz may be corrected.

I. THE SUFFERER NATURALLY DESIRES AN APPRECIATION OF HIS SUFFERINGS. 1. *That he may be understood.* You cannot understand a man till you know how he feels. Words are more than descriptions of bare facts; they may be utterances of the heart. To comprehend their import we must enter into the feelings of the speaker. We should study the needs and troubles of those whom we desire to understand in order to help them. 2. *That he may be fairly judged.* Eliphaz had made the most galling charges against Job, partly because he was utterly below understanding the afflicted man's overwhelming grief. We are unjust with those who are incomprehensible to us. Christ's executioners did not know him, and he prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). The mob that yelled at him and hounded him to death had not the least conception of his Gethsemane agony. 3. *That he may receive sympathy.* Sympathy helps us to understand one another. But without some preliminary knowledge we can have no kind of sympathy. Ignorant, well-meant attempts at sympathy hurt rather than heal, and chafe the very wounds they are intended to soothe.

II. IT IS NOT EASY TO FIND SCALES IN WHICH SUFFERING CAN BE WEIGHED. Where shall we look for a standard of measurement? We cannot judge by outside tokens of grief; for some are reserved and self-restrained, while others are demonstrative in their abandonment to grief. We cannot judge by the measure of the events that have caused the suffering; for some feel the same calamity much more keenly than it would be felt by others. Each sufferer is tempted to think that his troubles surpass all others. We can only understand a man in so far as we can succeed in putting ourselves in his place. But only Christ can do this perfectly. His incarnation is guarantee of his complete comprehension of human sin and sorrow; so that the sufferer who is misapprehended by his most intimate earthly friends may be assured of the perfect sympathy of his Saviour. Moreover, with his own thoughts the sufferer might measure his grief in a way which would help him to apprize it more justly than by wild conjectures. Suppose he measured it against his blessings: is it so vastly greater? Or suppose he weighed it with his deserts: is it so immensely heavier? Or suppose he compared it with what Christ suffered for him: is there really any comparison between the Christian's roughest cross and the awful cross of his Saviour?—W. F. A.

Ver. 4.—"*The arrows of the Almighty.*" The first thought that occurs to Job when he attempts to describe his trouble to his misjudging friend is that that trouble has been produced by shafts from heaven. Here is the exceeding bitterness of his grief. He regards his calamities as more than natural mischances; such a terrible conjunction of disasters points to a superhuman source. Thus Job is scourged by his faith. His theism adds an agony which the materialist would not feel.

I. THE TERROR OF THE ARROWS OF THE ALMIGHTY. 1. *They are impelled by an irresistible power.* They are shot by "El Shaddai." God in his power is conceived of as the Source of the troubles. But none can resist the might of God. No wonder Job is prostrate in despair. It is useless for him to stand up against his adversary. The shield of faith may "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. vi. 16); but no shield can keep off the piercing arrows of the Almighty. If God is against us, we are utterly undone. 2. *They come from the Source of light and blessing.* God had been showering blessings on the head of the patriarch, who had learnt to honour him as his Benefactor. It was hard, indeed, to find his great Friend turned into a Foe. This fact made the wounds pain as with deadly venom. It is fearful to think that our Father in heaven is shooting wrath against his children. No arrows are so keen as the arrows of love. 3. *They penetrate to the heart.* Earthly calamities strike the outer life. We may have ramparts and bastions that keep them off from our true self. But God's arrows penetrate to the citadel of the soul. He reaches the heart whenever he smites. We can bear outside distresses so long as we keep up a stout heart; but the wounds of the inner man are deadly.

II. THE MISAPPREHENSION OF THE ARROWS OF THE ALMIGHTY. 1. *The error of ascribing to God what he has not sent.* Job thinks that God is his Adversary, but the prologue shows that the adversary is Satan. Of the Satanic cause of his trouble Job has not the least conception. He ascribes it all to God. Thus he is mistaken, unjust, and needlessly dismayed. If he had but known that he was suffering from the arrows of Satan, he would have been more courageous and hopeful. May we not be in error in ascribing to God what he never sends? The evil state of society causes many troubles to the poor, which God does not wish them to suffer from. We cannot charge him with the terrible wrongs of a corrupt civilization which darken the slums of great cities. Our worst woes come from the devil within—from our own heart of sin. 2. *When God does smite, his purpose is good.* Job was so far right that God had some hand in his sufferings, for God had permitted Satan to go to the great length in tormenting Job that he had now reached. (1) There is a smiting to heal. Grievous chastisement is a discipline of love. We think that the arrow poisons us; what it really brings is a needed astringent. (2) There must be a smiting of judgment. God cannot suffer his rebellious creatures to sin with impunity. Though Job had not felt them, God has terrible arrows of judgment for the impenitent. It is well if we learn the lesson of the milder wounds of chastisement before those terrors burst over us.—W. F. A.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Satisfaction and discontent.* Job proceeds to show the reasonableness of his grief, and with it the unreasonableness of his censor's accusations. Eliphaz had been wasting his eloquence on the assumption that Job's outburst of despairing grief was uncalled for; or, at all events, he had not appreciated the tremendous distress of which it was the result. He regarded the effect as preposterous, because he had not seen the greatness of the cause.

I. THE SATISFIED ARE NOT DISCONTENTED. We have illustrations of this fact in nature. Among the wild animals ("the wild ass"), and also among the domesticated ("the ox"), we see that sufficiency produces content. If the wild ass brays, or if the ox lows, something is amiss. Supply them with all they need, and they will be quiet and contented. If, therefore, Job is not at rest, something must be amiss with him. 1. *The discontent of society makes it evident that some want is unsupplied.* Men do not rebel for the sake of rebellion. Political and social upheavals have their sources in some disorganized condition of the body politic. If all were satisfied, quiet would reign universally. 2. *The discontent of the soul proves that the soul is not satisfied.* Man has deeper needs than the animals. The wild ass and the tame ox can be satisfied, while man is still possessed by a "Divine discontent." This very restlessness

is a sign of his higher nature. His thirst reveals the depths from which it springs. Man is

"Poor in abundance, famish'd at a feast"
(Young.)

because "man shall not live by bread alone" (Matt. iv. 4).

II. THE UNSATISFIED MUST BE DISCONTENTED. This is more than the reverse side of the previous statement. It carries with it the idea that the dissatisfaction cannot be stifled, must be met, if it is to be set at rest. The truth is illustrated from natural things. Unsavoury food cannot be made savoury without the salt, the needed condiment. That which is naturally tasteless, like the white of an egg, cannot be made to have delicious flavours by any conjuring process, unless the thing itself is changed or receives additions. So no jugglery will remove the dissatisfaction of society or of the soul. We cannot make the world at rest by wishing it to be peaceful, or by declaring it to be quiet. A theory of order is not order, nor is a doctrine of optimism a quietus for the world's distresses. The bitter cry of the outcast will not be allayed because some philosophers believe themselves to be living in "the best of possible worlds." We do not make peace by calling, "Peace, peace!" when there is no peace. To preach to souls of rest and satisfaction is not to bestow those desired boons. It is as much a mockery to tell miserable men to be contented without supplying their wants, as to tell the hungry and naked to be fed and clothed while we do nothing to furnish them with what they lack. Any lulling of discontent without curing its cause is false and unhealthy. It is like putting a weight on the safety-valve. It is no better than the morphia that allays the symptoms of the disease it cannot cure. The discontent should go on till it finds its remedy in a true satisfaction. 1. Christ gives this for society in the kingdom of heaven; if we followed out his teaching in the world the wants of society would be satisfied. 2. He gives it for the soul in his body and blood, and the life eternal that comes from fellowship with him.—W. F. A.

Vers. 8, 9.—*The prayer of despair.* This is an awful prayer. Job longs for death, and prays God to crush him. Then there will be an end to his agonies. He has rejected his wife's temptation to suicide (ch. ii. 9); but he begs that God will take his life.

I. IT IS WELL TO BRING THE DESPAIR OF THE SOUL TO GOD. The despair is not utter and complete if it has not stifled the fountains of prayer. When it can be said of any one, "Behold, he prayeth," all hope is not yet gone. Although for the time being he had lost sight of it, still there is a point on which hope for better days may lay hold. When all things seem to be rushing to ruin, and there is no other outlook for the soul, the outlook to heaven is still open. If we can do nothing else, the way is still before us to cast our burden upon the Lord. Though the very prayer be one of horror and despair, like Job's, still it is a prayer. There is the saving element. The soul is looking up to God. It is not quite alone in its desolation.

II. GOD UNDERSTANDS THE PRAYER OF DESPAIR. He is not like Job's purblind censor Eliphaz, who judged in ignorance and wounded when he thought to heal. The breaches of conventional propriety in religion, which shock the more precise sort of piety, are not thus misapprehended by God. He views all with a large eye of charity, with a penetrating discernment of sympathy. The wild utterance that only scandalizes the superficial hearer moves the compassion of the Father of spirits. He knows from what depths of agony it has been forced, and he pardons the extravagance of it in pity for its misery.

III. THE PRAYER OF DESPAIR IS FOOLISH AND SHORT-SIGHTED. These two words, "prayer" and "despair," are quite incongruous. The one should utterly banish the other. If we quite understood the meaning and power of prayer, despair would be impossible. For prayer implies that God has not forgotten us; or why should one pray to heedless ears? When we carry our grief to God we bring it to Almighty Love, and such a haven must be more congenial to hope than to despair.

IV. GOD REFUSES TO ANSWER THE PRAYER OF DESPAIR. There are prayers which God will not answer, and that, not because he is inexorable, but because he is merciful; and as the mother is too kind to give her infant the flaming candles for which it cries, God is too good to bestow on his foolish children the evil things which they sometimes crave from his hand. Thus the very refusal to respond to the prayer is a result, not of

disregarding it, but of giving to it more than that superficial attention which would have been enough for an unquestioning response. God sifts and weighs our prayers. We cannot present them as cheques on the bank of heaven, expecting immediate payment, exactly according to the measure of what we have set down in them. God is far better than our prayers. He exceeds our fears even when we beg him to act according to them. His sane mind corrects the wild fancies of our haste and passion. Therefore we need not shrink from the utmost freedom in prayer. God will not deal with us according to our words, but according to his love and our faith.—W. F. A.

Ver. 14 (reading the last clause as in the margin of the Revised Version, "Else might he forsake the fear of the Almighty").—*The redeeming power of sympathy.* Job tells his friend that he has gone to work in a wrong way, and one which might have had most disastrous results, the opposite of those he aimed at. Eliphaz honestly intended to bring Job to God in contrite submission, but his harsh and unwise conduct was only calculated to drive the troubled man from God in wild despair. He should have chosen the "more excellent way" of sympathy.

I. THE SECRET OF THE REDEEMING POWER OF SYMPATHY. 1. *By giving strength to endure.* The soul that stands alone may sink down to despair. But "two are better than one." As we help to bear one another's burdens, we lift the crushing load that drives to rebellion. 2. *By softening the heart.* The danger of great calamity is that it will smite the heart to hardness. The most fatal effect is produced when all traces of suffering are passed, because the very faculty of feeling is frozen to death. Now, here sympathy has a saving efficacy. The tears that are sealed up in solitude burst forth at the sight of a friend's tears. 3. *By revealing the love of God.* There is danger lest great trouble should make men doubt God's love, and even come to regard all love as a pretence and a delusion. The world then seems very black and cruel. But a brother's kindness begins to dispel the error. It shows that the world is not wholly hard and cruel and selfish. This kindness is but a spark from the great fire of God's love. From the sympathy of our brother we are led up to the sympathy of our Father, out of which it springs. If there were more human charity in the world there would be more faith in God. Atheism is a product of the despair which sympathy would cure.

II. THE EXERCISE OF THE REDEEMING POWER OF SYMPATHY. 1. *In God.* Our sympathy is but a copy of God's sympathy. His method is to save by love. His goodness leads us to repentance. While we scold, God pities; while we blame, he forgives; while we reject, he invites. He saves the sinner by loving him. 2. *In Christ.* Christ's great redemption is a work of sympathy: (1) In its origin. It was sympathy that led to the advent of Christ. This was the ruling principle of his life on earth. This, too, brought him to the cross. He could not save himself, because he would not abandon his sinful, sorrowing brethren. (2) In its application. Christ saves men now individually through his sympathy. We have first to see that he understands us, loves us, feels with us. Then he lays hold of us and lifts us up. 3. *In men.* We, too, have to save by our sympathy. The old method of repression, rebuke, and repudiation has failed miserably; its fruits are only hatred and despair. It is time we resorted to God's method, to Christ's method. We must understand men if we would help them, feel with them if we would restore them. So long as we will not show sympathy with our brethren in their trouble and temptation, we cannot save them from their sin and despair. Lowell says—

> "Far better is it to speak
> One simple word, which now and then
> Shall waken their free nature in the weak
> And friendless sons of men."

W. F. A.

Ver. 25.—*The force of right words.* Job is not so unreasonable as he appears to his friends. He will admit the force of truth and reason. Only he considers the arguments he has heard false and fallacious.

I. REASONABLE MEN RECOGNIZE THE FORCE OF RIGHT WORDS. Words may be like arrows that pierce, like swords that divide, like hammers that crush; or they may be

like seeds that grow and bear fruit, like loaves of bread to feed the hungry, and streams of living water flowing by the dusty highway, from which all thirsty souls may drink. Thus they are more than mere sounds. They are expressions of thought. God's words come with power. All right words are forcible. But there are empty words that fall without any weight, and vapid words that are dissipated in the air without effect. It is not the number, the volume, or the noise, of the words that gives them force, but the rightness of them. We must, therefore, inquire wherein this rightness resides. 1. *In truth.* False words may seem to carry great weight. But in the end all lies fail. The truth, simply told, has a force which no rhetoric can equal. 2. *In adaptability.* There are truths which are not suitable for the occasion on which they are spoken. This was the case with many of the remarks which Eliphaz had made, which were right enough in themselves, but which did not apply to Job. They lost force by being irrelevant. 3. *In moral weight.* The justice of what we say adds weight to it. The most forcible words are those that find their way to our conscience. Others may be luminous; these words flame out with startling vividness. 4. *In sympathy.* Truth spoken in love comes with double force.

II. IT IS FOOLISH TO DISREGARD THE FORCE OF RIGHT WORDS. 1. *In the speaker.* This was the Temanite's mistake. He was not sufficiently considerate of the rightness of what he said. He meant well, but he spoilt all by this grievous error. We need to weigh our words. They may have many excellent qualities—clearness, grace, apparent vigour—yet if they are not right words they will fail. The Christian teacher needs to test and correct his words by standing close to the fountain of truth and right in the Holy Scriptures, and by keeping his heart pure and sympathetic. Otherwise all his eloquence will be barren, or even poisonous as mephitic vapours. 2. *In the hearer.* It is excessively foolish to disregard words as though they were merely "sound and fury, signifying nothing." They are the chariots in which thoughts ride; and if we would but open our gates to receive them, we might find those thoughts most welcome guests. Even if the words are unpopular or painful, we should be foolish to disregard them when we know them to be right. For truth does not cease to be truth by being rejected. Many unpalatable ideas are most medicinal. And many words, rejected at first, when once they are received, prove to be as the very bread of life. The words of the everlasting gospel are right words, which we may reject at our peril; which we may receive for our salvation.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VII.

Vers. 1—21.—In this chapter Job first bewails his miserable fate, of which he expects no alleviation (vers. 1—10); then claims an unlimited right of complaint (ver. 11); and finally enters into direct expostulation with God—an expostulation which continues from ver. 12 to the end of the chapter. At the close, he admits his sinfulness (ver. 20), but asks impatiently why God does not pardon it instead of visiting it with such extreme vengeance (ver. 21).

Ver. 1.—Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? rather, *Is there not a warfare* (or, *a time of service*) *to man upon earth?* Has not each man a certain work appointed for him to do, and a certain limited time assigned him within which to do it? And thus, Are not his days also like the days of an hireling? Since the hireling is engaged to do a certain work in a certain time.

Ver. 2.—As a servant (or, *a slave*) panteth for the shadow; *i.e.* longs for the shades of evening to descend and bring the day to a close. The slavery of Job's time was probably not unlike that of captive races in Egypt, so graphically portrayed in the early chapters of Exodus. The captive, working from morning to night at exhausting labour, would long intensely for the night to arrive, when his toil would come to an end. The inference is not drawn, but clearly is—so Job may be excused if he longs for death, now that he has reached old age, and that the work of his life is manifestly ended. And as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work; rather, *for his wages.* The word used (פעל) has the two meanings of "work" and "the wages of work" (see Jer. xxii. 13).

Ver. 3.—So am I made to possess months of vanity. "Months of vanity" are "months of which he can make no use"—"months which

are no good to him." It has been concluded from this that some considerable time had elapsed since Job was stricken by his disease. But he is perhaps looking to the future as much as to the past, anticipating a long, lingering illness. Elephantiasis is a disease which often lasts for years. **And wearisome nights are appointed to me.** To one stretched on a bed of sickness, the night is always more wearisome than the day. It has no changes, nothing to mark its flight. It seems almost interminable. In elephantiasis, however, it is a special feature of the disease that the sufferings of the patient are greatest at night. "In *elephantiasis anæsthetica*," says Dr. Erasmus Wilson, "a sense of dulness and heat pervades the surface, and there are sensations of tingling and prickling, and of burning heat. While the integument is insensible, there are deep-seated burning pains, sometimes of a bone or joint, sometimes of the vertebral column. *These pains are greatest at night; they prevent sleep, and give rise to restlessness and frightful dreams*" (Quain's 'Dictionary of Medicine,' vol. i. p. 817).

Ver. 4.—**When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone?** So Gesenius, Rosenmüller, and Delitzsch. Others translate, "the night is long" (Dillmann, Renan), or "the night seems endless" (Merx); comp. Deut. xxviii. 67, "At evening thou shalt say, Would God it were morning!" **And I am full of tossings to and fro.** Professor Lee understands "tossings of the mind," or "distracting thoughts;" but it is more probable that tossings of the body are meant. These are familiar to every bad sleeper. **Unto the dawning of the day.** A little rest sometimes visits the tired eyelids after a long, sleepless night. Job may refer to this, or he may simply mean that he lay tossing on his bed all through the night, till morning came, when he arose.

Ver. 5.—**My flesh is clothed with worms.** The *fons et origo mali* in elephantiasis is a worm called *filaria sanguinis hominis*. It is a long, fine, thread-like creature, of a white colour, smooth, and devoid of markings (Quain's 'Dictionary of Medicine,' vol. i. pp. 512, 513). **And clods of dust.** This is rather poetical than strictly medical. The special characteristic of elephantiasis, from which it derives its name, is that the integument, or outer skin, is "formed into large masses or folds, with a rugose condition of the surface, not unlike the appearance of an elephant's leg" (Quain, vol. i. p. 431). But the swellings do not contain "clods of dust." **My skin is broken, and become loathsome.** A common feature in elephantiasis is the development and gradual growth of solid papules or tubercles in the skin. These enlarge as the disease progresses, and after a time soften and break up; an ulcer is then formed, and a discharge follows of a virulent and loathsome character. Presently the discharge stops; the ulcer heals; but only to break out again in another place. In the Revised Version the passage is rendered, *My skin closeth up, and breaketh out afresh.*

Ver. 6.—**My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle.** Though each day is a weariness, yet, on looking back upon my whole life, it seems to have come and gone in a moment (comp. ch. ix. 25). **And are spent without hope.** Job does not share in the hopes which Eliphaz has held out (see ch. v. 17—27). He has no hope but in death.

Ver. 7.—**O remember that my life is wind!** (comp. Ps. lxxviii. 39). The wind is an image of all that is vain, shifting, unstable, ready to pass away (ch. vi. 36; Prov. xi. 29; Eccles. v. 16; Isa. xxvi. 18; xli. 9; Jer. v. 13, etc.). **Mine eye shall no more see good.** Another protest against the hopes that Eliphaz has held out (see the comment on ver. 6; and comp. ch. ix. 25). Job is still speaking of this life only, and not touching the question of another.

Ver. 8.—**The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more;** that is, I shall go down to the grave, and be no more seen upon earth. Neither friend nor enemy shall behold me after that. **Thine eyes.** God's eyes. God still sees him and watches him; this is a certain consolation; but will it last? **Are upon me, and I am not.** I am on the point of disappearing. Even now I scarcely exist.

Ver. 9.—**As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away.** In mountainous countries one sees clouds clinging to a mountain-side, which do not float away, but gradually shrink, and at last wholly disappear. They are "consumed" in the strictest sense of the word—the hot rays of the sun drink them up. **So he that goeth down to the grave;** rather, *to Sheol;* i.e. to the lower world, the abode of the departed. What exactly was Job's idea of this world it is impossible to say, or whether it involved the continued separate identity of individual souls and their continued consciousness. In Isaiah's conception both seem certainly to have been involved (Isa. xiv. 9—18), and perhaps in Jacob's (Gen. xxxvii. 35); but Job's creed on the subject can only be conjectured. It is certain, however, that both the Egyptians and the early Babylonians held the continuance after death of individual souls, their separate existence, and their consciousness (see the author's 'History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. pp. 317—319; and 'Religions of the Ancient World,' pp. 62—64). **Shall come up no**

more. The Egyptian belief was that the soul *would* ultimately return to the body from which death separated it, and reinhabit it. But this belief was certainly not general among the nations of antiquity.

Ver. 10.—**He shall return no more to his house.** This is best taken literally. Men do not, after death, return to their houses and resume their old occupations. From the life in this world they disappear for ever. **Neither shall his place know him any more** (comp. Ps. ciii. 16).

Ver. 11.—**Therefore I will not refrain my mouth**; rather, *I, moreover, will not refrain my lips*; that is, "You may do as you like under affliction, *I* claim the right of complaining." Job has already pointed out that nature teaches the animals to complain when they suffer (ch. vi. 5). Why, then, should not he? Complaint is not necessarily murmuring; it is sometimes merely expostulation, which God allows (comp. Ps. lv. 2; lxxvii. 3; cxlii. 2, etc.). **I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.** Extreme "anguish" and "bitter" suffering excuse complaints that would otherwise be blamable (comp. ch. vi. 2—4).

Ver. 12.—Job now begins his complaint, which is wholly addressed to God. The heads of it are: (1) that he is confined and restrained, allowed no liberty (ver. 12); (2) that he is terrified by visions in the night (vers. 13, 14); (3) that he is not "let alone" (ver. 16); (4) that so much attention is paid to him (vers. 17—19); (5) that he is made a butt for God's arrows (ver. 20); and (6) that he is not pardoned, but relentlessly persecuted (ver. 21). **Am I a sea, or a whale?** rather, *Am I a sea, or a sea-monster?* Am I as wild and uncontrollable as the ocean, as fierce and savage as a crocodile or other monster of the deep? Do I not possess reason and conscience, by which I might be directed and guided? Why, then, am I treated as if I were without them? The sea must be watched, lest it break in upon the land; in Egypt there had been many such breaches, as the configuration of the coast, with its narrow belts of sand and its vast lagoons, shows; and crocodiles must be watched, lest they destroy human life; but is there any need that I should be watched, restrained, coerced, hedged in on every side (ch. iii. 23)? Am I so dangerous? Surely not. Some liberty therefore might have been safely given to me, instead of this irksome restraint. **That thou settest a watch over me**; or, *a guard*; i.e. a set of physical impediments, which leave me no freedom of action.

Vers. 13, 14.—**When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint.** Sometimes, notwithstanding his many "wearisome nights" (ver. 5), Job would entertain a hope of a few hours' rest and tranquillity, as, wearied and exhausted, he sought his couch, and laid himself down upon it, but only to be disappointed. **Then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions.** Unpleasant dreams are said to be a symptom, or at any rate a frequent concomitant, of elephantiasis; but Job seems to speak of something worse than these. Horrible visions came upon him, which he believed to be sent directly from the Almighty, and which effectually disturbed his rest, making night hideous. Probably this was one of the modes in which Satan was permitted to try and test him.

Ver. 15.—**So that my soul chooseth strangling**; *i.e.* "so that I would prefer strangling to such horrid dreams," which are worse than any physical sufferings. Some see here a reference to suicide: but this is a very forced explanation. Suicide, as already observed, seems never even to have occurred to the thoughts of Job (see the comment on ch. vi. 8). **And death rather than my life**; literally, *rather than my bones.* Death, that is, would be preferable to such a life as he leads, which is that of a living skeleton.

Ver. 16.—**I loathe it**; rather, *I am wasted away*—"ulceratus tabesco" (Schultens). **I would not live alway**; rather, *I shall not live alway.* **Let me alone; for my days are vanity**; literally, *cease from me*; i.e. "cease to trouble me"—with, perhaps, the further meaning, "cease to trouble thyself about me;" for I am sufficiently reduced to nothingness—my life is mere vanity.

Ver. 17.—**What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him?** or, *make so much of him*—regard him as of such great importance (comp. Ps. viii. 4). It seems, at first sight, an exalted idea of God to regard him as too lofty, too great, to be really concerned about so mean a creature, so poor a being, as man. Hence, among the Greeks, the Epicureans maintained that God paid no attention at all to this world, or to anything that happened in it, but dwelt secure and tranquil in the empyrean, with nothing to disturb, displease, or vex him. And the holy men of old sometimes fell into this same phase of thought, and expressed surprise and wonder that God, who dwelt on high, should "humble himself to consider the things in heaven and earth." "Lord," says David, or whoever was the author of the hundred and forty-fourth psalm, "what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him? Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow that passeth away" (Ps. cxliv. 3, 4). But all, except Epicureans, agree that God does,

in fact, so concern himself, and a little reflection is enough to show us that the opposite view, instead of exalting, really degrades God. To bring conscious, sentient beings into the world—beings capable of the intensest happiness or misery, and then to leave them wholly to themselves, to have no further care or thought of them, would be the part, not of a grand, glorious, and adorable Being, but of one destitute of any claim to our admiration. **And that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?** This strong expression is not used of God elsewhere. But it well expresses the *extreme* tenderness and consideration that God has for man, and the deep love from which that tenderness and consideration spring.

Ver. 18.—**And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?** Our *whole* life is a probation, not merely particular parts of it. God "tries us *every moment*," if not with afflictions, then with blessings; if not with pains, then with pleasures. He is with us all the day long, and all our life long, equally in his mercies and in his chastisements. But Job was probably thinking only of the latter.

Ver. 19.—**How long wilt thou not depart from me?** rather, *Wilt thou not look away from me?* (see the Revised Version). Job does not go so far as to ask that God should "depart from" him. He knows, doubtless, that *that* would be the extreme of calamity. But he would have God sometimes turn away his eyes from him, and not always regard him so intently. There is something of the same tone of complaint in the psalmist's utterance, "Thou art about my path, and about my bed, and *spiest out all my ways*" (Ps. cxxxix. 3, Prayer-book Version). **Nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?** Even, *i.e.*, for the shortest space of time possible. A proverbial expression.

Ver. 20.—**I have sinned.** This is not so much a confession as a concession, equivalent to "Granting that I have sinned," or, "Suppose that I have sinned." In that case, **What shall I do unto thee?** or, *What can I do for thee?* How is it in my power to do anything? Can I undo the past? Or can I make compensation in the future? Neither seems to Job to be possible. **O thou Preserver of men**; rather, *thou Observer of men.* A continuation of the complaint that God's eye is always upon him. **Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee?** "A mark" (מפגע) is either "a butt," "a target for arrows," or else "an obstacle," "a stumbling-block," which God, by repeated blows, is removing out of his way. The latter meaning is preferred by Schultens and Professor Lee; the former by Rosenmüller and our Revisers. **So that I am a burden to myself** (comp. Ps. xxxviii. 4).

Ver. 21.—**And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?** Job feels that, if he has sinned, which he is ready to admit as possible, though he has certainly no deep conviction of sin (ch. vi. 24, 29, 30; vii. 19), at any rate he has not sinned greatly, heinously; and therefore he cannot understand why he has not been forgiven. The idea that the Almighty cannot forgive sin except upon conditions, is unknown to him. Believing God to be a God of mercy, he regards him also, just as Nehemiah did, as a "God of pardons" (Neh. ix. 17)—a belief which seems to have been instinctive with men of all nations. And it appears to him unaccountable that pardon has not been extended to himself. Like his "comforters," he makes the mistake of supposing that all his afflictions have been penal, are signs of God's displeasure, and intended to crush and destroy him. He has not woke up to the difference between God's punishments and his chastisements. Apparently, he does not know that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," or that men are "made perfect through sufferings" (Heb. ii. 10). **For now shall I sleep in the dust.** Now it is too late for pardon to avail anything. Death is nigh at hand. The final blow must soon be struck. **And thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.** The idea seems to be—God will relent at last; he will seek to alleviate my sufferings; he will search for me diligently—but I shall have ceased to be

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Job to God:* 1. *The soliloquy of sorrow.* I. A PATHETIC REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN LIFE. In contrast to the fascinating picture sketched by Eliphaz (ch. v. 17—27), Job depicts human life in general, and his own sorrowful existence in particular, as: 1. *A term of hard service.* "Is there not an appointed time [literally, 'a warfare, a term of hard service'] on the earth?" like that of a mercenary soldier hired out for military purposes to a foreign despot; and "are not his days like the days of an hireling?" *i.e.* a hired slave who has been let out to some pitiless taskmaster; both of whom, the soldier and the slave, "pant for the shadow" on the dial, and "long for their wages," to give them a release from their heavy toils. The language suggests: (1) That the period of human life is in every instance fixed, the Almighty having not

only determined the bounds of our habitation (Acts xvii. 26), but the number of our months (ch. xiv. 5), retaining in his own hand our times (Ps. xxxi. 15), and measuring out our days (Ps. xxxix. 4). (2) That the allotted space of human life is in every instance designed to be a season of service, not of ease, enjoyment, or indulgence, but of labour, endurance, and fatigue; not always hard in the sense alluded to by Job, viz. exacting, oppressive, exhausting, pitiless, but ever hard in the sense of being earnest, arduous, and continuous. Life was never meant for idleness. If God promises strength for the day, he first assigns work to the day (Deut. xxxiii. 25). Christ recognized that the day of life was designed for toil (John ix. 4). (3) That faithful work performed in time will in every instance meet with a just reward. As the hired soldier received his pay, and the slave obtained his wages, so will every one on earth be recompensed at last according to his works (Prov. xxiv. 12; Matt. xvi. 27; 2 Tim. iv. 14). In particular every faithful labourer in Christ's vineyard will receive his "penny" (Matt. xx. 9). The doctrine of heavenly rewards is not inconsistent with the idea of free grace (Heb. xi. 26; xii. 2). (4) That good men may sometimes long to be released from their labours, not, however, like the bondman or the mercenary soldier, because they serve an exacting and alien taskmaster, who grinds them to the dust with oppression, but because, though not weary of their labours, they are weary in them, and would fain be at rest (cf. Paul, Phil. i. 23; 2 Tim. iv. 6). 2. *A heritage of incessant misery.* As realized in the experience of Job, this misery was: (1) Heaven-imposed in its origin; he having been made to possess (literally, "caused to inherit") it by compulsion, through the stern will of an unseen but relentless taskmaster, without himself having done anything to either originate or merit it (ver. 3)—a mode of representing human life which has a superficial truthfulness about it in so far as it asserts that affliction is the almost uniform experience of man on earth, that nothing enters into the composition of human history, either collectively or individually, without the expressly given sanction of God, and that no amount of wisdom or endeavour on the part of man will enable him to escape that particular earth-experience which by Divine wisdom and love has been assigned him as his inheritance, but is radically false in insinuating that God acts capriciously and tyrannically, and alleging that man neither shapes nor deserves his particular lot, since no fact is more apparent than that man, as a sinful being, deserves more affliction than he gets, and that, to a large extent at least, every individual is the master of his own destiny. (2) Tedious in its continuance; Job characterizing his days of affliction as months of vanity; *i.e.* months which come without bringing relief to the sufferer, and go leaving nothing in their trail but disappointed hopes, each day seeming like a month in duration, and his sleepless nights as "nights of weariness," measured out to him one by one in slow and solemn regularity, each one appearing to interminably lengthen itself out as if it would never come to an end. Behold the subtle alchemy of grief, which can change the pace of time, and make that go with leaden feet which mostly flies with lightning wing. (3) Painful in its character; arising from a combination of troubles not often meeting in the same individual. (*a*) Extinction of hope by day; the absolute expiry of everything like expectation of betterment, which must have been a greater burden to the heart of Job than ever the elephantiasis was to his body: "We are kept alive by hope" (Rom. viii. 24); but within the soul of Job the principle of life was gone. (*b*) Want of sleep by night. As sleep is one of God's best gifts to man (Ps. cxxvii. 2), restoring nature's exhausted powers, refreshing mind and body both (Eccles. v. 12; Jer. xxxi. 26; cf. Shakespeare, 'Henry IV.,' Part II. act iii. sc. 1), so is the want of it one of the heaviest afflictions that can befall a sufferer, arising sometimes from excessive labour, as with Jacob (Gen. xxxi. 40); sometimes from intense bodily pain, as in the case of Job (ver. 5); sometimes from disturbed thoughts, as with Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. ii. 1), Ahasuerus (Esth. vi. 1), and wicked men (Prov. iv. 16); the restless tossings to and fro of the body keeping time with the inward agitations of the mind. (*c*) Bodily pain both day and night, springing from a loathsome malady, detailed (ver. 5) as breeding worms in his flesh, covering his skin with earth-coloured scales, causing it to stiffen and emit a purulent discharge, and commonly believed to be elephantiasis (see homiletics on ch. ii. 7). 3. *A period of exceeding brevity.* "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and vanish without hope" (ver. 6); *i.e.* they flee more rapidly than the shuttle passes backwards and forwards in the warp of the weaver's web, and vanish without

hope of any to succeed them—*i.e.* of any days of happiness on earth—an affecting emblem of the vanity and shortness of life.

II. A PITIFUL SUPPLICATION FROM HUMAN SORROW. 1. *The Being addressed.* "Oh, remember!" Though not named, God is meant. It is well, though not always necessary, to invoke God by name in our prayers; but certainly it is better to leave God's name out altogether than to introduce it too frequently into our devotions. That Job called on God in his calamity was a sign that his faith was not yet extinguished, and that he still retained his hold upon the God whom he had formerly professed to serve. It was likewise a more hopeful way of obtaining relief from, or support under, his troubles, since it is always better in our distresses "to cry to God than to complain to creatures" (Caryl). 2. *The prayer presented.* "Oh, remember!" As applied to God, the word signifies (1) to take notice, to observe, to bear in mind (Ps. lxxviii. 39); hence (2) to regard with pity (Ps. cxxxii. 1); and (3) to interpose with help (Gen. viii. 1). God remembers when, so to speak, he allows an object to remain in the contemplation of his infinite mind so as to be suitably affected thereby. Job desires that God would (1) consider his case; (2) commiserate his person; and (3) commute his sorrow. This, however, does not imply that God ever forgets his people (Isa. xlix. 15), though he may sometimes appear to do so (Ps. xiii. 1); or fails to sympathize with them in trouble (Ps. ciii. 13; Isa. lxvi. 13), though afflicted saints may sometimes imagine so (Ps. xliv. 24; Isa. xlix. 14); or is indisposed to succour them (1 Sam. ii. 9; Ps. xxxi. 23; xci. 1), though he frequently, for wise and good reasons, delays his intervention (Exod. xiv. 13; Matt. xiv. 25; xv. 23). 3. *The plea offered.* The irrevocableness of life which Job depicts by means of two impressive images, comparing his sorrowful existence to: (1) A passing wind. "Oh, remember that my life is wind!" a breath, a puff of air (Ps. lxxviii. 39; ciii. 16)—an emblem suggestive of the frailty, the rapidity, and (more especially here) the irrevocability of life. Job interprets the metaphor with regard to himself by saying that when once he had departed this life: (*a*) His eye should never more see good (ver. 7); *i.e.* it should never more return to enjoy the things that constitute (or are supposed to constitute) earthly felicity (cf. the language of Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 11). Life's pleasures, opportunities, privileges, can only be enjoyed once. Yet good in the highest sense does not terminate with death. When a saint departs from this mortal scene he enters upon the chief good, the experience of nobler pleasures and loftier privileges than ever he possessed on earth (ch. xix. 27; Phil. i. 21). (*b*) Men's eyes should never see him (ver. 8); *i.e.* he should never more mingle in the society of the living, never more participate in the friendships and associations of time, having bid farewell to all companions and loved ones (cf. Eccles. ix. 9, 10)—an argument for living peacefully and lovingly amongst friends, companions, and neighbours, since we must soon be parted from them and they from us. (*c*) Even God's eye should fail to see him (ver. 8); *i.e.* God would not be able to do him good after he was dead, the present life being the only season in which man has an opportunity of receiving "gracious" visitation from God. It is too late to give a man a cordial when he is in his grave; and much more is it *post horam* to look for salvation when life is ended (2 Cor. vi. 2). (2) A vanishing cloud. "The cloud dissolves and disappears" (ver. 9). The metaphor is appropriate, as setting forth the unsubstantial, transitory, and irrevocable character of human life (cf. Jas. iv. 14). Like the cloud which is quickly dispersed (often by a gentle puff of wind), vanishing into a realm where human vision cannot follow it, so man goeth down into Sheol, the unseen abode of departed spirits. And as the scattered cloud never again gathers itself upon the face of heaven, so never more does man revisit the upper air when once he has descended into "that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns." In particular, he never again returns to his house, neither shall his place in the family circle, at the social banquet, on change, and in the public assembly, know him any more (ver. 10). Though the doctrine of immortality and the hope of a resurrection are not here insisted on, it does not follow that they were unknown to either Eliphaz or Job (ch. xix. 26).

Learn: 1. Since life, and especially the Christian life, is a war-service (1 Tim. vi. 12), it becomes saints not unnecessarily to entangle themselves with the affairs of this world (2 Tim. ii. 4), but to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. ii. 3). 2. Since God will faithfully recompense his servants (Prov. xii. 14; Rom. ii. 10;

1 Cor. iii. 8), they whom he has hired should be faithful in the rendering of service to him (Rom. xii. 11; Eph. vi. 6, 7). 3. Since the natural life of man, even when taken at its best estate, is altogether vanity (Ps. xxxix. 5, 11), it is the part of wisdom to aspire after that life which will never disappoint (John iv. 14), never know affliction (Rev. vii. 16, 17), and never pass away (1 John ii. 17). 4. Since it is certain that we must all go down into the grave (ch. xxx. 23; Ps. lxxxix. 48; John ix. 4; Heb. ix. 27), it becomes us to prepare for that event (Ps. xxxix. 4; 2 Kings xx. 1; Phil. i. 21; 1 Pet. i. 17). 5. Since it is equally certain that we shall all come up again out of our graves (ch. xix. 26; Dan. xii. 2; John xi. 23, 24; Acts xxiv. 15), it is folly not to seek before we die the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection (Phil. iii. 11).

Vers. 11—16.—*Job to God:* 2. *The opening of the third controversy.* I. A DANGEROUS RESOLUTION. 1. The *purport* of it. To complain, not merely to repine against the misery of his lot, but to express his sense of Jehovah's cruelty in first afflicting him and then vouchsafing him no response to his solemn and pathetic appeal. If murmurings against one's outward estate are sometimes natural and even excusable, they are always perilous, even where not actually sinful. Those who begin by finding fault with their portion, generally end by reflecting on him by whom their portion has been bestowed. That Job did not curse God to his face, as the devil predicted, was a wonder, and was due more to grace than to himself. When the soul is in anguish it is better to be silent than to speak, to imitate David (Ps. xxxix. 9) than to copy Job. 2. The *spirit* of it. With vehemence: "I will speak;" the tense expressing energy of language with passion: "In the anguish of my spirit;" with bitterness: "I will complain in the bitterness of my soul;"—all which were unwarrantable aggravations of his original offence, although Job, by commencing, "I also," "I for my part," appeared to think he was not transgressing the bounds of right. And certainly language as vehement, extraordinary, and audacious can be quoted from other lips than Job's, language not usually blamed as sinful; *e.g.* Jeremiah's (xv. 18). Still, men are prone to forget that, in contending with God, they have absolutely no "right," so called, and certainly none to address him with irreverent presumption or insinuate aught against his loving-kindness or justice. 3. The *reason* of it. "Therefore;" *i.e.* partly because his sufferings were great, and partly because his life was vanity, but chiefly because God was silent and did not condescend to listen to his prayer; not one of which reasons, nor even all of them together, were sufficient to justify his violent proposal. Great sufferings are no excuse for great complainings, since they are in themselves no more than man deserves, are always sent in love, and are capable, if accepted with meek submission, of yielding the highest good. So far from the transient and irrevocable character of life inducing querulous behaviour, it should prompt man to turn its golden moments to the best account; while God's silence cannot give man the right to murmur, since God ever knows the best time to speak, whether in vindication of himself or in answering his people (Ps. l. 3).

II. AN IRONICAL INTERROGATION. 1. *The comparison made.* Almost impertinently, surely unbecomingly, Job asks whether God regarded him as a sea or a whale; *i.e.* as a mighty conflux of waters, a fierce, heaven-assaulting ocean, or as a huge aquatic monster, a great and terrible dragon of the prime, of which he was afraid and upon which accordingly he required to set a watch. Job's intention was to say that surely God did entertain such a notion of the poor emaciated skeleton upon whom he was heaping such gigantic calamities. It was strangely irreverent, on Job's part, so to speak, and wholly untrue besides. God esteemed neither him nor any of his intelligent creatures as a sea or a monster. God never speaks depreciatingly of man, and man never should of himself. Nor does God ever treat man like a sea or a whale, but always with a due regard to his intelligent and moral nature, in which respect man should copy God in dealing with himself. Least of all can it be said that God is ever afraid of man; the only being that man can really injure by his insubordination and wickedness is himself. Yet, though incorrect in the sense intended by Job, it is sometimes sadly true that the heart of man is as restless (Isa. lvii. 20), insatiable (Eccles. i. 7), violent (Jude 13), destructive (Josh. xxiv. 7), noisy (Jer. vi. 23), as the sea, and as ferocious and ungovernable as the great monsters it contains. 2. *The proof given.* As the turbulent ocean requires to be bounded and restrained, and leviathan to be held in

chains, so, says the patriarch, with grim irony, "thou settest a watch on me." Job was right in still recognizing God's hand in his afflictions. Whatever be the second causes, the First Cause in all calamity that befalls a saint, as indeed in everything that happens, is God (ch. ii. 10; Isa. xlv. 7; Amos iii. 6). Yet he erred in his interpretation of God's purpose in these afflictions. God watches over seas and whales, and over suffering men and saints at the same time, *i.e.* always, and by the same right—the right of his Divine sovereignty; and in the same way, by sending his omniscient glance into every corner of the universe; but not in the same spirit, watching ever *against* seas and whales, but always *over* men and saints; or for the same purpose, in the case of seas and whales to restrain them from doing damage in his world, in the case of men and saints to rejoice over them to do them good.

III. AN UNJUST ACCUSATION. 1. *The charge.* "Thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions" (ver. 14). These dreams and visions, horrible shadows cast upon the background of his wakeful and excited imagination by the terrible disease from which he was suffering, were of a character entirely different from the dreams and visions depicted by Eliphaz (ch. iv. 13) as visiting the good man from God. In the distemper of his spirit, Job imputes them to God, whereas they ought to have been properly ascribed to Satan. Had he simply desired to recognize the Divine hand in his sufferings, his language would have been becoming and worthy of imitation; but if, as is more probable, he actually meant to charge God with being the immediate Author of those pale phantoms and shadowy apparitions which banished sleep from his pillow and made him shiver with ghostly fear, he was surely verging on the borders of blasphemy. If not so heinous an offence as ascribing God's work to the devil (Matt. xii. 24), imputing Satan's work to God is wholly without excuse. 2. *The time.* "When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams." The best-founded expectations of man are not unfrequently disappointed. Even couches, formed for ease and comfort, often fail to impart them. They who most long for sleep's refreshment have sometimes the greatest difficulty in obtaining it. It is vain to look for comfort in affliction, or ease in the midst of pain, to either beds or couches, or any instrument whatever apart from the Divine blessing. The true Source of consolation for diseased bodies, distressed minds, and disturbed spirits, is God (Ps. xlii. 5; cxlvii. 3; Isa. xxv. 4; li. 3; lxvi. 5; 2 Cor. i. 3, 4; vii. 6). And as God delights to visit his suffering people on their beds (ch. xxxv. 10; Ps. xli. 3; xlii. 8; lxxvii. 6), so the devil seldom fails to shoot his sharpest arrows and muster his fiercest terrors during the night. 3. *The result.* (1) A desire for immediate death. "So that my soul chooseth strangling," *i.e.* suffocation, a sensation of choking being frequently experienced in elephantiasis; "and death rather than my life," literally, "than my bones," *i.e.* than the emaciated skeleton I have become. Life in itself is not necessarily joyous and desirable. The amount of pleasure derivable from existence in large measure depends on its circumstances and conditions; and these may be so changed as to render existence a burden. Yet sufferers should rather bear their burdens than inordinately long for release (ch. xiv. 14; Matt. xxvi. 39), since it is "better to bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of;" since whatever be the weight of our affliction, it is God's will that we should bear it; and since God is able to bring even an emaciated skeleton back from the brink of the grave. (2) A temptation to suicide, as some think. "So that my soul chooseth strangling" by external violence (cf. Nah. ii. 12), yea, by a suicidal act (cf. 2 Sam. xvii. 23); to which the next words, "and death by these bones," are supposed to allude. Even if this were the correct interpretation (which is doubtful), it is satisfactory that those who adopt it understand the suicidal temptation to have been rejected by the patriarch, who exclaims, "I loathe it;" *i.e.* I detest and repudiate with horror the idea of taking my own life. Suicide is an act of supreme cowardice, springing, except where reason is overthrown, from inability to endure suffering or shame; an act of supreme folly, since it can only plunge its deluded perpetrator into deeper suffering and more public shame; an act of supreme impiety, inasmuch as it arrogates to man a power that belongs to God alone. (3) A prayer for at least temporary respite. "Let me alone; for my days are vanity;" meaning, "My life must soon be ended; therefore cease to harass me with dreams and visions; but vouchsafe to me a period of ease and comfort before I depart" (cf. ch. x. 20, and *vide* homiletics).

Learn: 1. The danger of too exclusive meditation on the vanity of life. It is apt, as in Job's case, to foster sinful thoughts concerning God. 2. The propriety of always keeping a bridle on the lips (Ps. xxxix. 2). When Job removed restraint from his mouth he spoke in anguish, complained in bitterness, questioned with irreverence, accused with rashness, desired with vehemence, entreated with impatience. 3. The tendency of the human heart, especially when blinded by grief and agitated by passion, to misconstrue God's providential dealings with itself. 4. The certainty that good men may have much of the old unrenewed nature in them, lying unsuspected till occasion calls it forth. One would hardly have anticipated the outburst of temper which Job here displays. 5. The duty of thanking God for such common mercies as beds to sleep on and ability to use them. Many have beds who cannot sleep, and some would sleep who cannot find the beds. 6. The wickedness of, in any circumstances, undervaluing God's great gift of life. Life in the midst of suffering may often more glorify God than existence in the midst of ease. 7. The inexpediency of rashly concluding that one's days are vanity, since a man may be most useful when he least suspects it. Probably Job never served his age and generation so well as when passing through this terrible baptism of pain, sorrow, and temptation.

Ver. 16.—"*I would not live alway.*" I. THE CRY OF BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT. Exemplified in the case of Elijah (1 Kings xix. 4) and of Jonah (iv. 3).

II. THE WAIL OF GREAT SORROW. Illustrated by the experience of Job.

III. THE VOICE OF REMORSEFUL DESPAIR. As with Ahithophel (2 Sam. xvii. 23) and Judas (Matt. xxvii. 5).

IV. THE LANGUAGE OF AN AWAKENED CONSCIENCE. Witness the jailor of Philippi (Acts xvi. 27).

V. THE UTTERANCE OF FAITH. As employed by St. Paul (Phil. i. 23).

Learn: 1. The necessity of departing from this life (Heb. ix. 27). 2. The importance of preparing for another (Heb. xi. 10).

Vers. 17—21.—*Job to God:* 1. *A remonstrance with Heaven.* I. THE DIVINE CONDUCT DEPICTED. As that of: 1. *A Man-watcher.* (Ver. 20; cf. ver. 12.) Concerning this Divine espionage may be noted: (1) The object of it. Man (ver. 17). Not some formidable opponent or powerful adversary, of whose movements the Almighty might reasonably be apprehensive, not some all-devouring ocean, or fierce ungovernable sea-monster (ver. 12), but a poor, feeble, insignificant creature (*enosh*), a dull and spiritless hireling (soldier or slave), dragging out a term of hard service on the earth (ver. 1), burdened with intolerable miseries (ver. 3), whose days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle (ver. 6), are even vanity (ver. 16), and whose whole term of existence in this sublunary sphere is like a passing wind or vanishing cloud (vers. 7—9), that melts away and never more returns. (2) The character of it. Job supposes that this great Man-watcher whom he describes first attributes an extravagant importance to the feeble and insignificant creature whose portrait has just been sketched: "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him?" (cf. David's language to Saul, 1 Sam. xxiv. 14); then constitutes him an object of special, close, earnest, vigilant observation: "And that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?" (cf. Ps. viii. 4; cxliv. 3; Heb. ii. 6); next treats him like a prisoner subjected to regular inspection, in case he should either escape from confinement or be guilty of hatching plots against his keeper: "And that thou shouldest visit him every morning;" and finally puts him severely to the proof, *i.e.* by the thumbscrews and stocks of affliction: "And try him every moment." (3) The constancy of it. This terrible inspection Job represents, not as occasional or exceptional, which might have been tolerable, but as perpetual, without interruption and without cessation—"every morning" and "every moment," the Divine eye never leaving him so long as to permit him to swallow down his spittle. (4) The purpose of it. Not to bless man, as David liked to think of the Divine guardianship (Ps. viii. 4), but to curse him, to find out his faults, to detect his failings, to discover his sins. This horrible picture of the all-seeing, silent, never-sleeping eye of the Eternal always fixed on man with its cold, clear, cruel, calculating gaze, never seeming to move, but ever there, in the daytime and in the night season, dogging him at every turn, is happily not true of the saint (Ps. xxxiv. 15; xxxvii. 32, 33; cxxi. 1—8), though, alas!

it affords a fearfully vivid representation of the misery of the lost (Rev. vi. 16, 17). 2. *A Man-shooter.* "Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee?" *i.e.* as a target to shoot at (cf. ch. vi. 4). Another outrageous impeachment of the Deity, implying that God, in afflicting Job, had been guilty of: (1) Manifest favouritism, in passing by others and selecting him as the object of his attacks. (2) Deliberate cruelty, in not merely sending a random or occasional shaft against Job, but in, so to speak, setting him up like a target, and taking calm and deliberate aim at his bosom. (3) Deep malevolence, as if God took the same delight in directing his arrows against him, Job, that an archer might do in practising at a butt, or a soldier in sending a shaft against a foe. (4) Unjustifiable hostility, since Job at least was quite unable to discern any cause for such extraordinary procedure. 3. *A Man-oppressor.* "Why hast thou made me an obstacle in thy way?" (according to another and perhaps a more exact translation); the idea being that Job was perpetually in God's path, and that God, hating him and feeling him a burden (according to another reading of the next clause), rushed against him as if to destroy him, and so get rid of him. But God never so feels toward any man. He may hate man's sin, but man himself he never hates. He may often find man, through sin, an obstacle in his path, but he never sets man up before him as an object of hostile assault.

II. THE DIVINE CONDUCT CHARACTERIZED. As: 1. *Unworthy.* Job designs to hint that man's insignificance makes it wholly unbecoming, if not mean, on God's part to visit him with affliction; that such incessant vigilance as God exercises over man is altogether to attribute to him too much importance, that man, being so utterly frail and short-lived, it were nobler in God to permit him to enjoy his brief span of life in ease and comfort. A fallacious argument, since: (1) No being that God has made is too insignificant for God to care for. He cares for sparrows (Matt. x. 29), and for oxen (1 Cor. ix. 9), and why not for man (Matt. x. 31)? (2) If man is not too insignificant to sin, he cannot be too insignificant for God to keep his eye upon. The capacity of sinning gives man an importance in God's universe that he would not otherwise have possessed. (3) Though man's life on earth be short, the consequences of his evil deeds may live behind him; hence the impossibility of God withdrawing his control of mundane things. (4) The charge completely falls to the ground, since God watches over man, not in an evil sense, but in a good. 2. *Unkind.* Job's language sets forth the Divine conduct in a most offensive light, as never for a solitary instant looking away from man, or allowing him a moment's ease; but harassing him so incessantly that life becomes a burden, pursuing him so remorselessly that, do what he will, he can never get out of the Creator's way. Thank God, such a picture is only true of the impenitent. "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth" (Ps. xxxiv. 16). 3. *Ungracious.* Granting that he had committed faults, and that the great Man-watcher had detected sin in his past life,—"Why dost thou not pardon my transgression?" asks Job, "and take away mine iniquity?" An exceedingly natural question, not, however, because man is so insignificant a creature, and human life so evanescent, and sin so comparatively trifling, but because (1) God is essentially merciful and gracious (Exod. xxxiv. 6); (2) in the exercise of mercy God specially delights (Jer. ix. 24; Isa. xliii. 25; Ezek. xxxiii. 11; Micah vii. 18); (3) the exercise of mercy is perfectly consistent with the other attributes of his Divine nature (Rom. iii. 25, 26); (4) mercy more than justice redounds to the glory of God (Rom. ix. 23; 2 Cor. iv. 15; Eph. i. 6; Jas. ii. 13); (5) mercy is more calculated to soften and subdue man than punishment; (6) no one but God can pardon transgression or take away sin (Ps. xxxii. 5; ciii. 3; Isa. xliii. 25; Luke v. 21); and (7) God has distinctly promised to pardon them that cast themselves upon his mercy (Rom. x. 12, 13; 1 John i. 9). Yet in perfect harmony with all this, the awakened sinner may, like Job, be denied the sense or the outward sign of forgiveness (in Job's case the removal of trouble), because (1) he does not ask in the right spirit, with humility and self-abasement (Ps. xxxii. 5; li. 4, 11), asking that as a matter of right which can only be obtained as a gift of grace,—men who think they have a claim on God cannot be forgiven (Luke xviii. 14); (2) he does not ask with the right plea, viz. in the Name of God (Ps. cvi. 8; Isa. xliii. 25) or of Christ (John xiv. 13), but comes expecting to find favour on the ground of his own righteousness (Rom. ix. 32); (3) he does not ask for the right purpose, his object being escape from sin's punishment rather than from sin

itself (Jas. iv. 3); (4) he does not ask with sincere faith, but staggers at the promise through unbelief—ever an insuperable barrier to forgiveness (Jas. i. 6); and sometimes (5), though he asks, God may have reasons for delay in granting the soul's request, as *e.g.* to test the soul's sincerity or earnestness, to complete the soul's penitential submission, to quicken and intensify the soul's faith, to heighten the soul's appreciation of Divine mercy when it comes. 4. *Unwise.* "For now shall I sleep in the dust," etc. Job meant to say that, if God had any thoughts of mercy toward him at all, it was unwise to delay putting them into execution. Burdened with misery and unpardoned sin as he was, he would soon be gone. The pressure of such calamities as he endured must soon crush him into his grave; and then, should God, relenting, seek him to extend to him kindness, lo! he should not be. A beautiful picture, that of the Deity relenting towards man (cf. Isa. liv. 6—10; Jer. xxxi. 18—20); an impressive sermon, that *now* is the day of grace for both God and man—for man to seek (2 Cor. vi. 2), and for God to grant salvation (John ix. 4).

Learn: 1. That the most maligned Being in the universe is God, even his own people not always speaking him fair. 2. That, however mean and insignificant in himself, man has been more magnified by God than any other of his creatures. 3. That even afflictions are a token of God's desire to exalt man, since only through them can he attain to purity. 4. That if man's miseries are a heavy burden to himself, man's sins are a heavier to God. 5. That if man's iniquities are not removed, the reason lies with man, and not with God. 6. That God's love to his people is unchanging; since, however he may seem to be angry with them, he is certain in the end to relent. 7. That God is grieved when men pass away from earth without experiencing his favour.

Ver. 17.—"*Lord, what is man?*" I. THE INSIGNIFICANCE OF MAN. 1. In *origin*, allied to the dust. 2. In *character*, defiled by sin. 3. In *experience*, weighted with misery. 4. In *duration*, short-lived and evanescent. 5. In *destiny*, doomed to dissolution.

II. THE GREATNESS OF MAN. 1. *Created* in the Divine image. 2. *Preserved* by Divine care. 3. *Redeemed* by Divine love. 4. *Renewed* (or may be) by Divine grace. 5. *Immortalized* (or may be) by Divine life. 6. *Crowned* with Divine glory, already in Christ Jesus, and afterwards in them that are his.

LESSONS. 1. Since man is so insignificant, be humble. 2. Since man is so great, be good.

Ver. 21.—*A sinner's inquiry.* I. A CONFESSION. My transgression, mine iniquity.

II. A RECOGNITION. Of: 1. The possibility of pardon. 2. The meaning of pardon—to take away sin.

III. AN INTERROGATION. "Why dost thou not take away mine iniquity?" 1. A question natural to ask. 2. A question easy to answer (see preceding homiletics).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*The weakness of man: appeal to the clemency of God.* I. GENERAL VIEW OF MAN'S MISERY AND HIS OWN. (Vers. 1—5.) Man is compared to a hireling with an appointed time of service, the end of which is wearily and wistfully looked for. The ideas suggested are (1) toilsomeness; (2) fatigue and exhaustion; (3) intense longing for rest. As the slave longs for the lengthening shadows of evening, the hired labourer for pay-time, so the oppressed sufferer, toiling beneath a load of pain, longs for the welcome end of death. He "would 'twere bedtime, and all well." Voluntary and moderate labour is one of the keenest delights of life; but forced and prolonged toil exhausts the very springs of enjoyment. Rest is the reward of moderate exertion, but to the excessive toiler or sufferer it is denied. We have a picture here of the extreme misery of sleeplessness, than which none can be more acute; the tossing through the wakeful hours of darkness, the mind travelling over and over again the same weary track of its melancholy contemplations. It may be appropriate here to think of the *great blessing of sleep.* Homer termed it "ambrosial." It was one of the great boons

of Heaven to suffering mortals. It is "the season of all natures," as Shakespeare beautifully says. It is the preservation of sanity. Connected with this, the lesson of *moderate exertion* is one needed by many in these busy, striving days; and no less the fault of over-anxiety, and the duty of casting care upon God, on which the gospel insists so strongly. It is the life according to our true nature, and according to simple piety, which brings sound sleep by night, and healthy thought by day.

II. REFLECTION ON THE BREVITY OF LIFE, AND PRAYER. (Vers. 6—10.) The mood of self-pity continues. Then follows a lament on the shortness of life. It is compared to a weaver's shuttle, to smoke, to the vanishing of a cloud, as it is elsewhere compared (ch. ix. 25) to the hasty passage of a courier, or, in the well-known old story of English history, to the flight of a bird through a hall and out into the darkness again. We may compare the following plaintive passage from the Greek poet Æschylus:—

"Ah! friend, behold and see
What's all the beauty of humanity?
Can it be fair?
What's all the strength? can it be strong?
And what hope can they bear,
These dying livers—living one day long?
Ah! seest thou not, my friend,
How feeble and slow
And like a dream doth go
This poor blind manhood, drifted from its end?"
(Mrs. E. B. Browning's translation.)

We may draw from this passage the following lessons: 1. There is a constant sense of infirmity in human nature, and of the inexorable law of death. 2. The mind cannot submit patiently to this doom. Dear earthly affections (ver. 8) cry out against it, and unconsciously witness for the immortality of the soul. 3. The thought of utter extinction cannot be endured by an awakened and elevated spirit (ver. 10). These impotences and reluctances in the presence of decay and death are really tokens of immortality. We see them to be so in this instance, in an age when life and immortality were not brought to light. 4. The natural relief from all such sorrows and perplexities is in prayer (ver. 7). The cry, "Oh, remember!" is not unheard by him who knows our frame and remembers that we are dust. There may be the clear consciousness of God where there is not the definite assurance of immortality. But a firm faith in him, when cherished and educated, leads ultimately to the conviction that the soul cannot perish.—J.

Vers. 11—16.—*Fresh recourse to the relief of words.* The prayer seems, in this dark state of despondency, in vain; and Job's despair overflows all bounds and pours itself forth in a dark stream of thoughts and words.

I. SUFFERINGS MISUNDERSTOOD. One might suppose, he argues, from these intense oppressions, that he was some dangerous creature, who could not be chained down too closely nor be watched too narrowly (ver. 12)—one to whom not a moment's rest must be given, that he may not in his freedom commit some terrible injury. But is he such a being? is he a sea, or a living monster of the deep, to be so sharply tormented and guarded by God? Just so, he says (ch. xiii. 27), "Thou puttest my feet in the stocks, and watchest narrowly all my paths; thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet." Not even in sleep can he find rest—weakest and least dangerous of creatures though he be (vers. 13, 14).

II. RASH RESOLVES OF DESPAIR. (Vers. 15, 16.) He will rather be stifled, or in any way court death, than longer carry about this living skeleton, this wretched body which consists only of bones (comp. ch. xix. 20). He has a disgust for life, will not live for ever, for he has already lived too long.

III. APPEAL TO THE JUSTICE OF GOD. (Vers. 17—21.) After a renewed and passionate demand (ver. 16) that God may give him at least a moment's rest, since his life is already as good as vanished, and cannot abide, his language becomes somewhat more tranquil and contemplative. 1. *Questionings: the insignificance of man as an object of Divine regard.* (Vers. 17—19.) We may compare the question of the

psalmist (Ps. viii. 4). It is there suggested by the magnificence of the mighty heavens: what is man in comparison with that vast and brilliant aggregate of constellations? Here the question is suggested by the greatness of the sufferer's misery. What worth can he possess either for good or for evil, that he should be made the object of this incessant Divine attention? The answer to these obstinate questionings is found in the gospel. There man learns that it is the greatness and the value of the soul which makes him the object of the Divine pursuit; and then he learns, above all, that that pursuit is not inspired by the vengeance of an irritated adversary, or the caprice of an unjust tormentor, but by the love of an eternal Father, who chastises men for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness. 2. *Consciousness of guilt.* (Vers. 20, 21.) For the first time there is a reference on the part of Job to the concealed cause of suffering—sin. But it is only a general consciousness of infirmity, and an admission that possibly there may have been unwitting error on his part. He cannot confess a special sin of which his friends suppose him guilty, but of which his conscience is free. The words are rendered by some, "If I failed in that which I do unto thee, Preserver of men, why," etc.? Thus deeper than the sense of sin, deepest conviction of all in his heart, is: 3. *Instinctive trust in the goodness of God.* His reasoning is as follows: It may be necessary that God should punish man for guilt; but is this to hold so strictly that every slightest omission is severely scrutinized and sorely punished by God? Surely man is neither so strong for resistance to error, nor so dangerous, that he should be treated so harshly and jealously? Why, if there has been some fault in the conduct of Job, as seen by those all-penetrating eyes, does God loose all his arrows against him like a hunter aiming at a fixed mark (comp. ch. vi. 4; xvi. 12), shooting at him the poisonous darts of disease and suffering till he can no longer endure himself? Why does not God rather pardon him before it is too late, as, alas! according to all appearance, it now is, as Job sees nothing before him but the grave? This is no conflict of an infidel or rebellious spirit against its Maker. It is the pleading of a true child with its Father in heaven. It is the struggle of the soul against the iron pressure of that which we have learned to call natural law. The individual suffers, is sometimes crushed by natural law, while the mass are benefited. But above law is God. And out of this long picture of troubled thought the truth will presently flash into splendour, that in that loving and holy will of a Father the soul, emancipated from the troubles of time, shall find its eternal rest.—J.

Vers. 1—6.—*The days of the hireling.* Job speaks from the depth of suffering, and as yet he has no clear light upon the Divine purpose concerning him. God, who is his true Refuge, appears to be his Enemy; and he likens his miserable days to those of the oppressed slave. This he urges as a justification of the longing for rest which he has expressed. For him there is no prospect of that rest but in the grave. It is the cry of bitter subjection.

1. THE COMPARISON OF HUMAN LIFE TO THAT OF THE HIRELING. It is an appointed lot. It is a lot of subjection. It is a life of toil and weariness. In Job's case the comparison is most apt. But his thought is especially upon the longing of the hireling for the close of the day. For this the toil, the heat, the weariness, prepare him. Job's condition is one of hard toil. He is weary even of his life. And his longing for the rest which death alone can bring is the precise point of his comparison. How often does life present no brighter or more beauteous aspect! Its many cares, its disappointments, its multiplied sorrows and keen, penetrating pains make life to many to be as the hard drudgery of the hireling. How many long for death as the hireling for night! In a true sense life is the life of a hireling, and the good Master who has sent us into his vineyard to toil will reward the faithful labourer with his sufficient hire.

II. THE AGGRAVATIONS OF JOB'S LOT. He is to his own view as one whose toil is a grievous one. He is more than weary; and his longing for the shadows of evening is justified by what seems to him to be the hardness of his taskmaster. Earnestly he "desireth the shadow;" for long "months of vanity" he is "made to possess," and "wearisome nights are appointed" to him. When the tired labourer lies down to rest in unconscious sleep, and to gain strength for the toil of the morrow, Job is "full of tossings to and fro." The dawn brings him no refreshment. The fevered night leaves him to encounter unprepared the enemy of the day. His poor

afflicted body presents the saddest picture; "worms and clods of dust" clothe it. His "skin is broken;" his sores make his flesh "loathsome" to him, and his "days are spent without hope." From such a sufferer comes the word of complaining. It is little to be wondered at by one who remembers his own frailty. The picture of Job is a lesson for us, and, turning our thoughts from our own healthy life to the sufferings of the afflicted, let us learn our duty, and cherish: 1. The pitifulness of spirit which is due to all sufferers. 2. Their claim upon our help and sympathy. 3. The forbearance with which we should hear their complainings. 4. We also may, in our turn, become the sufferers, and need the comfort we now give to others. Thus may each man see himself in every sufferer, and learn to give that consolation he himself so soon may need.—R. G.

Vers. 1—6.—*The weariness of sorrow.* Expressing itself—
I. IN A DESIRE FOR THE CLOSE OF LIFE. (Ver. 2.)
II. AS A CONTINUOUS DISAPPOINTMENT. (Ver. 3.)
III. AS A CEASELESS RESTLESSNESS. (Ver. 4.)
IV. AS A REVOLT FROM THE PAINFULNESS OF ITS CIRCUMSTANCES. (Ver. 5.)
V. AS A CONDITION OF HOPELESSNESS. (Ver. 6.)—R. G.

Vers. 6—9.—*The speedy flight of life.* In the multitude of his thoughts within him, Job glances at many of the painful aspects of life. His view is influenced by the condition of his spirit. With a longing for the grave, he nevertheless mourns over the rapid flight of his few days upon earth. Such a reflection every one may wisely make. Consider the expressive similes in which Job sees his hasty life represented. 1. His days are swifter than the weaver's shuttle (ver. 6). 2. They are as the wind (ver. 7). 3. They are as the glance of the eye (ver. 8). 4. They are as the cloud which is consumed, and which vanisheth away (ver. 9). To what course of conduct should such a reflection lead? If life be so swiftly passed, can anything be done to abate its apparent evil? What is becoming to him whose days thus flee away? 1. A diligent and careful use and husbanding of time. 2. A concentration of attention on life's essential work, avoiding all frivolous occupations of time which rob the soul of its days and leave no residuum of blessing or benefit. 3. A careful guard against confining the pursuits of life to those things which can be attained only in this present world. 4. A just estimate of the value of immortality, and a due attention to the interests that relate to it. 5. A patient endurance of life's sorrows, seeing they will soon close; and a moderate absorption in life's pleasures, for they speedily pass away. Life is very brief, but it is long enough to enable every one to lay hold on eternal life, to prepare himself for that eternal life, and to do work that hereafter may be reflected upon with pleasure.—R. G.

Vers. 11—16.—*The cry of despair.* Job is in the depth of his suffering. His heart is sore broken. He bursts forth with his loud complaint, which he can no longer restrain. His spirit seeks relief in its cry. Every cry is supposed to give relief. But the bitter cry of despair, coming up from the depths of excruciating sorrow, often marks the turning-point in the history of suffering. Its vanity and uselessness being made apparent, the soul returns to a calmer and more collected state.

I. THE CRY OF DESPAIR IS WRUNG FROM THE HEART ONLY IN ITS EXTREMEST SUFFERINGS. Brave and strong as the human spirit may be under suffering, there comes a moment when its strength fails. It reaches a climax of pain and anguish. It can hold out no more; and, in the passionate haste for relief, seeks it in its wild cry of despair. "I will speak in the anguish of my spirit."

II. THE CRY OF DESPAIR IS VAIN. It fails to give ease to the suffering flesh, and, though an expression of the soul's anguish, in itself it is powerless to relieve that anguish. It is liable to excite but to rebelliousness. It is as the struggle of one enclosed in a strong net; or as the folly of a child, in wild passion, kicking with bare foot against the stony rock.

III. THE CRY OF DESPAIR, BEING OFTEN, AS HERE, A CRY OF DEFIANT COMPLAINT, TENDS TO ROUSE THE SOUL TO WICKED REBELLIOUSNESS. There is no restraint put upon the agitated soul. It is let loose in unrestricted freedom to declare, not its calm

judgment, but its uttermost complaint, goaded on by the severities of acute suffering. "I will not refrain my mouth."

IV. THE CRY OF DESPAIR SPRINGS FROM, AND AT THE SAME TIME PROMOTES, ERRONEOUS VIEWS OF LIFE AND ITS ISSUES. Job is so far led astray that he chooses "strangling and death rather than life." So completely is his judgment in abeyance that he knows no other alternative. Possibly it is the aim of the poet to show that Job's knowledge of the future is insufficient to counteract the sorrows and evils of the present.

V. THE CRY OF DESPAIR IS DESERVING OF PITY. When the soul is driven by fierce affliction to such an extremity, it is a proper object for the most tender compassion and patient forbearance. As men are patient with the demented, so they have need to be with him who, by despair, is driven off from the balanced, calm judgment and just thought.

VI. IT IS NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN THAT THE CRY OF HUMAN DESPAIR PIERCES TO THE EAR OF THE ALMIGHTY, THE ALL-HELPFUL ONE. Even the sigh of a contrite heart is heard; so also the wail of despair. The human extremity is the Divine opportunity. Job will ultimately prove that God has not forgotten him.—R. G.

Ver. 17.—"*What is man?*" The answer to this question must come from afar. No sudden or hasty conclusion must be made. The whole conditions under which life is held, the influence which life exerts, the final issue of life with all other considerations, must be regarded. Here frail, perishing man is seen to be magnified by God, who sets his heart upon him and visits him every moment. Why is so much made of life? "What *must man be* that *thou* takest such knowledge of him?" The answer is only to be found in a just view of the real greatness of human life. The human greatness is seen—

I. IN THE CAPABILITIES OF THE HUMAN MIND. All truth may be stored in it. It is exalted by its great capacities for knowledge, memory, reason, judgment, etc.

II. IN THE CAPACITY OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Every holy emotion may find a home in the human soul. Every lofty sentiment sweep across it as any strain across a lyre. All holy affections may be cherished. Man may know and love the highest objects of knowledge and affection. He may illustrate nobleness, patience, charity, faith, hope, gentleness—every grace.

III. HUMAN GREATNESS IS FURTHER SEEN IN THE WIDESPREAD INFLUENCE OF HUMAN ACTION. To-day the world is living in the light of the deeds of Job's life. The impulses of the deeds of past millenniums are felt to-day. A wide illustration possible.

IV. IN THE SKILFULNESS OF THE HUMAN HAND.

V. IN THE SUPREMACY OF MAN IN THE EARTH.

VI. IN THE DESTINY OF MAN, AND ESPECIALLY IN HIS ENDOWMENT OF IMMORTALITY. Although of earth, he aspires to heaven; though a child of time, he rises to eternity; though sinful, he can illustrate all holiness.

VII. THE HIGHEST EVIDENCE OF THE GREATNESS OF THE HUMAN LIFE SEEN IN THE INCARNATION, wherein the Divine life could manifest itself through the medium of the human. When life is thus duly estimated, and when it is known that the sorrows of life are used for its chastening and perfecting, then the answer is found to the question—Why dost thou "try him every moment"? It is because life is so precious and so capable of culture and deserving of it, that he thus seeks to discipline, refine, instruct, and perfect it.—R. G.

Vers. 1—3.—*The days of a hireling.* Job compares himself to a mercenary in war and to a hired servant at work. As these men have little interest in what they are doing, partly because the masters who hire them take little interest in them, Job feels his life but a weariness, and longs for the term of his service to expire.

I. LIFE MAY APPEAR LIKE THE DAYS OF A HIRELING. 1. *It involves hard toil.* The lot of most men is not easy; but some find life a grinding servitude. 2. *Its labour is often weary and unattractive.* Many people have to work at uninteresting tasks, and only regard their labour as drudgery. There is neither pleasure in the work nor pride in the result of it. If men could all choose their lots, many of the most necessary

industries would be entirely abandoned. 3. *It is only undertaken for the sake of its rewards.* Men work for wages, and, needing the wages, they endure the toil which they detest. This is not only true of what is called the wage-earning portion of the community. It applies also to many who seem to be their own masters, but whose work is undertaken solely for the remuneration which it brings in. 4. *The supreme Master is not seen to take interest in his servants.* The laws of life are inexorable. There is no evading the rules of God's great factory in which we are all set to work. Men fall and die at their tasks without visible signs of compassion from their Lord. Thus faith is severely tried, and some weakly ones sink to low views of life and of man's relations to God.

II. IT IS NEITHER HELPFUL NOR RIGHT TO REGARD LIFE AS THE DAYS OF A HIRELING. 1. *It is not helpful.* Hireling service is never of any great value. The work that is only done for pay is apt to be done hastily if by the piece, and in a wastefully slow and slovenly fashion if by the hour. Until a man puts his heart into his task, he cannot put good work into it. No one can live a worthy life chiefly in the hope of its rewards. The service of God which is only undertaken that good things may be obtained from God is degrading and of little worth. The Christian who lives solely on the hope of heaven is spending a poor life on earth. We have to discover higher motives and to serve God joyfully and lovingly, because his service is delightful, and because we love him. 2. *It is not right.* The hireling idea of life is delusively suggested to us by a superficial view of facts and by a low tone in our own minds. But it is completely false, for God does not treat us as hirelings. He knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust. He is our Father, and he pities us as his children. And therefore we owe to him more than a hired servant's drudgery—we owe filial obedience and the rich service of love. Now, when we have learnt to take right views of God and his service, the miserable, degrading idea of the hireling's lot drops off, and a much nobler and happier conception of life dawns upon us. Then the most common task ceases to be a piece of drudgery and becomes a labour of love. By a gracious law of providence it seems to be ordered that any duty which is undertaken conscientiously and heartily becomes interesting and even a source of pleasure. So while the hireling longs for the shadow that tells of the declining day and of the end of his task, the faithful Christian makes the most of his day of service, knowing "that the night cometh, wherein no man can work."—W. F. A.

Ver. 6.—*The weaver's shuttle.* This is one of the many emblems of the brevity of life which carry a certain subtle suggestiveness of deeper meanings in spite of the minimizing pessimism that seems to be their sole prompting cause. The shuttle flies swiftly across the web. What does this fact suggest?

I. THE MELANCHOLY BREVITY OF LIFE. "The velocity of time," says Seneca, "is infinite, and is most apparent to those who look back." This is one of the most trite topics of conventional moralists. Yet it is one which each individual man feels with a startled shock of surprise when it comes directly home to him in experience. We say that life is short, but we do not believe it till we are reminded of the fact by ugly surprises. Then we feel that the flying shuttle, the melting shadow, the tale hastening to a close, are not more transitory than life. We are but creatures of a day in the light of God's eternity.

II. THE VANITY OF EARTHLY AMBITIONS. We lay our foundations, but we have not time to put the corner-stone on our cherished design before we are called hence. The tools drop from our hands ere we have accomplished our purposes. The mirage of life fades before its paradise has been attained. We start with great hopes, but our hairs are gray before we have begun to realize them, and we are in our graves before they are fulfilled.

III. THE FOLLY OF IMPATIENCE. Let us be fair. If the joys of life are fleeting, so also are its pains. Though our lot be hard, the hardship will not be long. Job seems to complain that, if life is so short, it is cruel to spoil it with trouble. It seems sad that so little a day should be robbed of its brief sunshine. But, on the other hand, if the day is one of pain and bitterness, may we not be thankful that the evening hasteneth on?

IV. THE DUTY OF UNSELFISHNESS. We make too much of our own individual lives,

as though the world existed for ourselves. This is like the shuttle fancying that the loom belongs to it, and was made entirely to suit its convenience. Nay, it is worse; it is like the shuttle thinking the loom was made for *one* throw, *one* thread. We must learn to understand that we exist for a larger purpose. Slowly enough the great web of time is woven, though each throw of the shuttle is so swift. God is thinking of the whole.

V. THE MYSTERY OF A DIVINE PURPOSE. The shuttle knows not why it is flung across the threads. But it is working out an unseen design. The seemingly aimless and wasted throw is essential to the weaving of the pattern of the whole fabric. God has a purpose with each of our lives. Even the briefest life which is lived in obedience to God cannot be wasted. God's great loom will work it into his eternal design.

VI. THE NECESSITY OF A FUTURE LIFE. The animals are satisfied with their ephemeral existence. They have no melancholy reflections on the brevity of life. It is only to man that this earthly existence seems to be contemptibly short. Why? Because in his breast there dwells the instinct of immortality—an instinct whose very existence is a mute prophecy of its future satisfaction, since he who planted it will not disappoint it. The shuttle is not destroyed after its swift flight. This brief life carries us on to the endless ages of the Divine future.—W. F. A.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The vanishing cloud.* Job conceives of life as even more transient than the weaver's shuttle. It does not only pass swiftly away; it melts into nothingness, and ceases to be like the cloud that evaporates in the heat of the rising sun. The journey to the grave knows no return. Here we have the limited, melancholy view of death which was prevalent in Old Testament times, but which should be dispelled by the glorious doctrine of the resurrection which Christ has brought to light.

I. LOST TIME IS IRRECOVERABLE. We can never overtake the days that we have let slip by us in heedless idleness. A wasted youth is an irretrievable disaster; manhood cannot possibly go back and make up for the deficiencies of youth. At best we can but do the duties of to-day; it will be foolish to neglect these in attempting to pick up those of yesterday. A misused opportunity will never return. The memories of a happy and long-lost past may dwell with us as sweetest dreams, but they can never bring back the days of old. Joy, sorrows, busy scenes, quiet scenes,—all have melted away like the mountains and palaces of cloudland.

II. EARTHLY LIFE WILL NEVER RETURN. The pagan doctrine of metempsychosis finds no support in Scripture. We live but once on earth. Let us, then, make the best of this one earthly life; it is the only one we have. We might think we could afford to squander it a little recklessly if we had a dozen more lives to fall back upon. But we have no reserves. All our forces are in the field. We must win the battle at once or we shall be utterly undone. The duties, joys, sorrows, of life are with us this once. Let us use them in the highest possible service, that our one life may be a good life. Our dear ones are with us for one life only. Let us be patient with them and kind to them. When we have lost them we can never have them back to atone for our ungenerous treatment of them.

III. WE HAVE THIS ONE OPPORTUNITY OF PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE. We now know that death does not end all. But it ends the sowing-time. After death there is the harvest. What is sown in the present life must be reaped in the great coming age. If this life is misspent, it will go for ever, and we shall have no opportunity to come back to the world and make a better preparation for the great day of reckoning. We cannot buy oil for our vessels when the cry of the bridegroom's coming awakes the night.

IV. WE CAN LOOK FORWARD TO RISING TO A BETTER LIFE. It is foolish to take Old Testament texts as giving us a finality of truth. In their limitation they sometimes show us only the imperfection of the earlier knowledge. Job did not know the Christian revelation of redemption, though sometimes he seems to have caught glimpses of it. But we, knowing more, should have brighter hopes. Our guide is not Job in his despair, but Christ in his victory. We shall not rise on earth. But we can look forward to a resurrection-life in heaven, when we shall meet those long-lost but never-forgotten friends who have gone on before us.—W. F. A.

Ver. 14.—*Scared with dreams.* This seems to be one of the symptoms of Job's terrible disease, elephantiasis. Sleep even does not give him rest from his sufferings. The bodily torments of the day only give place to horrible dreams and alarming visions at night.

I. DREAM-TERRORS ARE REAL IN EXPERIENCE. Look at the man in a nightmare, how he groans and shrieks! We smile at his fancied troubles. Yet to him, while he endures them, they are very real. We feel according to our subjective state, not according to our objective circumstances. Souls are tortured by day-dreams which have no better foundation than those of the night, yet are not their distresses the less acute. Superstition peoples the heavens with dream-fancies of horror. There are no corresponding realities. Yet the victims of superstition are in real agony. An enormous amount of terrible mental suffering seems to be experienced by the heathen in their superstitious terrors of malignant divinities. One happy result of Christian missionary work is to sweep away those gloomy dreams, and bring the peace and confidence of Christian daylight to the benighted regions of the world.

II. SOME OF OUR WORST DISTRESSES HAVE NO BETTER FOUNDATION THAN IDLE DREAMS. They are terrible so long as we are under their spell; but if we only knew they were but fancies of the diseased mind, we should be relieved of their incubus. Note some of these. 1. *The idea that God is opposed to us.* This was Job's thought. He thought that even his ill dreams came from God, and that it was God who was scaring him. The too common notion in religion was and is that God is averse to us, and that we have to do something to win his favour, whereas the Scriptures tell us that he loves us and seeks us to be reconciled to him, and that, instead of our needing to do something to make him gracious, he has given his Son to redeem us to himself. 2. *The notion that our sins are incurable.* People will not believe that holiness is possible; therefore of course they do not have it, because they have not the heart of hope to seek it. We scare ourselves with ugly dreams of our own irretrievably ruined condition. Our sin is not a dream, but our despair is one. 3. *The terror of death.* To the Christian this is but an idle dream. Death is no hideous Miltonic monster, but the servant of Christ. Dying is the advent of Christ to the soul that lives in Christ's service.

III. CHRIST HAS COME TO DISPEL IDLE DREAMS. We are troubled about God's dealings with us because we do not know him. We have but to acquaint ourselves with him in order to be at peace (ch. xxii. 21). Christ reveals God in his Fatherhood. There are reasonable fears that are no dreams, but which spring from our consciousness of guilt. Often the dream is found in the illusion that ignores or excuses sin. Christ dispels that dream by revealing a dread reality, but only that he may lead us through repentance to pardon. Then all terrors of the night flee away in the glad daylight of God's love.—W. F. A.

Vers. 17, 18.—*The littleness of man.* These verses have been characterized as a parody on Ps. viii. 5. While following the form of the psalmist's language, and proceeding on the same general thesis, they suggest a very different inference. The psalmist was amazed at the condescension of God in noticing man, and filled with wonder at the honour that is put on so puny a creature. But Job is here represented as expressing his dismay that God should stoop to try and trouble so small a being. There is no equality in the contest, and it appears to Job as though God were taking advantage of the weakness of his victim. In spite of Job's perplexity and short-sighted complaints, there are truths behind what he says. We must endeavour to disentangle these truths, and separate them from the illusions unworthy of the goodness of God with which they are confused.

I. GOD IS WRONGLY CHARGED WITH WHAT HE DOES NOT DO. We know from the prologue that it is not God, but Satan, who is the "watcher of men," in the sense of the spy who delights to pounce on a fault and to worry the miserable in their helplessness. Most of the sufferings of life do not come directly from the Divine will, but proceed from the injustice of other men, from our own faults and mistakes, and from "spiritual wickedness in high places." We must beware of the dualism which would give this evil an independent power over against God. Satan can only go as far as God permits him. Still, the evil is from Satan, not from God. It is sin, not providence, that

brings the greatest trouble of life, and yet providence overrules that trouble for ultimate good.

II. THE SUFFERER IS TEMPTED TO MAGNIFY HIS OWN IMPORTANCE. Job's troubles were unique. But every sufferer is tempted to think that no one was ever troubled as he is. Feeling his own pain most intensely, he is inclined to make this the central experience of the universe, and to fancy that he is singled out for peculiar attacks of adversity. Job, however, generalizes, and regards himself as a specimen of mankind. Man himself seems unduly marked out for affliction. But no one is justified in coming to this conclusion till he knows how other beings are treated. It may be that man's hardships are but a part, and a fair part, of the hardships of the universe.

III. TO BE SPECIALLY TROUBLED IS TO BE MAGNIFIED IN IMPORTANCE. If it be so that man is specially singled out for affliction, no doubt a peculiar, though a most painful, importance is attached to him. Job becomes a great figure in Scripture through his troubles. Christ, crowned with thorns, is most significant on his cross. The sublimity of supreme sorrow is the inspiration of tragedy. Man is sometimes called out of his littleness by being made to suffer greatly. If God has a hand in all human sufferings—as God had in Job's, behind Satan—he is honouring man by condescending to permit him to receive exceptional trials.

IV. GREAT SUFFERING IS PERMITTED FOR THE SAKE OF GREAT GOOD. This is seen in the final outcome of Job's sufferings. They throw light on the higher life, and demonstrate the existence of disinterested devotion. The parody in Job is not so far from the original in the psalm. It is wonderful that God should permit human life to be honoured as the theatre in which the great tragedy of the conflict between evil and good is displayed. God is not stooping to torment men—like a giant torturing an insect—as to Job he appears to be doing with surprising effort. He is condescending to lead man on to greatness through suffering.—W. F. A.

Ver. 21.—*Limits to forgiveness.* If he has done wrong, and deserves to suffer, yet Job wonders why God does not pardon him. Is his Master altogether implacable? Will he exact the last farthing? Taking Job's question in a wider sense, we may ask—Why is not God's forgiveness unlimited and immediate?

I. THE EXPECTATION OF UNLIMITED FORGIVENESS. This is based on the power and on the goodness of God. 1. *His power.* The leper prayed, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" (Mark i. 40). Does not the saying apply to the cleansing from sin? Is God not able to purge sin completely out of the universe? For if he cannot do so, must we not say that God is limited, and therefore not Almighty, *i.e.* not God? 2. *His goodness.* He cannot wish to see evil continuing. His name is Love, and therefore he must desire the salvation of all. He is our Father, and it must be a pain to him to be separated from his children. Surely his goodness must incline him to universal pardon. His power would seem to make that possible. Therefore does it not seem reasonable to expect it?

II. THE EXPERIENCE OF LIMITED FORGIVENESS. The expectation is not realized. 1. *The forgiveness is limited in extent.* God's forgiveness is not freely bestowed on every sinner. There are multitudes who are still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Whilst the gospel is offered to all, very many people still perish in their sins. The universalism which would seem to spring from infinite power and love is not witnessed in actual life. 2. *The forgiveness is limited intensively;* i.e. those who are not forgiven are not freed from all trouble, neither do they find that sin no longer belongs to them. The first sense of Divine pardon is like a glimpse of heaven; but before long the joy gives place to disappointment, as evil consequences of old sins are found to follow us still, and even those sins themselves do not appear to be utterly slain.

III. THE EXPLANATION OF THE LIMITS OF FORGIVENESS. God treats us as moral agents. Forgiveness is not simply the relaxation of penalties; it is personal reconciliation. Punishment is not vengeance, but chastisement required by love as much as by justice. Hence we may deduce the explanation: 1. *Men have free-wills.* God desires to save all, and can save all, yet some do not wish to be saved. Then God respects the liberty which he has conferred. It must be observed that, as pardon is personal reconciliation to God, many who would be glad of release from sufferings, but

who do not desire reconciliation, do not really wish for pardon. 2. *Repentance is essential to forgiveness.* It would be bad in every way—hurtful to the sinner, as well as unjust—to forgive a man who did not repent of his sin. Indeed, the pardon would be a moral contradiction. 3. *Forgiveness does not involve a removal of all the consequences of sin.* The man who has wrecked health and fortune in sin does not become strong and rich by pardon. Natural consequences continue. Healing chastisements continue. Perhaps the penitent suffers because he is forgiven. God has not deserted him. He has visited him in love. Therefore it is a mistake to suppose, with Job, that great trouble is a proof that God does not pardon transgression. 4. *Sin needs an atonement.* It cannot be forgiven without a sacrifice—which we have in Christ (Heb. x. 12).—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1.—**Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said.** Bildad the Shuhite has the second place in the passage where Job's friends are first mentioned (ch. ii. 11), and occupies the same relative position in the dialogue. We may suppose him to have been younger than Eliphaz and older than Zophar. He does little more than repeat the arguments of Eliphaz, stating them, however, more bluntly, and with less of tact and consideration. The chief novelties of his discourse are an appeal to the teaching of past ages (vers. 8—10), and the employment of new and forcible metaphors (vers. 11—19).

Ver. 2.—**How long wilt thou speak these things?** An exclamation like that of Cicero, "Quousque tandem?" One or two outbreaks might be pardoned; but to persist was to abuse the patience of his hearers. **And how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind?** literally, *be a strong wind*; i.e. have all the bluster and vehemence of a tempest, which seeks to carry everything before it by sheer force and fury. The address is rude and unsympathetic.

Ver. 3.—**Doth God pervert judgment?** This was, no doubt, what Job's words of expostulation might seem to imply. But he had never gone so far as to make the direct charge, and a true friend would have shrunk from taxing him with an impiety, which could only be deduced from his speech by way of inference. It is our duty to put the best construction that we can on our friends' words, no less than upon their actions. **Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?** "Justice" is not altogether the same thing with "judgment." Judgment is the act, justice the principle which underlies or ought to underlie the act. It is, of course, impossible for God to pervert either. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth *do right?*" (Gen. xviii. 25).

Ver. 4.—**If thy children have sinned against him.** Bildad assumes this absolutely; Eliphaz had only hinted at it (ch. v. 4). Both presume to know what could be known only to the Searcher of hearts. **And he have cast them away for their transgression**; literally, *and he have delivered them into the hand of their transgressions*—abandoned them, that is, to the consequences of their wrong-doing. The allusion is, of course, to the fact recorded in ch. i. 19.

Ver. 5.—**If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes.** Here we have again an echo of the words of Eliphaz (ch. v. 8). There is a tacit assumption that Job has not had recourse to God, has not pleaded his cause with him or taken him into counsel; whereas all the evidence was the other way. Both when the first batch of calamities was reported to him (ch. i. 14—19), and when the stroke of disease came (ch. ii. 10), Job cast his care on God, fell back on him, submitted himself to him unreservedly. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord," he said in the one case; in the other, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" **And make thy supplication to the Almighty**; literally, *make the Almighty gracious to thee.*"

Ver. 6.—**If thou wert pure and upright.** Job had asserted this, not in so many words, but substantially (ch. vi. 29, 30). We have God's testimony that it was true (ch. i. 8; ii. 3); not, of course, in the sense that he was absolutely free from sin, but in that qualified sense in which "just," and "righteous," and "pure," and "holy" can be properly used of men. Bildad implies, without boldly asserting it, that he does not believe Job to deserve the epithets, either absolutely or in a qualified sense. If he were so, **surely now he** (*i.e.* God) **would awake for thee.** This is a common anthropomorphism (see Ps. vii. 6; xxxv. 25; xliv. 23; lix. 4, 5; Isa. li. 9). **And make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous**; or, *make peaceful the habitation wherein thy righteousness dwelleth*; i.e. make peaceful the habitation

wherein thou, a righteous man *ex hypothesi*, dwellest.

Ver. 7.—**Though thy beginning was small**; rather, *were small*. Bildad does not refer to the past, but to the present. Though, if God were now to set to work to prosper Job, his beginning would be slender indeed, yet what the outcome might be none could know. God might prosper him greatly. **Yet thy latter end should greatly increase.** Here, once more, Bildad does but follow in the steps of Eliphaz (see ch. v. 18—26), prophesying smooth things, as he had done. It is difficult to believe that either comforter put any faith in the prospect which he held out, or imagined that Job would really be restored to prosperity. Rather there is a covert **sarcasm** in their words. If thou wert indeed so free from guilt as thou claimest to be, then thou wouldst be confident of a happy issue out of thy afflictions. If thou art not confident of such an issue, it is because thou art conscious of guilt.

Ver. 8.—**For inquire . . . of the former age.** Put the matter to the test of experience—not the short-lived experience of living men, but the treasure of experience which has been handed down from generation to generation since the remotest times, and which is embodied in proverbs—the expression of the concentrated wisdom of antiquity. Search out and see what has in former ages been thought concerning prosperous men, like thyself, when suddenly cast down and afflicted. **And prepare thyself to the search of their fathers.** Go back, *i.e.*, to the past age, but do not stop there—pursue thy researches further and further to their remote ancestors. Bildad implies that the records of these remote times have been, in some way or other, preserved, either in writings or by oral tradition. Writing was certainly known in Egypt and Babylonia from a time anterior to Abraham, and to the Hittites at a date not very much later. Books of advice and instruction embodied in proverbs, or moral precepts, were among the earliest, in Egypt certainly. See the "Instructions of Amen-em-hat," in the 'Records of the Past,' vol. ii. pp. 11—16, and the 'Proverbs of Aphobis,' published by the Rev. Dunbar Heath. Bildad's speech is thought to indicate "special familiarity with Egypt."

Ver. 9.—**For we are but of yesterday.** "We," *i.e.* "of the present generation, old men though we may be, are but of yesterday; our experience is as nothing compared with the long, long experience of the past centuries, wherein the men of old "hived wisdom with each studious year," not, like ourselves, hurried and pressed by the shortness of the term to which life is now reduced, but having ample time for reflection and consideration in their long lives of five, six, seven, century lives (Gen. xi. 10—17), which enabled them to give their attention to everything in its turn, and to exhaust all the experiences that human life has to offer. **And know nothing**; *i.e.* comparatively. Sir Isaac Newton said that he felt like a child gathering shells upon the seashore, while the great ocean of truth lay unexplored before him. **Because our days upon earth are a shadow** (comp. ch. xiv. 2; Ps. cii. 11; Isa. xl. 6). So brief and fleeting that they can scarcely be called a reality.

Ver. 10.—**Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?** (see the comment on ver. 8).

Ver. 11.—**Can the rush grow up without mire?** The word translated "rush" (גֹּמֶא) is that which occurs also in Exod. ii. 3; Isa. xviii. 2 and xxxv. 7, as designating a plant common in Egypt, and which is only found in these four places. It is generally admitted that the "papyrus" is meant "a plant of the *Cyperaceæ*, or sedge family, which was formerly common in Egypt" (Hooker, in Smith's 'Dict. of the Bible,' vol. iii. p. 1019). The chief peculiarity of the papyrus is its triangular stem, which rises to the height of six or seven, sometimes even of thirteen or fourteen, feet, and terminates in a bunch of thread-like flowering branchlets. The pith of these stems was the material of which the ancient Egyptians made their paper. The papyrus is a water-plant, and needs an abundant supply, but would often spring up out of any small pool which the Nile left as it retired, and, when the water failed from the pool, would rapidly wither away. A fine papyrus plant was on view, with other water-plants, in the circular greenhouse in Kew Gardens, towards the end of the season of 1890. **Can the flag grow without water?** "The flag" (אָחוּ) seems to be the ordinary sedge, or marsh-plant. Like the papyrus, it would often spring up in all its greenness from a pool or pond left by the retiring river, and then in a few days, when the water was dried up, would wither away. Both images represent the prosperity of the wicked, and were probably proverbial.

Ver. 12.—**Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down.** It grows and flourishes in a rich greenness up to a certain point; no one touches it; but the water fails from the root, and it fades, collapses, and is gone. **It withereth before any other herb.** The ground may be all green around it with ordinary grass and other herbs, since they only need a little moisture—the water-plant will collapse unless it has its full supply.

Ver. 13.—**So are the paths of all that forget God.** So, that is, do those proceed on their way by whom God has been forgotten.

They spring up in apparent strength and lusty force; they flourish for a brief space; then, untouched by man's hand, they suddenly fade, fall, and disappear, before the mass of their contemporaries. Job is, of course, glanced at in the expression, "all that forget God," though it is the last thing that he had done. **And the hypocrite's hope shall perish**; or, *the hope of the ungodly man shall perish* (comp. ch. xiii. 16; xv. 34; xvii. 8, where the LXX. translates by ἀσεβής or παράνομος).

Ver. 14.—**Whose hope shall be cut off**; or, *break in sunder* (Revised Version). Here the second metaphor begins to come in. The ungodly, who has built up around him a house, and a body of dependants and friends, is like a spider which has spun itself a magnificent web, and thinks to find a defence in it. The moment it is put to the proof it "breaks in sunder;" its delicate tracery is shattered; its fabric goes to nought. Job's *house* had gone to nought before his person was smitten, and, though it had once been so strong, in the hour of trial had lent him no support at all. **And whose trust** shall be **a spider's web**; literally, *a spider's house*. All the trust of the ungodly, in whatever it consists, shall be as fragile, as frail, as unsubstantial, as the filmy structure that a spider spins with such care and skill, but which a wind, or a wasp, or an inconsiderate movement of its own may shatter to bits.

Ver. 15.—**He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure.** A spider's web, once damaged, rapidly goes to pieces. It cannot be patched up. To "lean upon it" is to put its structure to a test which it is unable to bear. It cannot "stand" or "endure." The case is the same with all the supports of the ungodly.

Ver. 16.—**He is green before the sun.** Bildad here introduces a third and more elaborate simile. The hypocrite, or ungodly man (ver. 13), is as a gourd (Jonah iv. 6), or other rapidly growing plant, which shoots forth at sunrise with a wealth of greenery, spreading itself over a whole garden, and even sending forth its sprays and tendrils beyond it (comp. Gen. xlix. 22)—lovely to look at, and full, apparently, of life and vigour. **And his branch shooteth forth in his garden**; rather, *over his garden*, or *beyond his garden*.

Ver. 17.—**His roots are wrapped about the heap, and seeth** (rather, *he seeth*) **the place** (literally, *house*) **of stones.** This passage is very obscure. The word *gal*, translated "heap," means sometimes a spring or stream of water (Cant. iv. 12); and many of the best Hebraists regard it as having that meaning here (Buxtorf, Lee, Stanley Leathes, Revised Version). In this case we have to regard the rapidly growing plant as having its roots wrapped about the perennial spring, which was a not uncommon, and always a much-desired, feature of an Eastern garden. Thus nourished, it naturally increased and spread itself, and "was green before the sun." May we suppose that it "saw the house of stones," because the spring which nourished it gushed forth from the native rock so that its roots were in contact with both?

Ver. 18.—**If he destroy him from his place**; or, *if he be destroyed*. The verb seems to be best taken as impersonal. If he be destroyed in any way, suddenly or gradually, by a Divine stroke, or by human agency, or by the comparatively slow process of nature, in any case the result is one, the flourishing plant is clean swept away, and the place of it knows it no more. Bildad's words are very dramatic and expressive. **Then it shall deny him, saying, I have not seen thee.** The place shall be ashamed of having ever nurtured anything so vile, and shall declare that it never held such a growth.

Ver. 19.—**Behold, this is the joy of his way.** Bitterly ironical—This is what his rapid and rampant greenery comes to; this is how his triumphant career ends! Utter destruction, disappearance, obliteration! **And out of the earth shall others grow.** The destruction leaves room for something better to follow—a sounder, healthier, and less short-lived growth.

Ver. 20.—**Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man.** Bildad winds up with words of apparent trust in, and good will towards, Job. God is absolutely just, and will neither forsake the righteous man nor uphold the wicked one. If Job is, as he says, true to God, upright, and (humanly speaking) "perfect," then he has only to go on trusting God; God will not leave him "till he fill his mouth with laughing, and his lips with rejoicing" (ver. 21); then "they that hate him shall be clothed with shame, and their dwelling-place shall come to nought" (ver. 22); but if, as we feel instinctively that Bildad believes, Job is not "perfect," but "an evil-doer," then he must expect no relief, no lull in his sufferings; he is obnoxious to all the threatenings which have formed the bulk of Bildad's discourse (vers. 8—20)—he may look to being cut off, like the rush and the flag (vers. 11, 12), crushed like the spider's web (ver. 14), destroyed, and forgotten, like the rapidly growing gourd (vers. 16—19); he must look for no help from God (ver. 20); but must be contented to pass away and make room for men of a better stamp (ver. 19). **Neither will he help the evil-doers**; literally, *neither will he grasp the hand of*

evil-doers; i.e. though he may support them for a while, he will not maintain them firmly and constantly.

Ver. 21.—**Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing.** This is very elliptical. The full phrase would be, "God will not cast away a perfect man; therefore, if thou be such, he will not cast away thee, till he fill thy mouth with laughter, and thy lips with rejoicing," or "with shouting for joy."

Ver. 22.—**They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame** (comp. Ps. xxxv. 26); **and the dwelling-place** (literally, *tent*, or *tabernacle*) **of the wicked shall come to nought** (literally, *shall not be*). The words are involved and obscure, because Bildad does not wish to make his meaning plain. He has to invent phrases which may cut both ways, and, while they seem directed against Job's enemies, may pain and wound Job himself.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Bildad to Job*: 1. *A bundle of mistakes.* I. UNJUSTIFIABLE REBUKE. "Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said." Even if on Job's part wholly deserved the admonition of Bildad was in itself worthy of censure, as being: 1. *Impatient.* "How long wilt thou speak these things?" It is due to every man who speaks in his defence, as Job did, to hear him patiently (Acts xxvi. 3); much more if he speaks in affliction. Nay, patience towards all men is an eminent token of sincere religion (1 Thess. v. 14; 1 Tim. vi. 11; 2 Tim. ii. 24; Titus iii. 2). Besides, they who rebuke others for impatience should not themselves be guilty of the same (Rom. ii. 21). 2. *Unsympathetic.* Throughout its entire length not a word indicates that Bildad cherished kindly feeling towards Job or pity for his deep distress. On the contrary, there is an amount of brutal plainness of speech that is hard to account for in a good man. Into whatever faults men may fall by their words or acts, their sufferings and sorrows should never fail to elicit our compassion (ch. vi. 14; Rom. xii. 15; Heb. xiii. 3). Least of all should those rebuke others' sins who cannot feel for others' woes (Gal. vi. 1; Titus iii. 2, 3). 3. *Uncharitable.* Bildad made no allowance for the anguish of spirit which had impelled Job to speak, but, like Eliphaz (ch. vi. 26), putting the worst possible construction on his words, contemptuously designated them as "these things," and characterized them as boisterous winds, vehement nothings, meaningless, but tempestuous, defying all restraints, overleaping all barriers, destroying all law and order in their course. "If sound speech that cannot be condemned" (Titus ii. 8) be excellent in all, "speech always with grace, seasoned with salt" (Col. iv. 6), is a special ornament of Christians; and "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (Jas. iii. 2); yet, equally on the other hand, a charity that never faileth, that is not easily provoked, that "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. xiii. 4—8), becometh them that hear.

II. DOUBTFUL THEOLOGY. "Doth God (*El*) pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty (*Shaddai*) pervert justice?" 1. *Absolutely, no!* It is impossible to conceive that the Divine Being, in his moral government of the universe, could even by a hair's breadth transgress the bounds of rectitude. (1) If he did, he could not be El-Shaddai, the All-powerful and All-sufficient Deity; since sin is essentially weakness and imperfection, and Omnipotence inconceivable except in alliance with immaculate purity and absolute integrity. Hence (2) because of being El-Shaddai, not only has he no temptation to resort to inequitable dealings with his creatures, but the bare idea of "perverting justice" is impossible, is wholly unthinkable in connection with him, and even the faintest insinuation thereof infinitely false. (In this sense it is not clear that Job, as Bildad suggests, had charged God with perversion.) Only the equity of God's dealings is not always discernible by man. Though the Judge of all the earth cannot do otherwise than right (Gen. xviii. 25), the judged do not always perceive the justness of his decisions. Hereafter the entire course of the Divine procedure on earth will be vindicated in the presence of an assembled universe. Meantime that it is in perfect harmony with the eternal principles of truth and right is an article of faith and a fundamental axiom of reason. 2. *Seemingly, yes.* As understood by Bildad, it is doubtful if justice can be claimed for all God's dealings with his intelligent creatures on earth. By justice Bildad meant the principle of rewarding good men with good

things, and bad men with evil things, upon the earth and in time. He contended that God could by no possible consideration be induced to depart from administering mundane affairs on this plain and simple principle. Accordingly, he argued that, if men sinned, God was shut up by the aforesaid principle to punish them in time; and, *vice versâ*, that if men were seen to be afflicted, the inference was irresistible that they had transgressed—otherwise God would be guilty of perverting justice in visiting them with tribulation. Similarly, he reasoned that God was bound to crown righteous men with prosperity; and that they who enjoyed good things in this life were only reaping the reward of virtue; although he likewise contended that if a good man relapsed into wickedness, he could not escape retribution in the shape of temporal calamity, while, if he repented, he would as surely be conducted back to his former prosperity. Now not one of these dogmatic positions of the ancient sage was correct; and against them all Job vehemently protested. The theory that connects all suffering with sin, though popular (John ix. 2; Luke xiii. 1—5), is fallacious. The doctrine that good things are invariably a reward of goodness will not stand the test of facts (Luke xvi. 25).

III. INAPT ILLUSTRATIONS. 1. *The case of Job's children.* (1) The assumption. "If thy children have sinned against him." Outrageously unfeeling was it, even if it had been true, so to lacerate the heart of a bereaved parent. "The words of the wise may be as goads" (Eccles. xii. 11), but the words of the good should be as "an honeycomb, sweet to the soul and health to the bones" (Prov. xvi. 24). "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright" (Prov. xv. 2), and "a prudent man covereth shame" (Prov. xii. 16). Entirely unwarranted, it was likewise atrociously cruel. Bildad had no reason whatever to assume that Job's children had been guilty (in his sense) of wickedness against God. Job's "it may be" (ch. i. 5) was not proof that "it was." In the general sense in which "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23), they had doubtless transgressed; in the particular sense that they had perpetrated positive offence against God evidence was completely awanting. Hence, because unwarranted, it was also heinously sinful. Bildad's imputation was an offence against the dead, against the living, against God. (2) The inference. "So hath he cast them away for [or, 'delivered them over into the hand of their'] transgression." Superficially correct to the extent that all sin has a tendency to *autonemesis*—sooner or later it will avenge itself upon the perpetrator thereof (cf. ch. v. 2), and that Job's children had been suddenly cut off by God (ch. i. 19); but radically vicious in attempting to connect these two—the principle and the fact—as cause and effect, since the history explicitly discovers (ch. i. 12) that the wickedness of Job's children was not the occasion of their destruction. They were cut off in pursuance of a divinely formed purpose to try Job. Yet this was no contravention of God's absolute justice, though on Bildad's principles it was quite inexplicable. 2. *The case of Job himself.* (1) The underlying hypothesis, which was false, viz. that Job was not pure and upright, even in the sense meant by Bildad (ver. 6), which Job was, having, like St. Paul, a conscience void of offence both toward God and toward men (Acts xxiv. 16), and like St. Peter the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Pet. iii. 21). (2) The proffered counsel, which was good. *What?* To seek unto God; *i.e.* to make supplication unto him, to address him in prayer. *Why?* To make God gracious unto him, this beautiful idea being conveyed by the force of the reflex. hithpael of the verb (Davidson). *When?* Betimes; the verb signifying "to seek early," *i.e.* first in time and first in importance (cf. Prov. vii. 15; viii. 17; ch. xxiv. 5). *How?* Earnestly; this also being implied in the verb "to seek." (3) The promised blessing, which was doubtful. This was: (*a*) Protection. The cause: "He will watch over thee," instead of "watching against thee" (ch. vii. 12). The effect: "And make thy habitation secure;" salute it with peace, and preserve it in safety (cf. Eliphaz's picture of the good man's house, ch. v. 24; and contrast his cursing of the wicked man's abode, ch. v. 3). The condition: "thy righteous habitation;" *i.e.* when thy habitation became the abode of a righteous man, God would pronounce it blessed and preserve it in peace. (*b*) Prosperity. "Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase." Bildad had no guarantee beyond his own theory for the prediction that a return on Job's part to piety would be followed by a restoration to material prosperity.

LESSONS. 1. "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger"

(Prov. XV. 1). Bildad's success would have been greater had his language been milder. 2. Those who undertake the work of teaching others should both see that what they teach is true, and study to speak the truth in love (Eph. iv. 15). Bildad was wanting in both of these respects. 3. A half-truth is sometimes as dangerous as a whole lie. Bildad's theology was of this sort. 4. Saints who are vehemently jealous for the Divine honour are often intensely unkind as well as unfair to their fellow-men. Bildad was as cruel towards Job as he was courageous in behalf of God. 5. Beware of sentencing those to perdition concerning whom God has not declared his mind. Bildad manifestly had no doubt as to the fate of Job's children. 6. It is man's duty to seek God betimes, whether the habitation of their righteousness prosper or no. Bildad's prediction must not be accepted as equivalent to God's promise. 7. The latter end of pious men, if not on earth, at least in heaven, will be one of greatness and glory combined. In this sense alone is Bildad's statement certainly correct.

Vers. 5, 6.—*The picture of a good man's home.* I. A PRAYING HOME. Where by both parents and children private and family devotion is observed.

II. A PIOUS HOME. Where such devotion is the outcome and expression of inward spiritual life.

III. A PEACEFUL HOME. Where the inmates enjoy the blessed calm of forgiveness, and dwell in love towards one another.

IV. A PROTECTED HOME. Where the eye of God continually rests upon the habitation and all who dwell therein.

V. A PROSPEROUS HOME. Where true spiritual riches are possessed, and as much temporal fortune is enjoyed as God's wisdom appoints.

Vers. 8—22.—*Bildad to Job: 2. Wisdom from the ancients.* I. THE TEACHERS. The world's gray fathers, not the immediate predecessors of Job, Bildad, and their contemporaries, but the progenitors of these—their remote ancestors, who are here described as: 1. *Early born.* In contrast to the men of Job's time, who are characterized as being late born, literally, "yesterday;" *i.e.* of yesterday, as if ascending the stream of time meant the same thing as approaching the primal fountains of truth—a popular fallacy which the royal Preacher corrects (Eccles. vii. 10). Antiquity is no sure test of truth; novelty is no sure mark of error. Rather error has a tendency to array itself in a *quasi*-sanctity derived from age. Many respectable fallacies and popular delusions have descended from remote times. Yet truth that bears the stamp of successive generations is all the more valuable on that account. 2. *Long-lived.* In comparison with their successors, who are here depicted as a short-lived generation: "Our days upon earth are a shadow" (ver. 9); the probability being that Bildad alluded to the remarkable longevity of antediluvian times, and of the patriarchal era immediately succeeding, as affording greater opportunity for making and collecting the results of observation, than the brief span of human life at the period when Job and he flourished. Yet the long leisure enjoyed by the Macrobii is now more than counterbalanced by the appliances of modern civilization. So that the results gathered in an ephemeral and shadowy life may rest upon a broader basis of experience than those collected by primeval sages in the course of centuries. Still, were each age dependent on the amount of knowledge it could accumulate for itself, the world's advancement would be tedious, if not practically at a standstill. Hence the duty of recognizing our obligations to the past, and of transmitting to posterity, not diminished, but if possible augmented, the gathered stores of matured wisdom inherited from bygone generations. 3. *Deep-thinking.* As men who with powers fully exercised employed the leisure of centuries in observing the phenomena of Divine providence, in comparing their *à priori* theories with life's facts; in investigating the profound problems of religion, and, after carefully elaborating the results, crystallized them in brief, sententious maxims, apothegms, parables, "bearing the impress of deep thought, and often deeply trying experience" (Davidson), which were passed along from age to age for the instruction of succeeding generations, in contrast with whom the contemporaries of Bildad and Job, and indeed the short-lived sages of modern times "know nothing." Bildad's estimate of the relative values of ancient and modern thought subject to correction on the grounds above indicated.

II. THE TEACHING. 1. *The proverb of the papyrus.* (1) The imago. A papyrus plant (*Cyperus papyrus*, L.) a *'gome*, so named from absorbing water, or a reed, an *achu*, like the Nile grass in Egypt (Gen. xli. 2), springing up suddenly, not upon dry ground, but on river-banks, in marshes, upon the margin of canals, wherever there is water (ver. 11), attaining to remarkable luxuriance even before it is ripe for the sickle, being the finest of all natural grasses (ver. 12), then quickly disappearing, withering before any other herb, when once the fierce summer heats have licked up the scanty moisture which caused it to flourish (ver. 12). (2) The interpretation. (*a*) The plant, an emblem of the ungodly man who lives in forgetfulness of God (ver. 13). Forgetfulness of God, of God's existence (Ps. xiv. 1), of God's omniscience (Ps. l. 22), of God's character (Isa. li. 13; lxiv. 5), of God's works (Deut. vi. 12; Ps. lxxviii. 11), of God's Word (Eccles. xii. 1; Hos. iv. 6), the essence of ungodliness (Ps. ix. 17; Ezek. xxii. 12). (*b*) The water, a symbol of that outward prosperity without which the hope of the ungodly cannot spring. A melancholy truth that wicked men, in whose thoughts God never is (Ps. x. 4), have sometimes a hope of eternal life. This not founded on a sure basis; on their own morality, ability, formality, or on some mistaken view they possess of the character of God, instead of on God's mercy, Christ's work, and the Spirit's grace. Commonly dependent on outward circumstances, and not derived from an inherent principle of spiritual life. (*c*) The luxuriant verdure while the water lasts, a picture of the hypocrite's display of religion while things continue prosperous. (*d*) The speedy withering when the water fails, a representation of the swift and utter collapse of the hypocrite's religion and its hope when, in the providence of God, the fostering element of material prosperity is withdrawn. 2. *The proverb of the spider's web.* (Vers. 14, 15.) Changing the simile, the wisdom of the ancients likens the hypocrite to a spider, and his hope to a spider's web, in respect of (1) its construction, being deftly and dexterously, with much care and infinite elaboration, built up and fashioned; (2) its intention, being designed, like the spider's web, for a habitation, a house for the soul in the day of trial and the day of death; (3) its attenuation, being as unsubstantial as a thin cobweb spun from the insect's bowels, and like that fabricated mostly from the hypocrite's own imagination; (4) its destruction, being easily cut asunder or detached from its main support, as the cobweb is by the lightest touch of broom or breath of wind; and (5) its deception, as miserably disappointing the sinner who trusts in it, leans upon it, expects to find support from it, as the cobweb does the spider who clings to it in vain, finding no safety in the threads of his gossamer palace, but along with them being precipitated into dark and dreary overthrow. 3. *The proverb of the climbing plant.* (Vers. 16—19.) Disentangling the moral from the fable, we have here presented, under the similitude of a creeping plant, the fortunes of an ungodly man in five stages. (1) Luxuriant prosperity; like the succulent plant swelling with sap in the sunshine, shooting forth leaves and branches over all the garden (ver. 16), twining its roots about the heap of stone, "seeing the inside of stones" (Carey), *i.e.* penetrating into the smallest interstices thereof, "living in the midst of flints" (LXX.), clasping and embracing the stony structure,—a striking image of exuberant and seemingly stable prosperity. (2) Complacent satisfaction; looking down proudly upon his material fortune, as the plant upon its house of stones, regarding it as a solid structure which he has reared and in which he anticipates finding repose. (3) Sudden destruction; being unexpectedly swallowed up, *i.e.* violently stricken down either by God (Delitzsch) or by it, the house of stones (Davidson); in the one case a monument of Divine retribution, in the other an example of the self-destroying character of worldly prosperity—as the plant is, in an evil moment, torn up from its place among the stones. (4) Public contempt; the former boon companions of the hypocrite in his prosperous days ignoring him, feeling ashamed of him, denying all acquaintance with him, as if the very ground where the uprooted plant grew were to disown it (cf. ch. xviii. 18; xx. 27). "Behold, thus endeth his blissful course"—a grimly ironical expression. (5) Utter oblivion; the place left vacant by him in society being immediately filled, and himself completely forgotten; "others in succession springing up from the dust." What a sermon on the vanity of human greatness! The disappearance from the stage of time of one who has lived in affluence, grandeur, fame, but a momentary wonder, like the dropping of a stone into the calm bosom of a lake—a noise, a ripple, and then the stillness resumes its sway—

"Or like the snowfall in the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever."
(Burns.)

III. THE MORAL. 1. *A general principle.* God will neither reject a righteous nor assist a wicked man (ver. 20). A good man may be cast down, but he cannot be cast off (Ps. xciv. 14; 2 Cor. iv. 9). The character (1 Sam. xii. 22; xv. 29; Job xxiii. 13; Mal. ii. 16; iii. 6), the covenant (Deut. iv. 31; 1 Kings viii. 23; 2 Kings xiii. 23; Ps. cxi. 5), the promise (Lev. xxvi. 44; Isa. liv. 9; Hos. ii. 19; Rom. xi. 29; 2 Cor. i. 20; Heb. x. 23), the people (Gen. xxiv. 27; Josh. xxiii. 14; 1 Sam. xii. 22; 2 Sam. xxiii. 5; Rom. xi. 2), of God, all combine to testify the impossibility of God's turning his back upon a truly pious man,—a thought full of comfort for the Christian (John x. 28). Equally do they proclaim the doctrine that God cannot really, however appearances may declare the contrary, take a bad man by the hand. Otherwise his Word would be falsified (Ps. xxxiv. 16), his purity tarnished (Hab. i. 13), his Godhead forfeited (1 John i. 5),—an idea fraught with warning for the wicked. 2. *A particular application.* This being so, on the hypothesis of Job's integrity, Job might with certitude reckon that God would not cast him off, but interpose in his behalf, till prosperity once more dawned upon him, and his mouth was filled with laughing, and his tongue with rejoicing (ver. 21); while the contrary portion would be allotted to all Job's enemies and God's, viz. shame and everlasting destruction (ver. 22). What Bildad here affirms of the respective fortunes of the righteous and the wicked is only true when we take into reckoning the eternal futures of both, the everlasting happiness (Ps. lxxiii. 24; Isa. xxxv. 10; Dan. xii. 3; Luke x. 20; xii. 32; Rom. ii. 7, 10; viii. 18) of the saint, and the everlasting perdition of the ungodly (Matt. xxv. 46; 2 Thess. i. 9; Rev. xxi. 8).

Learn: 1. If it is wrong to over-estimate, it is also wrong to depreciate, the men and things of bygone days. 2. It is much safer in our reasonings to rest upon the results of experience than to build upon the speculations of fancy. 3. The brevity of life should stimulate to diligence in pursuit of knowledge. 4. The teachings of tradition, though not infallible, have a place and value of their own. 5. It is well that the tongue should only speak what the mind and heart have meditated and prepared. 6. Covet not material prosperity, which may exist without inward piety. 7. Beware of an appearance of religion which has no corresponding reality beneath. 8. The secret of soul-prosperity, as the source of spiritual vitality, is frequent meditation upon God. 9. The entire world of common things is full of parables of heavenly truth to them who can interpret the same. 10. It is possible to make a fair promise at the outset of a Christian profession, and yet eventually fall away. 11. The wicked man's joy must ultimately be exchanged for sorrow. 12. The sorrows of earth in the case of God's saints will be succeeded by the hallelujahs of heaven.

Ver. 13.—*The hypocrite's hope.* I. A STARTLING DEFINITION. The hypocrite is: 1. An ungodly person. He has an outward pretence of piety, but in reality he is destitute of true religion. 2. A forgetter of God. It is not necessary that his impiety should take the form of flagrant wickedness. That might be easily detected, and would be altogether inconsistent with an appearance of godliness. It is enough that he simply forgets God.

II. AN AMAZING REVELATION. The hypocrite finds himself possessed of a hope, *i.e.* of God's favour and of eternal life; which hope is: 1. Like the papyrus, the fruit of his prosperity, wholly dependent on external circumstances. 2. Like the spider's web, a flimsy, unsubstantial edifice, deftly fashioned out of his own imagination. 3. Like the gourd, complacently self-satisfying.

III. A FEARFUL PREDICTION. The hypocrite's hope shall perish: 1. Like the papyrus, it may droop suddenly. 2. Like the spider's web, it may be destroyed violently. 3. Like the climbing plant, it will be blasted shamefully.

LESSONS. 1. Examine well the grounds on which our hope of heaven rests. 2. Seek to be possessed of that good hope which comes through grace.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—22.—"*Shall not the Judge of all . . . do right?*" The supposed attack of Job, by implication, upon the justice of God gives an opening for renewed admonitions and rebukes on the part of his friends. Bildad now comes forward and delivers a discourse full of noble faith, however its principles may be in this case misapplied. Rebuking the grievous complaints of Job as a wind, full of noise and emptiness (ver. 2), he proceeds—

I. To INSIST ON THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. This is an axiom of his faith. God *cannot* do unrighteousness. It is impious to admit the thought for a single moment into the mind. He insists on the *inflexibility* of God's rectitude. He will not *bend* right and duty (ver. 3). There can be no twisting, deviation, compromise, with God. His path is ever a straight line. Bildad will therefore rather draw an unfavourable conclusion about his friend than allow the slightest shadow to be cast on the splendour of the Supreme. Job *may* be guilty, nay, probably is so; but there can be *no* probability of any failure of right in God. The principle may appear somewhat harshly and rigidly stated; and yet from the sincere, even if narrow and limited, point of view of Bildad no doubt he is in the right. Rather seek any explanation of suffering, or leave it in mystery, than bring a charge against the unbending righteousness of God. 1. *Application to the past and present.* Following out this reasoning, the fate of Job's sons would seem to point to the fact that they had committed a deadly sin. And so, too, Job's present sufferings lead to the inference that he is very far from pure. The terrible example of his sons should be his warning. Yet this is expressed with some kindliness and forbearance. It is put hypothetically: "if thy sons" (ver. 4). Bildad, though rigid in doctrine, is not untender at heart—a kind of character we often see exemplified in life. But we have the lesson again and again from the conduct of these friends that friendship demands intelligence as well as heart. There is a missing link in Bildad's reasoning, which destroys its power in the present case. 2. *Application to the future.* There is hope for the sufferer if he will but betake himself in humility and repentance to God. (1) There must be the seeking, striving, straining, agonizing effort of the whole soul to recover its lost treasure—peace with him. (2) There must be prayer, the sincere expression of this desire (ver. 5). In life and in thought there must be conversion from evil and towards him, the Good and the Holy, the Gracious, and the Forgiving. The result will be the recovery of the lost happiness. (*a*) Innocence will be restored (ver. 6); grand hope and promise of the eternal gospel—the crimson stain may be removed from the heart and the hand, past sins and iniquities may be remembered no more. The possibility of a renovation of which men are tempted in themselves to despair. (*b*) Divine protection will be felt. God will watch over him (ver. 6) or "awake for him." The Shepherd of Israel, who slumbers not, will guard him from evil by night and by day, in his going out and his coming in. (*c*) Peace will be in his homestead—the peace which dwells with right and innocence. Over garden and orchard, on fields and barns, and around the hearth, will be felt brooding the nameless presence of the favour of God. (*d*) There will be increase of prosperity (ver. 7). The little one will become a thousand. The seed of right, germinating and producing, will grow to waving harvests of internal joy, of external good. Such are the cheering deductions from Bildad's high principles, the suggestions of his profound faith. The righteous God will be true to the righteous man. Sin is the only root of sorrow, virtue and godliness the only secret of abiding and eternal bliss.

II. APPEAL TO ANCIENT TRADITION. 1. *The wisdom of the primeval fathers the guide of to-day.* Bildad founds this upon the fact that: (1) *They lived to a greater age*, according to the accepted tradition, than present men. They therefore knew better the abiding laws of life than we of lesser insight, who are of yesterday and brief-lived like shadows (vers. 8, 9). (2) *Their wisdom was that of ripe conviction* (ver. 10). They did not speak at second-hand nor repeat by rote what they had learnt. Theirs was the wisdom of the heart. Contempt is expressed in several places in this book for mere lip-wisdom, the froth of the mouth as opposed to the genuine utterances of the mind (ch. xi. 2; xv. 3; xviii. 2). (3) There was therefore *the stamp of sincerity on their wisdom.* It came from men who had seen through life's illusions and cheats, and who had touched the foundation of things. 2. *Specimens of ancient wisdom.* (Ver. 11, *seq.*)

Here Bildad passes into citation of some old sayings, which condense the truths of life. (1) The papyrus and the grass of the Nile (vers. 11, 12). They cannot live without their proper element and nutriment of water; they quickly wither in its absence. So must it be with man where he is devoid of Divine grace (ver. 13). A new figure is introduced in the "paths" of the forgetters of God—they are lost like a wind-swept tract in the desert (comp. Ps. i.); and the hope of the unholy "goes under," disappears like the sun below the horizon's verge, to be seen no more. (2) The spider's web (ver. 14). He who trusts in his own strength or resources, without God, will have his confidence rent from him as the spider's web gives way at a slight touch or at the breath of the wind. The habitation which he thinks secure is but a gossamer thing; it cannot stand (ver. 15). (3) The creeping plant in its pride (vers. 16, 17). Before the burning glow of the sun, full of sap, it spreads over the garden, fixing itself firmly among the stones, and proudly lording it, as it were, over them. But when God withdraws the water, it perishes, unpitied by the home which it adorned. The wicked is thus denied and forsaken by his own connections, when he would rely upon them. Such is the pleasure of his way, turned into the deepest misery. Others spring from his remains, like suckers from the overthrown tree; let them take warning by his fate (vers. 18, 19). What powerful images of the *nonentity* of evil! It never really was—and, its semblance passing away, not a trace is left behind.

III. RECAPITULATION. (Vers. 20—22.) 1. In the way of solace. God does not despise the innocent. This is a *meiosis*, a saying less than is meant. He regards, he tends, he loves them, feeds them with water in the desert, keeps them as the apple of his eye. His will is to make them happy—to bring smiles to the dejected lines of the mouth, and to fill it with the fruits of praise. 2. In the way of warning. He "holds not fast the evil-doers' hand," and therefore when they stumble they are helpless. The enemies of the good man will see with shame that he is raised up from every fall (ver. 22); and once more, in final reverberation of the thunder of menace, the tent of the wicked shall vanish and be no more!

LESSONS. 1. The distinction between seeming and real prosperity—that which is for a time and that which is for ever. 2. Life by Divine grace, and recovery from seeming ruin. Death without Divine grace, and overthrow of seeming prosperity.—J.

Vers. 1—7.—*The Divine justice.* The words of Bildad, as of Job's other friends, are often marked by great beauty, and often embody principles of the highest practical value; but they frequently err in their application. The judgment of the friends upon Job is based upon an error which the entire course of the book is designed to expose. Here a true principle is enunciated respecting the Divine justice; which is shown to manifest itself—

I. IN A STRICT INTEGRITY. (Ver. 3.) "Doth God pervert judgment?"

II. IN A VIGOROUS PUNISHMENT OF INIQUITY. God gives the sinful up to the fruits of their wickedness (ver. 4). But he shows both mercy and judgment.

III. IN A COMPASSIONATE FORGIVENESS OF THE PENITENT. And he exalts his just judgment—

IV. BY A GRACIOUS INTERPOSITION ON BEHALF OF THE PURE. (Vers. 6, 7.) So that no cause of complaint could remain. The Divine justice is (1) unimpeachable; (2) it is displayed in the punishment of vice; and (3) in the certain reward of virtue, even if long delayed; (4) therefore may men without hesitation commit themselves (*a*) to its present treatment, and (*b*) to its final decisions.—R. G.

Vers. 1—7.—*The unimpeachable character of the Divine judgment.* He rendereth to every man according to his works. His ways are equal.

I. HE THAT SINNETH IS PUNISHED. (Ver. 4.)

II. HE MERCIFULLY HEARETH THE PRAYER OF THE CONTRITE. (Ver. 5.)

III. HE BLESSETH THE RIGHTEOUS. (Ver. 6.)

IV. THOUGH HE CHASTISE, HE FINALLY REWARDETH THE UPRIGHT. (Ver. 7.)

To this all the former ages bear testimony, as the recorded or traditional sayings of the ancients bear witness.—R. G.

Vers. 8—19.—*The hypocrite's hope.* Back to the testimony of the ages (vers. 8—10)

Bildad refers his suffering friend, to find there evidences of the security of the perfect man and the worthlessness of the expectation of the hypocrite. With beautiful figurativeness he illustrates these truths, and only errs in the covert implication that in hypocrisy is to be found the cause of Job's present sufferings. The hypocrite's hope vain and deceitful.

I. IT IS TEMPORARY. Passing away as the "rush without mire, or the reed without water." Quickly it grows up, but as quickly withers. The promise of it is vain. "While it is yet in its greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb."

II. IT IS UNSUBSTANTIAL AND UNTRUSTWORTHY. As "the spider's web." It is weak, unworthy of any confidence. As the gossamer thread is broken by a touch or even a breath of wind, so his expectation is cut off by the most trivial incident. It has no firmness, no endurance, no permanence.

III. IT IS IMMATURE AND NEVER COMES TO PERFECTION. "It is green before the sun." With rapid haste it strides forth, but only with equal haste to fail. In its own judgment it is firm and enduring as a stone structure. With proud self-confidence so he prides himself. But it is that all may fall to ruin. The destroyer is at hand, even he who casts away.

IV. IT IS FORGOTTEN AND DISAPPOINTING, AND PASSES OUT OF MIND. Its very place denies it. "I have not seen thee." No greater joy or reward can the hypocrite's hope afford him. Disappointment is his lot. He sows the seeds of vanity; vanity he reaps. He leans upon a thread which a breath may break. Deceitful himself, his hopes are as the heart which gave them birth. They return to their own. He created them; they are as their maker. From this rude disappointment men may guard (1) by sincerity of spirit, (2) by basing their hopes upon a true foundation, for which nothing prepares them but (3) a thorough honesty and cherished truthfulness.—R. G.

Vers. 20—22.—*God's care of the perfect man.* To the Book of Job may all sufferers turn for consolation; for though Job is both covertly and openly reproached by his friends, yet through their words there shine many clear statements of truth, and many just reflections on the wisdom, the goodness, and the wise government of God. The Divine care of the upright is very strikingly affirmed. God's care of the perfect man is—

I. TENDER. God does not "cast away" nor despise him, but gently leads him by the hand, as he will not the evil-doers, helping him as none other can help. To that care we have learnt that we may commit ourselves, forasmuch as he careth for us. The Divine, pitiful, compassionate aid is given to meet the need of the frail man. Not therefore, rudely, or with rough and harsh, but with tender, treatment does God help the perfect man. The Divine care for the upright is—

II. CONTINUOUS. He is faithful to them who put their trust in him. He disappoints the hope of the ungodly, but not that of the righteous. As the hypocrite trusted to a spider's web which had no strength, and to the unwatered flag which withered, so the perfect man finds in God a Rock of refuge, steadfast and unchangeable. He ever abides. The immutability of the Divine Name is one of the truest sources of consolation to the weary, the troubled, and sad at heart.

III. The Divine care for the perfect man is further A TRUE CAUSE OF JOY AND GLADNESS. He fills the "mouth with laughing" and the "lips with rejoicing." God gives songs in the dark night of affliction, and brings the true consolation to the sufferer, causing him to shout aloud for very joy. He is a Hiding-place and a Refuge. He is a Spring of water and a Shadow from the heat of the day. He inspires strength to the soul, as with bread he nourishes the body; and comfort to the spirit, as with wine he revives the drooping.

IV. The Divine care for the perfect man, in its retributive judgments, CASTS SHAME UPON HIS ENEMIES. Vindicating the character of his faithful one against the aspersion of his wicked foes, he causes "the dwelling-place" of that wicked one to "come to nought," and the wicked one himself to "be clothed with shame." Thus the Divine care is tender towards his befriended one—the poor, frail, but faithful son of man—crowning him with honour and glory, making his crown to flourish, while clothing his enemies with shame and confusion of face.—R. G.

Ver. 1.—*Bildad the pedant.* Job's second friend appears as a pedant, quoting the authority of antiquity, and relying on the tradition of the ancients. His character is not extinct, and the mischief of his blunders is with us to-day.

I. THE POWER OF THE PEDANT. This man bases his influence on certain good qualities. 1. *Experience.* It is to be supposed that this is of some value. The garnered wealth of experience should be a great test of truth. The rule that has stood the strain of time appears to be confirmed in value. Ideas may be very captivating when they first flash out in their novelty, but some hidden flaw may make them utterly worthless. But the mellow maxim, ripened by years, and enriched with the juices of manifold experiences, comes to us with great claims on our confidence. 2. *Humility.* It seems to be more humble to trust to those who are older than ourselves, than to set up our own wisdom as a rival of theirs. Who are we that we should pretend to question the wisdom of the ages? 3. *Reverence.* On the other hand, the associations of antiquity command our reverence. We show respect to grey hairs, and we are moved to similar feelings in view of all signs of age. Coming out of a dim past, hoary with the years, ancient things acquire a certain sanctity. The grand minster, the ruined castle, the worm-eaten cabinet, the rare old book,—these things stifle our impertinent modern presumptions by the silent weight of their years. "I love everything that's old," says Goldsmith; "old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine."

II. THE FOLLY OF THE PEDANT. This reverence for antiquity may be abused, and it is abused by the pedant, who assumes that all modern requirements are to be settled by some musty rule of the ancients. There are many errors in such a position. 1. *Lack of discrimination.* Pope writes—

> "With sharpen'd sight pale antiquaries pore;
> Th' inscriptions value, but the rust adore:
> This the blue varnish, that the green endears—
> The sacred rust of twice ten hundred years."

Time has brought down loads of rubbish on its stream as well as some precious cargoes of ancient experience. Pedants mistake scum for cream. 2. *Misinterpretation of the value of antiquity.* The earlier times, as Bacon tells us, were really the childhood of our race, and we are the true ancients. It is absurd to bind the practice of the adult age by the tentative ideas of infancy. What has been tried through the centuries, and being in frequent use has stood the test of time, has thereby acquired a certain value. But mere antiquity only means an origin in more primitive and less advanced times. 3. *The superstition of forms.* The pedant delights in forms and rules and exact precedents. But there are no true precedents for scores of things. Indeed, no two occasions are exactly alike. Therefore no human maxims can be large enough to embrace all circumstances. Life cannot be bound by formal rules. We must learn to look facts in the face, and dare to discard ancient maxims when they are proved to be false. Antiquity is venerable, but truth is more venerable. God has given us consciences, and he has promised us the help of his Spirit. Our best guide is not an ancient rule, but the living Christ, who is ever in the midst of his people.—W. F. A.

Ver. 3.—*The justice of God.* Bildad asks if it can be right for Job to complain as he does. Such conduct is an arraignment of the Divine justice. Human judges have been known to twist justice to suit their own purposes; this conduct was and is only too common in the East. But is it to be thought that God would act in this way? Surely the Judge of all the earth must do right (Gen. xviii. 25).

I. GOD'S JUSTICE IS GOOD AND DESIRABLE. It is the mistake of narrow, one-sided views to confine the idea of God's justice to his relations with sin and punishment, and to regard it solely as that which provokes his wrath. This mistake leads people to have a horror of the very notion of God's justice. They would be profoundly thankful if it could be blotted out of the list of his attributes. They regard it as solely inimical to them. Their supreme desire is to escape from its clutches. It is to them a most dreadful thing. How contrary is all this to the scriptural idea of the justice of God! In the Bible God's justice is welcomed with delight in contrast to the terrible injustice of man. It is God's righteousness, God's fairness, God's equal dealing. This must be good and desirable.

II. THE JUSTICE OF GOD IS NOT ALWAYS APPARENT. Sometimes he seems to show himself in the same light as the unjust judges of imperfect human society. We cannot see the equity of his dealings. He even seems to be perverting judgment. Good men suffer, and evil men prosper. This is the common complaint of the Old Testament saints in their trouble (*e.g.* Ps. lxxiii. 3). But how is it possible if God is just? There is not only an apparent negligence that lets wrong be done among men unchecked. God himself appears to pervert justice in his own providential dealings, sending calamities to the innocent, and heaping favours on the guilty. This obvious fact was forced on the notice of men, and it raised most perplexing doubts at a time when temporal good was assumed to be the right reward of moral good.

III. WE HAVE GOOD REASON TO TRUST THE JUSTICE OF GOD. 1. *He is almighty.* He has not the inducement to act unjustly that tempts the weak. Deceit and injustice are the refuges of feebleness. Cowards are unjust. Strength can afford to be magnanimous. 2. *He is perfectly wise.* He will not blunder into injustice, as the most immaculate human judge may do. 3. *He is absolutely good.* Our revelations of God's character should assure us that his justice must be without a flaw, even though all appearances are against it. The faith that will not bear a strain is worthless. If we cannot trust God when he seems to be acting hardly and unfairly, it is little that we trust him when we can see that all is going well. The goodness of God is our security; we must judge of events by what we know of God in Christ, not of God by what we appear to discover in events. 4. *Justice is not always what we should expect.* The principle must be simple and intelligible. We must believe that justice in God must be what we know as justice—only infinitely exalted. But the application of this justice may be beyond our conceptions. It may be just for God to do what looks to us now as unfair. Here we must trust and wait for the end.—W. F. A.

Ver. 7.—*A small beginning and a great increase.* With irritating admonitions—most galling in the cruel insinuation that Job's children had died on account of their sins—Bildad presumes to assure Job that if only he is pure God will be just, and will awake to deliver him, so that, though he has a small beginning, his end shall be very great. This was all based on a very false and unjust idea of Job, his past conduct, and his present duty. Nevertheless in itself it opened up a true view of the course of one who is restored to right relations with God.

I. THE CHRISTIAN MUST HAVE A SMALL BEGINNING. 1. *In penitence.* He must first humble himself in the very dust. No boasting can be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. 2. *In childlikeness.* We have to turn and become as little children if we are to enter God's kingdom. This implies humility, simplicity of heart, and the utter self-abandonment of faith. 3. *In spiritual experience.* We can but begin the Christian life as babes in Christ. Our knowledge is small, our strength slight, our spiritual attainment most imperfect. 4. *In enjoyment of blessings.* We may begin in temporal adversity. There is no promise that the Christian shall be a rich and prosperous man in the world. But whatever the external condition may be, the enjoyment of the real fruits of Divine grace will be but small until the soul has grown into the capacity to receive more of the blessings they bring.

II. THE CHRISTIAN WILL HAVE A GREAT INCREASE. 1. *On earth.* The Christian life should be one of progress, and it will be if it is healthy. Growth is a law of life, and it is a law that applies to the Divine life in the soul. The healthy Christian will grow in grace; his knowledge will expand; his spirituality will deepen; his capacity for service will widen; his enjoyment of the blessedness of the vision of God will become richer and more intense. 2. *In heaven.* The best comes last. The great increase is in the "latter end." This is different from the experience of natural life, which reaches a climax in middle life, and then turns towards the decrepitude of senile decay. But there is no such decline for the spiritual life so long as it is healthy. That life knows no old age; it partakes of the unfading glory of the Eternal. For the aged Christian there shall be "light at eventide;" and when his sun has set on earth, it shall rise in heaven in the larger glory of God's eternal day.

III. GOD LEADS THE RACE FROM A SMALL BEGINNING TO A GREAT INCREASE. This is the case naturally in the population which has sprung from one pair of parents, until it has filled the earth with more than a thousand million souls, and which continues to

increase at an unprecedented rate. The same is true of civilization and human progress. The law of human life on earth is one of advance and enlargement. Thus we are encouraged to look forward to the golden age. God is educating the race by the process of the centuries, and preparing it for great increase at the latter end. There was a grand advance beyond these Old Testament times when Christ brought in his gospel; the triumphs of the gospel speak of an enlarged increase. But the best is in store in the full coming of the kingdom of Christ. Therefore let us press forward in hope and an eager desire to do our part towards hastening the happy advent of the promised future.—W. F. A.

Ver. 8.—*Lessons from history.* Bildad invites Job to consult antiquity and to attend to that which the fathers have searched out. Even this pedant may remind us that wholesome lessons are to be culled from the gardens of the past.

I. HISTORY TEACHES BY EXAMPLE. Here we can see truth in the concrete. The ideas which we discuss in the abstract are embodied and at work in the living facts of history. We can study republicanism in ancient Greece, and monarchy in the Roman empire; the consequences of heathenism in the pagan world, and the fruits of Christianity in the story of the gospel and its triumphs; the power of the gospel in the romance of missions, and the weakness of man in the failure and ruin of ancient Churches. Here we see not lifeless arguments, but living men. Therefore much of the Bible is history; God's Word comes to us through man's life. We should pay more attention to men and facts.

II. HISTORY REVEALS THE ORIGIN OF INSTITUTIONS AND MOVEMENTS. Most of those which we have to do with took their rise in a more or less remote past. If we can trace them back to their source, we can better judge of their whole characters. Much attention is given to the childhood and youth of a great man by his biographer, for therein lies the secret of his after-life. It is well to trace back the Christian story, and see how God has been shaping his Church through the ages. Our religion is emphatically historical. It springs from facts, things done in the past. In this respect it is unique among the religions of the world. All the doctrines of Christianity are lessons of history; they all take their rise in the story of Christ and his cross. Yet we are not bound by pedantic rules and frivolous precedents. We find the origin of our faith in certain facts. The interpretation of those facts must grow with our advancing knowledge, and the application of their lessons must vary with changing circumstances.

III. HISTORY HELPS TO MATURITY OF JUDGMENT. If we are weak and lack independence of mind, it may weigh us down with the incubus of its precedents. This is how it affected Bildad with his veneration for the fathers, and this is how it affects those good Christian people who make the Church Fathers absolute authorities, when they should dare to trust a careful and devout interpretation of Scripture and the ultimate judgments of the Christian consciousness. Yet, on the other hand, there is a good use of the Fathers. The very variety of explanations of Christian doctrines in the past should teach us caution and a large wisdom in treating difficult subjects. The student of history will often know that some pretentious notion, flashed out on the world as a magnificent discovery, is but a thrice-slain error of ancient controversies. Old truth will endure the test of time. But standing on the experience of the ages, we should be able to reach forth to higher truth in the future, the more readily because we thus use the past.—W. F. A.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The rush and the papyrus.* From history Bildad turns to nature, or rather to a traditional saying about nature—to an old proverb; possibly it has been suggested from Egyptian lore.

I. THE PLANTS SPRING FROM WATER. Both of these plants grow in marshes or pools, and by the banks of rivers and canals. They both need an abundance of water. Man can only live when nourished by the goodness of God. The Christian can only grow to maturity when planted by the unfailing streams of the river of life.

II. THE PLANTS FLOURISH LUXURIANTLY. This is one of the characteristics of succulent plants in moist soil. They grow rapidly and flourish greatly. So, as the goodness of God is no mere sprinkling of refreshment, but a great river with abundance

of water, they who live upon it will not be in a meagre and stunted state, but will make great progress and will grow in grace.

III. THE FLOURISHING CONDITION OF THE PLANTS IS PROOF OF THE PRESENCE OF NOURISHING STREAMS. They may be so abundant and so rank in their growth as to hide the water from which they spring; but their very splendour of health and development is a certain sign that they are surrounded by plenteous streams. We know that their roots must be in the water because their stems and upper growth are so green and vigorous. So the existence of prosperity is a sign of Divine goodness. We cannot go so far as Bildad, and take it as a proof of God's approval, for God is gracious to bad men; but it is a proof of God's kindness. The spiritual flourishing of Christian people is a certain sign that they are drinking of the living waters. They may be reserved, and may not reveal to us the springs from which they draw, hiding the roots of their spiritual life. Still by their fruits shall we know them, and learn that they must be in vital relations with the Divine source of all spiritual experience.

IV. THE PLANTS FLOURISH FOR USEFUL END. The reed referred to by Bildad is an edible plant; and the papyrus is the material from which paper was anciently made. The prosperity which God gives to man is a talent to be used in the service of life. Spiritual growth should lead to spiritual productiveness. We receive grace from God in order that we may minister to the work of God.

V. WHEN THE WATER DRIES UP THE PLANTS WITHER. These plants are not like the thorns of the desert, which can endure a terrible drought without suffering seriously. They are distinctly denizens of watery places, and without water they must perish. Man's prosperity must cease when God ceases to bless him. He may ignore the Divine source of his good things, but he must fail if that source is stopped. The Christian more especially will suffer in his better life if he is deprived of the streams of grace. He is like the tree planted by the rivers of water. He in particular needs streams of grace if he is to flourish. He cannot thrive on his own goodly proportions. The most advanced Christian must go back and even utterly perish if he loses the constant supply of grace. We must be in Christ to live the Christian life.—W. F. A.

Ver. 14.—*The spider's web.* Bildad compares the hope of the impious to a spider's web, or rather, recalling sayings of antiquity, he quotes an old proverb to that effect. Let us consider the wisdom of this ancient saying by noting characteristics of the spider's web.

I. IT IS QUICKLY WOVEN. It is one of the most rapidly made fabrics in nature. It puts Jonah's gourd to the shame. Some men are very hasty in forming foolish hopes. With them the wish is father to the thought. They jump to conclusions that are favourable to themselves. But the sanguine temperament is no guarantee for permanent security. Because we believe readily, we do not believe the more safely.

II. IT IS DELICATE AND BEAUTIFUL TO LOOK AT. We cannot but admire the spider's web on a bright September morning, when it is spangled with dewdrops. Its very delicacy of structure adds to the beauty of it. There is nothing coarse about it. Some people have a religion that is refined and delicate and beautiful. They despise the vulgar ideas of other people. Their spider's web is much more suitable to their superfine culture than the coarse hemp ropes of the religion of less cultivated people.

III. IT IS USEFUL FOR ITS NATURAL END. We have no right to complain that the spider's web does not sustain our weight when we lean upon it. It was not spun for such a purpose. But yet it serves its own proper end. It is an excellent ladder for its maker, and a perfect trap for his victims. Some of those grounds of hope to which foolish people trust are not utterly false and useless. For example, æstheticism taken for a religion is as a spider's web. Yet it is useful as a form of culture. Intellectualism is like another spider's web. While the superfine thinker is spinning his fanciful threads of thought, he is doing little for the business of life. Yet what he does may be good and true in itself, if only he would keep it in its right place.

IV. IT IS EXCESSIVELY FRAGILE. It is just the type of fragility. Therefore all its good points are useless when a man thinks of trusting his weight to it. You but mock the drowning man if you toss him the spider's web. He must grasp a substantial rope if he is to be saved. Now, Bildad rightly compares the hope of the impious to this web. It is fragile in the extreme. 1. It has *no substance.* The man trusts (1) to his

own wisdom, which is folly in the eyes of God; (2) to his goodness, which under God's searching glance is full of sin; (3) to his prosperity, which cannot endure when the favour of God is withdrawn; (4) to God's goodness, which indeed is a rock of refuge, only it is out of the reach of the impious, who only clutch at a shadow of it in their own fancy. 2. It is *heavily tried*. Here is a question of life and death. A man has to seek a security for his own soul and his eternal interests. The spider's web may stand slight tests, but not the strain those awful requirements put upon it. Æsthetics, intellectualism, and all other human ideas fail here. We want a *strong* means of deliverance. The gospel shows us that this is to be had in Christ for those who repent and trust him.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IX.

Vers. 1—35.—Job, in answer to Bildad, admits the truth of his arguments, but declines to attempt the justification which can alone entitle him to accept the favourable side of Bildad's alternative. Man cannot absolutely justify himself before God. It is in vain to attempt to do so. The contest is too unequal. On the one side perfect wisdom and absolute strength (ver. 4); on the other, weakness, imperfection, ignorance, guilt (vers. 17—20). And no "daysman," or umpire, between them; no third party to hold the balance even, and preside authoritatively over the controversy, and see that justice is done (vers. 33—35). Were it otherwise, Job would not shrink from the controversy; but he thinks it ill arguing with omnipotent power. What he seems to lack is the absolute conviction expressed by Abraham in the emphatic words, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth *do right?*" (Gen. xviii. 25).

Vers. 1, 2.—**And Job answered and said, I know it is so of a truth.** "I freely admit," *i.e.*, "all that has been said." God would not cast away a perfectly righteous man (ch. viii. 20); and, of course, he punishes evildoers. But, applied practically, what is the result? **How should man be just with God?** or, *before God?* Apart from any knowledge of the doctrine of original or inherited sin, each man feels, deep in his heart, that he is sinful—"a chief of sinners." Bradford looks upon the murderer as he mounts the scaffold, and says, "But for the grace of God, there goes John Bradford!" Job has a similar conviction, that in the sight of God, righteousness, such as it is, shrinks away into insignificance, and is as nothing, cannot anyhow be relied upon. Such must be the attitude before God of every human soul that is not puffed up with pride or utterly insensate and sunk in apathy.

Ver. 3.—**If he will contend with him;** rather, *if he should desire to contend with him;* i.e. if, notwithstanding his knowledge of his own weakness and guilt, he should nevertheless be mad enough to desire to contend with God, then he will find that **he cannot answer him one of a thousand.** Of the charges which God might in his omniscience bring against him, he could not make a satisfactory reply to one in a thousand. It is not that Job admits any special guilt in himself; but such he feels to be the universal condition of humanity. "All have sinned," in ten thousand ways, "and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23).

Ver. 4.—**He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength.** The sense is strengthened if we omit "he is," and render, *Wise in heart, and mighty in strength, who hath hardened*, etc.? God's combination of perfect wisdom with infinite strength renders it hopeless for any man to contend with him. **Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?** Job fully admits the wisdom of all that Eliphaz (ch. iv. 17) and Bildad (ch. viii. 3—6) have said, or hinted, with respect to his inability wholly to justify himself. No one has ever taken this line of absolute self-justification, and prospered.

Vers. 5—13.—A magnificent description of the might and majesty of God, transcending anything in the Psalms, and comparable to the grandest passages of Isaiah (see especially Isa. xl. 21—24; xliii. 15—20).

Ver. 5.—**Which removeth the mountains, and they know not; which overturneth them in his anger.** Earthquakes are common in all the countries adjoining Syria and Palestine, and must always have been among the most striking manifestations of God's power. There are several allusions to them in the Psalms (Ps. viii. 8; civ. 32), and historical mention of them in Numb. xvi. 32; 1 Kings xix. 11; Amos i. 1; Zech.

xiv. 4, 5; Matt. xxiv. 7. Josephus speaks of one which desolated Judæa in the reign of Herod the Great, and destroyed ten thousand people ('Ant. Jud.,' xv. 5. § 2). There was another in 1181, which was felt over the whole of the Hauran, and did great damage. A still more violent convulsion occurred in 1837, when the area affected extended five hundred miles from north to south, and from eighty to a hundred miles east and west. Tiberias and Safed were overthrown. The earth gaped in various places, and closed again. Fearful oscillations were felt. The hot springs of Tiberias mounted up to a temperature that ordinary thermometers could not mark, and the loss of life was considerable (see the account given by Dr. Cunningham Geikie, in 'The Holy Land and the Bible,' vol. ii. pp. 317, 318). The phrases used by Job are, of course, poetical. Earthquakes do not literally "remove" mountains, nor "overturn" them. They produce fissures, elevations, depressions, and the like; but they rarely much alter local features or the general configuration of a district.

Ver. 6.—**Which shaketh the earth out of her place.** This is a still more startling figure of speech; but comp. Ps. xlvi. 2; lxviii. 16; cxiv. 4, 6. **And the pillars thereof tremble.** The earth is conceived of, poetically, as a huge edifice, supported on pillars (comp. Ps. lxxv. 3), which in an earthquake are shaken, and impart their motion to the entire building. Rosenmüller's quotation of Seneca, 'Nat. Quæst.,' vi. 20—"Fortasse ex aliqua parte terra *veluti columnis quibusdam et pilis* sustinetur, quibus vitiatis et recedentibus tremit pondus impositum"—is apposite.

Ver. 7.—**Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not.** A magnificent idea of God's power, and, of course, quite true. All the movements of the earth and of the heavenly bodies are movements which God causes, and could at any moment suspend. The sun only rises upon the earth each day because God causes it to rise. If he were once to intermit his hand, the whole universe would fall into confusion. **And sealeth up the stars.** Either covers them with a thick darkness, which their rays cannot penetrate, or otherwise renders them invisible. The idea is that God, if he pleases, can remove the stars out of man's sight, hide them away, seal them up.

Ver. 8.—**Which alone spreadeth out the heavens** (comp. Ps. civ. 2; Isa. xl. 22). The heavens are regarded as spread out over the whole earth, like a curtain or awning over a tent, everywhere overshadowing and protecting it. This "stretching" or "spreading out" is felt to be one of the mightiest and most marvellous of the Creator's works, and is constantly put forward in Scripture as a special evidence of his omnipotence (see, besides the passages above quoted, Isa. xlii. 5; xliv. 24; xlv. 12; li. 13; Jer. x. 12). It adds to the marvellousness that God did it all "alone," or "by himself" (comp. Isa. xliv. 24). **And treadeth upon the waves of the sea**; literally, *the heights of the sea*; i.e. the waves, which run mountain-high. God plants his feet upon these, to crush them in their proud might (comp. Ps. xciii. 5).

Ver. 9.—**Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades**; literally, *which maketh 'Ash, Kĕsil, and Kimah.* The rendering of the LXX. (ὁ ποιῶν Πλειάδα, καὶ Ἕσπερον, καὶ Ἀρκτοῦρον), supported, as it is, by most of the other ancient versions and by the Targums, has caused the *stellar* character of these names to be generally recognized; but the *exact* meaning of each term is, to some extent, still a matter of dispute. On the whole, it seems most probable that *'Ash*, or *'Aish* (ch. xxxviii. 32), designates "the Great Bear," called by the Arabs *Nahsh*, while *Kĕsil* is the name of the constellation of Orion, and *Kimah* of that of the Pleiades. The word *'Ash* means "a litter," and may be compared with the Greek ἅμαξα and our own "Charles's Wain," both of them names given to the Great Bear, from a fancied resemblance of its form to that of a vehicle. *Kĕsil* means "an insolent, rich man" (Lee); and is often translated by "fool" in the Book of Proverbs (xiv. 16; xv. 20; xix. 1; xxi. 20, etc.). It seems to have been an *epitheton usitatum* of Nimrod, who, according to Oriental tradition, made war upon the gods, and was bound in the sky for his impiety—the constellation being thenceforth called "the Giant" (*Gibbor*), or "the insolent one" (*Kĕsil*), and later by the Greeks "Orion" (comp. Amos v. 8; and *infra*, ch. xxxviii. 31). *Kimah* undoubtedly designates "the Pleiades." It occurs again, in connection with *Kĕsil*, in ch. xxxviii. 31, and in Amos v. 8. The meaning is probably "a heap," "a cluster" (Lee); which was also the Greek idea: Πλειάδες, ὅτι πλείους ἅμοῦ κατὰ μίαν συναγωγήν εἰσι (Eustath., 'Comment. in Hom. Il.,' xviii. 488); and which has been also inimitably expressed by Tennyson in the line, "Like a swarm of dazzling fireflies tangled in a silver braid." **And the chambers of the south.** The Chaldeans called the zodiacal constellations "*mansions* of the sun" and "of the moon" ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 575); but these do not seem to be here intended. Rather Job has in his mind those immense spaces of the sky which lie behind his southern horizon; how far extending, he knows not. Though the circumnavigation of Africa was not effected until about B.C. 600, yet it is not improbable that he may have derived from travellers or merchants some knowledge of the Southern hemisphere.

Ver. 10.—**Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number.** An almost exact repetition of the words of Eliphaz in ch. v. 9. The repetition may have been conscious or unconscious. Job may have meant to say, "My view of God embraces all that you can tell me of him, and goes further;" or he may simply have used words concerning the Divine unsearchableness which were common in the mouths of religious men in his time (comp. Ps. lxxii. 18; and *infra*, ch. xi. 7).

Ver. 11.—**Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not.** Near as God is to us, close as he comes to us, we cannot directly see him, or feel him, or perceive his presence. We know it by faith, we may feel it in our inmost spirits; but there is no manifestation of it to our senses. A sharp line divides the visible and invisible worlds; and this line, if it is ever crossed, is very rarely crossed. Job possibly reflects upon the pretension of Eliphaz to have had a physical consciousness of the visitation of a spirit (ch. iv. 15, 16), and asserts, with a tinge of sarcasm, that it is otherwise with him—the spirit-world passes him by, and he receives no light, no illumination, no miraculous direction from it. **He passeth on also.** The same verb is used by Eliphaz (ch. iv. 15) in speaking of his spiritual visitation. **But I perceive him not.** Eliphaz perceived the presence of the spirit (ch. iv. 15, 16) and heard its voice (ch. iv. 16—21). Job seems to mean that he is not so favoured.

Ver. 12.—**Behold, he taketh away;** rather, *he seizeth the prey* (see the Revised Version). The expression is much stronger than that used in ch. i. 21. Job seems to be smarting under the recollection of all that he has lost, and takes an aggrieved tone. **Who can hinder him?** (comp. Isa. xlv. 9; Jer. xviii. 6; Rom. xix. 20). **Who will say unto him, What doest thou?** To have to do with such an irresistible Being, alone in his might, would indeed be terrible if, while absolutely powerful, unchecked and uncontrolled from without, he were not also absolutely good, and therefore controlled and checked by a law from within. This, however, Job, in his present mood, does not seem clearly to see.

Ver. 13.—**If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him.** There is no "if" in the original; and the passage is best taken categorically: "God does not withdraw his anger;" *i.e.* the anger which he feels against those who resist him. "The helpers of Rahab do stoop [or, 'are prostrate'] under him." Rahab in this passage, and also in ch. xxvi. 12, as well as in Isa. li. 9, seems to be used as the proper name of some great power of evil. Such a power was recognized in the mythology of Egypt, under the names of Set (or Typhon) and of Apophis, the great serpent, continually represented as pierced by Horus (Rawlinson's 'Herodotus,' vol. ii. p. 257; 'History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. p. 395). In the earlier Aryan myths there is a similar personification of evil in Vitra, called Dasiya, "the Destroyer," and at perpetual enmity with Indra and Agni ('Religions of the Ancient World,' p. 114). The Babylonians and Assyrians had a tradition of a great "war in heaven" ('Records of the Past,' vol. v. pp. 133—136), carried on by seven spirits, who were finally reduced to subjection. All these seem to be distorted reminiscences of that great conflict, whereof the only trustworthy account is the one contained in the Revelation of St. John, "There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels"—the "helpers" of the present passage—"and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven" (Rev. xii. 7, 8). Job, it seems, had inherited one of such traditions, one in which the power of evil was known as Rahab, "the Proud One;" and he means here to say that God not only holds men in subjection, but also beings much more powerful than man, as Rahab and his helpers, who had rebelled and made war on God, and been cast down from heaven, and were now prostrate under God's feet.

Ver. 14.—**How much less shall I answer him?** If he be the Lord of earth and heaven, if he rule the sun and the stars, if he tread down the sea, if he be impalpable and irresistible, if he hold the evil power and his helpers under restraint, how should I dare to answer him? How should any mere man do so? And **choose out my words** to reason **with him?** Job feels that he would be too much overwhelmed to choose his terms carefully, and yet a careless word might be an unpardonable offence.

Ver. 15.—**Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer.** Even perfect righteousness, so far as possible in a creature, would not enable a man to stand up in controversy with him who "charges his angels with folly" (ch. iv. 18); and, moreover, to such righteousness Job does not pretend (see ch. vii. 20, 21). But I would **make supplication to my Judge;** rather, *to mine adversary* (see the Revised Version). Prayer is the only rightful attitude of even the best man before his Maker—prayer for mercy, prayer for pardon, prayer for grace, prayer for advance in holiness.

Ver. 16.—**If I had called, and he had answered me.** "If," that is, "I had challenged God to a controversy, and he had granted it, and bidden me to plead my cause at his bar, yet could I not suppose that he had really hearkened to me, and would

allow me boldly to stand up before him and freely to challenge his doings. Such condescension on his part, such an abnegation of his supremacy, is inconceivable, and I could not have acted on it." **Yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice**; rather, *yet could I not believe*. It was not that he would not have wished, but that he would not have been able, to believe.

Ver. 17.—**For he breaketh me with a tempest.** "God," that is, "would not be likely patiently to hear my justification, and calmly to weigh it, when he is already overwhelming me with his wrath, breaking and crushing me (comp. Gen. iii. 15, where the same word שׁוּף is used) with a very storm of calamity." The sentiment can scarcely be justified, since it breathes something of a contumacious spirit. But this only shows that Job was not yet "made perfect through sufferings" (Heb. ii. 10). **And multiplieth my wounds without cause.** A further assertion, not of absolute sinlessness, but of comparative innocence—of the belief that he had done nothing to deserve such a terrible punishment as he is suffering (comp. ch. vi. 24, 29).

Ver. 18.—**He will not suffer me to take my breath.** "He gives me no breathing-space," that is, "no time of relaxation or refreshment. My existence is one continual misery" (comp. ch. vii. 3—6, 13—19). **But filleth me with bitterness**; literally, *with bitter things*, or *bitternesses* (Hebrew, מְרֹרוֹת).

Ver. 19.—**If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong.** Still the idea is, "How can I contend with God? If it is to be a trial of strength, it is he who is strong, not I; if it is to be a suit, or pleading for justice, who will appoint me a day?" **And if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead?** (comp. below, ver. 33).

Ver. 20.—**If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me.** Since he could not *wholly* justify himself. "All men have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23). Job has already admitted the utterance of "rash words" (ch. vi. 3), and, at least hypothetically, that he "has sinned" (ch. vii. 20), and needs "pardon" for his "transgression" (ch. vii. 24). Job, if he tried to "justify himself," would have to acknowledge such shortcomings, such imperfections, such sins—at any rate, of infirmity—as would make his attempted justification a real self-condemnation. **If I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse**; rather, *even were I perfect, it* (i.e. my mouth) *would prove me perverse*; i.e. supposing I were actually perfect, and tried to prove it, my speech would be so hesitating and confused, that I should only seem to be perverse.

Ver. 21.—Though I were **perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life.** The original is very elliptical and very obscure. The words run, *I perfect—I know not myself—I abhor my life*, which some explain as meaning, "Were I perfect, I should not know it myself; I despise my life under such conditions" (Stanley Leathes); others, "I am perfect" (*i.e.* guiltless of any plain offence), "but do not understand myself, and care not what becomes of me" (Canon Cook); others again, "Were I perfect, should I not know myself, and, knowing myself, despise my own life?" (Professor Lee). The Septuagint gives us no help, as it plainly follows a different reading. Probably our present text is a corrupt one.

Ver. 22.—**This is one thing**; rather, *the matter is one*, or *it is all one*. There is no difference, that is, between the case of the righteous and the wicked; all are alike sinful in God's sight, all equally "concluded under sin" (Gal. iii. 22), and all consequently obnoxious to punishment at his hands (comp. Eccles. ix. 2). In a certain sense the statement is true, and corresponds with the argument of Rom. i.—iii.; but no account is taken here of God's gracious forgiveness of sin, much less of the general scheme of redemption, or the compensation for earthly sufferings in an eternity of happiness, on which the hope of the Christian rests. **Therefore I said it**; rather, *therefore I say*, with the Revised Version. **He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.** As far as *this* world is concerned, it is undoubtedly true that calamities fall alike upon the just and upon the unjust. Death is the lot of all; trouble, suffering, grief, the lot of all (ch. vi. 7). Nor can it even be said that the wicked in this world suffer more than the good (comp. 1 Cor. xv. 29). Their sufferings are more the natural consequence of their actions, but do not seem to exceed in amount or severity the sufferings of the good. But this only shows that there must be a future life to redress the apparent injustice of the present one, and set the balance right.

Ver. 23.—**If the scourge slay suddenly.** Such a "scourge" as war, or pestilence, or famine, is probably meant. If one of these be let loose upon a land, and slay, as it always does slay, *indifferently* the good and the bad, the innocent and the guilty, what is God's attitude? Does he interpose to save the righteous? By no means. He looks on passively, indifferently. Job even goes further, and says, with an audacity that borders on irreverence, if it does not even overstep the border, **He will laugh at the trial of the innocent.** St. Jerome says, "There is nothing in the whole book harsher than this." It may, perhaps, be excused, partly as rhetorical, partly as needful for

the full expansion of Job's argument. But it is a fearful utterance. (Professor Lee's attempt to explain the whole passage differently is scarcely a successful one.)

Ver. 24.—**The earth is given into the hand of the wicked.** As a further proof of God's indifference to the sufferings of the innocent, Job adduces the fact that, in the high places of the earth, are mostly set wicked persons, who oppress and persecute the righteous. This has probably been true, in the East at any rate, at all times. **He covereth the faces of the judges thereof.** God covers up the eyes of those who have to judge between the oppressors and the oppressed, so that they pervert judgment, and side with the oppressors. He does this, since he permits it to be done. Corrupt judges are among the perennial curses of the East. **If not, where, and who is he?** rather, *If it be not he, who then is it?* (see the Revised Version). Job argues that the established condition of things in human society must be ascribed to God, since (at least) he allows it. There is no one else to whom it can be ascribed.

Ver. 25.—**Now my days are swifter than a post.** Life slips away so fast that before it is well begun, it is ended. Job compares it to the swift passage of the trained runner, or messenger, who carried despatches for kings and other great personages in the olden times (see 2 Chron. xxx. 6; Esth. iii. 13; viii. 10, 14). Herodotus says of the trained runners employed by the Persians, "Nothing mortal travels so fast as these Persian messengers" (Herod., viii. 98). There is abundant evidence of the employment of such persons in ancient Egypt. **They flee away, they see no good.** It seems to Job that his prosperity (ch. i. 2—5) was only for a moment. He scarcely could look on it before it was gone.

Ver. 26.—**They are passed away as the swift ships;** literally, *like the ships of reed.* The allusion is probably to the frail reed vessels of the Egyptians, of which many ancient writers speak (see Theophrastus, 'Hist. Plant.,' iv. 9; Pliny, 'Hist. Nat.,' vi. 56; xiii. 11; Lucan, 'Pharsalia,' iv. 36, etc.). They were long, light canoes, formed generally of the papyrus plant, and propelled either by a single paddle or by a punting-pole. They were flat-bottomed and broad, like punts, with a stem and stern rising considerably above the level of the water (see the author's 'History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. pp. 507, 508). Isaiah speaks of them as "vessels of bulrushes," in which "swift messengers" were sent by the nations peopling the banks of the Nile (Isa. xviii. 1, 2). The Euphrates boats described by Herodotus (i. 194) were of an entirely different construction, and cannot be here intended. They consisted of a framework of wood, which was covered with skins, and then coated with bitumen, and resembled the Welsh "coracles." **As the eagle that hasteth to the prey;** or, *as the eagle that swoopeth on the prey* (Revised Version). Job's observation presents to him three types of swiftness—the trained runner upon the earth, the swift ships upon the waters, and the hungry eagle in the air. It seems to him that his life passes away as swiftly as any of these.

Ver. 27.—**If I say, I will forget my complaint** (comp. above, ch. vii. 13). Job represents himself as sometimes, for a moment, imagining that he might put aside his load of sorrow by not thinking of it. He tries and says to himself, "I will forget," etc.; but in vain. The whole mass of his sufferings seems to rise up against him, and make even momentary forgetfulness impossible. **I will leave off my heaviness;** or, *my black looks.* **And comfort myself** (comp. ch. x. 20 and Ps. xxxix. 13, where the same verb is rendered "recover strength").

Ver. 28.—**I am afraid of all my sorrows** (see the comment on ver. 27). **I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent.** The worst of all Job's sorrows is the sense of alienation from God, which his unexampled sufferings have wrought in him. Though unconscious of having deserved them, he still, not unnaturally, looks upon them as marks of God's displeasure, proofs that God does not regard him as innocent.

Ver. 29.—**If I be wicked;** rather, *I am wicked;* i.e. I am accounted so—I am already condemned. The extreme afflictions under which I suffer indicate that God has passed sentence upon me, and awarded me my punishment. **Why then labour I in vain?** *i.e.* Why argue? Why seek to justify myself, since no result is likely to follow? Nothing that I can say will alter God's foregone conclusion.

Ver. 30.—**If I wash myself with snow-water** (comp. Ps. li. 7). If I should succeed in purging myself of all guilt, and establishing, so far as words can do it, my spotless innocence, even then what advantage should I gain? Snow-water does not really cleanse what is defiled better than any other water, but a lively fancy might suppose it to do so. Job indulges in this fancy, but then checks himself, and adds a prosaic alternative. **And make my hands never so clean;** rather, *and make my hands clean with lye.* Lye, or potash, is the principal and most essential ingredient in soap, and the readiest and best detergent. If Job cleanses himself to the very utmost, "Cui bono?" he asks.

Ver. 31.—**Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch.** Yet would God with ease undo his work, show his purity to be impure, his

righteousness to be filthy rags, and thus, as it were, replunge him in the mire and clay from which he had sought to free himself, and hold him forth a more loathsome wretch than ever. **And mine own clothes shall abhor me.** So loathsome would he be that his very garments, stained and fouled by his disease, would shrink away from him and hate to touch him.

Ver. 32.—**For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment** (comp. vers. 2—14). On one of two conditions only, Job thinks, could the contest be even between himself and God. (1) If God, divesting himself of all his Divine attributes, became man; (2) if some thirdsman could be found, some umpire or arbitrator, to preside over the contest, and decide it. Neither condition, however, was (he thought) possible; and therefore no satisfactory judgment could take place. Recent commentators observe that the Christian scheme, which Job could not anticipate, provides almost a literal fulfilment of both conditions, since the God who is to judge us is "true Man," and is also a Mediator, or "Thirdsman," between us and the offended Father, with authority to make the final decision, "the Father having committed all judgment unto the Son" (John v. 22), and "given him authority to execute judgment also," for the very reason that he is "the Son of man" (John v. 27).

Ver. 33.—**Neither is there any daysman betwixt us;** literally, *judge*, or *arbitrator*, called a "daysman," since he appoints the day on which the arbitration is to come off. The LXX. renders by μεσίτης, "mediator." **That might lay his hand upon us both.** Moderate between us, that is; keep us both in check; assert an authority to which we must both submit.

Ver. 34.—**Let him take his rod away from me;** rather, *who would remove his rod from me.* Job means that it would be a part of the duty of the "daysman" to see that God's rod was removed from him before he was called upon to plead, so that he might not labour under so great a disadvantage as his sufferings would place him under. **And let not his fear terrify me;** or, *and would not suffer his fear to terrify me*; i.e. would not allow Job to be placed under the disadvantage, either of pain or of fear, either of actual or prospective suffering.

Ver. 35.—**Then would I speak, and not fear him.** Job has imagined conditions which are impossible (though they may, to some extent, be compensated for in the actual scheme of man's redemption); and says that, under the circumstances which he has imagined, he would not fear to justify himself before God. The assertion is over-daring, and, as Schultens says, shows the patriarch to be no longer master of himself, but carried away by the force of overwrought feeling. **But it is not so with me;** *i.e.* "I am not in such a position as to enter on my justification." I am weighted by my sufferings, and also by my fears. I therefore decline the contest.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Job to Bildad:* 1. *Bildad's theology refuted.* I. AN IRONICAL CONCESSION. "I know that it is so of a truth." The doctrine propounded by Bildad (ch. viii. 3), that in God's dealings with mankind such a thing as either a perversion or miscarriage of justice was impossible, Job in a certain sense allows. Abstractly considered, the sentiment was one which Job cheerfully admitted. As expounded by Bildad, that the Divine government of the world was one of visible retributive justice, he expressly impugned its truth. Yet, in order to expose its fallacious character as well as to demonstrate its worthlessness, he is willing to proceed on the assumption of its truth.

II. A PERTINENT INTERROGATION. "How should man [literally, 'frail, perishable man'] be just," *i.e.* maintain his righteousness, establish his innocence, "with God?" Supposing, for the sake of argument, that such a sufferer possessed the inward, ineradicable conviction that he was innocent (*i.e.* free from notorious transgression): by what process could he vindicate his personal integrity so as to arrest the punitive hand of the Almighty? By none that would be availing, Job proceeds to show. In a profounder sense than is here employed, the question of the patriarch possesses a momentous significance for man. How shall man, the frail, sinful, and perishing, establish his righteousness before God? As in Job's case, so in every man's, the attempt to do so is a wild imagination, and can only result in failure. Not, however, because of the impossibility of establishing what really exists, as in Job's view, but because the thing, the righteousness, is not there to be maintained; all the world being in inward consciousness, as well as in outward fact, guilty before God.

III. AN EXTRAORDINARY SUPPOSITION. "If he will contend with him;" *i.e.* if the individual arraigned by Divine providence should propose to impeach the Divine equity, and even undertake to demonstrate his own innocence; or, as others interpret the pronouns, if God should be willing to enter into controversy with him, *i.e.* weak and imperfect man. According to the former explanation, the language is suggestive of sinful presumption; according to the latter, of gracious condescension; according to either, the subject of debate is not the question of man's sinfulness in general, but of man's guiltiness in respect of particular offences.

IV. A HOPELESS CONTENTION. On two grounds Job protests that any such litigation with the Almighty as to man's innocence of individual transgressions (much more, therefore, as to the question of man's sinful condition) would be unavailing. 1. *Man's ignorance and frailty* would disqualify him from replying to God's accusations. Infinite in subtlety and endless in succession, the charges that by such an assailant might be brought against him would simply confound and paralyze him. Overpowered by terror at the ineffable majesty of his Divine opponent, he would entirely lose command of his poor faculties, such as they were, and would be utterly unable to repel so much as one charge in a thousand, even were they all untrue (ver. 3; cf. Ps. cxxx. 3). 2. *God's wisdom and strength* would render it impossible for any one engaging in such an enterprise to escape unhurt. "Wise in heart, and mighty in strength, who hath braved him and been successful?" (ver. 4). The wisdom of the Almighty, which enables him to search the heart (1 Chron. xxviii. 9; Ps. vii. 9), to understand the thoughts (Ps. cxxxix. 2), to know the works (ch. xxxiv. 25), to consider the ways (ch. xxxiv. 21), of men; and the power of the Omniscient, which secures that his counsel shall stand (Isa. xlvi. 10) and his purpose shall be fulfilled (ch. xxiii. 13, 14), clearly present a combination (ch. xxxvi. 5; xxxvii. 23; Dan. ii. 20), against which it is not only needless, but must for ever be positively ruinous, to strive.

Learn: 1. It becomes good men to acknowledge and confide in the righteousness of God. 2. The higher man's ideas rise of God's holiness and equity, the lower fall his thoughts concerning his own impurity and iniquity. 3. As there can be no unrighteousness with God, so neither can there be any righteousness with man. 4. Though it is hopeless to contend with God in argument, it is not so to wrestle with him in prayer. 5. The best attitude for a frail and sinful man to assume before God is that of self-abasement and penitence. 6. Man's ignorance and weakness are no match for God's wisdom and might. 7. God's wisdom and might have, for man's advantage, been deposited in Christ, who is the Power and the Wisdom of God.

Vers. 1—4.—*A gospel outline.* I. A SUBLIME TRUTH. There is no unrighteousness with God (ver. 1), in either: 1. *Permitting sin.* (Ps. xcii. 5.) 2. *Afflicting man.* (Deut. viii. 5.) 3. *Saving the penitent.* (Rom. iii. 26; 1 John i. 9.) 4. *Punishing the wicked.* (Rom. iii. 5; 2 Thess. i. 6.)

II. A MELANCHOLY FACT. It is impossible for man to establish his righteousness before God (ver. 2), his guiltiness being: 1. *Declared by Scripture.* (Ps. cxliii. 2; Prov. xx. 9; Eccles. vii. 20; Isa. liii. 6; Rom. iii. 19, 23.) 2. *Attested by conscience.* (Rom. ii. 15.) 3. *Confirmed by experience.* (Ps. lviii. 3; Eph. iv. 17, 18; Jas. iii. 2.)

III. AN HUMILIATING DISCOVERY. That man is utterly unable to answer God's accusations against him (ver. 3), in respect of either: (1) their *number*, man's sins being as numerous as the hairs of his head (Ps. xl. 12); or (2) their *character*, being infinitely heinous in the sight of God (Prov. xv. 9; Isa. xliii. 24; Jer. xliv. 4); or (3) their *proof*, the evidence in support of God's charges being clear and overwhelming (Gen. xviii. 21; Jer. xvii. 10).

IV. A CHEERING EVANGEL. That salvation may be found by yielding to God (ver. 4). 1. *Nothing but hurt* can arise from braving and opposing God (Isa. xxvii. 4). 2. *Certain salvation* springs from humble submission to God (ch. xxxiii. 27; Ps. lxxvi. 9; Isa. xxvii. 5).

Vers. 5—10.—*Job to Bildad: 2. The majesty of God depicted.* I. IN TERRESTRIAL PHENOMENA. 1. *Overturning mountains.* "Which removeth," *i.e.* uprooteth or overturneth, "the mountains, and they know not: which overturneth them in his anger" (ver. 5). Whatever be the allusion intended, whether to the convulsions of

nature which occurred at the Flood, or to those usually associated with earthquakes, the language suggests the absoluteness of God's control over nature, and in particular: (1) The greatness of his power, which, being able to uproot and overthrow mighty hills through its resistless force, must be competent to do the most stupendous works—must, in fact, be an agency to which there can be no impossibilities. The only power resembling it on earth is that of faith (Mark ix. 23), to which also is ascribed the ability to remove mountains (Mark xi. 23). (2) The suddenness of his power, the mountains being represented as overturned unexpectedly, in a moment, "without their knowing," which again reflects upon the vastness of that power which can effect so gigantic a feat without effort and without labour, so easily and naturally ("He toucheth the hills, and they smoke," Ps. civ. 32) that it is done instantaneously. (3) The fierceness of his power, especially when it is put forth in judgment, the uprooting of the mountains being depicted as a terrible manifestation of the Almighty's wrath, concerning which the overturned hills seem to say, "Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him" (Nah. i. 6; cf. Hab. iii. 6). 2. *Convulsing the earth.* "Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars," *i.e.* the internal foundations, "thereof tremble" (ver. 6). Nothing is more seemingly stable than the solid globe (Ps. cxix. 90). Its original establishment was a sublime witness to the power and wisdom of its Creator (1 Sam. ii. 8; Ps. xxiv. 1, 2; Ps. cxxxvi. 6; Jer. li. 15). Yet, by the mysterious forces treasured up within its dark retreats, the Almighty can make it tremble as if about to be dissolved (Ps. civ. 32; cxiv. 7), as he did at Sinai (Exod. xix. 18; Ps. lxviii. 8), and as once again he will do at the end of time (Heb. i. 10; 2 Pet. iii. 10). The shaking of the earth is an emblem of Divine judgments (Isa. xiii. 13).

II. IN THE WONDERS OF THE SKY. 1. *Obscuring the sun.* "Who commandeth the sun, and it riseth [or, 'shineth'] not" (ver. 7). Alluding to both natural and supernatural obscurations of the solar light, of the former of which ordinary eclipses may be taken as illustrations, while the Egyptian darkness will constitute a sample of the latter. (1) The sun is the most resplendent object in heaven. Here styled *cherem*, probably from its brilliant appearance (Delitzsch), or perhaps from its heat-giving properties (Gesenius). As such it is a silent witness to the great power of God (Gen. i. 16; Ps. lxxiv. 16; cxxxvi. 7, 8; Jer. xxxi. 35). (2) The sun is ever obedient to the will of its Creator. There is no part of God's universe that is not under law. The greatest suns as well as the smallest atoms continually recognize his authority. The orb of day is equally obedient in rising and in setting (Eccles. i. 5). As such, it is an eloquent teacher of obedience to man (Ps. cxlviii. 8). (3) The sun is never wearied of its beneficent mission to shine. And it always shines, except when commanded not. As such, it is a preacher of diligence to the Christian, who is commanded to let his light shine (Matt. v. 16). (4) When the sun is obscured or commanded not to shine, it is in judgment on the sins of man (Joel ii. 31; Amos viii. 9; Luke xxi. 25; Acts ii. 20), as during the Egyptian darkness (Exod. x. 22) and at the time of the Crucifixion (Matt. xxvii. 45). The darkened sun is an impressive and instructive emblem of the judgments God sends upon men and nations who neither value nor improve the light of truth and salvation they possess. 2. *Concealing the stars.* "And sealeth up the stars" (ver. 7). The stars also are God's creatures (Gen. i. 16), and as such are obedient to his control. The vast number, immense magnitudes, and incredible velocities of the heavenly bodies, as unfolded by modern astronomy, impart to us loftier conceptions of the Creator's power than were possessed by devout Hebrews. The Divine wisdom also is significantly displayed in the regularity of their movements, which secures that they never fail to swim out into the blue sea of the celestial firmament when the light of day has departed. Yet the ease with which the splendour of the midnight sky can be extinguished, by pouring over it the brilliance of day, or drawing round it the thick gloom of clouds, is no less striking as a visible display of almighty wisdom and power, and one which must have appeared to an Oriental, looking up into a Syrian sky, infinitely more solemnizing than it does to an Occidental, who only sees the stars shining with a dimmer lustre. 3. *Bringing down the clouds.* "Which alone spreadeth out the heavens" (ver. 8). The reference is probably not to the original creation of the firmament (Gen. i. 6), but to the visible descent of storm-clouds upon the sea (Ps. xviii. 9—11). The poet represents the striking phenomena of cloud-land as another exhibition of

almighty power. The modern scientist imagines, when he has predicted the advent and measured the velocity of a tempest, he has effectually disposed of the Hebrew poet's notion of supernaturalism in connection with the marvels of the sky. But the laws by which storm-clouds are built up and let down, swept along and finally dispersed, have not been spontaneously developed, or inherently possessed by, but externally imposed on, nature by him whose strength is in the clouds (Ps. lxviii. 34), who employs them as his chariot (Ps. civ. 3), and who when he pleases draws them across the face of heaven (Ps. cxlvii. 8). 4. *Walking on the billows.* "And treadeth upon the waves [literally, 'the heights'] of the sea" (ver. 8); *i.e.* upon the fierce mountainous billows. The two clauses are descriptive of a storm at sea, in which sea and sky appear to intermingle (Ps. cvii. 25, 26). As the wind, so the water; as the sky, so the sea; as the cloud, so the wave, recognizes the authority of God. The Divine power is usually exhibited as calming the troubled billows (Ps. lxv. 7; lxxxix. 9, 13). Here Jehovah is portrayed as exciting a tempest, bringing down his clouds, sending forth his hurricanes, raising the still waters into gigantic billows, lashing the quiet sea into a wild and tumultuous commotion, and then going forth in sublime sovereignty amidst the hurricane he has produced, walking calmly upon the crested heights of the ocean, causing his voice to be heard above the loudest roar of the storm, and at length saying, "Peace, be still!" So Christ visibly walked upon the Sea of Galilee (Matt. xiv. 26). Another picture of God's sovereignty over creation, another lesson of God's ability to be the confidence of them that are afar off upon the sea (Ps. lxv. 8).

III. IN THE CREATION OF THE STELLAR WORLD. 1. *The constellations of the northern hemisphere.* "Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and the Pleiades [literally, 'who made']." (1) *'Ash;* identified with Ursa Major, the Wain, the Bear, an exceedingly bright constellation in the northern sky, the Hebrew term signifying (according to some) "the Nightly Watcher," because of its never setting (Schultens), or perhaps with greater probability being contracted from an Arabic root *n'ash,* meaning "bier," the three stars in the tail being designated "Daughters of the Bier" (Gesenius); cf. ch. xxxviii. 32. (2) *Chesil;* literally, "Fool," regarded by the Assyrians as the famous hunter Nimrod, styled by the Arabs "the Hero," and by the Chaldeans, "the Giant;" commonly allowed to be the splendid constellation Orion, which "stands like a great giant in the heavens south of Taurus and Gemini" (Carey). (3) *Chimah;* literally, "Heap;" the well-known cluster of stars named "the Pleiades," a sparkling group compared by Persian poets to a bouquet formed of jewels (Delitzsch). 2. *The constellations of the southern hemisphere.* "And the chambers of the south;" *i.e.* the regions of the southern sky, which are completely veiled from view to us, and only occasionally discovered to Arabian spectators.

IV. IN THE PROVIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT OF THE UNIVERSE. The sentiment of ver. 10, which almost verbatim repeats the utterance of Eliphaz (ch. v. 10), may be viewed as a general description of the mighty power of God in upholding, as well as creating, the stupendous fabric he has summoned into being. Regarded in this light, it describes the operations of Divine energy as: 1. *Great.* He "doeth great things" (ver. 10). Everything that God does (in creation and providence) may be characterized as great (Ps. xcii. 5; cxi. 2), as being the production of infinite power. The distinction between great and little, when applied to Divine acts, exists only in the human understanding. The creation of a solar system is as easy to Omnipotence as the construction of an atom, and the formation of the latter as much dependent on Divine power as the production of the former. 2. *Wonderful.* "He doeth wondrous things." The wisdom displayed in the Divine works is conspicuous to every intelligent observer (Ps. civ. 24). The marvels of creation are fully equalled by the wonders of providence. The formation of a crystal, the structure of a flower, the organization of an animal, are examples of the former; the Deluge, the Exodus from Egypt, the Babylonish exile, the incarnation and death of Christ, illustrations of the latter. 3. *Unsearchable.* He doeth things "past finding out." Much as modern science has discovered of the secrets of Nature, there are vast realms lying unexplored around and beyond her, into some of which it is doubtful if she will ever be able to penetrate. Her ascertained results also make it probable that there are works of God into which she cannot sink the plummet of her finite understanding; as *e.g.* the nature of electricity and magnetism, the mystery of life in all its forms and gradations, the mode in which matter and mind act and

react upon one another. 4. *Numerous.* He doeth "wonders without number." The exquisite variety and the apparently limitless number of God's works are impressive testimonies to the infinite power and matchless wisdom of the Creator.

Learn: 1. There is no God like unto the God of the Christian (Exod. xv. 11; Deut. xxxiii. 26). 2. Nothing can transcend the power of God (Gen. xviii. 14; Jer. xxxii. 17). 3. God is infinitely worthy of the reverence, confidence, affection, and obedience of his intelligent creatures (Ps. lxxxix. 7; Rev. iv. 11). 4. It cannot but be dangerous to resist God's will (Nah. i. 6; Isa. xl. 24; Heb. xii. 29). 5. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Ps. xxvii. 1; Rom. viii. 31).

Vers. 11—20.—*Job to Bildad:* 3. *Creator and creature in conflict.* I. THE DIVINE ASSAILANT. 1. *His mysterious movements.* "Lo! he goeth by me, and I see him not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not" (ver. 11). The language, recalling Eliphaz's description of the shadowy spectre (ch. iv. 15), recognizes: (1) The personality of God. The Divine Being is not an impalpable abstraction or a dead unintelligent force, but a living, thinking, self-conscious Intelligence. Such a Deity is as much a necessity of reason as a postulate of revelation. (2) The activity of God. Not confounding the Creator and the creature as modern pantheism does, but ever maintaining a separation between the almighty Artificer of the universe and his works, biblical theology (both Hebrew and Christian) is also careful to avoid the error of deism, which, while believing in a Deity, removes him to a distance from his creation, setting him apart in cold, chilling isolation, amid the radiant splendours of a metaphysical perfection, and in particular interjecting between him and the realm of this sublunary sphere a gulf impassable by either him or man. Contrary to this, scriptural theism conceives God as an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Intelligence, continually superintending the universe he has made, as being ever present and ever active in all parts and places of his dominion (Ps. cxxx. 1—10; Jer. xxiii. 23, 24; Eph. i. 23; John v. 17). (3) The nearness of God. In a sense that is very real, God is never far from any one of us (Acts xvii. 27). Behind the veil which hides the unseen Eternities from mortal vision he continually sits, beholding all that transpires on earth; seeing all things and all persons, but ever remaining himself unseen. The besetting God of the Hebrew psalmist (Ps. cxxxix. 5) is the God of all men. Were the veil to be uplifted, it would at once be seen that God is always at hand. Sometimes it is lifted; as *e.g.* to Abraham (Gen. xv. 1), to Hagar (Gen. xvi. 13), to Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 13). And sometimes it is lifted to the soul when it remains closed to the bodily eye. God's nearness to man received its highest and truest expression when the Eternal Word became incarnate and dwelt among us. (4) The invisibility of God. Absolutely, *i.e.* in his uncreated essence, the supreme Deity must always remain invisible to and incomprehensible by man (ch. xxiii. 8; John i. 18; vi. 46; 1 Tim. vi. 16; 1 John iv. 12), if not also by all finite beings (ch. xi. 7; xxxvii. 23; Isa. xiv. 15). Relatively, he may be said to be visible when the spirit can recognize the working of his almighty finger, and invisible when that working or the reason of it is hid. Job complains that, while he can distinctly apprehend God to be passing by him in the events of providence and the phenomena of his individual experience, he is quite unable to discern God himself, *i.e.* to understand either the mode or the purpose of his mysterious movements (cf. ch. xi. 7—9; xxxvii. 5, 23; Ps. lxxvii. 19; Nah. i. 3; Matt. xi. 25). 2. *His resistless power.* (1) Invincible. "Behold, he taketh away [or, 'he assails'], who can hinder him [or, 'who shall repel him']?" (ver. 12). Impossible for the human soul not to feel overpowered with a sense of weakness and utter defencelessness when God, by the hand of providence, or by the inward stroke of his Spirit, collides with it. It is, however, some mitigation to the soul's distress, when it is able to recognize that the hand which strikes it is really God's (1 Sam. iii. 18; Ps. xxxix. 9). (2) Unchallengeable. "Who will say unto him, What doest thou?" (ver. 12). The sovereignty of God in removing, as well as in bestowing, creature comforts, such as possessions, children, etc., is as plainly demonstrated by experience as emphatically asserted in Scripture; and should be as cheerfully admitted by all as it was by Job (ch. i. 21; ii. 10) and by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 35). God's sovereignty, however, does not mean mere arbitrary and imperious behaviour. When God takes away (as also when he gives), he not only does what he has a perfect right to do, but the reasons present to his mind for doing it are such as cannot be

impeached. God's power always acts for the best, being allied with infinite wisdom; only God explains not his motives to creatures; but saints are ever satisfied that he doeth all things well (Ps. cxix. 65; Mark vii. 37; Rom. viii. 28). (3) Implacable. "Eloah restraineth not his anger" (ver. 13); *i.e.* he never recalls it, never holds it in or turns it back until it has accomplished its purpose; but permits it, like a rising tide or sweeping hurricane, to carry all before it, so that "the proud helpers" (literally, "the helpers of Rahab," *i.e.* "the helpers of pride," meaning probably either combinations of proud rebels, such as the antediluvians, or, "associates of the proud one," viz. the devil, or perhaps simply wicked men who, inspired by pride, think to interpose between the Almighty and the objects of his displeasure; such persons as are described in Ps. lxxiii. 6—9; but *vide* Exposition) "stoop under him." The mightiest combinations and confederacies of wicked men and devils are utterly helpless against God (Ps. ii. 1—3; lxxxiii. 5, 8; Jude 6). Their source, pride (Ps. x. 2—4); their purpose, opposition to God (Ps. xii. 3, 4); their end, destruction (Ps. xviii. 27; Prov. xvii. 19; Isa. ii. 11; xiii. 11). 3. *His unanswerable charges.* (1) Because of man's weakness. "How much less shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him?" (ver. 14). A blessed thought that man is permitted to reason with God (Isa. i. 16; xliii. 26), if not about his innocence, at least about his pardon and salvation. Persons who avail themselves of such permission should study to find appropriate language in which to state their case. Well-chosen words, if required in addressing man (Eccles. xii. 10), are much more indispensable in wrestling with God. Yet they who stand forth to plead with God should be profoundly impressed with a sense of their own unworthiness and insufficiency (Gen. xxxii. 10; Isa. vi. 5), and should accordingly be clothed with humility (2 Sam. vii. 18). (2) Because of God's greatness. "Whom, though I were righteous, I would not answer, but I would make supplication to my Judge" (ver. 15). A glimpse into the better nature of Job. Though repudiating the calumnies of his friends, and sometimes defending his own innocence with language indicating an approach at least to self-righteous presumption, he here appears overpowered with such a sense of the Divine majesty as to lay him prostrate in silence and self-abasement before him. Note the solemn relation in which God stands to all men—that of Judge; the character which the best of men bear in his sight—unrighteous; the summons which shall one day be addressed to all—to stand forth and answer for their sins; the attitude which all men should take towards God in view of that event—the attitude of supplication.

II. THE HUMAN COMPLAINANT. 1. *Mistrusting the Divine condescension.* Putting the case that he had summoned God into court, and that God had appeared, Job appears to conceive that a Being so infinitely exalted as he would not listen to the complaint of a frail mortal, or, if for a moment he did, would immediately break off in impatience and decline to listen further (ver. 16). A total misrepresentation of the Divine character, contradicted alike by God's descriptions of himself (Isa. lvii. 15, 16; Ps. xci. 15), and by the saints' experience of his grace (Ps. xxxiv. 6; xl. 17; lxxvi. 13). 2. *Impeaching the Divine goodness.* Describing the treatment he would meet at God's hands, Job insinuates that it would be the opposite of kind; that God would "break him with a tempest," "multiply his wounds without cause," "not suffer him to take his breath," "fill him with bitterness" (vers. 17, 18). As a matter of fact, the words present a literal account of Job's sufferings, and the aspect in which they were beginning to look to himself. Conscious that his calamities were causeless so far as any wickedness on his part was concerned, which God also testified (ch. ii. 3), and unable to discern the secret purpose for which he was being subjected to such excruciating tortures, he can only fall back upon the hypothesis that God has turned to be his enemy. Faith would have kept him right; but Job's faith, though not extinguished, was at this time suffering an eclipse. Sense and reason always misinterpret God. God never treats either saint or sinner as Job describes, aimlessly or maliciously, but always with tender love and for the loftiest ends (Heb. xii. 6, 10). 3. *Challenging the Divine equity.* Practically he represents God as stifling the creature's attempt to maintain his integrity by overpowering him with the dazzling magnificence of his Godhead; by rushing as it were into the open court of justice, and shouting to the poor bewildered appellant, "Is it a question of strength? Here am I. Is it a matter of right? Who will challenge me?" (ver. 19). But this, again, was a distorted view of the Divine character.

God has no need to be afraid of any investigation into his conduct, and just as little to apprehend that puny man could outwit his infinite wisdom or overreach his almighty power. 4. *Despairing of Divine acceptance.* So hopeless does the contest seem to Job between a poor suffering creature like himself and a Being of infinite majesty like God, that he confesses the dire impossibility of being able to establish his innocence before the tribunal of the skies. God's insufferable glory would so confound and stupefy him, that even if he were innocent, his own mouth would condemn him; were he guiltless, it would betray him (ver. 20); *i.e.* he would, through sheer terror and amazement (1 Pet. iii. 6), stumble out his own condemnation, and, conscious of his integrity, would yet confess himself guilty. What Job here asserts concerning his integrity or freedom from such transgression as Eliphaz and Bildad charged against him is certainly correct in the case of every one who would dare to maintain his moral purity in the sight of God. The clear revelation of God's majesty and holiness imparted to the awakened soul, when it appears as if standing face to face with God, renders it a hard task for man to uphold his sinlessness. If he attempted it, he would only stultify and condemn himself. Nay, he should not know his own soul (ver. 21), but only thereby demonstrate his ignorance of himself (cf. 1 John i. 8).

Learn: 1. It is impossible to entertain too exalted a conception of the great and holy God with whom we have to do. 2. It is quite possible, even for the best of men, to misconstrue God's dealings with the soul, and to regard him as an adversary who is really a Friend. 3. It is well to remember, in every appearance of conflict between the Creator and the creature, that all the right lies upon the side of the former. 4. The nearer saints advance towards perfection, the readier they are to acknowledge their imperfection. 5. A humble and self-abased spirit before God is quite compatible with the maintenance of one's blamelessness before men.

Vers. 21—35.—*Job to Bildad:* 4. *The cries of a despairing soul.* I. MAINTAINING HIS INNOCENCE. 1. *Attested by his conscience.* "Though I were perfect;" or, better, "I am guiltless" (ver. 21). Before God Job did not claim to be absolutely spotless, but merely to be free from such transgressions of the moral law as his friends insinuated he must have committed to render him obnoxious to those palpable tokens of Divine displeasure which had overtaken him. Against this, however, he protested as a wholly baseless aspersion of his character, declaring his determination to maintain his integrity at all hazards, ay, even should it cost him his life. "Yet would I not know [literally, 'I know not,' *i.e.* 'I value not, care not for'] my soul: I would despise [or, 'I despise'] my life" (ver. 21). Vehement asseveration such as this would, of course, have been out of place, and altogether unjustifiable, unless Job had had the clearest and most irrefragable evidence of his own innocence behind it. But this Job professed to have in the inner testimony of his conscience, which declared him to be what Jehovah himself had already affirmed him to be—"a perfect man and an upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil" (ch. i. 8). It is by no means impossible for a good man to have a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men (Acts xxiii. 1; xxiv. 16). Decisions registered before the court of conscience are always in accordance with truth. Conscience may be stupefied through sin, and prevented from delivering its testimony (Eph. iv. 19). It may even be perverted and constrained to call evil good (Acts xxvi. 9). But where enlightened and free, it never fails to indicate the moral standing of the soul. Scripture distinctly recognizes the validity of the inner witness of conscience (Rom. viii. 16). And not unfrequently this witness is all that a good man can lean upon in times of adversity (*e.g.* Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 21; Daniel, i. 8; SS. Peter and John, Acts iv. 19; St. Paul, Titus ii. 17; cf. Shakespeare, 'Henry VIII.,' act iii. sc. 2). When it is so, the evidence of circumstance and appearance being all against him, he is fully warranted to rest upon it. If he trust it, it will support him. 2. *Not disproved by his sufferings.* The sole ground possessed by Eliphaz and Bildad for their calumnies was that Job had been overtaken by evil fortunes. But, besides repelling the charges themselves as contradicted by the clear verdict of his own conscience, he likewise repudiates the foundation on which they were based as diametrically opposed to the plain facts of history. So far from appearances being against Job, rightly interrogated they were rather in his favour. So far from God's dealings with men being strictly retributive, so that Job's guilt might warrantably be inferred from his misery,

they were as nearly as possible the opposite. All experience showed: (1) That God frequently confounded the righteous and the wicked in one indiscriminate overthrow. "This is one thing [literally, 'it is all one'], therefore I said [or, 'will say'] it, he destroyeth the perfect and the wicked" (ver. 22). An incontrovertible fact, which wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, tempests, and other disastrous occurrences, sufficiently attest, which thoughtful observers in all ages have noted (Eccles. ix. 23), and which has frequently perplexed the good (Gen. xviii. 24); but which, while it is not an injustice to the creature, even the righteous themselves being sinful, is as little an inequality on the part of the Creator, who, though not bound to justify his ways to sinful man, may yet have adopted this method of Divine government as best suited to meet the moral and spiritual improvement of mankind generally, to exercise the faith and develop the graces of the righteous, and to awaken within the soul a conviction of the necessity and certainty of a future state (Mal. iii. 18; cf. Butler's 'Analogy,' ch. iii.). (2) That God was indifferent to the miseries of the righteous. "If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the righteous" (ver. 23); first at their sufferings, and then at the inward temptations to unbelief and despair that these sufferings occasion. This, however, is inconceivable. God cautions men against judging one another simply by appearances. Much more is it necessary to avoid this mistake in judging of God. "God doth not afflict the children of men," much less his own children, "willingly" (Lam. iii. 33).

"Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face."

God laughs at the wicked and their machinations (Ps. ii. 4); never at his people and their sorrows (Exod. iii. 7; Matt. xxiii. 37; John xi. 35). (3) That God seemingly extended favour to the wicked; first, generally, by promoting wicked men to positions of worldly influence and power: "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked" (ver. 24); and second, particularly, by committing the administration of justice to the ungodly: "He covereth the faces of the judges thereof" (ver. 24); *i.e.* so that, through ignorance and corruption, being unable to discern between right and wrong, they legalize oppression and robbery, "framing mischief by a law." That such anomalies exist is undeniable (Ps. xii. 8). And Job means to say that he holds God responsible for them. "If it is not he that is the Author of them, then who is it?" God is the moral Governor of the universe (Exod. ix. 29; Ps. xlvii. 2, 7; lxxxiii. 18). The civil magistracy is a Divine institution (Prov. viii. 15, 16). God alone has power to prevent the perversion of his own ordinance (Ps. lxxv. 7; Dan. ii. 21). God is not in ignorance that his people are oppressed (Eccles. v. 8). And God has distinctly promised to exercise righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed (Ps. ciii. 6). Hence nobody is to blame but God, says Job. The logic is good, but the theology is bad.

II. BEMOANING HIS LOT. 1. *The impossibility of attaining to happiness.* (1) The fleetness of his days had rendered this beyond his ability. His past life had vanished with incredible velocity: (*a*) like a quick-footed courier: "My days are [literally, 'were'] swifter than a post" (ver. 25), or state-runner carrying letters and despatches, sometimes able, when mounted on dromedaries, to travel a hundred and fifty miles a day; (*b*) like a fast-sailing ship, literally, "ships of reed," skiffs constructed of the papyrus *Nilotica*, and celebrated for their swiftness, "a little pinnace that may serve to make sport and pastime on the water, which turneth nimbly here and there, and goeth away apace" (Calvin); and (*c*) like a swift-flying eagle: "As the eagle that hasteth to the prey" (ver. 26);—three images conveying an impressive picture of the brevity of man's existence on the earth. (2) The vanity of his life was another cause of failure in reaching mundane felicity. His days had rushed by "without seeing good" (ver. 25), or, "having seen no good;" which in Job's case was not correct, as prior to his affliction he had attained to a high degree of both temporal and spiritual prosperity. Men are prone to forget past mercies. "Out of sight, out of mind," is frequently exemplified among saints. Perhaps no lives exist that never see good. Yet the noblest thing in God's world is not to see, but to do, good. A life that does good may be short; it can never be wholly vain. 2. *The impossibility of surmounting his sorrow.* This also had a double cause. (1) The immovability of his misery. However frequently he might resolve to brighten up, the recollection of his pains made him

shudder (ver. 28). Nothing is more certain than that the burden of sorrow cannot be removed by simple resolution. No man can really brighten up in the midst of affliction unless he casts his burden on the Lord. But to the doing of this in Job's case there seemed an insuperable barrier, viz.: (2) The unchangeable determination of God to count him guilty. Reasoning from the standpoint of sense, Job regarded this as the natural deduction from his continued sufferings. Hence the hopelessness of trying to look bright. Had Job adopted David's resolution (Ps. xlii. 5, 11; xliii. 5), he might have overcome this tremendous heart-sinking of which he was conscious. How immensely more advantageous the position of Christians than that of Job or even David! Not only have they the clear consciousness of acceptance with God for Christ's sake to support them, but they have the plainest Scripture declarations that affliction is a proof of love and friendship rather than of hatred and enmity and the most earnest exhortations to rejoice in tribulation; yea, to rejoice in the Lord always (Phil. iv. 4; Jas. i. 2). 3. *The impossibility of establishing his innocence.* Because of: (1) God's determination to make him out guilty: "I have to be guilty" (ver. 29). Same thought as above. It is certain that God is shut up by the necessities of his Godhead, His immaculate purity and incorruptible justice, to hold every man on earth, even the purest and most upright saint that lives, as guilty (Rom. iii. 19), but not in the sense here intended by Job. It is no pleasure to God to find men guilty. Certainly, he never makes an innocent man guilty; though, thanks to his mercy, he often treats a guilty man as innocent. (2) Job's inability to overcome this determination. Plaints were useless: "Why do I labour in vain" (ver. 29), in protesting my innocence, or trying to make it good? "If I wash myself with snow-water," supposed to be purer than common water, "and make my hands never so clean [literally, 'clean with lye or potash'], yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes should abhor me" (vers. 30, 31); *i.e.* the best attempts at self-justification would be useless.

III. YEARNING FOR A DAYSMAN. 1. *The necessity of such a daysman.* Job craved an arbiter or umpire between himself and God, because of the unequal terms on which they stood. "He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment" (ver. 32). For the same reason man requires a Mediator between himself, the feeble, sinning creature, and Jehovah, the infinitely powerful and immaculately pure Creator. And this want which Job so powerfully felt has been supplied by Christ, the one Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. ii. 5). 2. *The work of such a daysman.* Described as twofold: (1) To act authoritatively for both parties in the contest. "There is not a daysman," or arbiter between us, "that might lay his hand upon us both" (ver. 33); *i.e.* that might impose conditions upon both by the imposition of hands. This Christ is able to do in virtue of his twofold nature, being the Fellow of the Most High as well as the Son of man. Thus representing both parties, he can lay his hands on both. He can speak and act with authority for both. (2) To remove the obstacles to man's coming into converse with God. These were, in Job's case, two—the terror of God's rod, and the terror of God's face: "Let him take away his rod from me, and let not his fear [*i.e.* his terrible majesty] terrify me" (ver. 34). The same things prevent the free access of sinful man to God, viz. God's rod—not his providential afflictions, but his legal condemnations; and God's majesty, or the ineffable glory of his holy Godhead. And these have been removed by Christ; the latter by his incarnation, the former by his sacrifice. 3. *The benefit of such a daysman.* (1) Man is able to approach God—not perhaps as Job, with conscious integrity: "Then would I speak, and not fear him; for not thus do I stand with myself," *i.e.* I am not conscious of anything to make me afraid (ver. 35); but certainly, without alarm and with hopeful confidence; and (2) God is able to enter into treaty with man.

Learn: 1. There is a clear difference between maintaining one's blamelessness before men and asserting one's righteousness before God. 2. The character of God's heart is not always to be inferred from the dealings of God's hand. 3. Many things are permitted to occur in God's universe of which he does not approve. 4. The science of numbering our days is one that all mortals should learn. 5. The true value of a life is not to be estimated by its length. 6. The best consolation in human sorrow is the enjoyment of Divine favour. 7. The finest and purest morality will not enable a man to do without a mediator. 8. No man can come to God except through Jesus Christ. 9. But in him and through him we have access by one Spirit to the Father.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1—ch. x. 22.—*Second reply of Job. The fearfulness of God's power.* Now, for the first time, Job admits the great principle for which Eliphaz and Bildad have contended, but in a bitter and sarcastic sense. True, he says, it is not for man to contend against God. But why? Because he is absolute Power, and hence there is no possibility of a frail mortal prevailing in his plea. His might is his right. It is a dark conception of God to which Job's despair now drives him. He looks upon God simply as omnipotent Force, arbitrary and irresistible Will. Take the thought of power, and separate it from that of justice and of compassion, and we have the idea of an almighty Fiend rather than of a good and gracious Father. Yet the spark of true faith still lives, as we shall see, in the recesses of his awakened heart.—J.

Vers. 2—20.—*God viewed as absolute and arbitrary Power.* I. THE HELPLESSNESS OF MAN IN PRESENCE OF HIS OMNIPOTENCE. (Vers. 1—3.) What avails right on one's side against him who has all heaven's artillery at his command? "It is idle to argue with the Master of thirty legions." Out of a thousand questions with which the Almighty might overwhelm my mind, there is not one which I could answer with the chance of a fair hearing. Indeed, this in a sense is true, as the thirty-eighth chapter will presently show. It is idle to argue with God concerning the constitution of things. But it is never idle to plead the right. This, God, by the very nature of his Being, by his promises, is bound to attend to. Job thinks of God as the Almighty and the All-wise (ver. 4), and he finds in this combination of attributes only reason for despair. He leaves out his justice; his faith in his love is suspended for a time. Hence he sees him only through the distorted dream of suffering, and his dark inferences are wrong.

II. DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ABSOLUTE POWER OF GOD. 1. *In nature's destructive forces.* Here he would rival and outvie Eliphaz in the sublimity of his pictures. The more terrible phenomena of nature are produced as evidences of a blind, tyrannic might: the *earthquake* (ver. 5), which topples over the giant mountains like a child's plaything, and rocks the solid foundations of the earth (ver. 6); the *eclipse of sun and stars*, the universal darkness of the heavens (ver. 7). Here is the origin, according to some philosophers, of religion—man's terror in the presence of the vast destructive forces of nature. But it is the origin only of a *part* of religious feeling—of awe and reverence. And when man learns more of nature as a whole, and more of his own heart, he rises into loftier and happier moods than that of slavish fear. 2. *In nature's splendour and general effect.* The vastness of the "immeasurable heavens," and the great sea of clouds (ver. 8), the splendid constellations of the northern and the southern sky (ver. 9), lead the mind out in wonder, stretch the imagination to its limits, fill the soul with the sense of the unutterable, the innumerable, the infinite (ver. 10). This mood is happier than the former. It is one of elevation, wonder, delighted joy in the communion of the mind with Mind. It is stamped upon the glowing lines of the nineteenth psalm. But Job draws from these sublime spectacles at present only the inference of God's dread and irresistible power.

III. MANKIND ITSELF IN RELATION TO THIS ABSOLUTE POWER. 1. *It is invisible and swift* in its errand of terror (ver. 11). Sudden death by lightning, or by a hasty malady, naturally produces an appalling effect. Hence the prayer of the Litany. 2. *It is irresistible.* (Vers. 12, 13.) No human hand can stay, no human prayer avert, its overpowering onset. The monsters, or Titans ("helpers of Rahab"), were overcome, according to some well-known legend; how much less, then, can *I* resist with success (ver. 14)? 3. *The consciousness of innocence is therefore of no avail.* Supplication alone is in place before a Disputant who knows no law but his will (ver. 15). I cannot believe that he, from his height, would give attention to my cry (ver. 16). He is Force, crushing Force alone, guided only by causeless caprice (ver. 17); stifling the cry of the pleader in his mouth, and filling him with bitterness (ver. 18). 4. *The human dilemma.* Man in presence of an absolute Tyrant must always be in the wrong. If he stands on might, he is a fool; if he appeals to right, he has no court of all appeal—for who can challenge the Judge of heaven and earth? Right will be set down as wrong, innocence will be pronounced guilt (vers. 19, 20). We see, from this picture of Job's state of mind, that there is no extremity of doubt so dire as when man is

tempted to disbelieve in the principle of justice as the law of the universe, which *cannot* be broken. The thought of God turns then only into one of unmitigated horror and despair.—J.

Vers. 21—24.—*Rebellion of the conscience against this picture of terror.* A reaction comes; for the clear testimony of consciousness may be obscured for a time, but cannot be denied. In that clear consciousness, it seems that Job will turn against the injustice (as he thinks) of God, and boldly denounce it.

I. A GOOD CONSCIENCE LIFTS THE MIND ABOVE ABJECT FEAR. (We take ver. 21 as a declaration of innocence renewed.)

II. IT IMPARTS CONTEMPT OF DEATH. (Ver. 21.)

III. IT STIMULATES TO BOLDNESS IN PLEADING ONE'S CAUSE. We must think of Job, according to a leading conception of the book, as within his right in pleading against his (supposed) adversary as in a court. He argues, as again showing that God is merely an absolute Tyrant, that the innocent are punished along with the guilty (ver. 22). There are two examples of this: 1. The scourge, or pest, which quickly sweeps away whole populations, making no discrimination between the good and evil, the hoary sinner and the helpless babe (ver. 23). 2. The dominion of the wicked in the world. Their faces are covered; they do not distinguish between right and wrong. And who else can be the Cause of this but God (ver. 24)?—J.

Vers. 25—35.—*Melancholy reflections.* I. SELF-CONTEMPLATION IN REFERENCE TO THE PAST. His life has sped swiftly—like a courier, or the swift boat of the Euphrates or the Nile, or the swooping eagle (vers. 25, 26), and without seeming prosperity. Here he perverts the history of the past; but memory as well as reason is poisoned.

II. IN REFERENCE TO THE FUTURE. (Vers. 27, 28.) Hope has broken its wing. The effort to remove the gloom from his brow is useless, unless he could remove the weight from his heart. That—the sense of the disfavour of God—comes rolling back from every effort, like the stone of Sisyphus.

III. THE VANITY OF MORAL ENDEAVOUR. (Vers. 29—31.) He feels himself as under an absolute decree of guilt which no earthly power can possibly remove. Should he use snow-water and lye, *i.e.* employ all means to justify himself, still his absolute Judge would plunge him back into a state of horrible pollution.

IV. THE INEQUALITY OF THE STRIFE BETWEEN MAN AND GOD. Were it between man and man, he has no doubt of the success of his cause.

V. THE WANT OF A COURT OF APPEAL. (Vers. 32, 33.) There is no "daysman," or arbitrator, who can lay the hand of authority upon both of us, and, by determining the cause, bring the strife to an end.

VI. PASSIONATE APPEAL AND RESOLVE. The appeal is for *freedom of speech* (vers. 34, 35; ch. x. 1, 2). The last, or one of the last, boons that honourable men can be disposed to deny to the oppressed; one that God will never deny to his intelligent creatures. Yet Job, overcome by the dogmatism of his friends, seems to think it is now denied him. The resolve is that since life has now become a weariness and a disgust, he will give free way to words, regardless of consequences. In reviewing this wild complaint of an unhinged intelligence, we may learn the following lessons: 1. God is not to be thought of as absolute Power, but rather as absolute Justice and Love. The former is the conception of a demon, the latter that of the Father of spirits. 2. All sides and aspects of nature must be viewed as equally revelations of God. 3. Man is never weak when he has right on his side, and, though he seems to be crushed, he will be exalted for ever. 4. Darkness in the reason is no proof of the withdrawal of God's favour. Our subjection and personal sufferings do not affect the eternal objective realities. The clouds may hide, but cannot efface, the sun. 5. God is merciful to our misunderstandings, and detects the spark of faith in the heart of sufferers who may be unconscious of it themselves.—J.

Vers. 1—4.—*Man unable to answer to God.* Job resumes. He knows, as truly as does Bildad, that God doth not pervert justice. His work is always right, while man is erring, vain, and sinful. How shall the creature "answer" to the Creator? Were the Holy One to condescend to enter into controversy with his frail creature man, the poor

sinner would be dumb. Out of the mouth, even of the guilty, God would extort the confession of his own righteousness, and by his manifested glory compel the proud and self-conceited one to acknowledge his own sinfulness and error. This confession finally comes from the lips of his faithful "servant Job." The present words are the first notes of that final triumphant confession. The inability of man to answer God arises—

I. FROM THE FACT OF THE ABSOLUTE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE WAYS. Job acknowledges this; and this makes his own suffering lot, as the servant of God, so inexplicable both to himself and to his mistaken friends, who are bent, at all hazards, on finding an answer. It is possible for man to pretend an answer to God; and, with wicked boldness, to enter into contention with him. But, in presence of the perfectly holy work of the Most High, he must ultimately be silenced.

II. BUT MAN IS EQUALLY UNABLE TO ANSWER TO GOD BY REASON OF THE SINFULNESS OF HIS DOINGS. Even Job, commended of God, does not hide his sinfulness. On the lowest ground, it must be complained of man's work that it is imperfect. His best deeds, done with his utmost strength and with an intention as pure as he can summon, are but imperfectly done. The strength is but feebleness, the motive lacking in the highest qualities, and the performance but irregular. The unsteadiness of the human hand may be traced through all. Therefore—

III. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR MAN TO MAINTAIN HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD. The measure of moral apprehension left even in the most faulty is sufficient to convince every one in presence of the Divine holiness—the true standard—that he is verily guilty. Even Job, when he saw God, abhorred himself, repenting "in dust and ashes." In humility he confesses, "How should man be just with God?" If vain man, who is foolish enough at times to attempt any presumptuous work, should dare to "contend" with the eternal Ruler, it must only end in his utter defeat; for "he is wise in heart, and mighty in strength."

IV. THE HARDENING OF THE HEART TO APPEAR IN CONTENTION MUST ONLY END IN SHAME AND DISGRACE TO HIM. To this all experience bears witness; for who hath done so "and hath prospered"? Man is puny, ignorant, weak, vain, and sinful. How shall he appear in the presence of the Almighty, the All-wise, the Eternal? Lowliness and contrition describe the true attitude for man to assume before God. Then will he be gracious, and lift up him that is bowed down. But "if he withdraw not his anger, the proud helpers stoop under him."—R. G.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The true attitude of the afflicted.* Job makes a suitable reflection on the almightiness of Jehovah, seen in his control over the visible world. The lofty and deep-seated mountains, the very types of might and stability, he "removeth" without their knowing, and "overturneth in his wrath." He "shaketh" the whole "earth out of her place," and maketh the "pillars thereof to tremble." In the high heavens "he commandeth the sun, and it riseth not;" and "the stars" he "sealeth up" in darkness. The earth and the heavens obey him; and he "treadeth upon the waves of the sea." He doeth hidden and numberless things, and none can hinder him. Job, in view of this, and with a lowly recognition of his own powerlessness before the Lord of all, bows himself down in the attitude most becoming to the feeble, afflicted, and sinful child of man. It is—

I. AN ATTITUDE OF LOWLY HUMILITY. How becoming! How just! Let the creature bow low before the Creator. Let the feeble thing of a day humble himself before the Eternal and the Almighty. Let him who is powerless before the mountains and the sea, who cannot touch the stars, take his place in the dust, whence he is, in presence of him who by his power setteth fast the mountains; who by his word created the heavens and the earth, and upholdeth all by his own unaided strength. Lowliness will be followed by—

II. AN ATTITUDE OF SELF-DISTRUST. Knowing himself as he only can who reflects on the greatness of the Most High, the wise, afflicted one will not trust to an arm of strength; but, in the painful consciousness of his own weakness, will commit himself to the strong Lord who is over all. Job knows, as every afflicted one, that his suffering holds him as in a net, from which he cannot break loose. He has no power. He is chained, held down. His own flesh triumphs over him. He is a prisoner to disease. In his helplessness, with self-distrustfulness he casts himself into the arms of God.

He would not pretend to make answer, or to "choose out words to reason with him." His self-distrust is followed by—

III. PENITENCE—the one attitude of all the most becoming to man. In penitence he acknowledges his unrighteousness. And so deep is that penitence, that he declares, "Though I were able to establish my righteousness, yet I could not presume to answer." Penitence is the pathway to heaven's gate. He who lowly walks, walks surely. And God lifteth up them who thus bow themselves down. But he rises—

IV. TO THE ATTITUDE OF PRAYER. He lifts his voice to God. He makes his "supplication." He who is led to pray is led to the feet of him who casts away no needy suppliant. It is his high prerogative to hear prayer. Therefore all flesh, in their want, their sorrow, their sin, or with their songs of praise, come to him. Man's safety is here. The lowly, self-distrustful, humble penitent cannot raise his voice on high without the gracious response of the Divine mercy reaching him. To this men are driven (1) by their sense of impotence; (2) by the consciousness of sin; (3) by the assurance of the Divine mercy. Happy he who thus learns!—R. G.

Ver. 33.—*The Mediator.* The object desired by Job—and here he speaks for all sinful ones—is to obtain reconciliation with Jehovah, against whom he acknowledges himself to have sinned. He cries for a mediator, an arbiter, an umpire; one able to "lay his hand upon us both"—to bring us together, mediating between us.

I. THE NECESSITY FOR THIS ARISES: 1. From Job's consciousness of sin. In his prayer (ver. 28) he confesses to God, "I know thou wilt not hold me innocent." "I am not innocent," is the first confession of guilt. "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me." 2. From Job's inability to "answer" to God. Of this he has made both complaint and confession. "Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer" (ver. 15). Fear and just humility seize him. "How much less shall I answer him?" (ver. 14). Man cannot order his own cause before the eternal Judge. "He cannot answer him one of a thousand" (ver. 3). 3. From their utter inequality. "He is not a man, as I am" (ver. 32). They could not therefore "come together in judgment." How vain of poor, ignorant, feeble, sinful man to suppose that he can answer to God—that he can "appear before him!" How vain even to imagine himself justified and pure before him! Yet many "appear before" God in the presumptuous, self-excusing, self-justifying thoughts of their minds. All such self-justification condemned by Job's wise words and just views of things.

II. JOB'S CRY IS THE UNCONSCIOUS CRY OF THE UNIVERSAL HEART OF MAN FOR A MEDIATOR. Seen in all religious systems—the faith in the priest—the conscious ignorance of hidden spiritual verities. The uninterpreted apprehension of a spiritual world and government and future, and yet the inability to deal with these and to put one's self in a right attitude respecting them. This cry is heard in all lands, languages, and times. "Oh that there were a daysman!" This cry prepares for and anticipates the true Mediator.

III. THE RESPONSE TO THE UNIVERSAL NEED IN THE "ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MEN." Happily "himself Man." God "hath spoken unto us in his Son"—no longer in prophets, but in a Son, who is at the same time "the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance;" and yet "Man"—"bone of our bone." "God manifested in the flesh," and yet "in all things" "made like unto his brethren." Speaking with Divine authority to us in our language, and of heavenly things on our level. And revealing within the compass of a human life, and by means of human acts and human sentiments, the thought and love and pitiful mercy of God. And representing us—doing what Job felt (and all have felt whose views were just) he could not do, "appear before the face of God for us." Now we "have our access through him in one Spirit unto the Father." If we cannot order our speech or our cause, he can. If we cannot answer one of a thousand, he can. For he is able, indeed, to "put his hand upon both."—R. G.

Ver. 2.—*The problem of justification.* It is very doubtful how far Job conceived of this great problem as it has presented itself to us since the time of St. Paul. The whole question was confused to his apprehension by the inexplicable perplexity of his situation and the grossly unfair insinuations of his friends. It appeared as though God

were his Adversary, and it seemed hopeless to attempt to set himself right with One whose power was so vastly greater than his own. We have not Job's peculiar difficulties in regard to Divine providence. Yet to us the problem of justification is not less serious because we have been made to see the moral difficulties more closely. Let us, then, consider the Christian view of the problem of justification and its solution.

I. THE PROBLEM. The question which Job propounds is of a universal character. He does not ask how he, as one individual in special circumstances, can be justified; but his own case leads him to think of man generally. He feels that his difficulty is his share of a general difficulty of the race. What is this? 1. *To be just with God is to stand right with God.* The expression implies a certain relationship. It goes beyond subjective righteousness; it is more than internal holiness. It is a standing in right relations to God, in such relations as admit of his treating us as just men. 2. *The character of the relations depends on God's view of us.* We may appear just in the eyes of men and yet not be just with God. He knows us as we are, and he can be deceived by no cloak of hypocrisy. Therefore we have to lay aside all shams and appearances when we come to consider the question of our justification before God. 3. *Sin puts us all in wrong relations with God.* We start with the fact that we need to be justified. The justification cannot be a clearing of our character from false imputations, as Job's was largely; for many accusations are true—we are guilty. Hence the tremendous difficulty of the problem. 4. *It is unspeakably important that we should be in right relations with God.* This is not a question of abstract dogmatics, but one of personal experience. It does not merely touch our feelings, and concern itself with our peace of mind; it is vital to our soul's salvation.

II. ITS SOLUTION. Job propounds the question as though no answer could be given. With him it is a case of despair. But Christ has brought an answer, which St. Paul has expounded in the Epistle to the Romans. 1. *We cannot justify ourselves with God.* It is necessary to see this first of all. The Jews made the experiment with their Law, and failed. Many now make it, either by attempting to excuse themselves or by trying to better themselves. But they always fail. 2. *God has made a method of justification.* This is the great wonder of redemption, that our Judge provides our Advocate; that he who might condemn us finds a way by which we may be forgiven. 3. *This justification is in Christ.* (Rom. iii. 22.) Christ brings forgiveness of past sin and recovery to God. Thus he puts us in right relations with our Father. 4. *It is realized by means of faith.* (Rom. iii. 28.) When we put our trust in Christ, we receive from him the grace of pardon and renewal. The condition of faith is absolutely necessary. We must avoid the mistake of supposing that this is faith in our own state of justification, *i.e.* a believing ourselves to be justified. It is not that; but it is a personal trust and loyalty in relation to Christ himself. 5. *This condition results in a real state of right relations with God.* Justification is not a legal judgment, a mere pretence, affirming that we are what we are not. That would be a lie. It is an actual fact; a putting us in right relations with God. Thus it is the root and promise of righteousness.—W. F. A.

Ver. 20.—*Self-justification.* I. THE NEED TO BE JUSTIFIED. The burning necessity of justification lies at the root of Job's terrible agony. Yet even he does not feel it in its deep moral and spiritual significance, as it would have been felt by one who was conscious of sin rather than of undeserved suffering and unjust accusations. We cannot endure to be out of right relations with God. Though our lost state may not trouble us as yet, the time will come when we shall see its terrible and fatal character.

II. WE ARE TEMPTED TO JUSTIFY OURSELVES. The very need causes the temptation. Moreover, a self-flattering vanity urges us in the same direction. It is most painful and humiliating to have to own that we are sinners, deserving nothing but wrath and condemnation. When we feel ourself in danger, we are at once urged by very instinct to put ourselves in an attitude of self-defence.

III. WE MAY BE DELUDED INTO A MISTAKEN BELIEF THAT WE ARE JUSTIFIED. No delusions are so powerful as those which flatter us. It is so easy to put things in a favourable light to ourselves. While we are our own judges, every motive of self-esteem urges us to a favourable judgment. Then there comes in the terrible mistake of determining according to our feelings rather than according to objective reality, so

that when we have argued or soothed ourselves into a comfortable assurance that all is well, that very assurance is regarded as a proof of the fact on which it is supposed to be grounded. But this may be a pure hallucination. It is possible to be justified before God and yet to be tormented with needless fears of condemnation, and it is equally possible to be still under condemnation while we fancy ourselves in a state of justification.

IV. SELF-JUSTIFICATION MUST FAIL. We cannot get outside ourselves or transcend our own experience. No lever by which a man can lift himself has ever been invented. We may make a fair show in the flesh, but we cannot change our own hearts. We have sinned against God; it is useless for us merely to forgive ourselves; we need God's pardon. If sin were not real, we might find a defence which would clear our reputation. But it is real, most terribly and unquestionably real. This fact makes self-justification impossible.

V. OUR OWN CONDUCT DEMONSTRATES THE DELUSION OF SELF-JUSTIFICATION. Job seems to think he is so hardly dealt with, and God so much greater than he is, that whatever he says in self-justification will be turned against him. That is a mistake, for God is just and merciful. But in a deeper sense God's words are true. We may say we are just, but our deeds belie our words. Nay, our very mouth, that proclaims our justice, denies it; for our words are often sinful, ungenerous when they are not untrue.

VI. THE FAILURE OF SELF-JUSTIFICATION SHOULD DRIVE US TO GOD'S JUSTIFICATION IN CHRIST. We need not despair like Job, for we have a gospel to the unrighteous. Christ has brought a perfect justification, in pardon and renewal, for all who own their sin and trust his grace.—W. F. A.

Ver. 22.—*The injustice of equality.* Job complains that the same doom is meted out to the perfect and the wicked; this seems to be unjust. Our modern complaints are of the injustice of the terrible inequalities of life. But Job's position suggests to us that justice is not simple equality. Equal dealing may be unjust dealing. To be fair to all, we must not treat all alike. Yet the injustice of equality is apparently a common thing in the experience of life, and even in the dispensations of Providence. Thus special providence seems to be lost, and one broad, rough treatment appears to serve for the greatest variety of people.

I. IT WOULD BE UNJUST TO TREAT ALL ALIKE. This much may be conceded if we think of the whole of life, not of external experience alone, nor only of this temporal and limited sphere of existence. To look for absolute equality is to ignore variations of requirements and distinctions of character. But if this be so, what are we to understand by the apparent disregard of those differences? The world is governed by general laws. Events have widespread influences. Calamities come in a swelling tide, not in a meandering stream, and when they sweep over the land, weeds and fruitful plants suffer from the same devastation.

II. NEVERTHELESS, GOD IS NOT THUS UNJUST. Job is mistaken. 1. *We only see the outside of life.* The events which are common to all alike are external. They are visible objects of superficial observation. But these events do not constitute the whole of experience. The blow that breaks stone only toughens iron. The calamity that is a crushing judgment to one man is a healing tonic to another. When a flood sweeps over a district it leaves behind very different effects; for while it only brings ruin to houses, it brings fertility to fields. So the trouble is only equal externally. If only we could follow it into the experience of different men, we should discover that the inequality has ceased, and that a different effect is produced according to character and condition. While it is a curse to one life, it is a blessing to another. 2. *We only see the present experience.* Now, and on earth, there seems to be a rough, indiscriminate treatment of men. Here the injustice of equality is too often seen. But we must wait for the end. In Job's case the end brought about a complete reversal of the whole course of events. Now God makes his sun to shine and his rain to fall on good and bad alike—favouring equally, as he sometimes chastises equally. But this equality will not continue after death. Wheat and tares grow together, but only until the harvest. There will be a great inequality of treatment, when the one is gathered into the barns, and the other is burned. Surely men should learn to bear the common troubles of life patiently, if they know that beyond them all there is more than compensation;

there is fruitful increase, with richest blessings, for the true servants of God who endure patiently.—W. F. A.

Vers. 25, 26.—*The swift days.* Job compares his days to what is swiftest—on earth, the running messenger; in the sea, the boat of reeds; in the air, the eagle darting down on its prey. We must not look for a difference in the suggestiveness of these several illustrations. Gathered from every region of existence, they give great emphasis to the one significant fact of the brevity of life.

I. OUR DAYS ARE SWIFT IN COMPARISON WITH NATURE. The course of nature moves on slowly. Geology tells of innumerable vast ages of antiquity. Evolution presupposes an even longer stretch of time. By the side of the gradual movements of nature, our little days are swift and brief. Each man's life registers but a moment on the great dial of time. The old world rolls on, while we children of a day come and go in a rapid march of succeeding generations.

II. OUR DAYS ARE SWIFT IN RELATION TO OUR DESIRES. We crave for long experience. Extinction of being is a horror to us. There are within us great instincts of immortality. Thus, while we live our little earthly day, we are reaching forward to God's great eternity. We cannot be satisfied with an ephemeral existence.

III. OUR DAYS ARE SWIFT IN REGARD TO OUR POWERS. It takes us long to train those powers. Half a lifetime is not enough to perfect them. But before they are perfected, the shadows begin to lengthen and the melancholy afternoon is upon us. Surely, if God has given us faculties that take so long to develop, and that seem capable of great achievements if only they had full scope, it is sad that they should begin to wither as soon as they have reached maturity.

IV. OUR DAYS ARE SWIFT IN CONNECTION WITH OUR DUTIES. There is so much to be done and so little time to do it in. Our tasks grow upon us, and our opportunities are cramped and cut short. Do we not all plan out more work than we can ever accomplish? Thus we labour with a sad consciousness that we can never overtake our intentions.

V. OUR DAYS ARE SWIFT BY THE SIDE OF OUR EXPECTATIONS. A child sees eternity before him. In his estimation, one year—a whole year—is a vast epoch. Even in later youth time seems to be an abundant commodity. There is little need to economize it, for have we not enough and to spare? Presently we are surprised to see how quickly its unheeded moments are slipping away from us. Every year it goes faster, till the silent stream has become a headlong torrent, and days fly past us with terrible speed.

VI. OUR DAYS ARE SWIFT IN THE LIGHT OF ETERNITY. Here is the explanation of the whole mystery. We are not creatures of a day, although our earthly life is so short. God has given us a spark of his own immortality. In view of that the largest earthly life is a fleeting shadow. Yet the ample leisure of eternity must not make us careless of the work of the day, for this day will never return. How valuable is time in the outer world! The messenger runs with swiftest paces, the little skiff darts about on the waters, the fierce eagle drops on its prey like a thunderbolt. Though eternity is long, let us hasten to use our glorious prospects as an inspiration for a like eagerness in making the most of our brief earthly days.—W. F. A.

Vers. 30, 31.—*Despair of purification.* Job is possessed by a terrible thought. He imagines that God is so determined to have him as an object of condemnation that nothing he can do can set him right; even if he makes himself ever so clean, God will plunge him back in the mire, God will overwhelm him with guilt. This is, of course, a wholly false view of God, though it is not altogether inexcusable with Job in his ignorance and awful distress.

I. GOD ONLY DESIRES OUR PURIFICATION. We may not be tempted to fall into Job's mistake, for we have more light, and our circumstances are far more hopeful than his were. Still, it is difficult for us to conceive how entirely averse to making the worst of us God is. He cannot ignore sin, for his searching glance always reveals it to him, and his just judgment always estimates it rightly. He must bring our sin home to us; for this is for our own good, as well as necessary in regard to the claims of righteousness. Thus he seems to be forcing out our guilt. But in doing so he is not plunging

us into the mire, but only making apparent the hidden evil of our heart. The process is like that of a photographer developing a picture, like that of a physician bringing a disease to the surface. The result makes apparent what existed before, unseen but dangerously powerful.

II. IT IS HOPELESS TO ATTEMPT OUR OWN PURIFICATION. Here Job was right. We may wash ourselves, but we shall not be clean. Sin is more than a defilement; it is a stain, a dye, an ingrained evil. It is like the Ethiopian's skin and the leopard's spots; sin has become a part of the sinner's very constitution. Tears of repentance will not wash it out. Blood of sacrificed victims will not cleanse it away. Penance and good deeds will not remove it. We cannot undo the past, cannot do away with the fact that sin was committed. Therefore we cannot remove the guilt of our sin, nor its contaminating, corrupting influence from our consciences.

III. GOD PROVIDES PURIFICATION FROM SIN. We need not despair. Job is not only mistaken; the truth is the very opposite to what he imagines it to be. God himself, instead of aggravating guilt, has provided the only efficacious means for its removal. This was promised in the Old Testament: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord," etc. (Isa. i. 18). It is accomplished in the New Testament. Christ offered forgiveness of sin (Matt. ix. 2). By his death on the cross he made that forgiveness sure to us. What no tears or works of ours can do is effected by the blood of Christ, which "cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). That is to say, Christ's death is the great purifying sacrifice. When we trust in him the cleansing of guilt that is given, on condition of the perfect sacrifice, is ours. Our despair of purification outside Christ should only drive us to Christ that we may receive it.—W. F. A.

Ver. 33.—*The Daysman.* Job regarded it as unfair that his Judge and his Accuser should be one and the same Person, and he craved an umpire to come between. As a matter of fact, he was mistaken. His accuser was not his Judge. Satan was his accuser, and God was the great and just Umpire of the contest. Still, men have ever felt the need of one who should come between them and God, and assist them in coming to a right understanding with God. The feeling has arisen in part from a similar mistake to Job's, but also in part from a spiritual instinct. Leaving Job's misconception, what may we regard as the truth about this idea of the Daysman?

I. WE ARE AT FEUD WITH GOD IN OUR SIN. There is an ancient quarrel between the race and its Maker. Sin is more than disease; it is rebellion. It is more than a stain on our character; it is an offence against God. It is worse than a disarrangement of earthly relations; it is a wrong attitude towards Heaven. These unearthly characteristics of sin give to it a peculiar horror and make it a deadly danger. So long as we are living in sin we are God's enemies.

II. IT IS TIME THIS FEUD WERE BROUGHT TO AN END. It only widens while it is left unchecked. The longer we sin, the deeper our antagonism to God becomes. Thus we "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath." This is no matter of mere unseemliness and impropriety. It is a fearful wrong that the child should be fighting against his Father. It must bring ruin on the child and grief to the Father.

III. WE NEED A DAYSMAN TO SET US RIGHT WITH GOD. The Daysman is our Mediator. Now, the doctrine of mediation is not so popular as once it was. People say, "We want to go straight to God. He is our Father, we are his children. We want no one to come between us. We simply want to go straight home to God." There is much truth and rightness of feeling in this desire. If anything came between us and God, so as to hinder us, that would be a stumbling-block, an idol, and it would be our duty to remove it out of our way. Any abuse of sacraments, any tyranny of priestism, any person the most exalted, if even an angel from heaven, who came between so as to obstruct the way to God, would be an evil to be deplored and avoided. If even Christ stood in this position it would be our duty to forsake him. If Christianity meant a more difficult and roundabout way to God, it would be right to renounce Christianity, and to revert to a simpler theism. But the question is—What is the nearest way back to God? The exile desires to go straight home. You offer to show him on the route fine mountains, ancient cities, picturesque ruins. He will have none of them. He only wants to go home by the most direct way. But alas! he is far from home, and between him and his home there is the broad ocean. How shall he cross it? Now,

the Mediator is to help us over the ocean that separates us from God. He is between us and God, not as a wall that divides, but as a door in the already existing wall, or as the bridge that crosses a chasm—not to separate, but to unite. We have a Daysman—Christ. Our nearest Way to God, our only Way, is through him (John xiv. 6).—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER X.

Vers. 1—22.—Having answered Bildad, Job proceeds to pour out the bitterness of his soul in a pathetic complaint, which he addresses directly to God. There is not much that is novel in the long expostulation, which mainly goes over ground covered in ch. iii., vi., and vii.; but some new grounds are alleged as pleas for mercy, if not for justice. These are (1) that he is God's creature, and in the past (at any rate) has been the object of his care (vers. 3, 8—12); (2) that God must be above judging as man judges (vers. 4, 5); (3) that God knows his innocence (ver. 7); and (4) that he (Job) is entirely in God's power (ver. 7). In conclusion, Job begs for a little respite, a little time of comfort (ver. 20), before he descends into the darkness of the grave (vers. 21, 22).

Ver. 1.—**My soul is weary of my life.** This is better than the marginal rendering, and well expresses the original. It strikes the key-note of the chapter. **I will leave my complaint upon myself**; rather, *I will give free course to my complaint over myself*, or *I will allow myself in the expression of it* (see the Revised Version). Job implies that hitherto he has put some restraint upon himself, but now he will give full and free expression to his feelings. **I will speak in the bitterness of my soul** (comp. ch. vii. 11).

Ver. 2.—**I will say unto God, Do not condemn me**; literally, *do not pronounce me wicked*. My friends, as they call themselves, have, one and all, condemned me: do not thou also condemn me. A touching appeal! **Show me wherefore thou contendest with me.** One of Job's principal trials is the perplexity into which his unexampled sufferings have thrown him. He cannot understand why he has been singled out for such tremendous punishment, when he is not conscious to himself of any impiety or other heinous sin against God. So now, when he has resolved to vent all the bitterness of his soul, he ventures to ask the question—Why is he so tried? What has he done to make God his enemy? Wherefore does God fight against him continually?

Ver. 3.—**Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress?** Job assumes that he is oppressed. He has no conception that his sufferings are a purification (John xv. 2), intended to lead to the elevation and improvement of his moral character. He therefore asks—Is it worthy of God, is it good in him, is it compatible with his perfect excellence, to be an oppressor? It is a sort of *argumentum ad verecundiam*, well enough between man and man, but quite out of place between a man and his Maker. **That thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands** (comp. Ps. cxxxviii. 8). This argument is more legitimate. God may be expected, not to despise, but to care for, the work of his own hands (comp. Isa. xix. 25; xxix. 23; xliv. 21; lxiv. 8; Eph. ii. 10). Every maker of a thing, as Aristotle says, loves his work, and naturally guards it, cares for it, and cherishes it. **And shine upon the counsel of the wicked** (comp. ch. ix. 24). The prosperity of evil-doers must arise, Job thinks, from God allowing his countenance to shine upon them.

Ver. 4.—**Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth?** Notwithstanding the anthropomorphism of their language, the sacred writers are as fully aware as their modern critics of the immateriality of God, and the immense gap that separates his nature from human nature. It is on this that Job now dwells. God, being so much above man, having eyes that are not of flesh, and seeing not as man seeth, ought not to judge as man judges, with partiality, or prejudice, or even with extreme severity (ver. 6).

Ver. 5.—**Are thy days as man's days?** In short-lived man, short-sightedness and prejudice are excusable, but not in one whose days are unlike man's days—whose "years endure throughout all generations" (Ps. cii. 24). Such a one ought to be above all human infirmity. **Or thy years as man's days?** We should have expected "as man's *years*." But it marks the disparity more strongly to say, "Are thy years not greater in number even than man's [literally, 'a strong man's'] *days*?"

Ver. 6.—**That thou inquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin.** It seems to Job that God must have been "extreme to mark what he has done amiss" (Ps. cxxx. 3), must have searched into

every corner of his life, and hunted out all his sins and shortcomings, to have been able to bring together against him a total commensurate, or even approximately commensurate, with the punishment wherewith he has visited him.

Ver. 7.—**Thou knowest that I am not wicked**; rather, *although thou knowest* (see the Revised Version). Conscious of his own integrity and faithfulness, Job feels that God too must know them; wherefore it seems to him all the harder that he should be made to suffer as if he were a "chief sinner." **And there is none that can deliver out of thine hand.**

"'Tis excellent to have a giant's strength;
But tyrannous to use it like a giant."

Job's last ground of appeal is, that he is wholly at God's mercy, can look for no other deliverer, no other support or stay. Will not God, then, have pity, and "spare him a little, that he may recover his strength before he goes hence, and is no more seen"? (see Ps. xxxix. 15; and comp. below, ver. 20).

Vers. 8—12.—Here we have an expansion of the plea in ver. 3, "Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest despise the work of thine own hands?" Job appeals to God, not only as his Creator, but as, up to a certain time, his Supporter and Sustainer.

Ver. 8.—**Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about** (comp. Ps. cxxxix. 12—16, "My reins are thine; thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks unto thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My bones are not hid from thee, though I be made secretly, and fashioned beneath in the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book were all my members written, which day by day were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them"). Canon Cook observes with much truth, "The processes of nature are always attributed in Scripture to the immediate action of God. The formation of every individual stands, in the language of the Holy Ghost, precisely on the same footing as that of the first man" ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 50). **Yet thou dost destroy me**; literally, *devour me* (comp. ch. ix. 17, 22).

Ver. 9.—**Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay**; rather, *that thou hast fashioned me as clay;* i.e. "Thou hast formed me, as a potter fashions a pot out of clay." This is scarcely a reference to Gen. iii. 19, but rather an early use of what became a stock metaphor (comp. Isa. xxix. 16; xxx. 14; xlv. 9; lxiv. 8; Jer. xviii. 6; Rom. ix. 21—23, etc.). **And wilt thou bring me into dust again?** After having fashioned me out of clay into a human form, wilt thou undo thine own work, crumble me into powder, and make me mere dust once more?

Ver. 10.—**Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese?** "Didst not thou," *i.e.*, "form me as an embryo in the womb, gradually solidifying my substance, and changing soft juices into a firm though tender mass?"

Ver. 11.—**Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh.** "To thee," that is, "I owe the delicate skin, which encloses my frame, and keeps it compact; to thee I owe the flesh whereof my frame chiefly consists." **And hast fenced me with bones and sinews**; rather, *and hast woven me*, or *knit me together* (see the Revised Version, and comp. Ps. cxxxix. 13, where the same verb is used in the same sense). The idea is that the body altogether is woven and compacted of skin, bone, flesh, sinews, etc., into a delicate and elaborate garment (comp. 2 Cor. v. 2—4).

Ver. 12.—**Thou hast granted me life and favour.** God, besides providing Job with a body so delicately and marvellously constructed, had added the gift of "life" (Gen. ii. 7), and also that of "favour," or loving providential care, whereby his life was preserved from infancy to manhood, and from manhood to a ripe age, in peace and prosperity. Job has not forgotten his former state of temporal happiness (ch. i. 2—5), nor ceased to feel gratitude to God for it (comp. ch. ii. 10). **And thy visitation hath preserved my spirit**; or, *thy providence*—"thy continual care."

Ver. 13.—**And these things hast thou hid in thine heart**; rather, *yet these things didst thou hide in thine heart;* i.e. "Yet all the while, notwithstanding thy protecting care and gracious favour, thou wert biding in thy heart the intention to bring all these evils upon me; thou couldst not but have known what thou wert about to do, though thou didst conceal thy intention, and allow no sign of it to escape thee." **I know that this is with thee**; rather, *I know that this was with thee;* i.e. this intention to destroy my happiness was "with thee"—present to thy thought—even while thou wert loading me with favour. Job's statement cannot be gainsaid; but it involves no real charge against God, who assigns men prosperity or suffering as is best for them at the time.

Ver. 14.—**If I sin, then thou markest me**; rather, *if I sinned, then thou didst observe me.* Thou tookest note of all my sins as I committed them, and laidest them up in thy memory. **And thou wilt not acquit me**

from mine iniquity. This record of my offences thou still hast against me, and I cannot expect that thou wilt acquit me of them. Without some one to atone for them, men cannot be acquitted of their offences.

Ver. 15.—**If I be wicked, woe unto me!** If, on the whole, this record of my sins be such that I am pronounced guilty before God, then I accept my doom. Woe unto me! I must submit to suffer. **And if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head.** If, on the contrary, it be admitted that I have not sinned so grievously as to be pronounced unrighteous, even then I will not boast; I will not exalt myself; I will not hold up my head as if I were sinless. I am **full of confusion.** This clause should not be separated from the last. The sense runs on: "I will not lift up my head (being, as I am), full of confusion," or "of shame," through consciousness of my own imperfections (see the Revised Version). **Therefore see thou mine affliction;** rather, *and seeing my afflictions.* The sense given in the Authorized Version is maintained by Rosenmüller, De Wette, Stanley Leathes, and Merx, and defended by Canon Cook; but opposed by Schultens, Professor Lee, and our Revisers. If we accept the views of these last, the whole passage will run thus: "If I be [pronounced] wicked, woe unto me! but if righteous, yet will I not lift up my head, being [as I am] full of confusion, and seeing my afflictions." Job still views his afflictions as signs of God's disfavour, and therefore proofs of his sinfulness.

Ver. 16.—**For it increaseth. Thou huntest me.** This passage is very obscure, and has been taken in several quite different senses. On the whole, it is not clear that any better meaning can be assigned to it than that of the Authorized Version, "For my affliction increaseth," **or** "is ever increasing. Thou huntest me;" *i.e.* thou art continually pursuing me with thy plagues, thy "arrows" (ch. vi. 4), thy "wounds" (ch. ix. 17), thy poisoned shafts (ch. vi. 4). Thou givest me no rest, therefore I am ever conscious of my afflictions. **As a fierce lion.** Schultens regards Job as the lion, and so Jarchi and others. But most commentators take the view that the lion is God (comp. Isa. xxxi. 4; xxxviii. 13; Jer. xxv. 38; Lam. iii. 10; Hos. v. 14; xiii. 7, 8). **And again thou showest thyself marvellous upon me;** or, *thou dealest marvellously with me;* i.e. "inflictest on me strange and marvellous sufferings."

Ver. 17.—**Thou renewest thy witnesses against me.** Each fresh calamity that Job suffers is a new witness that God is displeased with him, both in his own eyes, and in those of his "comforters." His disease was no doubt continually progressing, and going from bad to worse, so that every day a new calamity seemed to befall him. **And increasest thine indignation upon me;** *i.e.* "makest it more and more evidently to appear, that thou art angry with me." **Changes and war are against me;** rather, *changes and a host;* i.e. attacks that are continually changing—a whole host of them, or "host after host" (Revised Version margin), come against me.

Ver. 18.—**Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb?** A recurrence to his original complaint (ch. iii. 3—10); as if, after full consideration, he returned to the conviction that the root of the whole matter—the real thing of which he might justly complain—was that he had ever been born into the world alive! **Oh that I had given up the ghost!** Before birth, or in the act of birth (so ch. iii. 11). **And no eye had seen me!** "No eye," *i.e.*, "had looked upon my *living* face." For then—

Ver. 19.—**I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.** So short an existence would have been the next thing to no existence at all, and would have equally satisfied my wishes.

Ver. 20.—**Are not my days few? Cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little.** Job here returns from vague longings and idle aspirations to actual realities—the facts of the case—and asks, "Is not the time that I now have to live short? Must not my disease make an end of me in a very brief space? If so, then may I not make a request? My petition is that God will 'cease' from me, grant me a respite, 'let me alone' for a short time, remove his heavy hand, and allow me to 'take comfort a little,' recover my strength, and obtain a breathing-space, before my actual end, before the time comes for my descent to Sheol," which is then (vers. 21, 22) described. The parallel with Ps. xxxix. 13 is striking.

Ver. 21.—**Before I go whence I shall not return** (comp. ch. vii. 9; and see 2 Sam. xii. 23). **Even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death.** Job's idea of the receptacle of the dead, while it has some analogies with the Egyptian under-world, and even more with the Greek and Roman conceptions of Hades or Orcus, was probably derived from Babylonia, or Chaldea, on which the land that he inhabited bordered (ch. i. 17). It was within the earth, consequently dark and sunless (compare the *Umbræ* of the Romans, and Euripides's *νέκρων κευθμῶνα καὶ σκότου πύλας*), deep (ch. xi. 8), dreary, fastened with bolts and bars (ch. xvii. 16). The Babylonians spoke of it as "the abode of darkness and famine, where earth was men's food, and their

nourishment clay; where light was not seen, but in darkness they dwelt; where ghosts, like birds, fluttered their wings; and where, on the doors and on the door-posts, the dust lay undisturbed" (Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archæology, vol. i. p. 118).

Ver. 22.—**A land of darkness, as darkness itself**; or, *a land of thick darkness* (see the Revised Version). And **of the shadow of death, without any order.** The absence of order is a new and peculiar feature. We do not find it in the other accounts of Hades. But it lends additional horror and weirdness to the scene. **And where the light is as darkness.** Not, therefore, absolutely without light, but with such a light as Milton calls "darkness visible."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Job to God: the progress of the third controversy:* 1. *The pathetic wail of a crushed heart.* I. SOBBING IN THE EAR OF GOD. 1. *The moan of a desponding heart.* "My soul is weary of [literally, 'loathes'] my life" (ver. 1). That which had rendered existence a disgust to Job was partly his intense bodily affliction, but chiefly the overwhelming strangeness of the Divine conduct towards him. If only he had been able to realize that, notwithstanding all contrary appearances, he was still an object of God's compassionate regard, he would have doubtless been able to endure with continued patience and exemplary submission the appalling calamities which had overtaken him. But the heavenward outlook of Job's spirit was obscured by gloomy clouds of doubt and fear. The conviction was beginning to force itself inward upon his soul that God was indeed turned to be his Adversary; and if that were really so, Job felt that life would not be worth living. So David estimated God's favour as life, and God's loving-kindness as better than life (Ps. xxx. 5; lxiii. 3; cf. homiletics on ch. vi. 1—13). 2. *The utterance of a fainting spirit.* "I will leave my complaint upon myself" (ver. 1); *i.e.* I will give it free scope, yield myself up to it, and permit it to take full possession of me. Job's complaint was that God was treating him as guilty while he was inwardly conscious of being innocent. Had this been really so, Job would have had reason on his side. But as yet the Divine antagonism to which he alluded was only an inference from his great sufferings. Hence the attitude assumed by Job was indefensible. Much more was it inexcusable to give way to a spirit of railing against God. If angry feelings rose within him, it was his paramount duty to repress them. The absence of gospel light, however, may serve in part to extenuate Job's offence. The Divine philosophy of affliction, as expounded by Christianity, was not understood by him. If, then, fainting under tribulation was wrong in the old Arabian patriarch, much more is it indefensible in a New Testament believer. 3. *The resolve of an embittered soul.* "I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (ver. 1). Job was at this time intensely miserable. Life was a burden. God was (or seemed to be) against him. His own spirit was stung with a keen sense of injustice. The result was that wild indignation against the Almighty was beginning to steal like a poison through his veins. His soul was fast getting set on fire of hell. In circumstances such as these, it was extremely unwise in Job to resolve to speak. Safety would have been better secured by silence. The only favourable feature in the case was that Job meant not to fling abroad his impassioned outcries on the wild winds, but to breathe them into the ear of God. If a saint or sinner should feel aggrieved with God, it is infinitely wiser to go direct with his complaint to God himself than to either brood over it in secret or tell it to the world.

II. PLEADING BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD. 1. *Deprecating condemnation.* "I will say unto God, Do not condemn me [literally, 'do not fasten guilt upon me']" (ver. 2). The words may be regarded either as the cry of a saint who is conscious of his own inward moral and spiritual integrity, but who, through bodily affliction or Satanic temptation, or both combined, has become suddenly apprehensive of having forfeited or lost the Divine favour; or as the prayer of a sinful soul awakened for the first time to a conviction of its guiltiness before God, which, in an agony of fear, it implores God not to fasten on it, but to cancel and forgive. In the first of these two senses it was used by Job, and by saints similarly situated it may still be employed. No greater consternation can seize upon the mind of a child of God than that produced by the fear that God intends to condemn him. But such a fear is groundless. Whom God

justifies, them he also glorifies (Rom. viii. 30). "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29). There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. viii. 1). God may sometimes hide his face from a saint (Isa. liv. 8), but he never finally turns his back upon him (Heb. xiii. 5). In the second sense it is a prayer appropriate to all awakened sinners. And, thanks to Divine mercy, God never fastens guilt upon a soul that fastens it upon itself, never condemns those who sincerely condemn themselves (Isa. i. 16; xliii. 25; 1 John i. 9). 2. *Desiring illumination.* "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." God contends with men when in his providence he afflicts, and by his Spirit convicts, them. He contends with sinners on account of their unbelief (John xvi. 8, 9) and wickedness generally; he may contend with his people on account of their backsliding (Micah vi. 2; Rev. ii. 4, 5), their formality (Rev. iii. 1), their spiritual indifference (Rev. iii. 15, 16), or simply to advance their individual improvement (Gen. xxxii. 24). Yet when God does so contend with a saint the reason is not always patent (ch. xxxvii. 21). Hence the prayer to be divinely instructed as to the grounds of God's controversy with the soul is not only not sinful, but highly proper and advantageous. Only it should be presented with reverence, with humility, with docility.

III. APPEALING TO THE HEART OF GOD. Job remonstrates with God against the treatment accorded to him on two main grounds. 1. *It is derogatory to the Divine character.* "Is it good unto thee [literally, 'is it becoming'] that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked?" (ver. 3). Three considerations, according to Job, ought to have prevented God from inflicting upon him such tremendous calamities. (1) His personal greatness. It was not becoming in a Being so transcendently glorious and powerful as he was to be guilty of oppression. (2) His personal interest. What proprietor ever destroyed his own property? What potter ever dashed to the ground the exquisite vessel which his hands had just fashioned? But Job was God's handiwork, and yet God despised him, and treated him as of no value! (3) His personal integrity. If God was a Being of absolute holiness and incorruptible justice, then it was clearly impossible that he could shine upon the counsel of the wicked, or favour bad men. But this, as it appeared to Job, was what God was doing in afflicting him. The threefold argument was good if Job's premiss was correct. But Job's description of the Divine conduct towards him was in all its particulars fallacious. The Almighty never oppresses any of his creatures, least of all man. The Creator never despises anything he has made, least of all his own children. The Governor of the universe cannot wrong the just, least of all can he favour the ungodly. Job's argument therefore should have led him to seek another solution for the dark problem that perplexed him. It could not be that God was treating him as above depicted: God's character forbade that. Neither could it be that he, Job, was guilty: the testimony of his own conscience protested against that. (It is not certain that a Christian would have been as tenacious of his own personal innocence as Job was.) Might it not, therefore, be that Job was putting a wrong construction on his sufferings? 2. *It is inconsistent with the Divine perfections.* (1) With his omniscience. "Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth?" (ver. 4). If God were like man, a being of limited capacity in respect of knowledge, if he could only judge by appearance, then he might be acting in the present instance under a mistaken idea of the patriarch's guilt. But against that rose the transcendent objection that God's eyes were not "eyes of flesh" at all, but eyes "like a flame of fire" (Rev. i. 14), from which no thought can be withholden (ch. xlii. 2), and which seeth every precious thing (ch. xxviii. 10). (2) With his eternity. "Are thy days as the days of man? are thy years as man's days, that thou inquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin?" (vers. 5, 6). Job professes he could have understood the Almighty's hot pursuit of him had the Almighty been a short-lived being like himself, and afraid that his creature might die before he had it out with him. But, then, God was not like man. There was no fear of God dying. Hence Job could not see the need for such a hasty and terrible inquisition as he had been subjected to. If to find out his sin was God's object, why all this hurry? had not God an eternity to do it in? (3) With his justice. "Thou knowest [rather, 'although thou knowest'] that I am not guilty; and there is none that [rather, 'and although none'] can deliver out of thy hand" (ver. 7). The Divine conduct would have been

perfectly intelligible to Job on the hypothesis that God, like some petty tyrant, had resorted to the thumbscrews of affliction to extort confession from a prisoner whom he knew to be innocent, simply because he had the power so to do. But such a supposition was, of course, untenable. Therefore Job felt hemmed in on every side by inextricable difficulty, and was obliged to cry, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me."

LESSONS. 1. The best thing for burdened souls to do is to cast themselves and their burdens into God's lap; not angrily, but humbly; not complainingly, but confidingly. 2. There is a wide difference between God's contending with his people, and God's condemning them; this he never, that he often, does. 3. When God's character and God's conduct appear in conflict, it becomes us to question our interpretations of the latter rather than renounce our trust in the former.

Vers. 8—17.—*Job to God: the progress of the third controversy: 2. An inexplicable contradiction.* I. GOD'S FORMER LOVING CARE. 1. *Minutely detailed.* (1) In Job's creation. This is first stated generally, the patriarch describing himself as having been made directly, by God's hand: "Thine hands have made me and fashioned me;" perhaps in allusion to Gen. i. 26 (cf. Deut. iv. 32; ch. xii. 10; xxxiv. 19; Ps. xxxiii. 15; Isa. xlv. 12); completely, in all his parts: "together ['literally, 'all of me'] round about" (cf. Ps. cxxxix. 15, 16; Exod. iv. 11; ch. xxvii. 3; Ps. xciv. 9); carefully, with exquisite skill: "Thou hast made me as the clay,"—possibly an echo of Gen. ii. 7, though most probably the image is that of a potter moulding an exquisite vessel. And certainly man is God's noblest handiwork, whether we have regard to his physical structure or to his mental and moral organization, and much more if we include both in our contemplation (cf. 'Hamlet,' act ii. sc. 2). The process of man's formation is then sketched in four particulars, showing a remarkable acquaintance with the physiological phenomena connected with this mysterious subject: the generation of the child; the production of the embryo; the gradual development of the fœtus; and the actual birth of the child (vers. 10—12); for further information on which points the Exposition may be consulted. (2) In Job's preservation. "Thy visitation [literally, 'thy providence'] hath preserved my spirit" (ver. 12). Man's continued existence on earth is as much a miracle of Divine power as his first introduction into life. Only Divine care constantly exercised could keep a delicate organism like the human body, and much more a complicated instrument like the human mind, from falling into disrepair, and eventually into dissolution. Man, too, has so many wants, that unless Divine goodness waited on him daily, he would speedily succumb beneath the stroke of death. Hence Scripture assigns our sustenance no less than our formation to God (Deut. viii. 3; Ps. xxxvi. 6; Acts xvii. 28). 2. *Skilfully employed.* As Job recalls the time when he was thus an object of God's paternal solicitude, he cannot help lingering over the sweet memories with which it floods his soul. Setting up, too, these tender reminiscences against the dark background of his present sorrow, he feels melted and softened. The thought of that Divine love which had fashioned him and favoured him enkindles in his soul a strange yearning for its return, which makes him try, as it were, by recalling old times to God, to excite a touch of pity in the Divine heart. "Thine hands have made me; and yet thou destroyest me!" "Thou hast made me as clay; and yet thou reducest me to dust again!" There are few arguments that touch the heart of God so powerfully as the remembrance of former mercies. "Put me in remembrance," says God (Isa. xliii. 26). "Forget not all his benefits," says David (Ps. ciii. 2; cf. xlii. 6; lxxvii. 10; cxliii. 5).

II. GOD'S PRESENT CRUEL TREATMENT. 1. *The Divine plot.* "And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee" (ver. 13). Job conceived that his terrible afflictions were the outcome of a dark and deep design which God had formed concerning him before he was born; that, in fact, God had summoned him into existence precisely in order to persecute him in the way about to be described. That God worketh all things on earth according to the counsel of his will, that every event in history, as well as every incident in individual experience, has its place in an eternally existing and universe-embracing plan, is a truth of natural religion no less than of Divine revelation (Acts xv. 18; Eph. i. 11). But that God created any soul expressly for the purpose of rendering it miserable, either in time or eternity, is a simple perversion of truth, inconsistent alike with man's fundamental notions of the

Deity and Scripture's explicit teachings as to the import of predestination. God never plots against either saint or sinner; but he never fails to plan for both—in which there should be comfort for the one (Rom. viii. 28), and a caution for the other (Prov. xv. 3, 11; Ps. xxxiii. 15). 2. *The fourfold net.* Job unfolds the nature of that plot which he conceives God to have devised against him. (1) On the supposition of his sinning. God had determined to mark it against him: "If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity" (ver. 14). The hypothesis was natural, since "there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not" (Ps. xiv. 3; 1 Kings viii. 46; Rom. iii. 12). The inference was also correct in the sense that God observeth all men's sins (Ps. xxxiii. 13—15; lxix. 5; Prov. xv. 3; Heb. iv. 13), and can by no means acquit the guilty (Nah. i. 3; Exod. xx. 5; Rom. vi. 23); but as insinuating that God lay in wait to catch men in transgression, or that he was swift to note and punish sin, it was decidedly incorrect (Ps. cxxx. 3; Neh. ix. 17; Exod. xxxiv. 6; Ps. lxxviii. 38). It is God's highest glory that, though he sees, he is now able not to mark, iniquity; that he can both remit the trespass and acquit the sinner in consequence of Christ's propitiation (Rom. iii. 25, 26). (2) On the assumption of his perpetrating heinous wickedness, then his punishment would simply be unspeakable: "If I be wicked, woe unto me!" It is still true that obstinate and impenitent transgressors will not escape the just judgment of Almighty God (Isa. iii. 11; xlv. 9; Prov. xi. 21; ch. xxxi. 3; Matt. xxi. 41; xxiv. 51; Rom. i. 18; ii. 8), but it is likewise a blessed truth that the most notorious offender may be forgiven (Isa. i. 18; Jer. xxxiii. 8; 1 John i. 7, 9; 1 Tim. i. 15). (3) If he should prove to be forensically guiltless, he must still demean himself as if he were a criminal: "If I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head." Job's language here suggests two important truths—that no man, however conscious of innocence, can really lift up his head before God as if he were spotless; and that even those who can lift up their heads, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, have no room for self-exaltation (Rom. iii. 27). (4) Should he venture to indulge in such a feeling, then God would redouble his attempts to abase him; hunting him like a wild beast,—"Thou huntest [literally, 'wouldst hunt'] me as a fierce lion: and again thou showest thyself marvellous upon me [or, 'thou wouldst repeat thy miracles upon me']"—prosecuting him like a culprit,—"Thou renewest thy witnesses against me;" besieging him like a fortress,—"Thou increasest [or, 'wouldst increase'] thine indignation against me, with host succeeding host against me." The imagery may set forth the intensity and variety of Job's sufferings; but it is likewise fitted to suggest the vehement, relentless, and unceasing opposition which God offers to all attempts on man's part to vindicate his own righteousness. It is God's paramount aim, in providence and grace, to reduce man to a position of self-abasement and self-condemnation; and for this end he employs all the supernatural power of his Word and Spirit, all the evidence and testimony of the sinner's own heart and life, all the vicissitudes and trials of his ordinary providence. God's object in doing so is that he may be able to lift up the sinner's head.

Learn: 1. That if God uses rigour towards man, he doth it not of any cruelty, since man is God's handiwork. 2. That man, being God's handiwork, should never cease to praise his Maker. 3. That man's lowly origin should both keep him humble and remind him of his latter end. 4. That God's power and grace should be recognized in man's preservation as much as in man's formation. 5. That "all things are naked and manifest to the eyes of him with whom we have to do." 6. That God, if swift to note, is still swifter to forgive, iniquity. 7. That the royal road to Heaven's favour and forgiveness is through humility and self-abasement. 8. That the end of all Divine discipline on earth is to humble man in preparation for eternal exaltation.

Vers. 18—22.—*Job to God: the progress of the third controversy:* 3. *An old complaint renewed.* I. A GREAT MERCY DESPISED. Life. "Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb?" (ver. 18). Job here announces an important truth, that the extraction of an infant from the womb is practically God's work (Ps. xxii. 9; lxxi. 6), but likewise commits a sin in regarding as an evil fortune what, rightly pondered, should have been esteemed a valuable blessing. Life, as God bestows it, is a precious gift; though frequently, as man makes it, it proves a dreadful

curse. Job's ingratitude was all the more reprehensible that in his case life had been crowned with mercies—with great material wealth, with true domestic enjoyment, with immense social influence, with rich spiritual grace, with palpable Divine favour.

II. A SINFUL REGRET INDULGED. That he had not been carried from the womb to the grave. "Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me!" (ver. 18). Job's regret was: 1. *Sinful;* inasmuch as it undervalued a Divine gift. 2. *Unnatural*, since it contradicted the instinct of love of life which the Creator has implanted in all his creatures. 3. *Foolish;* for though Job might have thereby escaped bodily pain, he would also have missed much happiness and many opportunities of glorifying God by doing good and enduring affliction. 4. *Mistaken;* as, though Job had been carried from the womb to the grave, his expectation, "I should have been as though I had not been," would not have proved correct. The child who opens its eyes on earth simply to shut them again does not return to the wide womb of nothingness when its tiny form is deposited in the dust. The fact of its being born into Adam's race constitutes it an immortal. The doctrine of annihilation, if not absolutely unphilosophical, is certainly unnatural and unscriptural.

III. A PASSIONATE ENTREATY OFFERED. For a brief respite in the midst of his sufferings. "Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little." 1. *The prayer.* "Let me alone." Job craved a momentary alleviation in his troubles. Few sufferers are without such interludes of ease. God mercifully mitigates human sorrow by granting brief periods of relief; otherwise men would be crushed, and the end of affliction defeated. 2. *The purpose.* "That I may be cheerful a little." Job could not brighten up while tormented by incessant pain and haunted by continual fear (ch. ix. 27). Only the lifting of God's hand would remove the load from his heart and the cloud from his brow. And this he felt was desirable before he went to the under world. Most men will sympathize with Job in desiring a brief period of freedom from pain before passing into the eternal world, to enable them to calm their spirits, to collect their thoughts, to prepare their souls for the last conflict and the great hereafter. 3. *The plea.* "Are not my days few?" Job thought himself upon the brink of the grave. In this, however, he was mistaken. Most men deem themselves further from the unseen world than they really are (1 Sam. xx. 3), but occasionally sufferers judge themselves nearer the close of life than they eventually prove to be. If the first is a sin of presumption, the second is an error caused by feeble faith. If the first is peculiar to youth and health, the second is not infrequent to suffering and age.

IV. A DISMAL FUTURE DEPICTED. Hades. The melancholy region, into which Job anticipated almost instantaneous departure, was not the grave, which was, properly speaking, only the receptacle of the dead body; but Sheol, the abode of departed spirits. As conceived by Job and other Old Testament saints, this was not a place where the disembodied spirit either found annihilation or sank into unconsciousness, but a realm in which the spirit, existing apart from the body, retained its self-consciousness. Yet the gloom which overhung this silent and impenetrable land was such as to render it unattractive in the extreme. It was a land of: 1. *Perpetual exile.* "Before I go *whence* I shall not return" (ver. 21); "the undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller returns" ('Hamlet,' act iii. sc. 1). 2. *Thick darkness.* "A land of darkness, as darkness itself" (ver. 22). Four different terms are employed to depict the gloom of this dismal world; the first (used in Gen. i. 2) probably depicting a condition of things upon which light has not yet arisen; the second representing this lightless region as death's shade, *i.e.* the veil which death draws around the eyes of men; the third setting forth this darkness as that which covers up or encircles all things; and the fourth pointing to the complete shutting off of light, the deepest and thickest gloom. This horrible picture the poet finishes by adding, "and the light is as the thick darkness," meaning that in that doleful region the daylight or the noontide is like the midnight gloom of earth: "not light, but darkness visible" (Milton, 'Paradise Lost,' bk. i.). 3. *Complete disorder.* A land "without any order" (ver. 22); meaning either without form or outline, every object being so wrapt in gloom that it appears devoid of shape, or without regular succession, as of day and night; a realm without light, without beauty, without form, without order; a dark subterranean chaos filled with pale ghosts, waiting in comparative inactivity during that "night in which no man can work," for the

dawning of the resurrection morn. Contrast with all this the Christian Paradise, where the spirits of just men made perfect are now for ever with the Lord; not a land of exile from which one shall no more return, but a better country, even an heavenly, from which one shall go no more out (Rev. iii. 12); not a region of darkness, but a bright realm of light (Rev. xxi. 23); not a chaos of confusion, but a glorious cosmos of life, order, and beauty (Rev. xxi. 1).

Learn: 1. The danger of unsanctified affliction. 2. The power of Satan over the human heart. 3. The short-sightedness of sense and reason. 4. The propriety of ever being ready for our departure into the unseen world. 5. The value of the gospel, which has brought life and immortality to light. 6. The advantage possessed by those who live under the gospel dispensation. 7. The greater responsibility of those who enjoy greater light than Job did.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—22.—*Appeal to the justice, knowledge, and goodness of God.* In his extremity of maddening pain and in his contempt of life, Job resolves to give full way once more to words (ver. 1). And as they pour forth in full flood from the bottom of his heart, we perceive that he has in reality truer and juster thoughts about God than those expressed in the preceding chapter. He proceeds to appeal one by one to the highest perfection which can be associated with the Divine Name.

I. APPEAL TO THE GOODNESS AND GREATNESS OF GOD. (Vers. 2—7.) 1. *To his reasonableness and justice.* (Ver. 2.) "Condemn me not unheard, without cause assigned; make clear to my mind, which cannot deny its convictions, my guilt and its nature." Taking the analogy of our Lord's reasoning in the sermon on the mount, if to condemn a man without cause is felt to be an odious injustice—if it is a cardinal point in a just earthly constitution (*e.g.* as expressed in our Habeas Corpus Act) that no man be seized and kept in prison without speedy opportunity of being confronted with his accusers—how can we ascribe such conduct to him who sits on the eternal throne? 2. *To his equity.* (Ver. 3.) Can it be right that God should, on the one hand, cast down the weak and innocent, and, on the other, exalt and favour the unprincipled and the wicked? This would not be to hold even the scales, the eternal emblem of justice. The true solution to the question is given by Christ. God is good to all alike. The great gifts of nature—sunshine and rain—are common to good and evil, just and unjust. And as to spiritual blessings, which are of their nature conditional on human will and seeking, God is as good to all as their own state and disposition will suffer him to be. Are, then, the sufferings of the good contrary to his justice? Not so; but they come under that higher law which Job and his friends have yet to learn, that suffering is one of the forms and manifestations of Divine goodness in the education of human beings. 3. *Appeal to his omniscience.* (Ver. 4.) God sees all things, from all beginnings, to all ends. He is not a short-sighted tyrant who is tempted to force by torture a confession of guilt from an unhappy prisoner against whom he has only a suspicion but no evidence. God *knows* that Job is innocent. But this fact should put an end to his murmurs, could he be wholly true to his higher faith in God. The right which God knows he will in the end declare, and will be seen to have throughout defended and protected. 4. *Appeal to his eternal duration.* (Vers. 5, 6.) The calm and ever-abiding existence of God must surely free him from those temptations to which short-lived man is subject. Hurry, impatience, haste, impetuosity, are characteristics of humanity, because men know they have much to do, and but a short time in which to do it. Therefore the tyrant will snatch quickly at revenge for any affront or injury he may have suffered. But who can escape the power and the penalties of the Eternal? Once more: God *knows* he is innocent (ver. 7)!

II. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE CREATOR AND THE CREATURE. (Vers. 8—17.) 1. *Comparison of the Creator and the creature to the potter and his work.* (Ver. 8.) The potter's artistic work is a work on which care, thought, elaboration, have been spent; it is a "thing of beauty," and he designs it to be a "joy for ever." He will not wantonly destroy it, will not bear to see it so destroyed. Can we believe otherwise of God and his work? A most true and telling analogy, and on which may be founded an argu-

ment for the immortality of the soul. Had that idea come within the horizon of Job's vision, his analogy would have afforded him profound comfort. 2. *Contrast between the careful production and preservation, and the seeming reckless destruction of the creature.* (Vers. 10—17.) On the one hand we see (vers. 10, 11) the marvellous production and development of the bodily life from the embryo to the distinct and fully developed form, arranged with all the apparatus and mechanism of nutrition and of movement. What dazzling evidences of the thought which God has lavished upon his chief work do all the discoveries of physiology unfold! We may read side by side with this passage Ps. cxxxix., and Addison's noble hymn, "When all thy mercies, O my God." Then there is the endowment of this marvellous framework with the great gift of life, and manifold rich enjoyments, and its preservation through all the dangers of youth to the present moment (ver. 12). But how dread the other side of the contrast! Behind this elaborate design there was concealed from the first, as it seems to Job's gloomy reflection, a deliberate purpose of destruction—the reckless annihilation of this splendid work of Divine art (ver. 13). Rather, if we do but rectify these perverted reasonings of a morbid and distressed mood, what noble and irresistible arguments do we derive from experience and from the science of our physical life for God's eternal interest in that which is here contained in it—the soul which partakes of him, and cannot perish! Then follows a terrible picture of the relation in which the patriarch, in his misery, supposes himself to stand to God. He is in a "tetralemma," or net, from which he can see no escape. (1) If he commits the smallest error (ver. 14), those all-searching eyes follow him with their ceaseless watch, and will exact the penalty of every fault. (2) If he should commit iniquity (ver. 5)—that he has done so, however, before these sufferings, he must most solemnly deny—then he will be justly chastened. (3) But even if he were in the right, he must appear as a guilty one; cannot dare, freely and proudly, to raise his head—because full of ignominy, and with his own eyes beholding his humiliation (ver. 15). (4) And should this innocent and insulted head, unable longer to endure the ignominy, rise in freedom and in pride—as Job is now doing, in fact, by the tone of his speech—then God, wroth with his resistance, will send afresh the severest sufferings upon him; will hunt him like a lion; will reveal himself in fresh marvels of woe and judgment (ver. 16); will produce fresh witnesses, in the shape of new pains, as accusers against him. Like hosts pouring one after another against one beleaguered city, so will these troubles thickly come on (ver. 17).

III. RENEWED BURST OF DESPONDENCY, IMPRECATIONS ON LIFE, CRAVING FOR REST. (Vers. 18—22.) Once more he wishes that he had never been (vers. 18, 19, repeated from ch. iii. 11, etc.). Once more he urges his strong petition that he may enjoy one brief respite during these few short days that remain, free from the unceasing torment (ver. 20), before he sinks for ever into the lower world.

IV. PICTURE OF HADES, OR THE LOWER WORLD. 1. It is the "land of darkness and of gloom, like to midnight" (vers. 21, 22). 2. Therefore it is the land of disorder and of confusion, where none who is accustomed to light and order can feel himself at home. 3. Though there be even there a slight change of day and night, yet even if it be bright there, it is as gloomy as midnight upon earth. We may compare those impressive pictures of the lower world and the state of the departed which we find in the 'Odyssey' (xi.)—

> "Never the sun, that giveth light to man,
> Looks down upon them with his golden eye,
> Or when he climbs the starry arch, or when
> Slope toward the earth, he wheels adown the sky;
> But sad night weighs upon them wearily."

"In bondage through fear of death." The knowledge of another and a better life—denied to Job—is evidently the one thing needed to satisfy an honest mind, cast down in extreme suffering, overwhelmed in mystery, yet unable to renounce its faith in the justice and goodness of God. Christianity, by bringing life and immortality to light, spreads a great radiance over the world. It is the firm grasp of this Divine idea which enables man to support suffering with calmness and patience. Let this idea be taken away, and—as we see from the painful tone of those in our day who seriously put the question, "*Is life worth living?*"—even ordinary suffering may be resented as intolerable.

LESSONS. 1. Confidence founded on our relation to God as a "faithful Creator." He cannot desert the work of his own hands. 2. His goodness in the past is an argument for trust for the time to come. 3. Insoluble perplexities are due to our own ignorance of the complete conditions of life. God is the most misunderstood of beings. 4. Every revelation is to be eagerly received, every habit of mind encouraged, which induces us to look on life as a good, death as a gain, and the scene beyond as one of eternal brightness for all faithful souls.—J.

Vers. 1—7.—*The supplicatory cry of deep sorrow.* This is the cry of one who declares, "My soul is weary of my life." He opens his lips that the stream of his "complaint" may flow forth unchecked. Yet is he humble and subdued, though he adopts almost the tone of expostulation. He has confessed himself to be unequal to the contention. He cannot give answer to God; he has acknowledged his guilt and impotence. Now he would know "wherefore" God contends with him. This is the desire of even the most resigned sufferer. Certainly the cry which comes oft from the lips of the deeply afflicted is, "Why am I thus made to suffer?" If Christian principle and calm faith keep back the demand, "Show me wherefore," yet it is heard in the undertones of amazement and surprise at the unexplained and even severe dealings of a loving God—"Ah, it is mysterious!" The confession of the mysteriousness of human suffering is a suppressed cry for the mystery to be cleared up. Job's cry takes the form of—

I. A DESIRE TO BE FREED FROM CONDEMNATION. "I will say unto God, Do not condemn me." This the first desire of the resigned sufferer. Let it not be as a punishment for my transgression. "Condemn me not" is another form of urging, "Pardon my offence which I confess." It is a prayer for forgiveness. Up to this, the previous confession of unworthiness and even of sin has properly led. It is the first rest of the soul. While the unconfessed condemnations of guilt are upon it there can be no peace. Happy he who in the depth of his suffering makes his confession; happier still he who hears the word of gracious forgiveness. This is followed by—

II. THE UNSUPPRESSED LONGING TO KNOW THE REASON FOR THE DIVINE AFFLICTIONS. "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." How natural to desire this! But the Divine ways are "past finding out." "He giveth none account of his ways." Certainly to Job came no sufficient answer. It remained for later days to learn, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." To all Job's suggestions a negative reply may be given. 1. It is not "good" (*i.e.* pleasing) to God "to oppress," to (appear to) "despise" his creatures; or, as it would seem, "to shine upon the counsel of the wicked." 2. He has not "eyes of flesh." He does not see "as man seeth"—looking only on the outward appearance, and judging by that alone. God looketh on the heart, and estimates the human act by the motive which impels it. He makes allowance for human frailty more than even frail, erring man makes for his own brother. He is just in his view, and not warped as is the judgment of feeble flesh. 3. His days are not "as the days of man." His are the days of eternity. He can wait until the future for a justification of Job's conduct. He has not to make haste to bring about a crisis in Job's history. He needs not to hurry to put Job to the proof. Our reflections on the Divine dealings may be justly corrected by duly pondering this history. In our assured integrity we may wait. In our conscious sinfulness we are safest in the Lord's hands; from which, indeed, we cannot escape. "There is none that can deliver out of thine hand."—R. G.

Vers. 8—12.—*Man the creature of God.* Job now seeks consolation in other courses of reflection, although arising out of the foregoing. He would fain draw what comfort he can from the knowledge of the fact that he is the creature of God. "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me together round about." Thy skill and patience, thy thought and attention, have been bestowed on me. Wilt thou forsake the work of thine hands? Is it solely for this time of trouble thou hast brought me forth? A calm meditation on the truth, "I am the creature of God, created by the Divine hands, the product of his activity," is calculated to bring consolation, for—

I. IT IS A PLEDGE OF BLESSING. Even erring man is thoughtful of his own work. God's work is perfect. But it is so because he momentarily guards it. He carries forward all the processes which we moderns call "laws of nature." Job saw the "hand"

of God in all the changes of the earth and heavens and of human life. Therefore to know I am a creature of God is to know my life is in his hands. I serve his purpose. He is Lord of all. Every act of his hand is pure blessing. He can do no evil. My creatureship is a sufficient pledge to me of certain blessing He worketh for the good of all the creatures of his hands—sheep and oxen, birds of air and fish of sea. So his work in my life is the truest warrant of good to me.

II. IT IS A SOURCE OF COMFORT. No one can calmly reflect on the fact of his creatureship without finding cause for comfort. Each may leave himself in the hands of his Owner. It is the basis of the truest consolation. "I am thine" must warrant the prayer, "Save me." The human life may be left in the Divine hands. The poor, frail, helpless one may commit himself unto God. There is rich comfort in the knowledge of the fact that the Lord of the whole earth is my Creator. That he should "destroy," or appear to destroy, the poor sufferer is at once acknowledged to be matter of surprise. Under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty Creator every creature may find refuge.

III. IT IS AN ASSURANCE OF DIVINE CARE. "Wilt thou then bring me into dust again?" This is the inevitable thought in the heart of him who recognizes himself as the creature of God—who says, "Thou hast made me as the clay." It is the instinct of frail man to care for his own. How much more is it the Divine method! Already Job has declared his faith when saying, "Dost thou despise the work of thine own hands?" Thou hast raised me from the dust; wilt thou bring me into dust again? Wilt thou frustrate thine own purpose? Thus Job reasons, and wisely. It is the assurance of calm wisdom, the faith which has firm foundation. He who has brought me into life, will care for me, will sustain me, will defend me.

IV. SUCH AN ASSURANCE IS A SUFFICIENT GROUND OF CONFIDENT AND CALM REPOSE. Restful is the spirit of faith; and the more simple faith is in its reasonings, the more assured is its peace. Consciousness of sin would lead to distress of mind and to fear when it is remembered, "Thine hands have fashioned me;" but to the heart assured of its integrity, this truth is the ground of calm repose. Prayer may be based upon this. Faith here may find its support; love, its inspiration.—R. G.

Vers. 13—17.—*The hidden purposes of affliction.* Job has reasoned much, and he has asked for an explanation of the Divine purpose. "Wherefore contendest thou with me?" Doubtless he judges, as do his friends, that suffering is the natural consequence and certain punishment of wrong-doing. But he is conscientious in affirming his innocence of transgression, and the Divine testimony to his goodness agrees with this (ch. ii. 3). What, then, is the explanation of the whole? Can we ever hope to know in this world what are the deep purposes of God in the afflictions of which the human life is capable, and especially in the sufferings of the godly? No. The purposes, though partially revealed, are still to a great extent "hidden"—hidden in the "heart" of God. Job feels himself hedged in. He is "full of confusion." We must remember Job had not the clear light in which we view the Divine work. Yet even from us his ways are hidden. We must say, "Clouds and darkness are round about him."

I. WE MUST SEE IT TO BE PERFECTLY NATURAL THAT THE DIVINE WAYS SHOULD BE HIDDEN FROM MEN. How should man be able to trace the Divine purpose? It is high; he cannot attain unto it. Hidden in the Divine mind—not always revealed by the incidents of affliction. "These things hast thou hid in thine heart."

II. THE HIDING OF THE DIVINE PURPOSES IS A SALUTARY TEST TO FAITH. Faith in God needful in order to a right relation of the human soul towards God. It is the basis of peace; encouragement to obedience; ground of holy fear; help to holy love. But the testing of faith leads to a more spiritual dependence upon God, to a more frequent reference of the heart to him. Walking by faith honours God. Faith needed by the very conditions of human life. Its exercise promotes its growth.

III. THE HIDING OF THE DIVINE PURPOSE IS A GRACIOUS DESIGN ON THE PART OF GOD MORE EFFECTUALLY TO WORK OUT HIS WILL CONCERNING MAN. The rebellious, not knowing it, cannot frustrate it. Secretly the Divine will is wrought out in the experience and history of the sufferer. The entire dependence of the soul on God is encouraged. This must lead to submission, and submission in faith. The reliance of the soul must be on the character of God, and not on circumstances and incidents.

IV. THE HIDING OF THE DIVINE PURPOSES ISSUES IN THE PERFECTING OF THE SUPREME EXCELLENCE OF THE HUMAN CHARACTER—PATIENCE. Thus it has its "perfect work," and the soul is left "entire, lacking nothing." He who can patiently and trustfully wait upon God, bearing up under pressure of afflictive circumstances, gains a vigour and beauty of character. If patience be wanting, all other qualities of the character are impaired. Man's wisdom is to be satisfied with committing himself to the hidden purposes of God. In faith to confide in them as wise and good. In patience to await their exposition when it shall please God to reveal them to him.—R. G.

Ver. 1.—*Weariness of life.* We need not wonder that Job was weary of his life. Beggared, bereft of his family, smitten with a painful and loathsome disease, tormented by the cruel comfort of his friends, he could see nothing but misery around and before him. Few, if any, have been in his sore plight. Yet others have felt the same weariness of life that the patriarch so naturally experienced. Let us look at the sorrowful condition and its Divine remedy.

I. THE SORROWFUL CONDITION. 1. *The misery of it.* Life is naturally sweet. It is a most merciful arrangement of Providence that the hard lot which would seem to be unbearable when regarded from the outside has many alleviations and consolations for those to whose portion it has fallen. There are few lives on which no gleam of sunshine ever falls. But to be weary of life is to have lost all the sunshine, and to be in dark despair. Like "Mariana of the moated grange," the desolate one cries—

"I am aweary, aweary; O God that I were dead!"

2. *The dangers of it.* (1) It tempts to suicide, and that is sin. (2) It leads to the neglect of duty; for if a man has no hope or heart in life, it is difficult for him to take up its tasks. When life itself is no longer worth living, it is hard to summon any energy for work. (3) It blinds us to remedies. Like Hagar in her despair, we do not lift up our eyes to see the fountain. Despair justifies itself by blinding us to hope. 3. *The causes of it.* This weariness of life may spring from a terrible conjunction of external circumstances, as it did in part with Job. But internal causes usually co-operate. Sometimes the despair is a result of bodily or brain disease, and the sufferer must be pitied and treated accordingly. But it may come from brooding too much over the dark side of life, from distrust of God, from a consciousness of sin, or from impenitent and rebellious thoughts. *Ennui* is the product of indolence. Weariness of life is often a result of idle sentimentality.

II. THE DIVINE REMEDY. This evil is not incurable. For the despair is a delusion. No one would be weary of life if he knew all its future possibilities. If the despair is a result of brain disorder, the remedy is in medicine, not theology. Here is a border-land where the two faculties touch; therefore a man who practises either should not be a stranger to the other. Despair may give way to a change of scene and a bracing regimen without any arguments. But when the causes are deeper and more spiritual, a corresponding remedy must be looked for. This will not be found in any worldly philosophy of life. The wonder is not that some people are weary of life, but that all who are "without God in the world" are not also "without hope." Pessimism is the natural goal of the Epicurean. Life is not worth living without God. The great remedy for weariness of life is the discovery of the true worth of life when it is redeemed by Christ and consecrated to God. Then it is not dependent on pleasure for its motives, nor driven to despair by pain. It has a higher blessedness than any earthly possession can give, in doing God's will on earth with the prospect of enjoying him for ever in heaven. But even the unselfish service of our brother man will help to conquer weariness of life. If Mariana had been well occupied she might have overcome her misery. There is a healing grace in the discharge of duty, and more of it in losing ourselves while serving others.—W. F. A.

Ver. 4.—*God's vision of man.* How does God see us? Is he so far above us that he cannot quite see us as we are? Is he so great that he cannot conceive of our littleness? Are his ideas so different from our own that he cannot understand our life and sympathize with it? Or is not God so supreme in his vision of man that he cannot make the mistakes we make, and must see us truly just as we are? If so, why does

God seem to act as though he had man's limited vision? Questions of this sort seem to be perplexing Job. How can they be met?

I. GOD SEES US TRULY AS WE ARE. It is no attribute of infinity to be above seeing what is small. Because God is infinite he can descend to the infinitely little as well as comprehend the infinitely great. Moreover, he does not treat us as insignificant beings unworthy of his notice, but he regards us as his children. The very hairs of our head are numbered by God. His greatness is seen in the truth and thoroughness of his vision. He does not look through distorting media, nor does he only see one aspect of things, as is the case with us. He sees all round everything, and he looks through all things. There is no secret hidden from God. He understands what he sees, for his infinite vision is accompanied by an infinite comprehension.

II. GOD JUDGES US BY A HIGHER STANDARD THAN OURS. We are hampered by narrow ideas; our judgment is warped and cramped by prejudice and error. Our ignorance, folly, and sin even mar the very standards by which we judge. God's estimate is supremely fair, and it is after the very highest and purest ideas of judgment.

III. GOD'S STANDARD OF JUDGMENT IS NOT ALIEN TO OURS. We might be dismayed by the very elevation and perfection of God's method of judgment, thinking it totally different from our own. If this were the case conscience would be a delusion. But God is the Creator of conscience, and though this is limited, and in a measure perverted, still it retains the essential character given to it by God. "God made man in his own image" (Gen. i. 26). Therefore man's honest judgment must be a reflection of God's judgment. God sees as we see, so far as we see truly. His judgment is just the correction and perfection of our judgment.

IV. GOD HAS ENTERED INTO OUR LIFE THAT HE MAY SEE US WITH OUR OWN EYES. This seems to be part of the purpose of the Incarnation. Christ is a brother-Man. He looks at us with human eyes. One with us by nature, he can perfectly understand us. We cannot even understand our favourite dog when he turns to us his dumb, pathetic gaze, for he is of a different species. Christ became one with us, one of our species. Thus we can understand him, and he can perfectly sympathize with us. Apart from Christ, God seems to be distant and altogether different from ourselves. In Christ he is one with us, near to us, and able to regard us with the eyes of a Brother. —W. F. A.

Ver. 8.—*Creation and its consequences.* Job appeals to God as his Maker. He remonstrates with the Creator for apparently destroying his own work. If God had first made man, why should God turn on his creature to "swallow him up"? This is not so much an appeal to pity or justice, as one to reason and consistency.

I. GOD IS THE CREATOR OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL MAN. Theologians were once divided between two theories of the origin of human souls, called respectively "Creationist" and "Traducianist." The Creationists held that each soul was created by God; the Traducianists that souls were derived by descent, were transmitted by birth from ancestral souls, and originally from Adam and Eve, just like the bodies they inhabit. Was it not unfair to confine the name "Creationist" to the former school? The idea of descent from parents does not exclude Divine action. The parent is not the creator. The original great Cause must be the Source of all that follows. If God only created once for all at the beginning of the world, still he created each individual, because each individual simply comes from that original creation. If it could be shown that man was not separately created, but that he derived his origin from lower creatures by evolution, he would be not the less created by God; for how could the marvellous process of evolution originate or progress, unless the Almighty and All-wise had started it? Nay, it is only reasonable to believe that God is ever creating. Not once for all, but in every stage of evolution, the Divine hand is working out the eternal plan. So also each individual life is moulded by that same Creative hand. God is working eternally, for the laws of nature are but the ways of God. He was as truly the Creator of Job as of Adam; and he makes each man now by means of birth as really as he made the first life out of inorganic matter.

II. THE FACT THAT GOD IS THE CREATOR OF EVERY MAN MUST AFFECT HIS TREATMENT OF ALL HIS CREATURES. 1. *He cannot have predestined them to ruin.* To affirm that he could do so is to say that the Creator is not God, but the devil. A god

who was merely indifferent to his creatures would not from the first plan their destruction. If it is suggested that God might do this to display his own glory, the reply is that such an action could display no glory, but the reverse. To say that God may do as he will with his own is irrelevant. His absolute rights over his creatures do not exclude moral considerations. Further, the holy, righteous, and loving character of God makes it absolutely certain that he could not have planned their ruin. 2. *He can never consent that they should be ruined.* "He hateth nothing that he hath made." The very fact of creation gives God an interest in his creatures. The artist cannot be indifferent to the fate of his works. But God is more than an artist; he is a Father, and a father cannot be indifferent to the fate of his children. It may be necessary for the parent to chastise, but no true and worthy parent will ever really wish to hurt his offspring. Can we think that God is less strong in parental love than we are? It is necessary for God to be angry with the wicked—and there is a terror in God's anger which men can only despise at their peril—but behind that anger there can be no vindictive temper, much less can there be a spiteful malignity. God only desires the welfare of his children.—W. F. A.

Ver. 12.—*Life and favour from God.* I. GOD THE ORIGINAL SOURCE. Job appeals to his Creator, and recognizes the Divine Source of all he is and all he has. The prologue shows that Job had always been a devout man, not forgetful of God. But his frightful losses and troubles brought home to him the thought of his relations to God with a vividness never before experienced. Job is now face to face with God. Huge calamities have swept away all intermediate interests, and over the wreck of his wasted life he looks straight to God his Maker. Terrible hours of distress reveal the deeper facts of life, as the earthquake exposes the granite foundations of the hills. Tragedy destroys superficiality. Those who have been through the raging waters of trouble are best able to perceive the Divine Source of all things.

II. GOD'S PRIMAL GIFTS. 1. *Life.* (1) This can only come from God. The chemist may analyze the component elements of our bodily frame, but the subtle life-principle can never be caught in his crucible. The engineer may construct a most delicate machine, but he can never breathe life into it. God is the one Source of life. (2) This is essential to all else. Here we are at the first and most fundamental gift. Men may bury treasures with the dead, but the silent sleepers in the tomb can never touch one of the gifts that rust and moulder by their side. We must live if we are to own or use anything. We must have the spiritual life in order to enjoy the gospel blessings. 2. *Favour.* Life is itself a favour. It is never deserved; yet it is good to live. But with life God gives other favours. Even Job in his desolation did not forget this fact, as some seem to forget it when they murmur against Providence, and complain of the world as though everything were working for the misery of man. Greater than all earthly favour is the grace of Christ, the favour shown to fallen man in the redemption of the race by the sacrifice of God's Son.

III. GOD'S CONTINUED GOODNESS. Job acknowledges that his very breath is continued by God's care. God does not merely create once for all; he preserves his creatures. If he were to withdraw his hand for one moment, they would cease to be. That we are alive now is a sign that God is now good to us. Present existence is a proof of present providence. Therefore our thanksgivings should be fresh; not the withered flowers of yesterday, but the new blossoms of to-day, with the dew still upon them. Daily renewed mercies call for daily renewed praises. We have not to look far for God, searching the annals of antiquity, inquiring of the deeds of old-world history, or scraping together the geologic records of the rocks. God is with us in the new sunrise, in each day's life and blessing.

IV. GOD'S ASSURED CARE. It cannot be as Job supposes. His remonstrance is natural to him, but it is needless. If God has made and preserved us, it is impossible that he should be turned against us. His past and present favours are proofs of his unchanging love. Though he smites, he cannot hate. Though he withdraws his smiling countenance, he does not remove his supporting hand. Creation and preservation are prophecies of redemption and salvation.—W. F. A.

Ver. 13.—*The things that are hidden in God's heart.* Job is possessed by a fearful

thought. His tremendous troubles, and the cruel accusations of his friends, have driven him to the conclusion that God must have conceived the idea of thus tormenting him long before Joh knew anything of it; that God must have hidden the dreadful purpose in his heart; that all the while Job was complacently enjoying his prosperity, God was nursing the secret design of scattering it to the winds, and plunging his servant into the depths of misery.

I. GOD'S PURPOSES ARE HIDDEN FROM MAN. They are more hidden than Job supposed. He thought that the Divine plan had just appeared. But it was deeper than he imagined. Not only was it hidden in the sunny days of prosperity; it was also hidden in the dark and dreadful days of misery. Had Job known the Divine purpose, his suspicions would have been dissipated, and he would have seen how unjust his arraignment of Providence was. We cannot yet see the Divine thought. If it were revealed to us, the discipline of trial would be frustrated. Moreover, it is too deep and wide for us to grasp it. Therefore we *must* walk by faith (2 Cor. v. 7).

II. GOD APPEARS TO HIDE DARK DESIGNS. So Job thought, and so the events of his life seemed to show. As the curtain slowly lifted, dreadful things were discovered behind. God was always in the future, preparing it for its advent; yet when it came it appeared in thunder and ruin. Was God secretly planning all this misery in the quiet, old peaceful days when Job suspected no danger? The unrolling of many a life-story has seemed to tell the same tale of God's secret thoughts made manifest in calamity.

III. GOD REALLY HIDES PURPOSES OF LOVE IN HIS HEART. 1. *He must do so because he is love.* We cannot understand his plans, but we can understand his nature as far as it is revealed to us. Now the revelation of God is wholly of goodness. This includes wrath against sin, but no injustice, no harshness, no delight in inflicting misery. Therefore, though we do not see the Divine intention, we may be sure that it is gracious. 2. *He is seen to do so as far as his purposes are revealed.* (1) In Scripture. Ancient prophecy and the New Testament gospel concur in setting forth the Divine plan, and although this includes judgment and the punishment of sin, its main design is the redemption of man. (2) In experience. Some of God's purposes are ripened and fulfilled during our earthly life. These are seen to be good and gracious. It is only the unaccomplished purpose that wears a threatening aspect.

IV. THE HIDDEN PURPOSES OF GOD'S HEART WILL BE ULTIMATELY REVEALED. God does not delight in secrecy, much less does he designedly tantalize his creatures by perplexing them with needless mysteries and alarming them with bogus fears. What we know not now we shall know hereafter (John xiii. 7). The great apocalypse of futurity will answer many a dark riddle of providence in the light of eternal love. We have but to possess our souls in patience, and all will be clear. Job's life-problem was solved at last. When ours is made clear it will only enlarge our wondering gratitude for the depth of the love which God had hidden in his heart.—W. F. A.

Vers. 21, 22.—*The land of darkness.* I. DEATH APPEARS TO LEAD TO A LAND OF DARKNESS. 1. *We cannot see what lies beyond.* Science cannot penetrate this mystery of mysteries. At best she can but dimly surmise the existence of an "unseen universe." Philosophy may reason of the soul's immortality, but can throw no light into the tomb. The mind dashes itself in vain against the awful wall that separates it from the world beyond. One by one our most intimate friends leave us, and the dark doors open to receive them, but never a ray of light comes out, and "the rest is silence." 2. *We shrink by natural instinct from death.* Reason as we may, the grave is a horror to us. We people the land of the dead with terrors of the imagination. La Rochefoucauld says, "Neither the sun nor death can be looked at steadily."

"Death is a fearful thing.
. . To die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about

The pendent world, or to be worse than worst
Of those, that lawless and incertain thoughts
Imagine howling!—'tis too horrible!
The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death."

(Shakespeare.)

II. WHETHER DEATH WILL LEAD TO A LAND OF DARKNESS DEPENDS ON OUR USE OF LIFE. Nature, science, philosophy, all leave the future obscure. But God has lifted the veil in the gospel enough to give us guidance, warning, and consolation. We learn from the revelation of Christ that the unseen land need be no place of terror and darkness. What it will be depends on our present conduct. 1. *Death leads the impenitent sinner into a land of darkness.* For him the horrors of imagination cannot be too black. No one can conceive the chill desolation of the "outer darkness," the dread despair of seeing the "door shut" on a rejected soul. The darkness will consist in separation from God, from blessed companionship, from joy, from life—for the future existence of the lost is never called a future life. The dolorous words of Job are not too strong for the fate of lost souls. 2. *Death leads the people of God into a land of light.* The old-world gloom of the grave is dissipated by Christ, who has "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). Here we have a great advance from the Old Testament standpoint. The resurrection of Christ has thrown a flood of light into the regions beyond. It has shown us a "land of the leal," where the blessed dwell in light eternal. St. Paul could even desire to depart and be with Christ, counting it gain to die (Phil. i. 21—23). All who have turned from sin to Christ may despise the darkness of death, for this is but the portal to the home of eternal life.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XI.

Vers. 1—20.—Zophar, the Naamathite, the third of Job's comforters (ch. ii. 11), and probably the youngest of them, now at last takes the word, and delivers an angry and violent speech. He begins by accusing Job of having spoken at undue length, and at the same time, boastfully and mockingly (vers. 2—4). He then expresses a wish that God would take Job at his word, and really answer him, since he is sure that the result would be to show that Job had been punished much less than he deserved to be (vers. 5, 6). Job's complaints against the justice of God's dealings he meets by an assertion of God's unsearchableness and perfect wisdom, which he contrasts with the folly of man (vers. 7—12). Finally, he suggests that a stricken man, being guilty, should humble himself, put away his iniquity, and turn to God, in which case he may expect a restoration to favour. Otherwise, he has only to look for wretchedness, failure, and despair (vers. 13—20).

Ver. 1.—**Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said** (see the comment on ch. ii. 11).

Ver. 2.—**Should not the multitude of words be answered?** A "multitude of words" is often reproved in Scripture, and taken as a sign of either folly (Eccles. v. 3) or sin (Prov. x. 19). Job had certainly been somewhat unduly verbose, and laid himself open to the taunt here launched against him; but neither had brevity been studied by his other friends in their previous answers (ch. iv., v., and viii.), nor is it greatly studied by Zophar here. **And should a man full of talk be justified?** literally, *a man of lips*, which may mean either "a great talker" or "a man who makes many professions." There is a widespread prejudice against a great orator, and a widespread notion that a good cause does not need many words.

Ver. 3.—**Should thy lies make men hold their peace?** or, *thy boastings* (see the Revised Version; and comp. Isa. xvi. 5; Jer. xlviii. 30). Zophar probably refers to such passages as ch. ix. 20, 35; x. 7, 15, where Job might seem to have justified himself altogether. **And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?** It is not quite easy to see what in Job's speeches up to this point could be regarded as "mocking." But perhaps Zophar would have thus characterized the following passages: ch. vi. 13, 14, 25—27; vii. 12; ix. 22—24.

Ver. 4.—**For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure.** Job had certainly not said this in so many words. In fact, he had not spoken of his "doctrine" (לֶקַח), nor had he called either his doctrine or his conduct absolutely pure (זַךְ). But, no doubt, he had maintained, in a certain sense, his innocency; not, indeed, his entire freedom from sin or guilt, but his honest endeavour to serve God and lead a good life. This was the real point disputed between him and his "comforters;" they argued, from his sufferings, that he must be a "chief sinner;" he maintained, from the testimony of his conscience, that he was free from all heinous sins. **And I am clean in thine eyes** (see above, ch. ix. 30; x. 7).

Ver. 5.—**But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee!** "Oh that God would do," *i.e.* "what thou hast challenged him to do"—show thee wherein he contends with thee! (comp. ch. x. 2). Then how would thy reasonings be confuted, and thy boastings be brought low!

Ver. 6.—**And that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom!** In God are "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid away" (ἀπόκρυφοι, Col. ii. 3). Zophar wishes that he would reveal to Job this wisdom, or a portion of it, as, in that case, all his pride and self-confidence would be confounded and fall away. **That they are double to that which is!** This phrase is very obscure. Some translate, "For he (*i.e.* God) is twice as wise as thou;" others, "That it (*i.e.* wisdom) is manifold in effectual working;" others, again, "That they (*i.e.* the treasures of wisdom) are double (or manifold) in substance." Perhaps this last rendering is to be preferred. The treasures of wisdom that are hid away in God have many depths, secret and unexplored; they "lie, as it were, fold over fold, in unexpected complexities, defying the shallow and unscrutinizing gaze" (Professor Stanley Leathes). If they were revealed to Job, they would astonish, confound, silence, him. **Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.** "Be sure," *i.e.*, "that God, so far from inflicting on thee a more severe punishment than thou deservest, in reality excuses much of thy guilt, and punishes thee less than is thy due." This is Zophar's conclusion from his general knowledge of God's dealings with man (comp. Ezra ix. 13).

Ver. 7.—**Canst thou by searching find out God?** literally, *Canst thou attain to the searching out of God?* Canst thou suppose, that is, that, whatever thy wisdom, learning, subtlety, sagacity, power of insight, thou wilt be able to search out and fully know the character, attributes, modes of thought and action, of the Most High? No. In one sense, all men do well to profess themselves "Agnostics"—not that they can know nothing of God, but that they can never know him fully, never exhaust the knowledge of him. As the apostle says, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. xi. 33, 34). **Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?** rather, *Canst thou attain to the perfection of the Almighty?* understand, *i.e.*, his inconceivable perfectness.

Ver. 8.—**It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do?** literally, *heights of the heavens; what canst thou do?* But the meaning is probably that expressed in the Authorized Version. God's perfectness is unattainable by man's thought, as the heights of the heavens are by his feet. **Deeper than hell;** literally, *than Sheol*, or the receptacle of the dead (see the comment on ch. x. 21). St. Paul speaks of the "deep things," or rather, "the depths" (τὰ βάθη) of God (see 1 Cor. ii. 10). **What canst thou know?** How small a part of the Divine nature can any man thoroughly comprehend and know!

Ver. 9.—**The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.** Zophar's metaphors are drawn from the objects which, to his mind, exceed in extent all others. "The earth" and "the sea" represent to him the illimitable.

Ver. 10.—**If he cut off;** rather, *if he advance* (comp. ch. ix. 11). **And shut up;** or, *imprison.* **Or gather together;** rather, *and call to judgment* (see the Revised Version). If God, that is, advance against a man in hostile fashion, seize and imprison him, and then call him to judgment, what is to be said or done? who can interfere with him? Matters must take their course. There is no ground for complaint. It is simply God's mode of administering justice on the earth. **Who can hinder him?** literally, *who can turn him away?* i.e. interfere with his action, interrupt it, divert it.

Ver. 11.—**For he knoweth vain men.** God is justified in these his judgments, even though he does not implead the man or bring him to account, or hear what he has got to say (ch. ix. 39), since he intuitively and at once "knoweth vain men;" seeth, that is, into the ground of the heart, and recognizes vanity, pretence, false seeming, so that he can judge infallibly without the forensic apparatus wherewith human tribunals are rightly surrounded, on account of the weakness and fallibility of human judges. **He seeth wickedness also.** If God can detect in a moment vanity,

pretence, false seeming, much more can he detect actual wickedness; which Zophar assumes to have been detected in Job's case. **Will he not then consider it?** rather, *even though he consider it not* (see the Revised Version). God does not need to pause and ponder and "consider" each case. He knows, without any such lengthened consideration, whether a man is true to him or not.

Ver. 12.—**For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt;** rather, *and a vain man may get understanding, and the colt of a wild ass become a man* (compare the Revised Version, marginal rendering). Zophar seems to mean that, through Divine discipline, such as that described in ver. 10, a vain, foolish, puffed-up man may be reclaimed and become a man of understanding—a stubborn and untamed one, wild as the colt of a wild ass, grow into a real man, *i.e.* acquire sense and discretion. If this is the meaning, undoubtedly Job is glanced at (so Schultens, Dillmann, and Canon Cook).

Ver. 13.—**If thou prepare thine heart.** Having indicated God's righteousness by these general remarks (vers. 7—12), and implied that Job's complaints are vain and futile, Zophar, in conclusion, addresses Job once more directly: "If *thou* (אתה) prepare thine heart," cleanse it, that is, of all defilement, direct it, and set it straight (see Ps. lxxviii. 8) before God, then such and such results (set forth in vers. 15—19) will follow. **And stretch out thine hands toward him.** The outward act of worship must follow the inward movement of the heart, for the turning to God to be complete.

Ver. 14.—**If iniquity be in thine hand.** Zophar assumes this to be probable, nay, almost certain. He has already told Job that God has exacted from him less than his iniquity (און, the same word) deserves (ver. 6). Conformably with this view, he now suggests that it would not do for Job to stretch out to God in prayer a hand full of iniquity, and that therefore, previously to making his supplication, he would do well to lay his iniquity aside. In a general way, the advice is excellent; but it was insulting to Job, who denied that he had any definite act of sin on his conscience. **Put it far away;** *i.e.* repent of it, confess it to God; if the case admits of it, make reparation or restitution. **And let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles;** or, *in thy tents.* The insinuation seems to be that Job is a robber chief, and that his tent and the tents of his followers are full of ill-gotten spoils, the fruit of his raids upon the defenceless.

Ver. 15.—**For then;** rather, *surely then* (see the Revised Version). **Shalt thou lift up thy face without spot.** At present, Zophar implies, he could not do so. The stain of many sins was on him (vers. 6, 11, 14). **Yea, thou shalt be steadfast;** literally, *molten*—perhaps "pure as refined metal" (see Isa. i. 25), perhaps "bright as a metallic mass." **And shalt not fear.** "Shalt be freed," *i.e.*, "from all the fears that disturb thee now" (see ch. iii. 26; vi. 4; vii. 14; ix. 28, etc.).

Ver. 16.—**Because thou shalt forget thy misery.** All thy past misery shall be clean swept away from thy remembrance, because of the happy condition whereto thou shalt be raised (see vers. 18, 19). "Sorrow's memory" is not always "a sorrow still." **And remember it as waters that pass away;** *i.e.* remember it no more than a man remembers the shower that has passed away or the pool that is dried up.

Ver. 17.—**And thine age shall be clearer than the noonday;** literally, *shall arise above the noonday;* i.e. "exceed it in splendour." Instead of the "thick darkness" to which Job is looking forward (ch. x. 21, 22), he shall bask in a light brighter than that of the sun at noon. **Thou shalt shine forth.** The Hebrew cannot possibly bear this meaning. The uncommon word used is allied with עָשְׁקָה, "obscurity," and, if a verb, should mean "thou shalt be obscure," rather than "thou shalt shine forth." But it is perhaps a substantive, meaning "darkness;" and the translation of the Revised Version is perhaps correct: "Though there be darkness." **Thou shalt be as the morning.** "Thy light," as Professor Lee explains, "shall gradually rise and expand itself far and wide." It shall dispel the darkness, and take its place, "shining more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18).

Ver. 18.—**And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope.** Job, entering on this second period of prosperity, would be and feel secure; safe, *i.e.*, from any return of calamity, because hope would once more animate him and be his predominant feeling. No doubt "hope springs eternal in the human breast;" and when Job's prosperity was actually restored (ch. xlii. 12—16), these anticipations had their fulfilment; but, as uttered by Zophar, there is a ring of insincerity about them, and we cannot but feel that his object in expatiating at length on the details of Job's coming happiness is not to console and encourage his friend, but rather to annoy and exasperate him, since the entire basis on which he builds is the assumption of Job's heinous guilt (vers. 3, 6, 11, 14), and the prosperity which he promises is to follow upon an acknowledgment of guilt and a putting away of iniquity (vers. 13, 14), which he

knew that Job wholly repudiated. **Yea, thou shalt dig about thee.** So Schultens, who understands it to mean that Job shall dig a moat around his habitation, to make himself perfectly secure. The verb has, however, two other meanings—"to investigate" or "search out," and "to blush;" and it is taken here in each of these meanings by some critics. Our Revisers translate, "Yea, thou shalt search about thee;" and so Canon Cook and Professor Stanley Leathes. Rosenmüller, on the other hand, and Professor Lee render the words by "Though thou shouldst blush," or "be ashamed." It is difficult to decide between such high authorities; but the fact that Job uses the verb in the sense of "search," "look after," in ch. xxxix. 29, and does not elsewhere use it in either of the other senses, should incline us to accept the rendering of the Revised Version. **And thou shalt take thy rest in safety;** or, *securely*; i.e. with a sense of being in perfect security.

Ver. 19.—**Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid;** *i.e.* there shall be no more raids on the part of Sabeans (ch. i. 15) or Chaldeans (ch. i. 17) to affright and injure thee. **Yea, many shall make suit unto thee.** On the contrary, thy aid shall be invoked, thy interference on their behalf prayed for, by many.

Ver. 20.—Had Zophar ended with ver. 19 Job might possibly have taken some comfort from his speech, holding out, as it did, a hope of restoration to God's favour and a return to happiness. But, as if to accentuate the unfavourable view which he takes of Job's conduct and character, he will not end with words of good omen, but appends a passage which has a ring of malice, menace, and condemnation. **But the eyes of the wicked shall fail;** or, *waste away*, grow weary, *i.e.*, of looking for a help that does not come, and a deliverer who does not make his appearance. **And they shall not escape;** literally, *their refuge is perished from them.* **And their hope** shall be as **the giving up of the ghost;** rather, *shall be the giving up of the ghost.* They shall have no other hope but death—a manifest allusion to Job's repeated declarations that he looks for death, longs for it, and has no expectation of any other deliverance (see ch. iii. 21, 22; vi. 7, 8; vii. 15; x. 1, 18, etc.). Such, says Zophar, is always the final condition of the wicked.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Zophar to Job:* 1. *The opinions of a dogmatist.* I. ZOPHAR'S OPINIONS CONCERNING JOB. A severe but wholly unfounded indictment. 1. *Loquacity.* Job's previous orations, so full of lofty sentiment and fervent emotion, he characterizes as "a multitude of words," and Job himself as "a man full of talk [literally, 'a man of lips']." Prolixity in speech, though not a violation of God's Law, is certainly a breach of good taste. Words should never be employed except to represent thoughts, and should always be carefully selected and skilfully compacted. If brevity be the soul of wit, it is also the heart of wisdom. Mere talkativeness is a fool's gift (Eccles. v. 3), and a frequent occasion of sin (Prov. x. 19). On the other hand, "even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise; and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding" (Prov. xvii. 28). A wise man, also, is never so much in danger of being mistaken for a fool as when he forgets to put a bridle on his tongue. God's people should be "swift to hear, slow to speak." 2. *Boasting.* Job's vehement language Zophar describes as "big talk"—the noisy declamation of a loud-mouthed controversialist, who talks his opponents down by sheer force of clamour, foolishly supposing he has thereby overcome them in argument. Words of truth and soberness should be used by all (Acts xxvi. 25). Religious men especially should be careful, particularly in the hearing of weak brethren, of extravagant assertions as to either their own piety or their thoughts about God. Job's asseverations came near overstepping the limits of a just moderation; yet they appeared worse than they were because of Zophar's failure to understand them or sympathize with their speaker. 3. *Mockery.* Job's sentiments Zophar pronounced to be wholly of an infidel tendency. But what Job scoffed at was only the representation of the Divine character and government which had been given by Eliphaz and Bildad. It may argue audacity and self-conceit to arraign the popular dogmas of the day; but one may do so, it is hoped, without being justly chargeable with impiety and unbelief. 4. *Hypocrisy.* Job's steadfast assertion of personal integrity seemed to Zophar mere religious pretence. But if a man, who is at heart insincere, may yet be esteemed righteous by his fellows (Matt. vi. 1—6), it is not impossible that one, who seems a hypocrite in man's eyes, may in God's sight be "perfect and entire."

II. ZOPHAR'S OPINIONS CONCERNING GOD. Zophar suggests that, if God appeared to Job, he would be found: 1. *Irresistible in teaching.* "Oh that God would speak, and open his lips against [or, 'with thee'] " (ver. 5). Thy complaints would then be silenced by the convincing light of God's revelations! What Zophar here desiderated for his friend has been practically granted to all. "God manifest in the flesh," "the Man Christ Jesus," who appeared in the fulness of the times, is God's Answer to all preceding and subsequent centuries perplexed with the dark problem of existence. No solution of life's enigma but God's ever satisfies a soul. God can accomplish what no human teacher can (ch. XXXVI. 22); he can exhibit to the soul truth in its naked purity, causing it to commend itself to every man's conscience, and, whether accepted or rejected, putting to silence all doubts and questionings as to its import (1 Cor. ii. 4—13; 2 Cor. iv. 2; 1 Thess. i. 5). 2. *Unsearchable in wisdom.* "And that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is [or perhaps, 'that it is fold upon fold']." True wisdom lies deep. Its secrets are seldom patent to superficial observation. Hidden fold over fold, their discovery is a work of labour, the fruit of profound reflection, the result of Heaven's revelation. Even that wisdom which is purely mundane requires patient, painful, persevering study (Prov. ii. 3, 4); much more "that wisdom which cometh from above" (Jas. iii. 17). Most of all the wisdom of the Divine mind lies fold upon fold, deep, intricate, unfathomable, unsearchable, and therefore undiscoverable by man except through Divine revelation (see homiletics on next paragraph). 3. *Merciful in judgment.* "Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity [literally, 'forgets for thee of thy guilt']" (ver. 6). Designed for Job's humiliation, the exhortation, nevertheless, contains precious truths. (1) That God can forget a man's guilt, suffer it to drop out of his mind in such a way that it shall never plead against him for punishment (Isa. xliii. 25; Rom. iii. 26). (2) That God, in point of fact, forgets a portion of every man's guilt, since otherwise no man could stand before him (Ps. CXXX. 3). Zophar failed to see (3) that God can forget all a sinner's trespass, and exact from him nothing of what he deserves.

Learn: 1. That all the opinions of a good man are not necessarily correct. 2. That it is sometimes harder to be just to one's fellow-men than it is to be fair to God. 3. That man's ideas of God and truth may be arraigned without incurring the charge of infidelity. 4. That men often behold sins in others which they cannot, though they should, see in themselves. 5. That good teaching should not be rejected, even though rudely proffered. 6. That even vulgar dogmatists may sometimes utter lofty truths. 7. That God is more merciful than even the best of men think.

Ver. 6.—*A sermon on the Divine forbearance.* I. THE DESERT OF SIN. 1. The *nature* of it. The punishment of death—temporal, spiritual, and eternal. 2. The *severity* of it. Were this penalty exacted from each transgressor to the full, it would mean the extinction of every spark of terrestrial happiness, the withdrawal from the sinful soul of every gracious influence, the absolute cessation of hope of eternal felicity beyond the grave, with all the misery which such a melancholy state of being would entail. 3. The *certainty* of it. That is, unless the execution of this awful penalty can be delayed. That it can, constitutes the glad tidings of the gospel. But where the gospel of the grace of God is not permitted to interpose for the sinner's rescue, the infliction of this appalling retribution is inevitable. 4. The *justness* of it. To some minds it seems scarcely consistent with absolute equity to inflict so tremendous a chastisement upon feeble men for the trifling defalcations of a short lifetime. But this objection springs from imperfect notions of the heinousness of sin as committed against an infinite God and a holy Law. Besides, the penalty is that of the Divine Law, and we know that the Law is holy (Rom. vii. 12).

II. THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD. 1. *The proof of it.* (1) Our own lives attest this. (2) God's Word affirms this. (3) God's providential dealings with men in general discover this. 2. *The reason of it.* (1) In mercy to man, because he willeth not that any should perish. (2) In justice to Christ, from whom the full penalty hath already been exacted. (3) For the honour of himself, the glory of his grace being the highest motive by which God can be actuated.

III. THE INSTRUCTION OF MAN. "Know thou;" meaning that precious lessons

should be derived from the study of so grand a truth. 1. *Submission.* It should silence all murmurings against afflictive dispensations. 2. *Repentance.* It ought to fill the human spirit with devout contrition. 3. *Hope.* It should teach man to "account the long-suffering of our God salvation."

VERS. 7—12.—*Zophar to Job: 2. God's wisdom and man's folly.* I. THE PERFECTION OF DIVINE WISDOM. 1. *Unsearchable.* Zophar's interrogations (ver. 7) may signify either that man can never fully understand God, or that man's wisdom can never fully equal God's. Taken either way, they mean that the Divine wisdom, already described as "fold upon fold" (ver. 6), transcends the comprehension of a finite mind. Whether the knowledge of God attainable by the speculative reason is a real and immediate knowledge of God as he is, or "nothing more than a tissue of ambitious self-contradictions which only indicate what he is not" (Mansel, 'Limits of Religious Thought,' lect. iv.), may be relegated to philosophers and metaphysicians to determine. It is certain the Divine Being is unsearchable by man in his essence (ch. xxxvi. 26; xxxvii. 23), in his Person (Gen. xxxii. 29; Judg. xiii. 18; John i. 1; x. 30), in his attributes (Ps. cxlvii. 5), *e.g.* in his wisdom (Isa. xl. 28; Rom. xi. 33), in his works (ch. v. 9; ix. 10), and in his ways (Nah. i. 3; Rom. xi. 33). Hence man's wisdom can never equal God's. Man's wisdom at the best can be fully comprehended; God's cannot. 2. *Infinite.* That which renders the Divine wisdom unsearchable is its infinitude (vers. 8, 9). The wisdom displayed by Deity in the creation, decoration, and preservation of the universe does not exhaust the fulness that his Godhead contains. Could the human mind explore the former in every possible direction, there would still remain in each an infinitude beyond, representing the deep things of Eloah, and the perfection of Shaddai. Most impressively does the language convey the thought of man's inferiority to God in respect of wisdom. For if man by his utmost efforts cannot reach unto the perfection of the creatures—if there be heights in heaven which he cannot scale, and depths in Sheol to which he cannot penetrate, if even the wide-rolling, far-resounding sea baffles him with its mystery—how much less should he hope to reach unto the perfection of the Creator? 3. *Irresistible.* "If he," *i.e.* the Almighty, acting under the guidance of his wisdom, "cut off [literally, 'should arrest'] and shut up," or imprison, "and gather together," *i.e.* a court to try man his prisoner, "then who can hinder him?" (ver. 10). A graphic picture representing (1) God's ability to pursue, arrest, and shut up in prison those who offend against his holy Law, as he did with Adam and Eve (Gen. iii. 8, 9), with Pharaoh (Exod. xiv. 23), with Jonah (i. 4); as he still does with wicked men, pursuing them with the hot foot of an avenging providence (Prov. xiii. 21), apprehending them with the strong hand of an awakened conscience (Acts ii. 37; xvi. 30), and as he will yet do with the finally impenitent who despise his offered grace (Matt. x. 28; xiii. 42; 2 Thess. i. 9). (2) The certainty that God will yet bring the ungodly into judgment at the last day (ch. xxi. 30; Eccles. iii. 17; Matt. xxiv. 30; xxv. 31; Rom. xiv. 10; Heb. ix. 27), since he often does so prelusively and premonitorily on earth (Prov. xi. 31; Ps. lviii. 11). And (3) the impossibility of any one being able to either contend with him in argument or outwit him with chicanery (ch. ix. 4, 12, 14). Men may seem at present to reply successfully against God, denying his existence, ignoring his providence, impeaching his justice, vindicating themselves and repudiating the charges of his Law; but when God holds the great assize it will be seen how utterly vain as well as preposterously foolish have all their endeavours been. 4. *Omniscient.* God knows vain men, and thoroughly comprehends their wickedness, without requiring to reflect upon either them or it. His knowledge of men is (1) universal: "He knoweth men," *i.e.* he knows them all; (2) particular: "He knoweth vain men," he knows their characters and their works; (3) continuous, he constantly observes them; and (4) intuitive, he knows them at once and thoroughly, with all-seeing, all-searching glance. And this omniscience lays the basis for God's invincibility in judgment.

II. THE CONSUMMATION OF HUMAN FOLLY. In contrast to the transcendent wisdom of Eloah, Zophar depicts men, and in particular Job, as: 1. *Morally worthless.* "Vain men," literally, "men of nothingness," men devoid of principle, and "hollow men," he styles them. The appellation is by no means incorrect, as descriptive of

man's natural condition; man being now, in consequence of sin, emptied of all goodness and spiritual understanding. 2. *Naturally witless.* Prone to entertain exalted notions of his own wisdom, man is naturally senseless as a wild ass's colt—which also is not wholly astray from the truth, the estate of man from his birth being one of much ignorance, especially with regard to things Divine. 3. *Essentially heartless.* Zophar designs to say that hollow-hearted man can only be humanized by the salutary discipline of affliction. The change wrought upon him by the fierce discipline of life is as great as it would be for a wild ass's colt to become a man. But this implies that man is by sin dehumanized and without a heart. 4. *Absolutely hopeless.* Delitzsch reads, "But before an empty head gaineth understanding, a wild ass would become a man;" thus teaching that man's folly is irremediable. This black picture, however, is not in all points according to truth. Sinful man may be born again, may obtain a new heart, may acquire an enlightened understanding, and may eventually be arrayed in stainless moral purity.

Learn: 1. To revere the transcendent majesty of him who is infinite and unsearchable in wisdom. 2. To trust the providential government of him who is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." 3. To believe the gracious revelations of him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." 4. To accept the heavenly gifts of him who "hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." 5. To cherish deep humility before him "whose foolishness is wiser than men," and before whom man's highest wisdom is but folly. 6. To be thankful to him whose "manifold wisdom" hath been revealed for the enlightenment and salvation of foolish men.

Vers. 13—20.—*Zophar to Job:* 3. *An exhortation to repentance.* I. THE ACTINGS OF PENITENCE. 1. *Preparation of the heart.* "If thou prepare [literally, 'direct'] thy heart," *i.e.* towards God. True penitence is a heart-work, beginning in the heart, relating to the heart, and carried on by the heart, though not without Divine assistance (Prov. xvi. 1). (1) An arduous work; the verb implying serious purpose, fixed resolution, continuous effort; and the concentration of the heart upon anything, much more upon what is spiritually good, being ever a task of supreme difficulty (Jer. xvii. 9). (2) A complex work; the right setting or directing of the heart involving self-examination, to discover where the heart is wrong; self-humiliation, or sincere sorrow on account of that wrongness of heart which is discovered; and self-rectification, or the immediate, conscious, and deliberate reversal of that state of wrong (Ps. cxix. 59; Jer. xxxi. 18, 19; Hos. vi. 1). (3) A necessary work; Scripture invariably representing this Godward direction of the heart as a constituent element in true repentance (1 Sam. vii. 3; 2 Chron. xx. 33), as the want of it is no less strongly stigmatized as a mark of impenitence and sin (Ps. lxxviii. 8). (4) A personal work; sinful man having many aids in the task expected of him, such as the external teaching of the Word, and the internal illumination of the Spirit, but still being himself held responsible for its actual performance. 2. *Elevation of the soul.* "If thou stretch out thine hands towards him," *i.e.* God; the lifting up and stretching forth of the hands being a common devotional attitude (Exod. ix. 33; Ezra ix. 5; 1 Kings viii. 22), and hence a frequent biblical symbol of the outgoing and ascending of the soul to God in prayer (Ps. lxiii. 4; cxliii. 6; Isa. i. 15). Such exercise implies a sense of the soul's need of God, a yearning of the soul after God, a perception of the soul's distance from God, an inward persuasion that this distance may be diminished, if not entirely removed, and the human soul again be at peace with God, and a fervent application that such confidential and loving relationship between the two may again be restored. 3. *Reformation of the life.* "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles." This, no less than the two preceding, is indispensable to a complete work of penitence. Mere amendment of the external walk and conversation does not amount to, and will certainly not serve as a substitute for, the cleansing of the heart. On the other hand, the work of inward purification, though it could stand alone, would not suffice without a corresponding rectification of the daily life. True repentance consists in sorrowful acknowledgment of sin, and tearful supplication of mercy, followed by a steadfast resolution after new obedience. Beginning in the heart with the detection of sin, and proceeding to the lip with the confession of sin, it terminates in the life with

the renunciation of sin (1 Sam. vii. 3; Ps. xxxiv. 14; Isa. i. 16; lv. 7; Jer. vii. 5; Matt. iii. 8). And this renunciation must be complete. (1) The sin itself must be put away; all kind of it—open wickedness, secret iniquity, personal transgression, domestic wrong-doing, so far as this latter lies within one's power (Gen. xviii. 19; 1 Sam. ii. 12, 17; iii. 11, 14; Ps. ci. 2, 7). (2) The separation effected must be thorough and final; sin being required to be not merely put away, but put far away—cast forth, like Hagar and Ishmael; like the scapegoat, into a land not inhabited, never to return.

II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE PENITENT. 1. *Cheerful confidence before God.* (Ver. 15.) Instead of cowering sorrow-stricken and shame-covered, like a trembling criminal, before his judge, filled with confusion and unable to lift up his head (ch. x. 15), Job would be able to stand erect and firm, like a molten statue sitting squarely on its base, with no trace of tears upon his countenance, and no stain of punishable guilt upon his conscience. Nothing fills the soul with trembling and apprehension, or relaxes the cords and sinews of the heart, like a sense of unpardoned sin (Ps. xxxviii. 8). Nothing sooner shades the brow with gloom, or banishes the light of joy from the countenance (Gen. iv. 5, 6; Luke xviii. 13), than the loss of Divine favour. On the contrary, nothing so effectually restores serenity of aspect and courageousness of soul to the individual as a consciousness of pardon. When the spot of guilt is removed from the conscience, the tear of sorrow is soon wiped from the face. A forgiven penitent may afterwards encounter affliction; but, sustained by the peace of God which passeth understanding, he can even joy in tribulation (Rom. v. 3). 2. *Perfect happiness in himself.* (Ver. 16.) That complete exemption from adversity would infallibly attend the repenting transgressor, was incorrect; that the inward comforts and enjoyments of the pardoned sinner would so surpass his former anguish as to cause it to be entirely forgotten, was as precious and consoling as it was true. The greatest happiness attainable or conceivable on earth is the joy of salvation, the joy which no man taketh from its possessor, the joy unspeakable and full of glory, which springs from a sense of acceptance with God. However deep the iron of conviction may have been driven into the penitent's soul, however bitter the anguish that may have racked his spirit, the moment the stricken heart is visited with a sense of Heaven's favour, it "remembereth no more the anguish for joy" that it has been forgiven. The only thing that can effectually drive out sorrow from the soul is the entrance of Heaven's joy. 3. *Radiant prosperity in life.* (Ver. 17.) Job's after-career should be one of unclouded prosperity, which should shine around him with a brilliance outdazzling the noonday sun, and should never know decline or diminution; if it did, that decline would only be a gentle shading down as from meridian splendour to morning brightness, that diminution but a temporary obscuration, to be followed by the breaking forth of dawn. All this is, of course, true of the path of the just, only when spiritually considered. 4. *Complete security on earth.* "And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope." This marks the ground of the good man's confidence. Assurance of God's favour to an Old Testament saint was equivalent to a guarantee of permanent prosperity; to a New Testament believer it is tantamount to a promise of spiritual enrichment. Hence hope inspires the Christian with a feeling of security (Ps. xxxi. 24; cxlvi. 5; Rom. v. 5; Eph. vi. 17; 1 Thess. v. 8). The following clauses indicate the completeness of the saint's confidence. "Yea, thou shalt dig about thee [or, 'look around thee, inquiringly,' searching into all possibilities of danger, and finding none], thou shalt take thy rest in safety. Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid." So did David (Ps. iii. 5, 6; iv. 8), and so may all God's people, however circumstanced. 5. *Growing influence among men.* "Yea, many shall make suit unto thee;" literally, "shall stroke thy face," or caress thy cheeks, by way of flattery or supplication, perhaps both (Prov. xix. 6). A remarkable testimony to the influence of piety, which "would be more respected if it were more known" (Hutcheson). God's Israels have power with men as well as with God (Gen. xxxii. 28), and Christ's followers are the salt of the earth (Matt. v. 13). Hence the favour and friendship of saints and of the Church are frequently coveted and even solicited by the unbelieving and ungodly (Gen. xxvi. 26—29; Ps. xlv. 12; Matt. xxv. 8).

III. THE DOOM OF THE IMPENITENT. 1. *Bitter disappointment.* "But the eyes of the wicked shall fail," shall waste away with vain and anxious looking and longing for help which cometh not. He who expects God to either visit him with benign

salvation or bless him with temporal prosperity while indulging in sin, is cherishing an ill-grounded hope. God may do the latter for wise purposes of his own; the former he cannot do. To anticipate that he will is to entertain a foolish dream (ch. viii. 14, 15). 2. *Certain destruction.* "They shall not escape;" literally, "their refuge perishes from them." As wicked men will not reach the good they look for, so neither will they avoid the evil they are afraid of. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished;" "The expectation of the wicked is wrath." Sooner or later calamity will overtake and overthrow the ungodly (Isa. xiii. 9; Mal. iv. 1; Eph. v. 6; 1 Thess. v. 3). Thanks to Divine grace, a refuge has been provided for the penitent—God himself (Ps. xlvi. 1), or the hope of the gospel (Heb. vi. 18); but "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. ii. 3). 3. *Final despair.* "Their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost;" literally, "the breathing forth of the soul or life," *i.e.* it shall cease, and become utterly extinct. "The expectation of the wicked shall perish." "A wicked man's hope is but a cold coal, and an evanishing thing. It is but like a sob or two of a dying man, and then he is gone" (Hutcheson).

Learn: 1. True happiness and true religion begin at the same point and in the same thing, viz. penitence. 2. When a soul returns to God in penitence, God never fails to return to it with prosperity, if not temporal and material, at least spiritual and eternal. 3. Though true piety does not look for a reward on earth, it most commonly finds one. 4. The damnation of the impenitent is as certain as is the salvation of the penitent.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—20.—"*Humble yourselves beneath the mighty hand of God.*" Zophar, the youngest of the friends, now comes forward once more to beat down the complaint of Job with the old arguments and commonplaces. To support his words, he does not appeal to a vision like Eliphaz, nor rely on the wisdom of the ancients like Bildad, but depends on his own understanding and zealous though narrow instinct for God. His whole speech is an example of the beauty and, at the same time, the defect of religious zeal. In anxiety for God's honour he forgets to be considerate of his fellow-man. The general contents of the speech may be characterized as the *rebuke of human ignorance.*

I. INDIGNANT DENUNCIATION OF HUMAN COMPLAINT. (Vers. 1—4.) He terms Job's outpourings a "torrent of words," "vain talk," and impious "mockery," a scoffing; and Job himself is an idle "prater." Further, he stoutly sums up all Job's speeches as meaning shortly this: "My teaching is pure, and I am guiltless in God's eyes." Job, in fact, has stepped quite out of his place, in Zophar's opinion, laying down principles and doctrines instead of meekly and penitently suffering in silence. It is an unjust view, manifestly; and we should be warned against the danger, in pleading for God, of being unjust and unfair, hard and uncharitable, to our fellow-man. To fetter the tongue, to attempt to lay fetters on the free course of the mind, especially in its moment of sorrow, may be to inflict a cruel injury on a sensitive heart.

II. WISH FOR GOD'S APPEARANCE. (Vers. 5, 6.) He desires that God in the fulness of his revelation, in the complete disclosure of knowledge and truth, may convince Job how "doubly strong" is Wisdom in her nature and penetrating power (ver. 6). Here would Job learn that, so far from being unjustly punished, God has rather passed by much of his guilt, and punishes him far less than he deserves. Here two defects are contrasted. 1. *Half-knowledge of God.* This according, to Zophar, is Job's condition. He has but a partial understanding of God; and the little that he sees he misapplies, and so is led into perplexity and passion. Zophar, assuming guilt in Job, deems, and wrongly, that Job is tempted to think only of his innocence, and to overlook his great and hidden sins. In the end (ch. xxxviii.), when God does manifest himself, Job does recognize that he is but a half-knower, but not that he is a hypocrite. 2. But there is, on the other hand, *the assumption of knowledge* on the part of the rebuking speaker which is not less a fault. This is, indeed, the error of all the friends, and it awaits the Divine answer. In seeking to remove the mote from Job's eye, they are unconscious of the beam in their own. These differences may be reconciled if we bear in mind the great saying of St. Paul, that we see but in part, and know but in part, and that all perplexities are solved by an absolute faith in the Divine love. We see

again and again illustrated in Divine things the truth that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

III. CHALLENGE TO HUMAN IGNORANCE: THE UNSEARCHABLENESS OF GOD. (Vers. 7—9.) All measures of vastness, all ideas of infinity, are called in to impress this thought. The might and the wisdom of God are high as the unscalable heaven, deep as the dark lower world (comp. ch. xxii. 12; xxvi. 6). The infinity of God embraces the whole earth, and reaches beyond; it is longer than the firm land, broader than the broad sea, so that before it there is nothing too lofty, too obscure, too remote. It is the fixed thought-embrace of the universe. Will mortal man, then, be guilty of the folly of quarrelling with God's wisdom and power, and so incur the full weight of his judgment? Rather let him be dumb, and open not his mouth, and say, "Thou hast done it."

IV. HUMAN IGNORANCE CONVICTED AND ABASHED BEFORE THE DIVINE JUDGMENT. (Vers. 10—12.) If God holds judgment with this supreme wisdom and power, then plainly man, be he never so stupid and obstinately ignorant of his guilt, must forthwith become conscious of it; and though he were furious and wild as a wild ass (comp. ch. xxxix. 5, 8), he must be subdued by that omnipotent power into tameness and docility. "The wild ass is now born as a man," converted by the terror of that moment of judgment. So speaks Zophar with caustic rebuke of what he considers the contumacy of Job. He seems to turn the language of Job, in ch. ix. 11, *et seq.*, to his own purpose. Thus the arrival of the Judge to execute judgment is in the rush of a rapid storm (ver. 10). He "passes by," and thereupon follows the "shutting-up" or arrest of the accused, that he may not escape during the judgment; and then the "gathering together" of the people to hear the judgment.

V. WORDS OF HOPE AND PROMISE. (Vers. 13—20.) Severe as are the speeches of the three friends, they yet have a clear apprehension of the eternal gospel of God's mercy, and insist on the unfailing hope set before the true penitent in that gospel. 1. *Conditions.* (1) (Ver. 13.) The "direction," or "preparation," or setting straight, of the heart. This is the first thing. Crooked feelings, perverted principles, must be rectified. There must be sincere penitence. Happiness does not begin with the outward life to pass into the inward; the process is the reverse. And the restoration must be in the same order. If the inward life be purified, the outward will flow into peace. (2) Along with this there must be the "spreading forth of the hands to God;" in other words, true prayer. The symbol is put for the thing signified, the rite for the reality. Very significant and beautiful was the Hebrew attitude of prayer. It expressed longing, urgency, the effort of the soul to seize and hold fast the unseen power and grace in time of need. (3) (Ver. 14.) There must be the removal of all previous iniquity from the home as well as the heart. Every vestige and association of it must be swept away—all that might remind the soul of forbidden pleasures, and tempt it into renewal of its sin. It might be well for a man in the endeavour to make his repentance thorough and sincere, and might help his mind to form new associations, to renew the face of his dwelling from top to bottom, and cast out all articles of furniture, pictures, utensils, etc., that might bring up the thought of former evil. For *some* minds it would at least be a wholesome discipline. At all events, let nothing be left undone to cleanse the heart, the imagination, the inward chambers of the soul, in preparation for the coming of the gracious renewing, consecrating presence of the Divine Guest. 2. *The consequences of return to God.* (1) *Courage* (ver. 15), fresh, calm, and strong. Referring to Job's complaint (ch. x. 15) that he is compelled to bow his head in ignominy before the unworthy, his friend declares that he will be enabled to lift it up in the face of day. How serene the face, how clear the glance, how assured the step of the man who has no coward secret of ill in his heart, who by confession and repentance has made the mighty God his Friend! (2) *Oblivion of sorrow.* (Ver. 16.) Is memory on the whole a greater blessing or torment? Alas! Job has lately found it to be the latter. The "remembering happier things" has proved his "crown of sorrow." Like a returning tide, it has cast his wrecked treasures at his feet. But on the turning of his heart to God these bitter memories shall be carried away, as on a flowing stream, till they pass out of sight and disappear. Thank God that we can remember; but thank God, too, that we can forget! (3) *A season of brightness.* (Ver. 17.) Even if the darkness come, it will be comparatively bright like the morning—exactly opposite to ch. x. 22. For there is no darkness to him who has God as the Guest of his soul. (4) *Rest unbroken by danger* (vers. 18, 19);

cheerful hope in toil; the respect and homage of friends and suitors. For there is something magnetic in piety and goodness; it seems a kind of amber which attracts to itself. Such will be, ever are, the fruits of a heart free from guile, and at peace with God. Zophar's enthusiastic picture is fitted to kindle a love of virtue and piety; but its exclusion of the facts and relations of life renders it but partially true, like the maxims of his two friends. We must be content to feel that there is a truth, and a very deep and Divine truth, in this sequence, without denying that there are complications of this truth with others, as in the case of Job, which God and eternity can alone unravel.

VI. DARK PICTURE, IN CONTRAST, OF THE WICKED. (Ver. 20.) 1. The languor of vain longing. Their eyes waste and consume with watching and tears for a dawn that never comes (comp. Ps. vi. 7). 2. Escape from the prison of their woe is denied. 3. Hope and life are together extinguished.—J.

Vers. 1—6.—*Self-complacency condemned.* Even the lowly and humble are liable to over-estimate their own goodness, and the more so if roused to self-justification. All imperfect human judgments, given as Job's were, under the influence of deep feeling, are liable to be coloured, to be overdrawn and extravagant. Job's long speech in his own justification is likened by Zophar to a torrent. Zophar, like his companions, may judge Job harshly, wherein lies his error and theirs; but his words have a vein of truth in them. He is right in condemning the self-complacent, who can prate freely of his own goodness, whether he is judging Job rightly or wrongly.

I. SELF-COMPLACENCY APT TO BURY ITSELF IN A MULTITUDE OF WORDS. It would almost seem that the mere abundance of Job's answers to all the accusations raised against him excites his friend's retort. Yet how true is it that the self-complacent one, willing to justify himself, finds arguments in abundance! And, being on his defence, he is liable to view things with a prejudiced eye. The man "full of talk" is in danger of burying truth in "the multitude of words." The greater need for guarding against the perils of exaggeration by how much many words are used. A strict watch necessary when the tongue runneth over.

II. SELF-COMPLACENCY SHOWN ESPECIALLY IN SELF-JUSTIFICATION. This the point of Zophar's accusation. This the constant danger. A man at peace with himself, rightly or wrongly believing in his own innocence, is most liable to justify himself. The lowly self-accused spirit is freed from this especial danger. Self-justification shows the standard by which life is judged to be a low one. As men rise in goodness, and so in their clearer discernment of the true nature of righteousness, they are bowed down in self-abasement. The self-justified has but a poor and very imperfect standard of right before his eyes. "Shall no man make thee ashamed?" Therefore—

III. SELF-COMPLACENCY HIDES THE JUDGMENT OF GOD FROM THE EYES. The man comes up to his standard. He is open to no more teaching. His "doctrine is pure;" he is "clean"—at least, in his own "eyes." Such a man in danger of perverting judgment. To close the eyes to the Divine judgment upon the life, even though that judgment be severe, is to do irreparable harm to the character. Let the true light shine, though it reveal faults of the gravest kind and bring down the pride of men to the very earth. Zophar may not intend to accuse Job of intentional lying, but he does accuse him of error. Men must err in their judgments if the standards by which they judge are false. The eye blinded by self-complacency cannot see that which, if clearly seen, would condemn.

IV. SELF-COMPLACENCY REBUKED BY AN ACCURATE VIEW OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENTS. To this Job was ultimately brought. We see him in the process—in the way. If God "speak," if he "open his lips," his words are sure to condemn. If he shows "the secrets of wisdom," then would appear his gracious forbearance, and, even in the case of the heavily afflicted, it would be revealed that he "exacteth less than iniquity deserveth." One day the clear light will shine, and not Job only, but every perplexed and suffering son of Adam, will see that the Lord is gracious and merciful, that he does not render to man the whole fruit of his evil doings. He remembers the frailty and error of men's judgments, and is patient and forgiving.—R. G.

Vers. 7—12.—*Man humbled before God.* Vain man reasons upon the ways of God, and presumes to penetrate to the depths of the Divine wisdom. A professed wisdom

lands him in folly. To scale the heavens is as easy as to "find out the Almighty to perfection," to fathom the depths of the Divine designs. Job and his friends and hosts of others of us attempt to explain the name and ways of God, but our efforts are vain, and but expose a folly equal to our ignorance.

I. THE DIVINE NATURE AND THE DIVINE PURPOSES INFINITELY BEYOND THE POSSIBLE KNOWLEDGE OF MAN. How soon may a prudent reflection on either of these assure men that they "cannot attain unto" them! "High as heaven," "deeper than hell," "longer than the earth," "broader than the sea,"—these are the terms used by Zophar in his just description. As well may man attempt to touch the height of heaven, to reach to the depth of Hades, to stretch his arms to compass sea and land from the far east to the distant west, as to pretend to comprehend, within the compass of his feeble and limited knowledge, an adequate estimate of the Divine nature, an adequate understanding of the Divine counsels,—"to find out God."

II. As the Divine Name is incomprehensible by man, and the Divine ways past his searching out, so is it equally BEYOND THE POWER OF MAN TO HINDER THE WORKING OUT OF THE DIVINE PURPOSE. In his ways God hides his wise design. He worketh towards a definite end. Men may oppose it in their folly or sinfulness, or seem to hinder it in their error. But like an onflowing tide it bears all before it. "Who can hinder him?" His work is an omnipotent work, as his Name is infinite. Against the might of God it is vain for feeble man to oppose his strength, or the energy of his will. The Divine "kingdom ruleth over all."

III. It is, therefore, utterly IMPOSSIBLE FOR MAN TO ESCAPE THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF ALMIGHTY GOD. Zophar would thus shut up Job unto self-abasement. Revealing his impotence before God, his inability so much as to know the Divine Name, or to grasp with his understanding the widespread ways of the Most High, he would compel Job to abasement—to a confession of guiltiness, to the wisdom of casting away his vain self-assurance, that of God he may be made wise. All these purposes are good in themselves, but the covert implication—God is angry with thee; God judgeth thee; "he seeth" *thy* "wickedness"—is harsh and erroneous. Like his brethren, he errs in the method of applying his good principles. Yet is it wise for all men (1) to learn their impotence before God; to bow to the Divine ways; (2) to assure themselves of the wisdom and goodness of the hidden purposes of God; (3) to commit themselves in lowly reverential trust to the overruling power and government of God. Thus the intractable one shall become gentle, docile, and obedient—the "wild ass's colt" will become a man.—R. G.

Vers. 13—19.—*The invitation to repentance.* All Job's friends would lead him to repentance. They see the judgments of God upon him in his afflictions. They know of no other cause for afflictions than as a punishment for wrong-doing. The conclusion is clear, "Thou hast sinned." This underlies all their speeches. But they have rightly seized the truth—God forgiveth the iniquity of the repentant. Therefore they urge their entreaty to their friend in one word, "Repent." And Zophar reveals to Job the method of repentance, the encouragement to it, and its reward.

I. THE METHOD OF REPENTANCE. 1. "Prepare thine heart." Give the heart its true direction—from evil towards God. 2. "Stretch out thine hands towards God"—in prayer—the true sign of repentance, the sign of lowly self-abasement, the very confession of sin, the opening of the heart with the lips to renounce evil, to sue for pardon. The hands stretched towards God is the human sign of return to him. 3. Put away iniquity. The actual renunciation of evil, forsaking and abandoning it with the heart and hands and voice lifted to God, is the certain and indubitable evidence of true repentance. No sorrow for sin becomes repentance until sin is by the sorrowing heart renounced. "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away."

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO REPENTANCE. 1. "Then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot," *i.e.* of guilt. Thy heart, cleared of its guilt, shall be free and joyful. 2. And with consciousness of the Divine forgiveness thou wilt be able to look up without fear—"to lift up thy face"—to God. 3. Then sorrow shall be supplanted by peaceful joy. "Thou shalt forget thy misery." Thy grief shall leave no more trace than waters that flow by. 4. Then brightness shall dawn upon thy life, over its remainder shall be a time of gladness; "as the morning shalt thou be."

III. THE REWARD OF REPENTANCE. The encouragements to repentance are in themselves part of its reward, though that reward will be only truly, because only perfectly, found in the subsequent days of the life. Beautifully and cheeringly does this friend paint the rich prosperity of later days even to the overwhelmed sufferer. Although an error lurks beneath it all, which the teaching of the entire book is designed to correct; yet out of the bright encouragements, as out of an early morning, the full promise of blessing to the repentant arises. "Thou shalt be secure." The sense of security will take possession of the breast from which condemnation is removed. The assurance of the Divine forgiveness is a pledge of the Divine love, and the forgiven one hides in the God against whom in his folly he had sinned. Hope illumines the future, and his spirit, braced with holy courage, takes its rest in safety. He can lie down in peace and sleep, for he has gained a new trust in God. He defies his foes. Prosperity returns; "many make suit unto him." Such is the rich reward promised to Job by his friend, should he repent of his sin. True, as a great principle for human conduct it, however, lacks a correctness of application, for Job is not suffering for his sins. But every smitten one may learn the wisdom, the comfort, and the happy consequence of true repentance.—R. G.

Ver. 1.—*Zophar, the man of the world.* After the seer and the pedant comes Zophar, who poses as the man of the world. He can pretend to no supernatural illumination, neither has he any claims to put forth on the score of learning; but he thinks he knows men, he prides himself on his common sense, the ways of the world are familiar to him. Even from his low standpoint he thinks he can detect enough to condemn Job. We may see in Zophar the characteristics of a man of the world in his treatment of moral and religious questions, when he presents himself as a devout man and friendly adviser.

I. HE IS ORTHODOX. Zophar entirely agrees with the main position of Eliphaz and Bildad. He accepts the doctrines of the visionary when they have been endorsed by conventional society, and he echoes the traditions of antiquity after he has ascertained that they are not regarded as obsolete in his time. He has not the spiritual individuality to be singular. He will always side with the majority. The fear of Mrs. Grundy is ever before his eyes. It is bad form to be a heretic. Conventionality is orthodoxy with this man, and conventionality is the rule of his life.

II. HE IS A MAN OF THE TIMES. He would rather despise the dreams of the visionary and the sayings of the pedant. He thinks himself a modern man. But he is no power in his day, for he is but the creature of his age. It is the duty of Christians not to follow the age, but to rule it. When the worldly Christian follows it, he enslaves himself, and does his best to subject the kingdom of heaven to the prince of this world. We ought to understand our times, sympathize with their need, use their advantages, work for their progress, but never be their creatures and drudges.

III. HE IS BLIND TO THE GREATEST TRUTH. The whole spiritual world is a non-entity to this man. Being religious and orthodox, he talks the language of Divine things; but his words are meaningless counters. The reality of those things is quite beyond his grasp. He thinks he knows men, but he only sees one side of the world. A whole hemisphere of human experience is turned away from his gaze. He is like a person on this world looking at the moon, seeing one side in varying phases, but never able to catch a glimpse of the other side of it. The truly spiritual, the generous, the mystical, are all obscure to him. We cannot know the best truth till we are liberated from the shackles of conventionality.

IV. HE IS CENSORIOUS. Zophar joins his two friends in their condemnation of Job. The man of the world thinks himself broad-minded. Very often he is not over-scrupulous on moral questions that touch his own interest. But no one can be harder in condemning those who transgress the customs of the circle in which he moves. His religion has no softening, sweetening influence on him. It only seems to make him sour and disagreeable. So-called Christians of this stamp are the greatest possible hindrances to the progress of the gospel. It is *their* conduct that makes so many people hate the Christian religion.—W. F. A.

Ver. 2.—*The provocation of a reply.* Zophar will not take the trouble to be courteous.

He rudely addresses Job as "a man full of talk." He has been irritated by the "multitude of words" that Job has poured forth. The very volume of the patriarch's discourse provokes the man of the world to make a reply.

I. THE OVERFLOW OF FEELING FINDS VENT IN A MULTITUDE OF WORDS. Speech is not all calculated and purposeful. Sometimes it is aimless and reckless. It is not always directed to the end of telling some fact or influencing some person. It may be just the irrepressible outcome of emotion. The most taciturn become eloquent when in a passion. Excitement needs a safety-valve. The swollen river must have a vent or it will overflow its banks. The hottest words do not always lead to the most violent actions; but the fire that burns under unnatural restraints is likely to burst forth at length in the most fearful conflagration. Let us be patient with the hasty, passionate words of souls that are deeply moved, not weighing them nicely, nor treasuring them up for future accusation.

II. PASSIONATE WORDS CANNOT BE UNDERSTOOD BY THE UNSYMPATHETIC. Zophar is vexed at Job's eloquence. One reason is that he cannot understand it. The man of the world is always angry with what he cannot comprehend. It annoys him to think that there may be more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in his philosophy. The highest poetry is to him but a multitude of words. He is wearied with 'The Faëry Queene;' 'Paradise Lost' is tedious to him. Browning he regards as a juggler with language. Even in Scripture the deepest utterances of psalmist and prophet are but empty words. Christ spoke in brief sententious utterances, graphic if enigmatic; yet even Christ's discourses are but dead words to those who will not lend a sympathetic ear. We always misjudge our fellow-men when we do not sympathize with them; then the deepest utterances of their hearts are but "sound and fury signifying nothing." A Pilate could never understand the prayers of Gethsemane.

III. A MULTITUDE OF WORDS PROVOKES REPLY. Zophar is roused to answer Job with more asperity than he would have shown if the patriarch had maintained the dignified silence with which he had received his friends. This is unreasonable, unkind, wrong; still it is only what must be expected under the circumstances. The world will not be reasonable or kind in its treatment of us. Therefore it may be well for us to be on our guard against noisy opposition beyond what is inevitable. Self-restraint is a grace which brings its own reward. The *abandon* of passion is certain to lead to vexation of spirit.

IV. THE PATIENCE OF GOD ENDURES A MULTITUDE OF WORDS. He does not hear us for our much speaking. There is no virtue in long prayers (Matt. vi. 7). But deep feeling will find expression in unceasing prayer. Then our Father listens with more patience than our friends show to us. Job had good reason to be thankful that he could make his complaints to Heaven. God was more patient than Zophar. He is ever ready to listen to the cries of his children.—W. F. A.

Ver. 5.—"*Oh that God would speak!*" Zophar's wish is most ungenerous. Feeling his own inability to give a complete reply to the complaints of Job, he expresses a desire that God may interpose and give the requisite answer. He really wants God to come as his advocate and speak on the side of conventional orthodoxy. But though he is now moved by an uncharitable thought, the desire that he is led to express is significant of a common need of mankind. Both Job and his accusers look for a Divine interposition, and long for a clear utterance of God's mind.

I. IT IS NATURAL TO DESIRE A DIVINE VOICE. This desire springs out of our spiritual instincts. We cannot shake it off. It is almost universally felt among all races of men, and it becomes only deeper and more urgent with the progress of spiritual culture. The animals betray no signs of any such wish. We alone feel as orphans, as exiles from home; we alone crave a voice from heaven. This is but natural. The child longs to hear from his father. The perplexed looks for a guide, the sorrowful for a comforter, the wronged for an advocate. Will God come and solve the great riddle of existence?

II. IT IS UNREASONABLE TO EXPECT TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE WITH THE OUTWARD EAR. By our materialism we pervert the natural instinct that cries out for God. We live so much in the body that we come to overvalue the experience of our senses. It seems to us that we should be better satisfied if we could hear God's voice sounding like the

voice of our human friend. We forget that the senses may be subject to illusion. If we heard a voice as from heaven we could not be sure that it came from God. Moreover, it is not well that God should cut the knot and explain every mystery at once. We are not yet ready to receive all truth. It is good for our discipline that our patience should be tried, and that we should walk by faith.

III. GOD HAS SPOKEN. We listen for the thunder and ignore the still, small voice. But God is ever speaking to us in his Spirit through our consciences. He has given more explicit revelations of his truth through the inspiration of prophets and apostles. The circulation of the Bible is the going forth of God's voice. Christ is the incarnate Word of God. What Zophar wished for has in a measure appeared in Christ. The old craving for a Divine oracle is met in the best way by the advent of our Lord as "the truth" (John xiv. 6).

IV. GOD WILL SPEAK MORE FULLY AT THE END OF THE DAYS. God appeared at the end of Job's trials. A grand theophany in final judgment is promised us (Zech. xiv. 4). Even in the light of the gospel many problems are still obscure. Christ did not bring the answer to every question when he appeared on earth. He brought sufficient light for saving knowledge, but he left us to walk by faith. Thus we may still crave the complete revelation, when God shall speak once more, vindicating the right and clearing the mystery of providence. Meanwhile, the nearer we walk to Christ the more of his voice can we hear, and the less perplexed shall we be; for he who follows Christ will not walk in darkness (John xii. 35).—W. F. A.

Ver. 7.—*The unsearchable depth of God.* It has been said that Zophar shows "some touch of the base courtier spirit and motive" in thus eulogizing the wisdom of God. He seems to wish to secure God on his side. While he rebukes Job he flatters God. Nevertheless, though his motive may be unworthy, the question which he here raises is real and important.

1. GOD'S THOUGHT IS UNFATHOMABLY DEEP. 1. *It must be so because God is infinite.* If we could understand God completely, it would be clear that he was but as one of us. A dog cannot fathom the thought of a man, because the inferior being can never enter into the depths of the experience of one greater in faculty. No creature can measure the mind of the great Creator. 2. *It is found to be so in experience.* We are continually baffled by riddles of providence. We are puzzled to find our calculations false, and our explanations unsatisfactory. We fail to understand the object and meaning of God's mysterious dealings with us.

II. WE CANNOT BUT DESIRE TO FATHOM THE DEPTHS OF GOD'S THOUGHT. No inquiry can be more intensely interesting. God is the Source and controlling Power of our lives, and everything depends on what he thinks about us. Therefore true theology is no idle study of the cloister; it is the most practical inquiry concerning what most intimately affects our vital interests in time and in eternity. But apart from personal considerations, the study of God is the study of what is highest, best, and most wonderful in the universe. Can any more lofty employment for the human intellect be found? Is it not grossly unnatural for the child not to care to know about his father? Surely it is wrong to check an inquiring soul in its search after God, even when it seems to go sounding on through dim and perilous ways.

III. MEN HAVE MADE FOOLISH CLAIMS TO HAVE FATHOMED THE DEPTHS OF GOD. Zophar did this even while appearing to honour the vastness and mystery of the Divine thought; for he assumed that he knew God's idea, and that this was just identical with conventional orthodoxy. His was the common error of extreme dogmatists. Creeds may be excellent as clear, concise confessions of belief; but the moment a finality is claimed for them they cease to be a help, and become a positive stumbling-block and hindrance to truth. We cannot define God; he escapes all the bounds of the largest words. When we attempt to draw a circle about him we tacitly assume that he is not an Infinite Being.

IV. OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS REAL, BUT PARTIAL. We cannot "find out the Almighty *unto perfection.*" We cannot know God perfectly, cannot know all of God. We may know much of him. He is not represented in the Bible as the Unknowable, nor to Christians as "the Unknown God." Indeed Christians can say, "We know that we know him" (1 John ii. 3). Our knowledge is not merely a knowledge of our

thought about him; and theology is not simply the science of man's religion. We know God truly, as far as our knowledge extends. Yet we know but a very little of God. Therefore let us learn humility, patience, faith. We can never know all, but we may know more. Therefore let us "follow on to know the Lord" (Hos. vi. 3).—W. F. A.

Vers. 13—19.—*The blessedness of returning to God.* Zophar draws a beautiful picture of the joys and blessings of restoration to God, and, though its implied background must have spoilt it for Job by suggesting that the patriarch was a great sinner needing repentance, in itself the picture is true and helpful.

I. THE PROCESS OF RETURNING TO GOD. 1. *By a right condition of the heart.* The heart is first to be set right. We can only return to God with our heart. The heart wandered; the heart must come back. Going to church is not necessarily going to God. Beginning to attempt good works is not always entering the kingdom of heaven. We must begin with inward and deeper things. 2. *By a personal approach to God.* The hands are to be stretched out to him. This is the posture of a suppliant. It is the attitude of prayer, but it signifies more than the offering of a petition; it suggests that the helpless man is stretching out to God for deliverance, that the penitent child is trying to get near to his Father. We cannot be saved while we remain at a distance from God; as our sin and ruin consist in our departure from God, so our restoration is accomplished in our personal return to him. 3. *By a repentant renunciation of sin.* Sin must no longer dwell in our tabernacles. We cannot recover God while we retain sin. The repentance must not only consist in confession and sorrow. The sin itself must be cast off. Until we are willing to do this in heart and life no restoration is possible. It was wrong and unfair of Zophar to assume that Job needed to come to God as a penitent, for the suffering man had done this long before his troubles, and he was already a redeemed and honoured servant of God. But till we have thus actively repented we cannot be restored. Zophar's principle applies to all who have not yet forsaken their sins.

II. THE HAPPY RESULTS OF THUS RETURNING. Zophar must be blamed for the narrowness, the unspirituality, and the conventionalism of his picture. Restoration to God brings higher blessings than Zophar dreamed of naming, and, on the other hand, it does not always bring the swift and visible rewards which he portrayed with sympathetic eloquence. Yet we may gather some hints of the blessings of restoration even from the partial lights of his picture. 1. *Freedom from guilt.* The restored penitent will "lift up" his "face without spot." The old stain has gone. Confidence takes the place of the shame of sin. 2. *Fearless steadfastness.* "Yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear." An evil conscience is timorous. The cure of sin brings strength and stability. 3. *Forgetfulness of the sad past.* It will go like the waters of the winter torrent, that disappear and leave their stony course dry in the summer heat. The sorrow seems to be eternal while we have it. But not only is time a healer; forgiveness and restoration hasten the process. 4. *A bright reputation.* This was Job's old possession, but he seemed to his friends to have lost it. Sin tarnishes a good character. But forgiveness and restoration prepare for a new Christian character. The darkness gives place to bright daylight. 5. *Perfect security.* The restored man can lie down in peace, fearing nothing, for God is with him.—W. F. A.

Ver. 18 (first clause).—*The security of hope.* I. IT IS OF THE NATURE OF HOPE TO GIVE A SENSE OF SECURITY. If a man thinks himself safe, he will go forward confidently; if he expects he can win, he will throw his energy into what he is doing; if he is sure of victory, he will not shrink from the foe. When hope has faded out of a man's life, he may still pursue his course with the doggedness of despair; but his step has lost its elasticity and his eye its fire.

II. HOPE TENDS TO CREATE REAL SECURITY. The loss of confidence is itself a weakness. When we expect to fail, we prepare failure for ourselves. On the other hand, a calm, fearless progress makes for success. There is a foolish sanguineness which only dreams of the joys that are to drop into one's lap unsought and unearned. But a true and sensible hope will not be thus blind and indolent. It will be the inspiration of effort. If we have hopes of victory over sin and of a useful Christian

life, we are spurred on to attempt to realise them. Hope is necessary in Christian work. A hopeless missionary is not likely to be very fruitful.

III. A BASELESS HOPE LEADS TO A FALSE SECURITY. Hope may be a mere snare. Possibly the sanguine man is living in a fool's paradise. His hope may be altogether without foundation, and if so, in trusting to it he will only sink down to ruin. We need to have a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Pet. iii. 15). Safety is not proportionate to confidence. Although, as we have just seen, hope simply as a subjective feeling does *tend* to victory, yet if it is quite groundless, its tendency will not be strong enough to overcome tangible obstacles.

IV. CHRIST HAS GIVEN TO US A TRUE AND INSPIRING HOPE. 1. *It is true.* Christ does not content himself with soothing our fears and instilling a sense of restfulness and confidence. That would be a fatal course, like drugging a patient with morphia instead of curing his disease. But when Christ instils the feeling of hope, he does so by setting before us good reasons for hope. The Christian hope is based on the revelation of God's love, on the atoning work of our Lord, on his resurrection and triumph. He is our Hope (Col. i. 27), and all that gives worth to him and his work gives weight to the Christian hope. 2. *It is inspiring.* The great hope of Christ is that sin shall be conquered and the kingdom of heaven come in power. (1) This is inspiring to the individual. No one of us need be satisfied with a low tone of Christian life. It is open to all to rise to great heights of holiness and fruitful living. The hope is in Christ, not in ourselves; and his resources are unlimited, his riches unsearchable (Eph. iii. 8). (2) This is also inspiring for the Church. The weary battle of the ages is destined to ultimate victory. Christ, not the devil, must triumph at last. Difficulties press upon us and discouragements grow thick around us, yet the cause of God cannot fail. The promise of victory should inspire the hope which helps forward the accomplishment.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XII.

The discourse of Job, here begun, continues through three chapters (ch. xii., xiii., xiv.). It is thought to form the conclusion of the first day's colloquy. In it Job for the first time really pours scorn upon his friends, and makes a mock of them (see vers. 2, 3, 20; ch. xiii. 4—13). This, however, is a secondary matter; his main object is to justify his previous assertions, (1) that the whole course of mundane events, whether good or evil, must be attributed to God (vers. 6—25); (2) that his sufferings entitle him to plead with God, and demand to know why he is so punished (ch. xiii. 3—28). A comparatively mild expostulation concludes the first series of speeches (ch. xiv.).

Vers. 1, 2.—And Job answered and said, No doubt but ye are the people. Bitterly ironical. Ye are those to whom alone it belongs to speak—the only "people" to whom attention is due. **And wisdom shall die with you.** "At your death," *i.e.*, "all wisdom will have fled the earth; there will be no one left who knows anything." At least, no doubt, you think so.

Ver. 3.—But I have understanding as well as you. "I, however, claim to have just as much understanding [literally, 'heart'] as you, and to be just as well entitled to speak, and to claim attention;" since **I am not inferior to you.** "I am not conscious," *i.e.*, "of any inferiority to you, intellectual or moral. I do not fall below you in either respect." **Yea, who knoweth not such things as these?** "Not," Job means to say, "that much understanding is necessary in such a case as this; any man of common intelligence can form a correct judgment on the point in dispute between us." The special point, in Job's mind, seems to be God's complete mastery over the world, and absolute control over all that takes place in it (see the introductory paragraph).

Ver. 4.—**I am as one mocked of his neighbour.** You have accused me of mockery (ch. xi. 3); but it is I that have been mocked of you. The allusion is probably to ch. xi. 2, 3, 11, 12, and 20. **Who calleth upon God, and he answereth him.** You mock me, though I have always clung to religion, have called upon God in prayer, and from time to time had my prayers answered by him. **Thus it is the just upright man that is laughed to scorn.**

Ver. 5.—**He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease;** rather, as in the Revised Version, *In the thought of him that is at ease*

there is contempt for misfortune; it (i.e. contempt) *is ready for them whose foot slippeth.* The meaning is, "I am despised and scorned by you who sit at ease, because my foot has slipped, and I have fallen into misfortune."

Ver. 6.—**The tabernacles of robbers prosper.** Having set at rest the personal question between himself and his friends, Job reverts to his main argument, and maintains that, the whole course of mundane events being under God's governance, all the results are to be attributed to him, and among them both the prosperity of the wicked, and, by parity of reasoning, the sufferings of the righteous. **And they that provoke God are secure** (comp. ch. ix. 24; x. 3). **Into whose hand God bringeth abundantly.** So both the Authorized and the Revised Versions; but recent critics mostly render, "who bring their God in their hand," *i.e.* "who regard their own right hand as their God" (comp. Virgil, 'Æn.,' x. 773, "Dextra mihi Deus").

Ver. 7.—**But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee.** Job here begins his review of all creation, to show that God has the absolute direction of it. The order of (1) beasts, (2) birds, (3) fishes, is that of dignity (comp. Gen. ix. 2; Ps. viii. 7, 8). Job maintains that, if appeal were made to the animal creation, and they were asked their position with respect to God, they would with one voice proclaim him their absolute Ruler and Director. **And the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee.** The instincts of birds, their periodical migrations, their inherited habits, are as wonderful as anything in the Divine economy of the universe, and as much imply God's continually directing hand.

Ver. 8.—**Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee.** If the material earth be intended, the appeal must be to its orderly course, its summers and winters, its seed-time and harvest, its former and latter rains, its constant productivity, which, no less than animal instincts, speak of a single ruling power directing and ordering all things. If the creeping things of the earth, the reptile creation, be meant, then the argument is merely an expansion of that in the preceding verse. The instincts of reptiles are to be ascribed, no less than those of beasts and birds, to the constant superintending action and providence of the Almighty. **And the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.** The testimony will be unanimous—beasts, birds, reptiles, and fishes will unite in it.

Ver. 9.—**Who knoweth not in all these;** or, *by all these;* i.e. by all these instances. **That the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?** literally, *the hand of Jehovah.* The name "Jehovah" does not occur elsewhere in the dialogue, though it is employed frequently in the historical sections (ch. i. 6—12, 21; ii. 1—7; xxxviii. 1; xl. 1, 3, 6; xlii. 1, 7—12). The writer probably regards the name as unfamiliar, if not unknown, to Job's neighbours, and therefore as avoided by him in his discussions with them. But here, for once, he forgets to be consistent with himself. Outside Scripture, the name is first found on the Moabite Stone (about B.C. 890), where it designates the God worshipped by the Israelites (see 'Records of the Past,' vol. xi. p. 166, l. 18).

Ver. 10.—**In whose hand is the soul of every living thing.** A brief summary of what had been said in vers. 7, 8, to which is now appended the further statement, that in God's hand—wholly dependent on him—is the entire race of mankind also. **And the breath of all mankind;** literally, *and the spirit of all flesh of man.*

Ver. 11.—**Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat?** rather, *as the palate tasteth its meat?* (see the Revised Version). In other words, "Is it not as much the business of the ear to discriminate between wise and unwise words, as of the palate to determine between pleasant and unpleasant tastes?" The bearing of the verse on the general argument is not clear.

Ver. 12.—**With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding.** Men get their wisdom gradually and painfully by much experience during a long stretch of time, so that it is not until they are "ancient" that we can call them wise or credit them with "understanding." But with God the case is wholly different.

Ver. 13.—**With him is wisdom and strength.** With God wisdom and strength dwell essentially. He is not wiser or stronger at one time than at another. Time and experience add nothing to the perfection of his attributes, which are unchangeable. Such wisdom infinitely transcends any to which man can attain, and therefore is doubtless the wisdom whereby the world is governed. **He hath counsel and understanding.** God *has* these qualities as his own. They are not acquired or imparted, but belong to him, necessarily and always.

Ver. 14.—**Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again.** Professor Lee thinks that the allusion is to the cities of the plain (Gen. xix. 24—29). But the sentiment is so general, that we may well doubt if particular instances were in Job's mind. At any rate, the destructive agencies of nature must be as much included as any supernatural acts. **He shutteth up a man** (comp. ch. xi. 10). God "shuts up" men when he hedges them in with calamities or other circumstances, which take away from them all freedom of action (ch. iii. 23; xix. 8). When he does this, the result follows—

There can be no opening. No other power can give release.

Ver. 15.—**Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up.** God, at his pleasure, causes great droughts, which are among the worst calamities that can happen. He withholds the blessed rain from heaven (Deut. xi. 17; 1 Kings viii. 35; xvii. 1), and the springs shrink, and the rivers dry up, and a fruitful land is turned into a desert, and famine stalks through the land, and men perish by thousands. **Also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth;** *i.e.* he causes floods and inundations. Once upon a time he overwhelmed the whole earth, and destroyed almost the entire race of mankind, by a deluge of an extraordinary character, which so fixed itself in the human consciousness, that traces of it are to be found in the traditions of almost all the various races of men. But, beside this great occasion, he also in ten thousand other cases, causes, by means of floods, tremendous ruin and devastation, sweeping away crops and cattle, and even villages and cities, sometimes even "overturning the earth," causing lakes to burst, rivers to change their course, vast tracts of land to be permanently submerged, and the contour of coasts to be altered.

Ver. 16.—**With him is strength and wisdom;** rather (as in the Revised Version), *with him is strength and effectual working.* God has not only the wisdom to design the course of events (ver. 13), but the power and ability to carry out all that he designs. **The deceived and the deceiver are his.** Not only does God rule the course of external nature, but also the doings of men. "Shall there be evil in a city, and shall not he have done it?" (Amos iii. 6) He allows some to deceive, and others to be deceived. Moral evil is thus under his control, and, *in a certain sense*, may be called his doing. But it behoves men, when they approach such great mysteries, to be very cautious and wary in their speech. Job touches with somewhat too bold a hand the deepest problems of the universe.

Ver. 17.—**He leadeth counsellors away spoiled.** The wise of the earth cannot resist or escape him; he frustrates their designs and overthrows them, and, as it were, leads them away captive. **And maketh the judges fools;** rather, *and judges maketh he fools.* There is no article, and no particular judges are referred to (comp. Isa. xliv. 25).

Ver. 18.—**He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle.** This may either mean that God at his pleasure both looses kings from captivity, and also binds them with a cord and causes them to be carried away captive; or that he looses the authority which kings have over their subjects, and then lets them be carried away captive by their enemies. The latter is perhaps the more probable sense.

Ver. 19.—**He leadeth princes away spoiled;** rather, *priests* (כֹּהֲנִים), as in the Revised Version. This is the only mention of "priests" in the Book of Job, and a priest-caste, such as that of Egypt or of Israel, can scarcely be meant. The priests are placed among the mighty, on a par with kings (ver. 18), princes (ver. 21), and "the strong" (ver. 21). This context makes us naturally think of those priest-kings whom we hear of in the olden times, such as were Melchizedek (Gen. xix. 18—20) and Jethro (Exod. iii. 1; xviii. 1—27), and the Egyptian kings of the twenty-first dynasty ('History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. ii. pp. 408—415), and Ethbaal of Tyre ('History of Phœnicia,' p. 435), and Sethos (Herod., ii. 141), and others. Job's allusion is probably to persons of this exalted class, who no doubt were sometimes defeated and dragged into captivity, like other rulers and governors. **And overthroweth the mighty.** Schultens understands by *ethanim* (אֵיתָנִים) "great teachers;" but the ordinary meaning of the word is "strong" or "mighty" (see ch. xxxiii. 19; Micah vi. 2).

Ver. 20.—**He removeth away the speech of the trusty.** God deprives trusted statesmen of their eloquence, destroys their reputation and their authority. **And taketh away the understanding of the aged.** He turns wise and aged men into fools and drivellers, weakening their judgments and reducing them to imbecility.

Ver. 21.—**He poureth contempt upon princes;** literally, *upon the munificent.* But the word has often the more generic sense of "princes," "great men" (see 1 Sam. ii. 8; Prov. xxv. 7, etc.). **And weakeneth the strength of the mighty;** literally, *looseth the belt of the strong.* But our version sufficiently expresses the meaning.

Ver. 22.—**He discovereth deep things out of darkness.** By "deep things" are probably meant the "deeply laid schemes" which wicked men concoct in darkness (or secrecy). These God often "discovers," or causes to be laid bare. English history can point to such a case in the discovery of the famous "Gunpowder Plot" in the second year of King James I. **And bringeth out to light the shadow of death.** There is nothing secret which God cannot, if he choose, reveal; nor is there anything hid which he cannot make known. Dark, murderous schemes, on which lies a shadow as of death, which men plan in secret, and keep hidden in their inmost thoughts, he can, and often does, cause to be brought to light and made manifest in the sight of all. Every such scheme, however carefully guarded and

concealed, shall be one day made known (Matt. x. 26). Many are laid bare even in the lifetime of their devisers.

Ver. 23.—**He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them.** God's providence concerns itself, not only with the fate of individual men, but also with that of nations. With Israel, his "peculiar people" (Deut. xiv. 2), he especially concerned himself, but not with Israel only. Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, Elam, Edom, Ammon, Moab, were likewise objects of his attention, of his guidance, of his chastening hand, of his avenging rod. Particular nations were consigned by God to the charge of particular angels (Dan. x. 13, 20). At his pleasure he can "increase" nations by blessing them with extraordinary fecundity (Exod. i. 7—12), or "destroy" them by internal decay, by civil wars, or by the swords of their neighbours. **He enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again**; *i.e.* "enlarges their bounds, or diminishes them." In Western Asia, where Job lived, empires were continually starting up, growing and expanding, increasing to vast dimensions, and then after a while shrinking back again to their original narrow limits. Egypt, Elam, Babylon, and the Hittite nation were cases in point.

Ver. 24.—**He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth**; rather, *the chiefs of the people*, or "the popular chieftains" (Lee). He deprives these "chiefs" of their wisdom or courage, or both, and thus brings down the nations under their governance. **And causeth them to wander in a wilderness** where there is **no way**; rather, *in a chaos*—one of the words used in Gen. i. 2 to describe the condition of the material universe before God had ordered and arranged it. The chieftains, deprived of their "heart," are so confused and perplexed that they do not know what to do, or which way to turn.

Ver. 25.—**They grope in the dark without light** (comp. ch. v. 14 and Deut. xxviii. 29). **And he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man**; literally, *to wander*—to pursue a devious course instead of a straight one.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Job to Zophar*: 1. *The conduct of the friends criticized.* I. ARROGANT ASSUMPTION REPELLED. 1. *With sarcastic admiration.* "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." Irony is a weapon difficult and dangerous to use, apt to wound the hand that wields it as well as the heart that feels it, and seldom becoming on the lips of any, least of all of good men. Admirably adapted to sting and lacerate, it rarely improves or conciliates those against whom it is directed. Yet, not being absolutely sinful, it may be employed with success against arrogant pretension and haughty assumption. Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings xviii. 27), and St. Paul in his Epistles (Gal. v. 15; Phil. iii. 2; 1 Cor. iv. 8), used satire with remarkable effect. Job also in the present instance may be held as justified in retorting on Zophar and his colleagues, whose conduct richly deserved castigation. 2. *With vehement self-assertion.* "But I have understanding [literally, 'a heart'] as well as you; I am not inferior to you [literally, 'I fall not beneath or behind you']." Modesty, which at all times becomes good men (Prov. xxx. 3; Dan. ii. 30; John i. 27; 2 Cor. iii. 5), and is specially enjoined upon God's people (Ps. xxv. 9; Isa. lxvi. 2; Micah vi. 8), and Christ's followers (Matt. v. 3; xviii. 4; Rom. xii. 3; Col. iii. 12; 1 Pet. v. 5), need not prevent a frank self-assertion when one is, like Job, unjustly aspersed. It is sometimes false humility to sit with uncomplaining silence beneath the tongue of slander. Provided one indulge not in extravagant assertion, and assume not the credit of gifts and graces which have descended from above, a man may honestly and even boldly maintain his intellectual and moral worth, should these appear to be maliciously traduced. Job might have safely claimed to surpass his antagonists in mental capacity and acquaintance with the culture of the day, in ripe personal experience and ability to interpret the ways of God to man; but with much modesty he only aspires to be their equal, to have a heart (*Anglicè*, a head, a brain) as well as they, and not to be the shallow-pated witling, or wild ass's colt, they insinuated. 3. *With scornful contempt.* "Yea, who knoweth not such things as these?" The sublime wisdom with which they sought to overwhelm him was the veriest commonplace; their much-paraded teaching but a string of threadbare maxims, "familiar in the mouth as household words," of which he himself could supply an endless series of examples, as beautiful and more correct—which he does in the present chapter. It is a just ground of complaint when old and hackneyed sentiments in morals or religion, science or

philosophy, are served up with the air of, and made to do duty for, original discoveries. Yet it is proper to remember that truth once apprehended by the mind does not deteriorate, or become less valuable, by age. Besides, it is of more consequence that a doctrine should be true than that it should be new. Still, new truth, or, what is often mistaken for such, new aspects of old truths, possess a singular fascination for vigorous and independent minds.

II. UNKIND BEHAVIOUR RESENTED. 1. *Its character described.* "I am as one mocked of his neighbour;" "The just upright man is laughed to scorn." By serving up such trite platitudes as Job had listened to, they had simply been converting him and his calamities into a laughing-stock, because they saw him standing on the sharp edge of ruin, as a traveller might cast away "a despised lamp," of which he had no further need. To make a man the subject of laughter, the butt of ridicule, the object of scornful wit on account of either personal appearance (Gen. xxi. 9), bodily infirmity (2 Kings ii. 23), providential adversity (Lam. ii. 15), or religious character (Ps. xlii. 3), is severely reprehended by the Word of God (Prov. iii. 34; xvii. 5; xxx. 17). Yet good men may expect to receive such treatment at the hands of worldly unbelievers and nominal professors, since the like was meted out to Christ (Matt. xxvi. 67, 68; xxvii. 27—31; Luke xxiii. 35), David (Ps. xxii. 7; xxxv. 16; lxix. 11, 12), and the apostles (Acts ii. 13), to Old Testament saints (2 Chron. xxx. 10; 1 Kings xxii. 24; Heb. xi. 36), and New Testament preachers (Acts xvii. 32) and disciples (Jude 18). 2. *Its aggravations recited.* These were twofold. (1) Job, who had been subjected to this scornful laceration, had been (*a*) a good man, personally just and upright, and therefore such a one as saints should not have ridiculed; (*b*) one who had enjoyed confidential communications with Heaven—a man of prayer, who had called upon God and been answered by him—and therefore not a person to be lightly spoken of or to; and (*c*) a miserable sufferer overtaken by adversity—one who was "ready to slip with his feet," and on that account all the more requiring to be comforted instead of scorned. (2) They who had scorned him had been (*a*) his neighbours, his friends, at whose hands he should rather have received pity (ch. vi. 14); and (*b*) were themselves in the enjoyment of ease, which might have kindled in their flinty bosoms a spark of sympathy for his misfortunes. 3. *Its extenuation stated.* It was common. "Contempt for the weak, who totter and fall on slippery paths, is the habitual impulse of those who stand firmly on the firm ground of security, and see no reason why other men should not be as vigorous and 'resolute' and prosperous as themselves" (Cox). The world worships success; failure is its unpardonable sin. When fortune smiles upon a person he is known of all; when adversity engulfs him, he is forgotten by all (ch. viii. 18). Recall the language of Buckingham on his way to execution: "This from a dying man receive as certain," etc. ('King Henry VIII.,' act ii. sc. 1); and Mark Antony's address over Cæsar's dead body: "But yesterday," etc. ('Julius Cæsar,' act iii. sc. 2).

Learn: 1. If adversity has its uses, prosperity has its dangers, being prone to engender self-conceit, arrogance, lack of sympathy, and contempt for others. 2. Wisdom is the noblest excellence of man; yet of wisdom no man enjoys a monopoly. 3. It is no disparagement to truth to be styled commonplace, since precisely as it becomes commonplace does it accomplish its mission. 4. As prayer will not always hinder persecution, so neither should persecution by either friends or foes be allowed to extinguish prayer. 5. Few faults of men are so completely bad that no sort of extenuation can be discovered for them.

Vers. 6—13.—*Job to Zophar: 2. The dogma of the friends demolished.* I. BY THE FACTS OF EXPERIENCE. 1. *The adverse fortunes of the good.* Exemplified in Job's own case, which showed (1) that a man might be upright and yet fall into misfortune; (2) that a person enjoying confidential relations with Heaven, calling upon God and receiving answers, might sink so low in the mire of adversity as to become a scorn and a byword, and be regarded as a sort of infidel and outcast; and (3) that the largest and heaviest portion of a good man's affliction might even come from the good themselves, from those who enjoyed the reputation at least of being religious, from his neighbours and friends, who were themselves sitting in the sunshine of prosperity. And the entire veracity of these deductions is abundantly confirmed by the concur-

rent testimony of all past ages, by the histories, *e.g.* of Abel, of Joseph, of David, of Christ; while it is sustained by the voice of all contemporary observation. 2. *The prosperous fortunes of the bad.* Apt illustrations were at hand in the seemingly unchanging success which waited on the footsteps of those marauding caterans with which Arabia Deserta was overrun. (1) As to *character*, they were notoriously wicked, in fact, flagrantly immoral, outrageously ungodly. They were: (*a*) Robbers of men, violent and rapacious plunderers, who put might for right, "men of the arm" (ch. xxii. 8), acting on

> "The good old rule, the simple plan,
> That they should take who have the power,
> And they should keep who can;"

like the Nephilim and Gibborim of Noah's day, who deluged the world with immorality and violence (Gen. vi. 4). (*b*) Defiers of God, impudent and audacious sinners who openly and presumptuously trampled on Heaven's laws in order to obtain their unhallowed will, like the tower-builders of Babel (Gen. xi. 4), like Pharaoh (Exod. v. 2), like Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii. 19—35), like wicked men generally, whose foolish tongues "talk loftily," and "set themselves against the heavens," and "walk through the earth" (Ps. lxxiii. 8, 9), and whose carnal minds, inflamed with enmity against God (Rom. viii. 7), conspire against the Lord and his Anointed (Ps. ii. 2). (*c*) Worshippers of the sword, who had no deity but the dagger which they carried in their hands, as the glutton has no god but his belly (Phil. iii. 19); who, like Lamech, made ballads to their rapiers (Gen. iv. 23); like Laban, regarded brute force as the supreme power of the world (Gen. xxxi. 29); and like the ancient Chaldeans, took military strength for their god (Hab. i. 11). (2) As to *fortune*, it was as widely removed from that of the virtuous and pious as it could well be. (*a*) Their tents were peaceful. That is, their habitations were tranquil, their families were united and numerous; their domestic felicity was deep (cf. ch. xxi. 8—11; Ps. xvii. 14; xlix. 11). (*b*) Their persons were secure. Calamity seldom, almost never, overtook them. Winds and hurricanes that desolated the righteous left them untouched (Ps. lxxiii. 4). (*c*) Their baskets were full. Retaining the Authorized Version (Carey and others), we understand Job to have said that God brought to them abundantly with his own hand, as if he had taken them under his especial protection.

II. BY THE TEACHINGS OF THE CREATURES. 1. *The teachers.* The entire circle of animate and inanimate creation—everything on the earth, in the air, and in the sea. The natural and the supernatural, the visible and the invisible, the material and the spiritual, the mundane and the heavenly, are in God's universe so indissolubly linked together, and so wisely adjusted to each other, that the one is a picture or reflection of the other, the earthly and material an emblem of the heavenly and spiritual. Hence all nature is full of subtle analogies to things and thoughts existing in the realms above it—the intellectual, the moral, the spiritual, the human, the celestial. Hence the wise student of nature may find

> "Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything."
> ('As You Like It,' act ii. sc. 1.)

Hence man is frequently counselled by Scripture writers to learn wisdom from the creatures. "Solomon sends us to the ant; Agur to the coney, the locust, the spider; Isaiah to the ox and the ass; Jeremiah to the stork, the turtle-dove, the crane, the swallow; and the heavenly Teacher himself to the fowls of the air" (Thomas). Of all teachers Christ stood indisputably first in interpreting the hidden thoughts of nature. 2. *The teaching.* While the creatures say much to man concerning God, his almighty power, unerring wisdom, unwearied goodness, and ever-watchful care; and concerning duty, reminding man that he, like them, should act in harmony with the laws of his nature, and in obedience to the will of his Creator (Ps. cxlviii. 7—13), they are here introduced as instructors on the subject of Divine providence. Among the lower creatures phenomena exist analogous to those above described as occurring in the higher world of men. How often is the harmless lamb devoured by the wolf, the kid by the panther, the gazelle by the tiger, the patient ass by the ferocious lion! Are not the eagle, the vulture, and the hawk but as rapacious robbers swooping down upon the dove

the sparrow, and the robin? Can greater plunderers be found than the vast aquatic monsters, the whale, the shark, and the crocodile, which roam through the deep, striking terror among the lesser tribes that haunt the seas? And yet "who knoweth not in all these that the hand of Jehovah hath wrought this, in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?" Well, if these things occur under God's government among the lower creatures, why, asks Job, might similar occurrences not transpire under the same government among men?

III. By the sayings of the fathers. 1. *The ground of their authority.* The weight attached by Zophar, and indeed allowed by Job himself, to the maxims of antiquity, was derived from the fact that they were the concentrated wisdom of antecedent ages, which had been carefully elaborated by long-lived sages as the result of their individual and collective experience (*vide* homiletics on ch. viii. 8—22). 2. *The limit of their authority.* Granting that these sagacious apothegms and profound parables were fairly entitled to be heard, Job contended that they were not possessed of absolute authority. They were not to be accepted with unquestioning submission, but with wise and intelligent discrimination, the ear, and of course "the judgment which sits behind the ear," having been given to try words as the palate does food. And even at the best they were only human judgments, the thoughts of long-lived patriarchs, of much-observing as well as deep-reflecting sages, but not at all to be compared with the thoughts of him with whom is "wisdom and strength, counsel and understanding" (ver. 13). They were, therefore, not to be accepted as final interpretations of the facts of providence, which were the concrete expressions of eternal Wisdom, as much as these traditional maxims were the abstract utterances of patriarchal wisdom. Man's thoughts never can be more than a finite projection, or contracted image, of God's. Hence the danger of setting man's thoughts in place of God's, investing confessions, catechisms, and symbolical books generally with the authority which belongs only to the supreme revelation of God's mind. Hence also the folly of attempting to crush the boundless realm of God's truth into the narrow dimensions of any formula, however beautiful or well-arranged, however strictly scientific or profoundly philosophic. The fundamental principles of all intelligent Protestantism may be summed up in two thoughts: man's formulas are not the exact measure of God's revelations; "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." 3. *The verdict of their authority.* If rightly discriminated, the voice of patriarchal wisdom will be found to be on Job's side; in support of which assertion he proceeds, in the next section, to recite other sayings of antiquity, which certainly give countenance rather to his than to their view of God's providential government of the world and mankind. So perhaps it will be generally found that the best thoughts of men in all ages harmonize with the thoughts of God as expressed both in the Bible and in providence.

Learn: 1. "He that is first in his own cause seemeth right; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." 2. "A half-truth is sometimes as dangerous as a whole lie." 3. "In contemplation of created things, by steps we may ascend to God." 4. It is not true that "man is the measure of the universe." 5. "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in man's philosophy." 6. "That alone is true antiquity which embraces the antiquity of the world, and not that which would refer us back to a period when the world was young."

Vers. 13—25.—*Job to Zophar:* 3. *The providence of God described.* I. As infinitely wise and powerful. "With God is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding" (ver. 13)—a sentiment repeated in ver. 16. Of the two attributes here mentioned, the first is involved in his supreme Divinity; though in the connection Job seems to base it on his eternal existence, as if he meant to say, "You affirm that in length of days is understanding, and I grant it; but what then must be the wisdom of him who is eternal in his years?" The second, which is equally involved in the conception of Godhead, may here be said to rest upon the already stated fact that "in his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (ver. 10). The Creator of the universe must be strong, and the Eternal Intelligence must be wise. Being, then, infinitely wise and powerful, the like qualities must appear in his handiwork. As the artist puts his conceptions into the painting which he executes, and the artificer directs attention to the work he has fashioned as a proof of his ability;

so, reasons Job, will the providential government of God be seen, when thoroughly examined, to reflect the matchless wisdom of his omniscient mind, and attest the measureless force of his almighty hand.

II. As ABSOLUTELY SOVEREIGN AND RESISTLESS. "Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening" (ver. 14). The first may allude to the destruction of the Tower of Babel, and the second to the confusion of tongues; though the reference may be more general, to such acts of destruction (and, by implication, of restoration) and of restraint (and again, by implication, of liberation) as attest his almighty power. Illustrations of the former may be found in the burning of Sodom by fire; the destruction of Jerusalem by the armies of Titus; the overthrow of Babylon and Nineveh; the engulfment of Herculaneum and Pompeii by volcanic agency; while the shutting up of men in prisons may be regarded as having been exemplified in Joseph (Gen. xxxvii. 24), Jeremiah (Lam. iii. 53; cf. Jer. xxxviii. 6), Jonah (i. 17).

III. As EXTENDING TO NATURE AND MAN. 1. *To nature.* "Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth" (ver. 15). Perhaps exemplified in the first formation of the dry land (Gen. i. 9), and in the Deluge (Gen. vii. 11); though more probably pointing to the Divine agency as the true cause of drought (1 Kings xvii. 1), and of floods or destructive inundations. 2. *To man.* "The deceived and the deceiver are his" (ver. 16). Possibly alluding to himself and his companions (M. Good), though it is better to give the language a wider reference. Exemplified in Satan and man (ch. i. 12; Rev. xx. 3), the lying spirit and Ahab (1 Kings xxii. 22), antichrist and unbelievers (2 Thess. ii. 11). The language forcibly expresses God's complete control over all classes of men.

IV. As CONTROLLING INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES. 1. *Individuals.* (1) Civic rulers. "He leadeth counsellors away spoiled [literally, 'naked,' *i.e.* 'stripped of their official robes, and of their clothes and shoes as captives'], and maketh judges fools," destroying their power and degrading their position (cf. Isa. iii. 2, 4; xl. 23; xliv. 25). "He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle" or cord; meaning either he unbinds their prisoners, and makes them prisoners instead, or he unlooses the jewelled girdle of kings, the insignia of royalty, and ties their loins with the cords of servitude. Illustrations: Zedekiah, Napoleon, etc. (2) Ecclesiastical officers. "He leadeth princes [literally, 'priests'] away spoiled [literally, 'stripped of their robes'], and overthroweth the mighty [or, 'the long established'—those of great and high repute for sanctity and wisdom, probably such priest-princes as Melchizedek and Jethro]." (3) Eloquent senators. "He removeth away the speech [literally, 'the lip'] of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged" (ver. 20). So he turned the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness (2 Sam. xv. 31). (4) Haughty nobles. "He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty;" literally, "looseth the girdle of the strong" (ver. 21). The girdle being the belt by which the garments were fastened prior to undertaking any violent exertion, the language expresses the idea that it is God's province either to impart or to withhold the strength requisite for any undertaking in which man may engage. (5) Intriguing politicians. "He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death" (ver. 22). While the language may with perfect propriety be applied to the power possessed by God of disclosing truths which lie beyond the reach of the human intellect, as *e.g.* those of revelation, or of bringing to light recondite discoveries in science and philosophy, which are ever wrapt in impenetrable darkness till he is pleased to unfold them, the connection seems to rather point to God's ability to read the secret thoughts and intentions of the human heart (Heb. iv. 12, 13), and in particular to detect and expose "the deep and desperate designs of traitors, conspirators, and other state villains" (Good); as those, *e.g.* of Absalom against David (2 Sam. xv. 6), and Haman against the Jews (Esth. iii. 9), of Herod against Christ (Matt. ii. 8), and of the Jews against Paul (Acts xxiii. 21), as the Catiline conspiracy in Rome, and the Gunpowder Plot in England. 2. *Communities.* (1) National tendencies. The deep things out of darkness and the discovered death-shade may also allude to "the hidden bents and currents which slowly give shape to the character and functions of a nation or ever it is aware, or ever even its rulers are aware, of them; that stream of tendency running partly underground for a while, which silently carries us we know not whither, we know not

how, and lands us in enterprises and modes of national activity alien and opposed to those towards which our subtlest politicians supposed they were guiding us" (Cox). (2) National movements. "He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again" (ver. 23). The original distribution of mankind into nations, and their dispersion over the face of earth, although effected in accordance with natural law, was directly the work of God (Gen. x., xi.). So national increase and national diminution, national prosperity and national adversity, however these may seem to be the result of well-known and invariably operating causes, are traceable in the last analysis to the will and power of God (Ps. xxii. 28; xxiv. 1; xlvii. 2, 3; Isa. xl. 22, 23; Dan. iv. 17; Acts xvii. 26). He increased Israel in Egypt (Exod. i. 12), and diminished it in the wilderness (Numb. xiv. 29), advanced it to prosperity under David (2 Sam. viii. 6, 11, 14), and gave it up to decay from the time of Rehoboam forward (1 Kings xii. 24). He enlarged in turn Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Rome, and in turn straitened them. He has exalted Britain, America, Germany, but he has not deprived himself of power to bring them to the dust again. (3) National leaders. "He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way," leaving them to their own foolish and distracted counsels, so that "they grope in the dark without light," and causing them "to wander in a wilderness where there is no way" (vers. 24, 25). It is not in man that walketh, whether he be a statesman or a ploughman, to direct his steps aright. They that guide either themselves or others by the light of their own understanding are like travellers who follow an *ignis fatuus* to their destruction. Hence no politician can safely guide a state, unless God first guides him. A gigantic intellect, splendid eloquence, prolonged experience, the subtlest craft, the most careful deliberation, the rarest sobriety of judgment, will not suffice for political success (of the highest kind) without the help of Divine wisdom and strength. Even a Solomon, if deserted by God, will begin to play the fool, and a Samson to be weak as other men.

Learn: 1. To recognize God's hand in the providential government of the world. Habitually to do so is no inconsiderable sign of a gracious heart. 2. Not to look for an exact distribution of rewards and punishments on earth. It is not included in the Divine programme that the justice of God's procedure here shall always be perceptible by those to whom it relates. 3. To rest assured notwithstanding that God doeth all things well. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" 4. To reverently bow before the providential dispensations of him who reigns in heaven and rules on earth. Though his will is too absolute to be resisted, yet the choice of how we shall submit to that will has been placed in our hands. 5. To carry the thought of God's overruling providence with us into all the relations and duties of life. It is a great help to piety to recollect that God is near.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The resentment of a wounded spirit.* Repeated reproaches and accusations falling upon the conscience of an innocent man sting him into self-defence. They may do a service by rousing him out of stupor and weakness, and may bring to light the nobler qualities of his soul. We are indebted to the slanders of the Corinthians for some of the noblest self-revelations of St. Paul.

I. OUTBURST OF INDIGNANT SCORN. (Vers. 1—3.) With bitter irony Job rebukes the assumption of these men to know better than himself concerning matters which belonged to the common stock of intelligence, and in which he was in no wise inferior to them. To claim superior knowledge over others is always offensive. To do so against a sick and broken man from the vantage-ground of health and prosperity is nothing less than a cruelty. And to make this pretension in matters of common tradition and acceptance, where all stand about on a level, is an insult to the sufferer's understanding.

II. INDIGNANT REMONSTRANCE AGAINST THE COURSE OF THE WORLD. (Vers. 4—6.) 1. *Cruel inversions of life.* Job, who in his just and innocent life, had hitherto stood in confidential relations with God, who had prayed and whose prayers had been heard, is now

a butt for laughter and scorn. He calls now and God no longer hears (ver. 4). 2. *The injustice of human opinion.* (Ver. 5.) "Contempt belongs to misfortune, in the opinion of the secure." A true description of the opinion of the world. If "nothing succeeds like success," then nothing damns like failure in the common opinion of the unfeeling world. "It awaits those whose foot is slipping." As the herd of wolves turn upon the sick and fallen brute, so the thoughtless man tramples upon the man who is down. To those who are banded together by the tie of selfish pleasure only or convenience, the very sight of that which interferes for a moment with their content is hateful. How different the sanctified instincts of pity, compassion, and helpfulness which Christ has planted in his society, the Church! It is the mission of the Christian community to leaven with its principles the heartless mass of society. On the other hand, nothing succeeds like success; "restful dwellings" (ver. 6) and confident security are enjoyed by the wasters or desolators who by word and deed hold God in contempt, and think to make him bend to their purposes. The rude man of violence, who owns no law but that of the strong hand, thinks that where force is there is God, and all must bow to force as if to God. So he "taketh God in his hand;" he "imputes his power unto his god;" he sacrifices to his net, and burns incense unto his drag (Hab. i. 11, 16). His motto is like that of the impious warrior, "My right hand is god" (Virg., 'Æn.,' x. 773, "Dextra mihi deus").—J.

Vers. 7—12.—*The wisdom and the power of God a truth universally known.* It is not the peculiar possession of those fancied wise friends. It is a truth impressed on all nature and on the experience of man.

I. APPEAL TO THE LIVING CREATURES. (Vers. 7—10.) The beasts, the birds of the air, the earth with all its living growths, the creatures of the sea,—all bear traces of his skill, all receive from him their life and sustenance, all are subject to his omnipresent power (comp. Ps. civ. 26—30).

II. APPEAL TO THE EXPERIENCE OF AGE. As the palate tries and discriminates between the different dishes on the table, so does the ear try the various opinions to which it listens, and selects the best, the ripest, as its guide (ver. 11). Long life means large experience, and large experience gives the criterion of truth and the guide of life. Yet experience is but the book of *common* experiences. It fails us when we have to deal with the peculiar and the exceptional, which is the present situation of Job (ver. 12).

III. ELOQUENT DESCRIPTION OF THE POWER AND WISDOM OF GOD. (Vers. 13—25.) Here Job rivals and surpasses his friends. With repeated blows, as of the hammer on the anvil, he impresses the truth that the might and intelligence of the Supreme are irresistible, and before him all human craft and power must be reduced to impotence. The power and the wisdom of God alternately occupy his thought, appear and reappear in a variety of images.—J.

Vers. 13—15, 18—21, 23—25.—*Images of the irresistible power of God.* I. THE WALL, OR HOUSE, OR CITY THUS DEMOLISHED CANNOT BE BUILT UP AGAIN. (Ver. 14.) Swept with the besom of destruction, it becomes the possession of the bittern and pools of water (Isa. xiv. 23). The ruined walls of Babylon and her charred gates defy the weary toil of the people (Jer. li. 58); she sinks, and shall not rise from the evil that Jehovah will bring upon her (Jer. li. 64). Men may build, but he will throw down (Mal. i. 4).

II. THE PRISON-DOORS WHICH HE SHUTS NO MAN CAN OPEN. (Ver. 14.) He hath the key of David (Isa. xxii. 22; Rev. iii. 7). Vain all human bravery when the Lord hath determined to "deliver a man into the hand of his enemy" (1 Sam. xxvi. 8). Yet there is a merciful aspect of this seeming harsh truth, as pointed out by St. Paul: "He hath shut them all up in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all" (Rom. xi. 32).

III. THE DRYING UP AND SENDING OF FLOODS. (Ver. 15.) As illustrated in the ancient story of Gen. vi. and viii., and of the drought in Elijah's time (1 Kings xvii.). He shuts the heaven (1 Kings viii. 35), and he alone can give showers (Jer. xiv. 22).

IV. THE SUBJUGATION OF EARTHLY KINGS. (Ver. 18.) As illustrated in the carrying of Manasseh captive to Babylon (2 Chron. xxiii.), and of Zedekiah (Jer. lii.). The

thought is repeated in ver. 21, and further illustrations may be drawn from the cases of Pharaoh, of Saul, of Ahab.

V. THE DEPRIVATION OF SPEECH AND WISDOM. (Ver. 20.) Men's sagacity is turned to folly; their prudence is vain when it pleases him to put forth his power (comp. Isa. iii. 1—3). So in ver. 24, where we are reminded of the striking judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv.).

VI. THE INCREASE AND DESTRUCTION OF NATIONS. (Ver. 23.) The rise and fall of empires and peoples is determined by constant laws. Obedience to law means increase and prosperity; violation of law, decay and ruin.

VII. CONFUSION AND BEWILDERMENT are evidences of the practical power of God (vers. 24, 25). Chaos, wandering, darkness, helpless vacillation, fall upon men and nations from time to time, because they have been unfaithful to the true light and the Divine leading.—J.

Vers. 16, 17, 22.—*Instances of the overruling wisdom of God.* I. THE DECEIVER AND THE DECEIVED ARE HIS. (Ver. 16.) He can cause the spirit of the faithless prophet to be a lying spirit (1 Kings xxii.), to be deceived in his oracles, and incur destruction (Ezek. xiv. 9).

II. SO THE JUDGES ARE MADE FOOLS. (Ver. 17.) In short, God hath made from time to time the wisdom of this world foolishness (1 Cor. i.), that no flesh might glory in his presence.

III. HE BRINGS NEW DISCOVERIES OF TRUTH TO LIGHT. (Ver. 22.) This is the revelation of God in history, and its page is full of illustrations. The calling of Abraham; the raising up of Moses; the deliverance of Israel; the elevation of David, the "rod out of his stem," the lowly Messiah; the progress of the gospel and triumph over the wisdom of Greece and pride of Rome; the beginnings of the Reformation,—are but a few of the salient points in this providential history of the world.

The whole description is fitted to teach: (1) Humility in the sense of the feebleness of our power, the inferiority of our knowledge in presence of the power and wisdom of God. (2) Reverence in the study of history and the observation of nature. (3) Watchful and confident expectation of changes in the course of providence, by which iniquity will be overturned, the rule of falsehood be brought to an end, and the Divine kingdom be advanced in the world.—J.

Vers. 1—6.—*Contempt the lot of misfortune.* Job is driven to retort. He affirms his own competency to speak. He claims equality with his would-be teachers, whose words are yet far from healing or comforting his sorely afflicted heart. "I have understanding as well as you." But to him belongs the contempt which is the lot of misfortune. Sad is the story told in a sentence here, but repeated in every day's history and in every land and every age. The selfish heart, rising to a higher level of prosperity, looks down, and looks contemptuously down, on him over whom Misfortune casts her dark shade. "The just upright man is laughed to scorn." Note the truth of this, its wrong and its remedy.

I. UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE TESTIFIES TO THIS—THAT CONTEMPT IS THE LOT OF MISFORTUNE. The testimony comes up from a thousand sufferers towards whom fortune has shown no favour. The wounds may be deep, the pangs of sorrow keen; dark desolation may encompass; but the joyful, the well-to-do, on whom the smile of prosperity rests, become incompetent to descend to the lowly lot. On such the tale of woe makes little impression. There is a sad, if not even natural, revulsion from the mere sight of suffering, and the step is easy from this to the bitter, scathing complaint, "Ah! he brought it all upon himself!" From Job's days downward the same has been ever seen. Prosperity seems to blind the eyes, to harden the heart, to withdraw the sympathies even from the friend overtaken in misfortune. It is an interruption to ease and felicity, to quiet and comfort. And Well-to-do resists as impertinent the appeals of the victim of misfortune; or, as here, takes up an accusation against him, and treats him as an offender. Everywhere the truth of this is seen. "He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thoughts of him that is at ease."

II. IT IS NOT MORE GENERAL THAN IT IS WRONG. It is unworthy, unbrotherly, unneighbourlike. The great Teacher hit the evil with his hard words, and exposed for

ever to the gaze of men the self-sufficiency of the prosperous one and his carelessness as to the condition of the sufferer. He passes by on the other side, indisposed to help the poor wretch lying in his blood, stript and sore. Pride fills the heart to overflowing that is well-nigh full of treasure. There is little room in it for sympathy and pity, and the tender communion of sorrow. He who is lifted up does not feel that the lot of him who is trodden down is any affair of his. He cannot be hindered on his way. Shame upon the heart that is so far forgetful of the common interest that it leaves the needy and sad, and finds itself absorbed in its own comfort! The curl of contempt upon the lip and the hard word upon the tongue—Job fathomed this depth, and in the bitterness of his soul rebukes the wrong.

III. WE TURN TO OTHER WORDS FOR THE CORRECTION OF THIS ERROR. True, Job by his irony accuses his severe friends, who transport themselves into accusers. In their hard words he traces the contempt of which he complains, and takes his lot with others who suffer like himself. He is not unmindful of the true Source of help. He is one who "calleth upon God." He retains his integrity, and the consciousness of it gives him support even under this trouble. "The just upright man is laughed to scorn." But the assurance of his uprightness is a deep consolation. Here, then, are the true sources of help. The tested faith in God will find its reward, and the testimony of a good conscience is of price untold. By these Job is upheld, and by that strength which is secretly imparted to all faithful ones who call upon God, though it may seem as though they were abandoned and forgotten. If the "neighbour" mocketh, the righteous Judge does not mock; and though the trial is permitted and continued, a Divine and gracious end is reserved which Job lived fully to prove.—R. G.

Vers. 7—10.—*The testimony of the creature to the Divine government.* Job again vindicates himself in presence of his accusing friends. He professes his knowledge to be as theirs, and he even points them to the lower animals to find wisdom from them. The very beasts of the earth, the fowls of the air, the fruitful field, the fishes in the deep, all tell the great truth—Jehovah reigns supreme. "In his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind;" all proclaim the Almighty, all speak of the Ever-living One in whom all live. This testimony is witnessed—

I. IN THE CONSCIOUS LIFE OF EVERY CREATURE. Even man, at the head of all, is conscious of the dependence of his life upon some power higher than himself. There is one Lord of life, Author of all life, Supporter of all. Every individual life declares "the hand of the Lord hath wrought this." In his hand alone is "the soul"—the life "of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." He is the Creator and Preserver of every life.

II. IN THE INFINITE VARIETY OF LIFE. What an unlimited variety do we behold! The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the fish of the sea, abound in a wide diversity of life. All speak of the infinite Creator, in whom are the possibilities of infinite life; who, of his own infinite resources, has created and made the whole. That the species vary according to the encircling conditions of their life does not detract from their testimony to the infinite and supreme Power. For the very existence of every life speaks of that Power. How great is he whose creative skill reveals itself in this unlimited variety!

III. NOT LESS TESTIMONY IS BORNE BY THE CONTINUOUS REPRODUCTION OF THE VAST VARIETIES. That age after age this power continues to bring forth, each after its own kind, is another testimony to the greatness of him "in whose hand is the soul of every living thing." The creation and preservation of the many species age after age speaks to the thoughtful mind of him who is the one Lord of all life, who by his omnipotent overruling preserves all in their order and in their continuance.

IV. BUT IN THE MARVELLOUS STRUCTURE OF THEIR BODIES ANOTHER TESTIMONY IS BORNE. How delicate are the organs of the body—the powers of sight, of hearing, of activity; the strength of one, the delicacy of the structure of another! How wonderful are the nerves of the body, conveying the impression from the outer world to the brain! Equally so the blood-vessels, and the hidden powers by which the bones are built up, and again the powers of nutrition gathering food from without and assimilating it to the body in all its parts. This is done without the knowledge and consent of the creature; for the creature, even man, knows not how it is done. It is above him; it speaks

definitely and distinctly and loudly of God, "in whose hand is the breath of all mankind."

V. YET A FURTHER TESTIMONY IS TO BE SEEN IN THE ABUNDANT PROVISION MADE FOR THE SUSTENANCE OF ALL. Notwithstanding the vastness of the realm in which creature-life is found, and the variety of the forms of life, each having its own peculiar needs, yet he "satisfieth the desire of every living thing." Food is abundant for man and beast, and of the fowls of the air it is truly said, "he feedeth them." So the Divine work is seen on every side; and from all the varieties of conscious life one testimony arises to the great truth, "The Lord reigneth." On every work the truth lies clearly impressed, "The hand of Jehovah made this."—R. G.

Vers. 11—25.—*The Divine supremacy illustrated.* Bildad appeals to "the ancients." Job replies, "I also know their teaching." But there is a wisdom higher than that of the ancients. Wisdom—unfailing wisdom—is a Divine attribute. From the earthly to the heavenly wisdom Job turns. He speaks of a higher and a mightier One—One "with whom is strength and wisdom," by which he rules. The supremacy of that Divine rule he illustrates from a very wide field of survey. He points to the evidences of the Divine almightiness—

I. IN THE CONTRASTED POWERLESSNESS OF THE HUMAN OPPOSITION TO THE DIVINE WILL. (Ver. 14.)

II. IN THE CONTROL OF THE MIGHTY ELEMENTS OF NATURE. The very "waters" obey his behest (ver. 15).

III. IN COMPELLING EVEN THOSE THAT ERR AND THOSE THAT DECEIVE TO BE SUBSERVIENT TO HIS WILL AND PURPOSE. (Ver. 16.)

IV. IN CONFOUNDING THE WISDOM OF THE WISE. Leading "counsellors away spoiled," and bringing down the judge to the level of the fool (ver. 17).

V. IN HUMBLING KINGS AND PRIESTS AND MIGHTY MEN. (Vers. 18, 19.)

VI. IN RESTRAINING THE SPEECH OF THE ELOQUENT AND ROBBING THE AGED OF THEIR UNDERSTANDING. (Ver. 20.)

VII. IN CASTING CONTEMPT UPON THE HONOURABLE, AND MAKING THE STRONG TO TOTTER WITH WEAKNESS. (Ver. 21.) He giveth or taketh away wisdom and might as it pleaseth him, proving that he is wise and mighty above all; for these are his gifts to the children of men that have them.

VIII. HE FURTHER SHOWS THAT THE HIDDEN THINGS OF DARKNESS ARE OPEN TO HIS VIEW. He discovereth the secret works of evil. Even the thick shadow of death cannot hide from him (ver. 22).

IX. NATIONAL HISTORY IS EQUALLY UNDER HIS CONTROL. His power is over the nations; he enlarges or straitens as he pleases. He scatters or gathers as he will (ver. 23).

X. THE VERY CHIEFEST AMONG ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE EARTH ARE SUBJECT TO HIS SOVEREIGN SWAY. It is a little thing for him to remove the light of reason from them, confounding and confusing them, and casting them into darkness and gloom. Elsewhere we learn why and when the Almighty deals thus with men. Job's purpose is to show that man is as nothing before him. In his highest honour, in his utmost wisdom, in his greatest strength, he cannot contend with Jehovah. Over the individual life in all its various conditions, over the combined lives of men in their national or political combinations, he is still supreme. And over the heavens and the earth he is Lord—even over all. This is Job's faith and his declaration. He can proclaim the supreme and absolute majesty of Jehovah as truly, and even more strikingly than his friends.—R. G.

Ver. 2.—*Irony.* I. IRONY IS TO BE FOUND IN SCRIPTURE. There is great variety in the style of Scripture. Almost every modification of language is to be found in the Bible, consecrated to some holy purpose. Even the faculty of humour is utilized, as in the incident of Balaam's ass (Numb. xxii. 28—30), and in St. Paul's recommendation that the woman who will not wear a veil had better complete the exposure of her head by being shorn (1 Cor. xi. 6). The prophets abound in irony. Christ used irony in the parable of the rich fool (Luke xii. 16—20).

II. THERE IS A PLACE FOR IRONY IN DISCOURSE. Some evils can be best met just by

being exposed. Now, irony is a method of showing a thing in an unexpected light, so that, while admitting all its claims, we make it apparent that those very claims are absurd. Slight failings will be best castigated with simple ridicule; more serious ones, if they are not great sins, with grave irony.

III. PRETENTIOUSNESS ESPECIALLY PROVOKES IRONY. Each of Job's three friends has now spoken. Though they were not alike in attainments nor in natural dispositions, they agreed in their dogmas and in their judgment of Job. A tone of conscious superiority and irritating censoriousness rings through all their speeches. This not only vexes Job; it prompts an ironical retaliation. It is dangerous to make grand pretensions. Humility is a great security, and when humility is lost, we lay ourselves open to attack on the ground of our assumptions. Pretentiousness does not only thus provoke ironical replies; it best meets its merited castigation by these replies, which humiliate it in a most unanswerable manner.

IV. IRONY IS A DANGEROUS WEAPON FOR A CHRISTIAN TO WIELD. It may be a lawful weapon. There are times when it can be used in the cause of righteousness with tremendous effect. But there is great danger lest the employment of it should destroy "the greatest thing in the world"—love. There is always a tendency to push it too far, and to go beyond wholesome rebuke in the direction of cruel scorn. This is distinctly unchristian. Moreover, as Job's friends did not understand him, possibly he did not understand them. If so, his irony may have been too severe for justice. We should be careful that we are in no error before we venture to use irony against our brother. Even then, zeal for righteousness should be tempered by brotherly kindness.

V. GOD DISPLAYS IRONY IN PROVIDENCE. The Greek tragedians saw irony in fate. Man's greatness was shown to be a very small thing, and his boasted success a mere bubble. The old classical idea was dark and hard, for it did not take into account the Fatherhood of God. But within God's infinite purpose of love there is room for irony. By the slow unrolling of the course of events, the boasting of the pretentious ends in confusion. God humbles his creatures in their pride and vanity, giving them sudden falls, by means of which they cannot but feel their helplessness and littleness. The monarch is choked by a fly. Such things are not done vindictively, or in scorn; but because we are ruined by boasting and saved in our humiliation. Thus the ugly weapon of irony may prepare us for the healing grace of the gospel.—W. F. A.

Ver. 5.—*Contempt for the unfortunate.* Like Jesus, when he prayed for his murderers, with the plea that they knew not what they were doing (Luke xxiii. 34), though in much less perfect magnanimity, Job sees some excuse for the conduct of his censors. He finds that conduct to be an instance of a common rule of action, viz. that the prosperous despise the unfortunate.

I. WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND THE TROUBLE WE DO NOT SHARE. Job's vast woe was quite beyond the comprehension of his would-be sympathizers. They thought that they had fathomed its depths, and that they were in a position to adjudicate upon its merits. But they had scarcely skimmed its surface. They did not know what Job suffered; much less did they see why God had permitted him to be thus afflicted. The happy look from their sunny homes on the dark abodes of misery, but they cannot understand the sorrows they have never tasted. They who have always had their wants satisfied simply do not know what hunger and thirst are. The unbroken family cannot conceive of the agony of bereavement.

II. WE ARE TEMPTED TO DESPISE THE TROUBLE WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND. As we have not the faculty to dive into its mystery, it seems to us a shallow thing. Therefore, when the sufferers appear to make much of it, we are inclined to think that they are exaggerating it; that they are giving way to it in a cowardly weakness; that they are indecently demonstrative or even shamming hypocritically. The rich are too often ready to regard the very poor as whining impostors. They who have never felt the pangs of conscience look with contempt on the penitent's tears.

III. WE MAY USE OUR OWN TROUBLE AS A MEANS OF STIMULATING OUR SYMPATHY WITH THE TROUBLES OF OTHERS. Possibly this is one reason why it is sent to us. We have been too narrow and selfish in our view of it, thinking it must be confined to some effect directly and solely beneficial to ourselves. But it may be largely intended to

prepare us for our work in helping others in trouble. The widow can sympathize with the widow; the poor show most kindness to the poor. The experience of the prostration of a great illness enables a person to understand and help sick people. Thus sorrow is a talent to be used for the good of others, by being invested in sympathy.

IV. THE SORROWS OF CHRIST HELPED TO MAKE HIM A PERFECT SAVIOUR. If Christ understands anything, it is sorrow; for was he not "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"? Therefore the sufferer who is despised by his prosperous brethren can turn with assurance of sympathy to the Saviour of men. Christ not only understands sorrow, he knows how to use it. He converted his cross into a lever for raising a fallen world. He will help his suffering disciples to despise their own sorrows while sympathizing with the sorrows of others. Strong in his victory over sin, sorrow, and death, Christ for ever sanctifies suffering. While the superficial may despise it, true Christians can now see in it a means of heavenly grace.—W. F. A.

VERS. 7—10.—*Lessons of nature.* I. NATURE REBUKES MAN'S IGNORANCE. Job refers his friends to nature in a tone of reproach. They ought to have known what nature was proclaiming. There are two grounds for this rebuke. 1. *The wealth and fulness of nature's testimony to her Creator.* Go where one may, nature is ready to speak for God. The beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the creeping things on the ground, the fishes of the sea, all speak for the power and wisdom of their Maker. There is variety in this grand utterance of nature, yet there is unity. Many creatures, of diverse sorts, concur to bear witness to the same great truths. If we cannot understand the beasts, the birds may teach us; if the insects are an enigma, the fishes may instruct us. Though all these different voices of nature may not be sounding in our ears at once, we cannot be long out of the reach of some of them. Therefore—

> "In contemplation of created things
> By steps we may ascend to God."
>
> (Milton.)

2. *The greater intelligence of man.* "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee"—as though those dull brutes knew what man had missed discovering. So the lord of creation is sent to be a pupil of his humblest subjects. Of course, to be prosaically accurate, it must be said that the beasts do not understand the lessons they teach; that only man can know God, and that the testimony of nature is unconscious. Still, the higher faculty of man makes it a shame that he should not know what nature is teaching in so many ways all around him.

II. NATURE REVEALS GOD'S PRESENCE. 1. *By its constitution.* The very variety of the creation bespeaks the mind and power of the Creator. For this variety is not confused, but orderly. There must be a sameness about the very disorder of chaos which is not seen in the cosmos. The various species of living creatures keep their several places in the scale of creation, fulfil their distinctive destinies and perform their separate functions. There is mind and purpose in the very variety of nature. 2. *By its life.* Nature is not a huge mosaic. If its variegated picture were motionless and changeless, we could not but admire the infinite skill with which it had been put together. The exhibition of stuffed specimens of dead animals in a natural history museum gives us abundant proof of the skill of the Creator. But the fields show us what no museum can reveal. In the great world of nature all is life and movement. Thus we have not the relics of an ancient Divine activity of God, like fossils of extinct animals, but the creatures in the very flush of life. And this life must be constantly maintained. Then by its very continuance it proclaims the presence of God. He is in nature, energizing in it every moment. In his hand is the soul of every living creature. 3. *By its human connections.* Man shares in the common life of nature. The hand that holds the soul of every living thing holds the breath of all mankind. "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts xvii. 28). Therefore we have not only to look around us on the animal creation. If we do but consider our own existence, we have daily evidence of the presence of God. The testimony of creation is designed to remind us of our own dependence on God. It is especially a good corrective of the subjective notions of a visionary. Job answers Eliphaz and his awful vision most aptly by appealing to the great living voice of nature.—W. F. A.

Ver. 11.—*Discrimination.* Job seems to mean that, as the mouth detects differences of taste, so the ear discerns distinctions of words. We do not eat all that we taste. We can reject the nauseous and select the palatable. In the same way we do not accept and believe all that we hear. We can discriminate between the sayings that come to us. Bildad in particular has been attempting to settle the question of providence by appealing to the traditions of antiquity. Job shows that he can make the same appeal to another series of proverbs, and the result will be very different. Tradition is not unanimous. It is not reasonable, therefore, to take all that comes to hand from it as infallible truth. We must examine and test it, selecting what is wise, rejecting what is erroneous.

I. DISCRIMINATION IS NEEDED. Note why. 1. *Many voices claim a hearing.* We are not left to a monotone of advice. A very Babel of tongues assails us. We are besieged on all sides by claimants for our belief. We live under a perfect rain of rival notions. Every theory pretends to be absolute truth; yet each novel theory gives the lie to its predecessor. In religion this is very painfully apparent. Not only do the great historic religions of the world compete for supremacy, but Christianity itself speaks to us in many voices. What are we to believe amid the conflict of the sects and parties, some urging to extreme sacerdotalism, others to evangelicalism; some contending for the ancient creeds, others favouring new lights? We must use discrimination, for it is childish folly to give our assent to the first voice that chances to attract our attention. 2. *It is important to accept the purest truth.* Truth is the food of the soul. We dare not play with its ideas in *dilettante* indifference. To be deluded is to be ensnared. We suffer by feeding on error. As we must distinguish between wholesome and unwholesome diet if we would be in bodily health, so we must distinguish between truth and error if we would be in spiritual health. There are even deadly poisons which look beautiful. They must be detected and rejected if our souls are not to be killed.

II. DISCRIMINATION IS POSSIBLE. 1. *We have a natural faculty of judgment.* Job claimed to possess this, and he compared it with the natural discriminating ability of the palate. Our minds were made by God for use. If we weakly and indolently fail to employ them, and so become the slaves of any unscrupulous deceiver, we have only ourselves to blame for our ruinous error. While we have to walk by faith, we need first to use our reason in order to be assured of a good ground of faith. To deny the possibility of doing so is to play into the hands of the ultramontane Roman Catholics. 2. *Our judgment can be enlightened by the Holy Spirit.* We must be aware that we often err. The palate is not an infallible guide, for what is pleasant to the taste may be most unwholesome. There are sweet poisons. How shall we be able to avoid attractive errors? This question is most important, because our taste has been depraved; a vicious appetite has perverted the natural faculty of discrimination. But Christ has provided for the difficulty by promising the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth (John xvi. 13). Let us but be sure we are humbly depending on the Spirit of God, and we cannot err fatally.—W. F. A.

Vers. 13—25.—*The wisdom and might of God.* Job meets his friend's authoritative utterances of proverbs and worldly maxims by a citation of similar sayings, but with a different import. It is not true that the righteous always prosper, and that the wicked always suffer. Such a primitive notion implies too anthropocentric a conception of the universe; it goes on the assumption that all things are done just to suit our condition and conduct. Now, Job takes a higher and wider view. He appeals to sayings that speak of the supreme wisdom and irresistible might of God, altogether irrespective of man and his concerns.

I. GOD'S WISDOM AND MIGHT ARE OVER ALL. We cannot fathom his thought; we cannot resist his arm. He will do what he thinks best whether we concur or not. The universe is under an irresistible Ruler. It is possible for us to question what God does, but we cannot answer him. We may rebel against his authority, but we cannot overthrow it. Therefore we should escape from our petty parochialism, and consider God's large world and universal rule, before we attempt to form any theory of life.

II. GOD'S SUPREME WISDOM AND MIGHT CONCERN OTHER INTERESTS THAN THOSE OF

MAN. Our narrow views of God's government lead to false opinions about his action. We are tempted to fancy that all he does is solely with a view to its effect on ourselves. Thus we colour the universe with our egotism. But the Lord of all must have vast interests to consider of which we know nothing. What looks foolish to us because we cannot see the end in view—an end often quite outside ourselves, would appear in a very different light if we knew all God's far-reaching designs.

III. GOD'S WISDOM AND MIGHT ARE BOTH IN HARMONY WITH HIS GOODNESS. This is not so apparent in Job's representation of the Divine action as it must be to a Christian. The patriarch has fallen into the error of a one-sided view in combatting the narrow and erroneous opinion of his friends, and he has come to represent God too much as the irresponsible Oriental autocrat, whose only law is his will, but whose will may follow mere caprice, and may be free from all considerations of justice. Job would not say as much of God, but his description leans in this direction. Now, we know that the most supreme thing in God is not his might, nor is it his wisdom; it is his love (1 John iv. 8, 9). Therefore, although we cannot understand his large purpose, that must be a good one. We see God in his irresistible might casting down kings and princes, leading clever people into scenes of bewilderment, apparently playing with all sorts of men as mere pawns. But this is only because we are short-sighted. The large purposes which include other worlds than ours do not exclude our world. God does not brush man aside as a nonentity when he goes forth to achieve his vast designs. One of God's greatest purposes is the redemption of man by the gift of his own Son (John iii. 16).—W. F. A.

Ver. 22.—"*Deep things out of darkness.*" I. HOW GOD DISCOVERS DEEP THINGS OUT OF DARKNESS. He has means of knowledge which are sealed to us, a key which unlocks the most secret chamber, an eye that can see down to the most hidden depths. He sees the skeleton in the cupboard. The mask of the hypocrite can never deceive him. 1. *God sees inwardly.* Man looks on the outward countenance, God on the heart (1 Sam. xvi. 7). His indwelling Spirit sees as far as it influences, and it influences the inmost springs of our being. 2. *God sees immediately.* This results from his inward vision. We have to infer and draw conclusions by means of a chain of reasoning. God can dispense with this process. He *sees* everything; his knowledge is direct and intuitive. 3. *God sees everywhere.* Our vision is limited to a certain area. Even when we stand on the top of a mountain and endeavour to take in a great panorama of scenery, we can only look attentively at one part of the prospect at a time. But God's infinite gaze takes in all the facts of the universe at once.

II. WHAT DEEP THINGS GOD BRINGS TO LIGHT. 1. *He discovers hidden sin.* The nefarious design of the unscrupulous statesman concocted within the locked doors of the council-chamber, the dark plot of the little band of desperate conspirators, the ugly scheme of the robber horde, the fell purpose of the betrayer, are all quite known to God from the moment when the first black thoughts entered the minds of their originators. The sin which has once been committed is all known to God, though it may have been hushed up and kept from the observation of men. In the great day of judgment God will bring it to light. 2. *He discovers hidden goodness.* All that God brings out of its secret hiding-place is not evil. There are hidden treasures. Miners bring up precious minerals from the dark interior of the earth. The voyage of the *Challenger* was a means of bringing to light many wonderful works of God from the dim depths of the sea. God observes all hidden worth.

"The violet born to blush unseen"

is perfectly well known to him. He also understands the innocence that is cruelly misjudged and condemned as guilt by men. Some day he will bring that to light, and vindicate the cause of every true martyr.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES THAT RESULT FROM GOD'S DISCOVERY OF THE DEEP THINGS OF DARKNESS. He will rectify all wrong. He will give righteous judgments. The dark creatures of sin that are brought to light cannot be left out in the full blaze of the sun to befoul the day with their obscenity. As we stamp on the unclean things that creep out of dark places when they are suddenly disturbed and crush them, so God must destroy the wicked when their evil is brought to light. The revelation can only

be preliminary to the condemnation. Meanwhile the delusion which leads men to harbour their sin is fatal. Whatever excuse covers it is a lie.

"For love of grace,
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul;
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place;
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen."

On the other hand, the ultimate vindication of the right is a grand encouragement to "patient perseverance in well-doing."—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIII.

Vers. 1, 2.—The first two verses of ch. xiii. are closely connected with ch. xii., forming the natural termination to the first section of Job's argument, that all results, whether good or evil, must be referred to God. Ver. 1 is little more than a repetition of ch. xii. 9 and ver. 2 of ch. xii. 3.

Ver. 1.—**Lo, mine eye hath seen all this, mine ear hath heard and understood it.** All the particulars mentioned concerning God's government of the world in ch. xii. 6—25 are derived by Job from his own experience. His eye has seen them or his ear has heard them. He is not indebted to others for information on these simple points, which he regards as necessarily impressed by their experience on all grown men (see ch. xii. 9).

Ver. 2.—**What ye know, the same do I know also.** Job's friends have claimed to instruct him and set him right, on the ground of their age and experience (ch. iv. 8; v. 27; viii. 8—10). He protests that, in the matters on which they have lectured him, they have no advantage over himself—he knows all that they know—in truth, the knowledge is open to all (see ch. xii. 3). **I am not inferior unto you.** An exact repetition of the second clause of ch. xii. 3.

Vers. 3—13.—The second section of Job's argument is prefaced, like the first (ch. xii. 2—5), with a complaint with respect to the conduct of his opponents. He taxes them with the fabrication of lies (ver 4), with want of skill as physicians of souls (ver. 4), with vindicating God by reasonings in which they do not themselves believe (vers. 7, 8), and consequently with really mocking him (ver. 9). Having warned them that they are more likely to offend God than to please him by such arguments as those that they have urged (vers. 10—12), he calls on them to hold their peace, and allow him to plead his cause with God (ver. 13).

Ver. 3.—**Surely I would speak to the Almighty.** It is not Job's wish to argue his case with his three friends, but to reason it out with God. His friends, however, interfere with this design, check it, thwart it, prevent him from carrying it out. He must therefore first speak a few words to them. **And I desire to reason with God.** Compare God's own invitation to his people, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord" (Isa. i. 18), and again, "Put me in remembrance, let us plead together; declare thou, that thou mayest be justified" (Isa. xliii. 26); which indicate God's gracious willingness to allow men to plead on their own behalf before him, and do their best to justify themselves.

Ver. 4.—**But ye are forgers of lies.** A harsh expression, indicating that Job was thoroughly exasperated. The lies which his friends had forged were, partly, misrepresentations of what he had said, as for example ch. xi. 4, but mainly statements, more or less covert, which implied that he had brought all his calamities on himself by a course of evil-doing (see ch. iv. 7, 8; viii. 13, 14; xi. 11, 14, 20). **Ye are all physicians of no value.** Job's friends had come to him to "comfort" him (ch. ii. 11), and act as physicians of his soul. But they had entirely failed to be of the least service. They had not even understood his case.

Ver. 5.—**Oh that ye would altogether hold your peace!** The friends had "held their peace" for seven days after their arrival (ch. ii. 13). Oh that they would have held it *altogether!* Their words had done nothing but exasperate and goad almost to madness. There is a mournful pathos in Job's entreaties to them to be silent (comp. ver. 13). **And it should be your wisdom.** "Speech," it has been said, "is silvern, silence is golden." No doubt "there is a time for everything . . . a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Eccles. iii. 1, 7); nor is the rule of La Trappe altogether a wise one. But probably ten times as much harm is done in the world by speaking as by keeping silence. "Words for God" need especial care and caution.

If they do not do good, the harm that they may do is incalculable.

Ver. 6.—**Hear now my reasoning.** As his friends have not kept silence, but have spoken, Job claims a right to be heard in his turn. If it be thought that he is somewhat impatient, it must be remembered that his opponents are three to one, all eager to catch him in a fault, and not very mild in their reprimands. **And hearken to the pleadings of my lips.** Job's "pleadings" are addressed, not to his friends, but to God, and are contained in vers. 14—28 of the present, and the whole of the succeeding chapter.

Ver. 7.—**Will ye speak wickedly for God?** We are not to suppose that Job's friends consciously used unsound and untrue arguments in their disputations with him on God's behalf. On the contrary, they are to be regarded as convinced of the truth of their own reasonings—as brought up in the firm belief, that temporal prosperity or wretchedness was dealt out by God, immediately, by his own will, to his subjects according to their behaviour. Holding this, they naturally thought that Job, being so greatly afflicted, *must be* a great sinner, and, as they could not very plausibly allege any open sins against him, they saw in his sufferings a judgment on him for secret sins. "His chosen friends," as Mr. Froude says, "wise, good, pious men, as wisdom and piety were then, without one glimpse of the true cause of his sufferings, saw in them a judgment of this character. He became to them an illustration, and even (such are the paralogisms of men of this description) a proof of their theory that 'the prosperity of the wicked is but for a while;' and instead of the comfort and help that they might have brought him, and which in the end they were made to bring him, he is to them no more than a text for the enunciation of solemn falsehood" ('Short Studies,' vol. i. p. 300), *i.e.* of statements which were false, though solemnly believed by them to be true. **And talk deceitfully for him.** "Deceitfully," because untruly, yet so plausibly as to be likely to deceive others.

Ver. 8.—**Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God?** Job intends to accuse his opponents of leaning unduly to God's side, and being prepared to justify him in the teeth of reason and justice. This is like the conduct of a judge who should allow his decision to be biassed by favour towards one or the other party in a suit.

Ver. 9.—**Is it good that he should search you out?** "Are your motives in thus acting," Job asks his opponents, "so pure that they will stand the severity of God's judgment when he turns his scrutiny upon you, and searches out the grounds of your proceedings? **Is not your real motive to curry favour with him because he is so great and powerful?" Or as one man mocketh another, do ye so mock him?** You may impose on a man by so acting, but you will not impose on God.

Ver. 10.—**He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly accept persons.** Even though it is his own person which you accept, his own cause that you unduly favour, he, as the God of truth, and Maintainer of right, will assuredly reprove and condemn you.

Ver. 11.—**Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you?** Will not the very excellency and perfection of God cause you all the more to fear, since they will be arrayed against you? God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, who is no respecter of persons, and hates those who are respecters of persons, will by his very purity and truth be offended at your conduct, and induced to punish it.

Ver. 12.—**Your remembrances are like unto ashes.** The "remembrances" intended are probably the wise saws, embodiments of the ancient wisdom, on which Job's adversaries have relied in their disputations with him (ch. iv. 7, 8; viii. 8—11, etc.). These Job declares to be mere dust and ashes—useless, worthless, such as the first breath of air will blow away. **Your bodies to bodies of clay;** rather, *your mounds*, or *your defences* (see the Revised Version). These defences, Job says—*i.e.* the arguments by which his opponents support their views—are no better than "defences of clay"—easy to batter down and destroy. The ancient defences of a town were usually either of stone, as at Khorsabad ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. pp. 278, 279), or of crude brick faced with burnt brick, as at Babylon and elsewhere. But Job seems to be speaking of something more primitive than either of these—mere earthworks, like the Roman *aggera*, hastily thrown up and easy to level with the ground.

Ver. 13.—**Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak;** literally, *be silent from me that I may speak;* but our version gives the true meaning. Job repeats the entreaty with which he had begun (vers. 5, 6). **And let come on me what will.** Job is prepared to face the worst. He feels, as he expresses it below (ver. 19), that, if he holds his tongue, he must die. He *must* speak, and speak he will. After that, let God do as he may please—he will accept his punishment, if God thinks fit to punish him.

Vers. 14—28.—The appeal is now to God; but Job prefaces it by excusing his boldness (vers. 14—19).

Ver. 14.—**Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth?** An obscure phrase, to be ex-

plained by the parallel in the second member of the verse. The general meaning is, "Why do I jeopardize everything—my body, taking it as it were between my teeth; and my soul, taking it as it were in my hand?" Neither idea will bear minute analysis; but the latter, at any rate, was known to the Greeks (Athen., 'Deipnosoph.,' p. 569), and is common in English. **And put my life in my hand** (comp. Judg. xii. 3; 1 Sam. xix. 5; xxviii. 21; Ps. cxix. 109).

Ver. 15.—**Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him**; rather, *yet will I wait for him*. The passage is one of the few in this book where there are two readings—לֹא אִיחַל and לוֹ אִיחַל. Those who prefer the latter commonly render it, "I have no hope;" but it is pointed out by Canon Cook that there are reasons for regarding לֹא as an archaic form for לוֹ, which sometimes takes its place. If this be not allowed, the reading לוֹ will have to be preferred, on the double authority of the versions and of the context. Job cannot possibly have said, in one verse, "I have no hope," and in the next, "He (God) shall be my Salvation." **But I will maintain mine own ways before him**; *i.e.* "I will maintain that they are right and good ways, not open to the imputations that my 'friends' have cast upon them" (ch. iv. 7, 8; viii. 6, 20; xi. 11, 14, 20).

Ver. 16.—**He also shall be my Salvation.** Whatever God does to him (ver. 13), whatever burden he lays upon him, though he even "slay" him (ver. 15), yet Job is sure that ultimately, in one way or another, God will be his Salvation. It is this determined trustfulness which at once gives Job's character its strength, and atones in a certain sense for his over-boldness in challenging God to a controversy. His heart is right with God. Though the secrets of the unseen world have been hidden from him, and the condition of man after death is a mystery on which he can only form vague conjectures, yet he is sure that in the end God will not fail him. **For an hypocrite shall not come before him.** If he were a hypocrite the case would be different; he would tremble before God, instead of feeling confident. But, knowing that he is honest and true, he is not afraid; he is bold to "come before him," and plead his cause before him.

Ver. 17.—**Hear diligently my speech, and my declaration with your ears.** A last appeal to his opponents to give him their full attention (comp. ver. 6).

Ver. 18.—**Behold now, I have ordered my cause**; *i.e.* I have prepared my pleadings, and arranged them; I know what I am about to say. **Also I know that I shall be justified.** I am confident, *i.e.*, that the cause, if it be fully heard, will be decided in my favour. It will appear that I have not brought my calamities upon myself by my own misdoings. Of justification, in the forensic sense, of imputed righteousness, with its concomitant ideas, Job, of course, knows nothing.

Ver. 19.—**Who is he that will plead with me?** Will God himself plead? Or will he depute some one, man or angel? Job is impatient that the pleadings should begin. **For now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost.** Some translate, "For now shall I hold my peace and give up the ghost," which they explain to mean, "If God does implead me, I shall take refuge in silence, and straightway expire." But this seems an impossible conclusion, when all that Job has been aiming at and striving for since his opponents taxed him with wickedness has been that he might "speak to the Almighty, and reason with God" (ver. 3). It is far simpler to keep to the translation of the Authorized Version, and understand Job to mean that things have now reached a point at which he must either speak or expire.

Ver. 20.—**Only do not two things unto me.** Before beginning his plea, Job has two requests to make of God. (1) That he will put an end for a time to his bodily sufferings—suspend them, at any rate, while the pleading continues; (2) that he will during the same space abstain from terrifying him mentally, as he had done on previous occasions (ch. vi. 4; vii. 14; ix. 14; see below, ver. 21). **Then will I not hide myself from thee**; literally, *from thy face* (comp. ch. ix. 34, 35, "Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me: then would I speak, and not fear him").

Ver. 21.—**Withdraw thine hand far from me**; *i.e.* "thy *afflicting* hand." Job views all his physical suffering as coming directly from the hand of God—momentarily caused by him, and therefore removable by him at any moment. He has no thought for secondary causes. **And let not thy dread make me afraid.** Job speaks here and elsewhere of spiritual terrors—those vague and impalpable fears which suggest themselves inwardly to the soul, and are far more painful, far more dreadful, than any amount of bodily anguish. Unless he is free from these, as well as from physical pains, he cannot plead his cause freely and fully.

Ver. 22.—**Then call thou, and I will answer.** "Then"—when I am free from suffering, both mental and bodily—implead me, bring thy charges against me, and I will answer them. As Mr. Froude observes, "Job himself had been educated in the same creed" as his comforters; "he, too,

had been taught to see the hand of God in the outward dispensation" ('Short Studies,' vol. i. p. 300). He therefore assumes that God will have a particular charge to make against him, in connection with each of the calamities that have come on him, and he is prepared to face these charges and confute them. At the same time, he is undoubtedly much confused and perplexed, not knowing how to reconcile his traditional belief with his internal consciousness of innocence. **Or let me speak, and answer thou me.** "Let me," *i.e.*, "take the initiative, if thou preferrest it so—let me ask the questions, and do thou answer."

Ver. 23.—**How many are mine iniquities and sins?** This is scarcely, as Professor Stanley Leathes represents it, "a deep confession of personal sin" ('Old Testament Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 27). It is more in the nature of a remonstrance. "These sins of mine, for which I am so grievously punished, what are they? Name them. How many are there of them? **Let me know exactly what they are**; and then I can question my conscience concerning them." **Make me to know my transgression and my sin.** These words imply that he does not know them at present. He knows of some infirmities and lighter misdoings of his youth (ver. 26); but he knows of no such sins as are commensurate with his sufferings.

Ver. 24.—**Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?** What is thy reason for withdrawing from me the light of thy countenance, and behaving towards me as though thou wert mine enemy? Job does not believe God to be his enemy. He knows that God will one day be his Salvation (ver. 16); but he recognizes a present alienation, and desires to be made acquainted with the cause of it.

Ver. 25.—**Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?** Job compares himself to two of the weakest things in nature—a withered leaf, and a morsel of dry stubble. He cannot believe that God will employ his almighty strength in crushing and destroying what is so slight and feeble. A deep sense of God's goodness and compassion underlies the thought.

Ver. 26.—**For thou writest bitter things against me.** The allusion seems to be to the ordinary practice in ancient law-courts of formulating a written *acte d'accusation* against supposed criminals. Keeping up the imagery of a court and pleadings, Job represents God as engaged in drawing up such a document against him. The "bitter things" are the charges which the *acte* contains. **And makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.** Job, like David, has to acknowledge "sins and offences" committed in his youth (Ps. xxv. 6). In considering what the indictment against him can be, he can only suppose that these old and long-forsaken sins are being remembered and brought up against him, and that he is being punished for them. He does not exclaim against this as injustice; he feels probably that there is no statute of limitations respecting sins and their punishment; but it can scarcely have seemed to him consistent with God's goodness and mercifulness that the offences of his immature age should be visited upon him so bitterly.

Ver. 27.—**Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks** (comp. ch. xxxiii. 11). The punishment is said to be still in use among the Bedouin Arabs. It was well known to the Israelites (Prov. vii. 22; Jer. xx. 2; xxix. 26), to the Greeks (Herod., ix. 37), and to the Romans (Acts xvi. 24). **And lookest narrowly unto all my paths.** Not allowing me to escape thee. **Thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet**; rather, *upon the soles of my feet.* The "print" intended is probably a mark which the stocks were in the habit of making (see Professor Sayce, in *Sunday at Home*, December, 1890, p. 125).

Ver. 28.—**And he.** The change of person is very strange, but not unknown to the Hebrew idiom. It is impossible that any one but Job himself can be meant. **As a rotten thing consumeth, as a garment that is moth-eaten.** An allusion to the character of the disease from which he is suffering.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—16.—*Job to Zophar: 4. A wounded soul at bay.* I. THE VOICE OF FIERCE RECRIMINATION. Transfixing on the spear-point of his remorseless logic the men who had mocked at his misery, and converted his very piety into a laughing-stock, with infinite scorn Job holds them up a spectacle to angels and to men, charging them with at least three most detestable offences. 1. *Ignoring of facts.* They had favoured him with their views of how God conducted the affairs of the universe, citing apothegms, quoting proverbs, and adducing similitudes carefully selected to bear out their peculiar dogmas and preconceived theories; but he too could string together wise saws extracted from the ancients, being in respect of traditionary lore not one whit behind them (ver. 2),

and he had done it (ch. xii. 6, 14—25). What is more, he had observed in the world around him exemplifications of everything he had advanced (ver. 1); and, unless they had been as blind as moles and as senseless as the ass to whose offspring they had compared him, they too must have frequently perceived the same. But they had not been willing to discover anything inconsistent with their favourite dogma; or they had travelled through the world with their eyes shut and their ears closed; or they had not been at the trouble to reflect and compare. Inattention, or want of observation, inconsideration, or want of reflection, insincerity, or want of a genuine love for the truth, are three formidable barriers in the way of man's advancement in knowledge. The first is the fault of the careless, the second of the foolish, the third of the ungodly. Eye and ear, being the soul's best gateways for knowledge, should be kept continually open. But the testimonies and reports which enter by these gateways should be subjected to diligent inspection and careful comparison. The truth once found should never fail to secure admission into the inner chamber of the heart. 2. *Forging of lies.* Instead of patiently collecting and collating facts from the opened page of human history, and deducing therefrom conclusions as to the principle or principles of the Divine government, Job's friends first invented a theory, and then looked about for musty proverbs to support it. They were not philosophers or theologians at all, but simply theorists, inventors of sophisms, stitchers together of falsehoods, and fabricators of vanities (ver. 4), who had endeavoured to construct a theodicy by mingling together a little bit of fact and a large amount of fancy, or by patching together a handful of ancient platitudes. Much of modern science, philosophy, and even theology, proceeds upon the principle here so severely castigated. The true Baconian method of induction, first to ascertain with minute accuracy, not a few, but, as far as possible, all the facts of the case before pronouncing judgment as to the formula which shall explain them, is the only safe guide to be followed in philosophical discussion, scientific research, or theological investigation. A formula that does not embrace every known fact, much more that is contradicted by any known fact, cannot be correct. 3. *Accepting of persons.* Passing on to a more serious indictment, Job charges them with abject and contemptible sycophancy; with taking God's side simply because they knew he was strong; with supporting his cause by means of arguments which were consciously insincere, and generally with playing the part of flatterers—a course of conduct which Job declares to be: (1) Wicked in itself. "Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him?" (ver. 7). To propound fallacious theories, least of all to do so knowingly and deliberately, never can be right, even though such theories are advanced in favour of God and religion. This is practically done when men attempt to buttress up Divine truth, advance the Divine cause, or vindicate the Divine character by means of sophistical arguments. But not even in this case does the end sanctify the means. (2) Unjust towards himself. "Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God?" (ver. 8). To side with God in any controversy which he maintains with the creature never can be wrong considered in itself (Rom. iii. 4), but to do so without regard to the rights of that creature with whom God contends never can be right. Job complained that, in declining to believe his protestations of integrity, and in cruelly assuming without proof that he was guilty, his friends were practically showing partiality towards God, and behaving with unfairness towards him. But it never can be right, in order to justify God, to perpetrate injustice against man. (3) Displeasing to God. "Is it good that he should search you out? or as one man mocketh another, do ye so mock him?" (ver. 9). Were God to investigate their conduct, he could not possibly extend to it his approbation. They would seem to him as persons who were attempting to jest with and deceive him, as men jest with and deceive their fellows. Their behaviour would be wholly abhorred by him whose patrons they had so presumptuously constituted themselves, since God never can approve of falsehoods or injustices even in support of his own cause, which stands in no need whatever of sophistries or patronage of any sort. (4) Certain of exposure. "Shall it be well with you when he searches you out? or may you deceive him as a man is deceived?" No! verily. "He will surely reprove you, if ye secretly accept persons." And this in two ways; by confounding their persons: "Shall not his excellency make you afraid?" and exploding their doctrines: "Your remembrances," *i.e.* your memorable sayings, "are," or shall be, "like unto ashes;" literally, "shall be proverbs of ashes;" *i.e.* they shall be demonstrated

to be as valueless and as easily effaced as similitudes traced upon the dust; "and your ramparts," *i.e.* the arguments behind which ye entrench yourselves, "shall be ramparts of clay," as easily broken through as mud walls.

II. THE VOICE OF OUTRAGED INTEGRITY. 1. *An appeal from man to God.* "Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God!" (ver. 3). So David, when the mouth of the wicked and the tongue of the deceitful opened against him, addressed himself to God in prayer (Ps. cix. 2—4). Christ also, when his enemies gaped upon him with their mouths, sought refuge against their calumnies in holy intercourse with God (Ps. xxii. 2—21; Matt. xxvii. 39—46; John xi. 42). The example of both is commended to saints when similarly circumstanced (Ps. lv. 22; xci. 15; Phil. iv. 6; 1 Pet. v. 7), and has been frequently followed. Many who have been denied justice at the hands of their fellows have been constrained to appeal to the tribunal of the skies. It is a great mercy that such a court exists for suffering men, and that its door is never closed against the suit of a distressed saint (Ps. xxxiv. 15; 1 Pet. iii. 12; Luke xviii. 7, 8). On the contrary, God's people are invited to repair to him in every time of trouble (Ps. l. 15; lxii. 8; Rom. xii. 12; Heb. iv. 16), when burdened by affliction, when overtaken by spiritual anxiety, when misunderstood by men. If we may not maintain our sinlessness before God (Ps. lxix. 5), we can at least uphold our integrity (ch. x. 7; John xxi. 15, 16; Rom. i. 9). But whatever be our case, it will be by him both exactly appreciated and tenderly sympathized with. 2. *A request for non-interference on the part of man.* "Oh that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom" (ver. 5); "Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak" (ver. 13). Job advances two reasons for desiderating silence on the part of his friends. (1) It would greatly enhance their reputation for wisdom (cf. Prov. xvii. 28). It is one mark of wisdom to know when to be silent; and it is better to be always silent than to utter heartless sophistries and pointless platitudes like those of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. (2) It would greatly facilitate his converse with God. In the soul's supreme moments of spiritual distress, few things are more irksome than the well-meant but almost always irritating admonitions and advices of good people. The ordinary mind fails to see that, as there is a joy, so also there is a sorrow, with which no stranger can intermeddle (Prov. xiv. 10). Besides, the great controversy between God and the human soul must be fought out in solitude and in silence, like the struggle at the ford of Jabbok between the angel and Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 24). 3. *A determination to defend his cause with God.* (1) At all hazards. Job is prepared to go forward, "let come on him what will;" "to take his flesh in his teeth, and put his life in his hand;" to undergo death itself if need be. "Behold! he may slay me: I entertain no hope," *i.e.* of any other issue to the conflict: "yet will I maintain my ways before him." However this verse be translated (*vide* Exposition), it contains a threefold testimony—to Job's deeply seated consciousness of his own personal integrity; to Job's clear moral honesty, since a hypocrite would never have proposed to invite the Divine inspection of himself and his ways; and to Job's exalted heroism, which would rather brave death than dishonour, clinging to God with invincible fidelity in spite of overwhelming temporal disaster and mental anxiety; yea, in the face of death and dissolution—a sublime refutation of the Satanic calumny (ch. ii. 5). (2) Yet not without hope. Job was inwardly persuaded that the ultimate result of his venture would be triumphant vindication and salvation. This conviction was grounded on the fact of his intense inward longing to stand face to face with God. His reasoning takes the form of a syllogism. It is impossible that a man conscious of hypocrisy should desire an interview with God. But such desire is the all-absorbing passion of my soul. Therefore I indulge the hope that I am not a hypocrite, and that he who now seems to be my Adversary will eventually prove my Salvation.

Learn: 1. It is the delight of a good man, the sign of a wise man, and the duty of all men, to study the ways and works of God. 2. It is no sin to vindicate one's character when that is wrongly aspersed. 3. It requires a good cause to enable a weak man to speak with the Almighty. 4. It is not a fault in manners to reprove good men when they tell lies. 5. It is a fault in good men when they depart from the truth even by a hair's breadth. 6. It is infinitely wiser not to talk at all than to talk like a fool. 7. It is dangerous to summon allies from the devil's camp, even when fighting in the Lord's battles. 8. It is an insult to God to suppose that light and darkness, truth and

error, sincerity and hypocrisy, righteousness and unrighteousness, Christ and Belial, can be confederates. 9. It is better to revere God's holiness on earth than to tremble before his glorious power in a future world. 10. It is a poor defence that even a good man finds in lies and deceptions. 11. It is preferable to part with life than with faith in God. 12. It is certain that, though a humble believer may be slain, he never can be lost.

Vers. 15, 16.—*Faith and assurance.* I. JOB'S FAITH. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Mark: 1. The *Object* of Job's faith. God, as the Justifier of the ungodly who believe, since Job did not claim to be sinless, and yet expected to be justified. 2. The *trial* of Job's faith. The intense sufferings, both physical and mental, through which he passed. The faith of God's people is commonly subjected to trial. Yet it is doubtful if any have ever experienced greater difficulties in the way of believing in God than Job did. 3. The *intensity* of Job's faith. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Job was determined that no amount of hardship should prevent him from confiding in the God of mercy and salvation; in which respect he is well worthy of imitation by Christ's followers. 4. The *triumph* of Job's faith. It was no mere boast on the part of Job that he would cling to God at all hazards, as it has often proved on the part of over-confident believers (*e.g.* Peter); but the issue of his trial established the sincerity of his words. His faith was often rudely assaulted, and sometimes appeared to tremble, but it was never overthrown.

II. JOB'S ASSURANCE. "He also shall be my Salvation" (ver. 16); "I know that I shall be justified." Assurance of salvation is clearly possible, since it was enjoyed by Abel (Heb. xi. 3), Enoch (Heb. xi. 6), Abraham (Gen. xv. 6), Moses (Exod. xv. 2), David (Ps. xviii. 2), St. Paul (Phil. i. 21; 2 Tim. iv. 8); it is also extremely desirable for the saint's usefulness, as much as for the saint's comfort, and in every instance in which it is possessed must be based, as Job's was, on: 1. *Belief in the Divine testimony.* Job knew that he would be justified, not because he was a sinless man, but because he trusted in God; and this is the first ground of assurance to an anxious soul. The sinner that believes is sure of salvation, because "he that believeth shall be saved;" and every one who trusts in him that justifieth the ungodly may with confidence affirm, "I know that I shall be justified." 2. *Consciousness of personal sincerity.* That is, if a man, after careful self-examination, discovers in himself the tokens of true piety and Christian integrity, he is warranted to conclude that he has passed from death to life, and God will eventually prove his salvation. Job felt he was not a hypocrite, but a sincerely upright man; and hence he knew that God would not condemn him. St. John, in his Epistles, supplies marks by which a man may determine for himself whether or not he is a genuine Christian disciple.

Learn: 1. That without faith there can be no assurance. 2. That wherever there is faith there ought to be assurance.

Vers. 17—28.—*Job to God: resumption of the third controversy:* 1. *The pleading of a saint with Heaven.* I. PRELIMINARIES TO THE PLEADING. 1. *Public audience invited.* Job requests his discomfited friends to be silent spectators of the ensuing trial, and to attentively consider the defence he was about to offer (ver. 17). Intended chiefly for the ear of God, it should yet contain nothing unfit for publication in the hearing of men. Conscious of sincerity, Job had nothing to conceal. Guilelessness is ever a mark of true saintship. "A man with a clear conscience can stand fearlessly before the whole world." Undaunted courage is also characteristic of the godly (Ps. xxvii. 1; Prov. xxviii. 1; 1 John iii. 21), who, however, unlike Job, are emboldened, not by a sense of their own integrity, but by a calm reliance on the righteousness of Christ (Isa. xlv. 24, 25; l. 7—9; Rom. viii. 32—34). 2. *Perfect readiness expressed.* Job asserts (ver. 18) that he had carefully arranged the several pleas he should urge in vindication of his outraged integrity. And in this Job's example may be followed with advantage. Neither saint nor sinner should irreverently and presumptuously intrude into God's presence without having first composed his heart and, as far as possible, arranged his thoughts (Eccles. v. 2). No man is ready for reasoning with God in prayer until he knows both what he wants and how to plead for it. 3. *Hopeful confidence entertained.* "I know that I shall be justified" (ver. 18). This was no presumption on the part of Job, who probably based his justification before God, in

the strictly forensic sense of absolution and acceptance, not upon his own righteousness, but upon the free favour of God, through the merit of his Redeemer (ch. xix. 25); but merely that inward consciousness of personal integrity which a good man may justly rely on as evidence of a gracious state, and by which he may encourage his fainting spirit when about to appear before God, like Hezekiah (Isa. xxxviii. 3), David (Ps. xxvi. 1), St. Peter (John xxi. 17), St. Paul (Rom. ix. 1), and St. John (1 Epist. iii. 21). Of course, it would be presumption were a sinful man, standing on his own righteousness, to expect that he would be justified before God (Ps. cxliii. 2; Rom. iii. 20). But, trusting in the great propitiatory sacrifice of him who is "the Lord our Righteousness," the guiltiest and most unworthy sinner may draw near to God with holy boldness (Heb. iv. 16; x. 22), and with absolute assurance of acceptance and salvation (Heb. vii. 25; Rom. viii. 1), saying, "I know that I shall be justified." 4. *Sinful impeachment challenged.* "Who is he that will plead with me?" *i.e.* against me, contradicting and disproving what I now so fearlessly assert, viz. my personal integrity. If there is any, let him stand forth and establish his indictment. If he succeed in tarnishing my fair name, "I shall be silent, I shall give up the ghost," feeling that, honour gone, life itself can have no further charm for me. Many a one besides Job has felt that "good name in man and woman is the immediate jewel of their souls" ('Othello,' act iii. sc. 3), "the immortal part" of themselves (ibid., act ii. sc. 3), and that, that being lost, nothing worthy of possessing can remain (cf. 'Richard II.,' act i. sc. 1). Job's language reminds us of St. Paul's address to his accusers before Felix (Acts xxiv. 16—21); and afterwards before Festus (Acts xxv. 11); also of the loftier challenge addressed by Christ to his countrymen (Isa. l. 8; John viii. 46). And though certainly believers cannot use the question as did Christ, and may sometimes have a difficulty in employing it in the sense of either Job or St. Paul, it is always open to them, as they keep their eyes on the cross, to exclaim, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom. viii. 33).

II. CONDITIONS OF THE PLEADING. 1. *A cessation of his troubles.* (Ver. 21.) The hand of God a frequent biblical expression for affliction (1 Sam. v. 6, 7; Ps. xxxii. 4; xxxviii. 2; Isa. i. 25), which is sent (Deut. viii. 5; 2 Sam. vii. 14; ch. v. 17; Ps. xciv. 12; Heb. xii. 6, 7), guided (ch. xxxiii. 17—19; Prov. iii. 11, 12; Isa. xlviii. 10; Ezek. xx. 37), and removed (Ps. l. 15; lxvi. 12; Zech. xiii. 9; John xvi. 20; Matt. v. 4) by Divine wisdom and power. The fatherly chastisements of God are directly designed to refine and purify the saintly soul (ch. xxxvi. 8, 10; Isa. xlviii. 10; Heb. xii. 11), and to draw it near his footstool in penitence and faith, humility and love (Hos. v. 15; Heb. xii. 9). Yet, not unfrequently, one of the first effects of bodily affliction upon a good man, especially if it be severe, is to discompose his mind, disturb his heart, and generally unfit him for converse with God. Notwithstanding the spiritual benefits folded up in tribulation, there can be no greater blessing, even with a view to the exercises of religion, than *mens sana in sano corpore.* Much of the spiritual depression experienced by Christians is traceable to extreme bodily infirmity, though sometimes happy invalids can say with St. Paul, "When I am weak, then am I strong;" "Most gladly will I glory in infirmities, that the power of God may rest upon me." Then, if pious souls, groaning beneath the pressure of physical maladies and mental anxieties, find it hard to concentrate their thoughts upon Divine things, what must be the madness of those who delay the work of repenting and pleading with God for forgiveness and salvation till they are lying on a sick-bed, racked with pain, and perhaps trembling in the grasp of death? 2. *A removal of his fear.* (Ver. 21.) The Divine character has a terrifying, as well as an attractive, side to sinful man. The glory of the Divine purity is so effulgent (ch. iv. 18), of the Divine justice so incorruptible (ch. ix. 2), of the Divine wisdom so ineffable (ch. ix. 4), of the Divine strength so overwhelming (ch. ix. 19), that the human spirit instinctively shrinks back in alarm. Burdened with guilt, tainted with pollution, lying under condemnation, it cannot hold up its head in the presence of such awful majesty, but, falling prostrate before the footstool of heaven's glorious King, exclaims, like Isaiah, "Woe is me; for I am undone!" (Isa. vi. 5); and like David,

> "In judgment enter not with me, thy servant poor;
> For why, this well I wot, no sinner can endure
> The sight of thee, O God."
>
> (Ps. cxliii. 2, metrical version.)

And like St. Peter, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke v. 8). Job felt that, unless his mind were relieved from such paralyzing views of the overwhelming grandeur of his invisible Judge, it would be utterly hopeless to expect he could even state his case aright, much less win his cause. Hence already he had craved the interposition of a daysman, who should both take away God's rod and remove God's fear (ch. ix. 34) in order to enable him to speak; and to this he apparently again recurs. Happily such a daysman has been provided for us in Christ, in whom the anxious sinner may now behold, not only the rod of Divine punishment removed, but the greatness of the Divine glory veiled, so that one who desires to speak with God may do so without a fear, "whether God himself opens the cause, or permits him to have the first word."

III. CONTENTS OF THE PLEADING. 1. *A bold interrogation.* (Ver. 23.) (1) A valuable definition. Sin is *'avon*, or perverse acting, a bending, twisting, or turning aside from the Divine Law; *chattah*, a false step, hence a failing, an error, a sin of weakness or infirmity; and *pesha'*, a breaking away, hence deliberate and malignant wickedness. The first epithet describes the nature of sin—"it is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the Law of God;" the second points to the source of sin—human weakness (Jer. x. 23); while the third indicates the heinousness of sin—it is essentially rebellion against God (Rom. viii. 7). Or the three expressions may allude to different kinds of sin, palpable offences, venial imperfections, notorious crimes, of all which Job was supposed to be guilty. (2) A candid confession. Whatever iniquities, sins, or transgressions Job had committed, God perfectly knew them, could reckon up their number and estimate their heinousness. Men often are unconscious of their faults, frequently forget their shortcomings, and can seldom realize the enormity of their wickednesses. But all these are patent to God's omniscient mind (Ps. lxix. 5; lxxiii. 23; Luke xvi. 15; Heb. iv. 13). (3) A passionate supplication. That God would enable Job to understand the nature and enormity of those offences of which he had been guilty, and for which his friends alleged he was suffering. The prayer is admirably suited to and urgently needed by all, though not in the sense in which it was employed by Job. No man can attain to a clear discovery of his own sinfulness, to an adequate estimate of the number of his misdeeds, to a just appreciation of their essential wickedness, except through Divine teaching. Such teaching God imparts through his Word (Ps. xciv. 12; Rom. vii. 9) and Spirit (John xvi. 8). (4) An obvious implication. Job designed it to be understood that he himself was unconscious of any such offences, though of course he did not claim to be entirely innocent. 2. *An inexplicable problem.* (Ver. 24.) Here is (1) a painful experience, the sense of having lost the Divine favour, to a gracious soul the highest blessing attainable or even conceivable on earth (Ps. xxx. 5; lxiii. 3); (2) a common experience, realized by David (Ps. xiii. 1; xxii. 1), by Heman (Ps. lxxxviii. 14), and by Christ (Matt. xxvii. 46), as well as by many of Christ's followers since; (3) a mysterious experience, not that God should hide his face and seem to withdraw his favour from a sinful soul, but that, having once admitted a repenting and believing sinner to his love, he should to all appearance cast him off—a course of conduct for which Job was perfectly at a loss to account; yet (4) a needful experience, in the case of Christ to make him perfect as a Saviour, in that of Job, David, Heman, and others to make them perfect as saints. 3. *A pathetic expostulation.* (1) The unworthiness of the Divine conduct in afflicting Job. Absolutely powerless and insignificant had Job become through his long-continued trouble, like a fallen leaf upon the way, agitated and tossed by every passing wind, or like the withered stubble of a corn-field, and yet the Almighty assailed him with the full force of his Divine artillery, as if he were some formidable opponent whom it required the battalions of omnipotence to crush (ver. 25). To Job's mind it seemed wholly incongruous, entirely preposterous, completely unbecoming the Divine Majesty. So God's procedure in providence oftentimes appears to sense and reason unworthy of his greatness and glory; but faith, coming to the rescue, reminds the doubting heart that he doeth all things well. (2) The seeming injustice of God's conduct in afflicting Job. Conscious of innocence in his riper years, Job could only offer, as the solution of that perplexing enigma by which he was confronted, that God was going back upon the sins of his youthful days, although these had long since been repented of and forgiven (ver. 26). But sin once forgiven is for ever forgotten (Isa. xliii. 25; Micah vii. 18,

19). God never reproduces for punishment the transgression he has freely pardoned. Yet the iniquities of youth which have not been cancelled by Divine mercy have a strange power of self-resuscitation in riper years; and God often makes wicked men (*e.g.* the drunkard, the profligate), in accordance with the established and righteous laws of retribution, to inherit, or possess, or reap the bitter fruits in old age of the excesses and indulgences of youth. Hence the necessity of cultivating moral purity in youth, and the propriety in after-years of praying, "Remember not the sins of my youth" (Ps. xxv. 7). (3) The extreme severity of God's conduct in afflicting Job, who was treated like a prisoner; whose feet were thrust into the stocks, as were those of Jeremiah (xx. 2; xxix. 6), and of Paul and Silas (Acts xvi. 24); whose steps were narrowly watched, lest he should either enjoy too much freedom or attempt to escape (cf. ch. x. 14; and see homiletics on ch. vii. 12—21), and whose liberty was (according to one interpretation), restrained within narrow limits, by a boundary or circle drawn around the soles of his feet (ver. 27), and that though he, the chained, inspected, and immured prisoner, was a poor miserable creature, lying rotting on an ash-heap like a garment that the moth gnaweth (ver. 28).

Learn: 1. The gratitude which saints and sinners both owe to God for the throne of grace. 2. The sublime fearlessness with which the guiltiest no less than the godliest may approach that throne. 3. The liberty which all enjoy to pour out their hearts before God. 4. The propriety of seeking a more intimate acquaintance with the reality and power of indwelling sin. 5. The sinfulness of supposing that God ever treats any of his creatures as enemies.

Ver. 28.—*The knowledge of sin.* I. MAKE ME TO KNOW THE REALITY OF SIN, in case I should deny it and be deceived.

II. MAKE ME TO KNOW THE POWER OF SIN, lest, being taken unawares, I should become its slave.

III. MAKE ME TO KNOW THE HEINOUSNESS OF SIN, lest, making light of it, I should be led to glory in my shame.

IV. MAKE ME TO KNOW THE GUILT OF SIN, lest, being indifferent to its danger, I should fail to seek escape.

V. MAKE ME TO KNOW THE PARDONABLENESS OF SIN, lest, doubting of God's mercy, I should sink into despair.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—22.—*Man's injustice and the justice of God.* Job proceeds to turn the tables upon these self-complacent friends, who are so disposed to moralize and find illustrations of their conceptions of the Divine righteousness at his expense. His friends, however, really do him a service; not, indeed, by manifesting the sympathy he craves, but by throwing him upon his own resources—still better, by throwing him upon his God. The tonic of opposition is sometimes far more needed in mental suffering than is the soothing draught of sympathy. The former braces, the latter enervates. It appears to be so now with Job. He rouses the forces of his soul, as the palm tree stirs up its vital energies beneath the weight attached to its branches; and he rushes upon the last cast. He will throw himself, regardless of consequences, upon the pity and justice of the Eternal.—J.

Vers. 1—12.—*Correction of the friends.* I. TRANSITION IN JOB'S ADDRESS. (Vers. 1—3.) He pauses for a moment before entering on a new course of thought. He asserts that his experience has not been without fruit. The *eye*, the *ear*, the *mouth* (ch. xii. 11), are the physical symbols of living and actual experience. So St. John: "That which we have *heard*, . . . *seen* with our eyes, . . . looked upon, and our hands have *handled*" (1 John i. 1). And in no particular is their knowledge, in virtue of which they presume to take so high ground, superior to his own.

II. RESOLVE. "To speak to the Almighty, to reason with God." It is a *bold*, yet a truly *reverential* and a *believing* resolve. It reminds us of Abraham pleading for the cities of the plain. It is founded on the firm apprehension of the moral attributes of

God, which he cannot deny without denying himself. On this ground we may even venture safely. *Boldly* we may come to the throne of grace, and beseech God not to forsake the eternal throne of his holiness.

III. REJECTION OF THE INTERFERENCE OF HIS FRIENDS. (Vers. 4—6.) No sooner is the resolve taken to appeal to God than new strength comes to the heart. Job rises above the cloud of misconstruction that has gathered about him, like the tall cliff towering above the clouds, and looks down with scorn on these "forgers of lies," these "worthless physicians." It is his turn to be the instructor, and theirs to hold their peace.

IV. DENUNCIATION. (Vers. 7—9.) He proceeds severely to expose their errors, and to lay bare the root from which they proceed. 1. They seek to honour God at the expense of truth, which is a corrupt zeal; for the God of truth can only be honoured by truth in words and deeds. 2. They are moved by the instinct of flattery, and thus become partial, one-sided advocates for God. But God is not exalted by depressing man, nor honoured by injustice done to his creatures. 3. Their accusations of others show ignorance of themselves. And how would it be if scrutiny were now to be made into *their* lives? and would they dare to cast the load of guilt on the unhappy in his awful presence? They are reflections like these which are needed to check the uncharitable thought and bridle the censorious tongue.

V. MENACE. (Vers. 10—12.) These grave faults cannot be committed with impunity. God would punish them for their partiality. His majesty, on his appearance, will confound them. They will be treated as sinners, and all their *memoranda*, their fine sayings, which they have got by heart rather than derived from deep experience (ver. 12), will be scattered like dust and fall to the ground like crumbling structures of clay. "For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall be brought unto judgment." Thus Job shakes himself free from his shallow counsellors before turning solemnly to God.

LESSONS. 1. In casting responsibility on others we may be incurring greater responsibility ourselves. 2. We should hesitate to apply truth to others before we have first applied it to ourselves. 3. Self-knowledge fits us for the office of counsel; blindness to self exposes us to rebuke and judgment.—J.

Vers. 13—22.—*Job's appeal to God.* I. DREAD OF THE RESULT OF THE APPEAL COMES UPON HIS MIND AT THE VERY MOMENT OF EXECUTING HIS RESOLVE. (Vers. 13—15.) So with Moses (Exod. xxxiii. 20), with Manoah and his wife (Judg. xiii. 22); so with Abraham pleading for the cities of the plain (Gen. xviii. 23, *et seq.*). It is the consciousness of weakness in the presence of omnipotence, of sinfulness in the presence of perfect holiness, which checks the spirit on the threshold of the unseen world and the unseen Presence. Over the door of an Eastern temple (as Spenser tells the story) there was an inscription, "Be bold," and over a second door repeated, "Be bold;" and again, "Be bold, and evermore be bold;" but last of all over the inner door was written, "Be not too bold." So fear and reverence chasten the confidence with which the believing child of God, in the full confidence of right, draws near to him.

II. TERROR LAID ASIDE. (Vers. 15, 16.) There is solace to Job in the thought that he shall be able to speak forth his most sacred convictions before he dies (ver. 15). But there is another and a nobler train of thought suggested here. His innocence will at last lead to his deliverance; for no unholy man dares appear before God; but he is not conscious of an unholy mind. Compare the noble fifteenth psalm.

III. DEMAND FOR A HEARING FROM HIS ADVERSARIES. (Vers. 17—19.) In this brief challenge we see all the features of the demeanour of a sincere and upright soul in the hour of trial. 1. Undaunted courage. 2. Presentiment of victory. 3. Readiness for all opponents and for all consequences. These are the arms which innocence furnishes, and in which the weakest and most defenceless may be arrayed as in a panoply.

IV. PRELIMINARY REQUESTS. (Vers. 20—22.) Before proceeding with his appeal, Job makes two requests: (1) that his pains may be assuaged; (2) that he may not be terrified by the sudden visitation of God (comp. ch. ix. 34). These he asks as the guarantees of the freedom of his speech. There is something deeply pathetic in this vacillation between confidence and fear—the confidence derived from the sense of

innocence and right, the fear which the thought of the dread presence of the Divine must ever impress.

LESSONS. 1. He who is most confident in the assurance of his innocence before man will be the most humble and timid in the presence of God. 2. Faith must finally overcome fear in every true heart.—J.

VERS. 23—28.—*Self-defence before God: 1. The weak against the Strong.* I. THE CRY OF INJURED INNOCENCE. (Ver. 23.) He asks that he may have his sins enumerated and brought home to him, and that he may not thus ever be punished without the knowledge of the nature of his guilt.

II. SENSE OF THE SILENCE AND WITHDRAWAL OF GOD. (Ver. 24.) God does not answer his challenge, and still his suffering continues, as if he were a foe to whom the Almighty deigns not to utter a word. The silence, the seeming deafness and dumbness of God before his creatures' pitiful cries, is more awful than all his thunder. Oh that he would but *speak*, in whatever accents! Man can never cease to agonize, to pray, to wrestle with the Unseen, until he extorts some response to the cry and craving of his heart.

III. PLAINT OF THE WEAKNESS OF SELF IN THE PRESENCE OF OMNIPOTENCE. (Ver. 25.) He has two vivid figures to represent this weakness: (1) that of the leaf, driven to and fro by the wind, so feeble and vanishing a thing has his life become; (2) that of the dry and worthless stubble; and yet God is against him as if he would drive and purge away every vestige of his existence. His fan is in his hand, and he is winnowing his floor from this useless chaff!

IV. SENSE OF THE AGGRAVATION OF HIS SIN. (Ver. 26.) In addition to his natural pains, he is loaded with the memories of long-past sins, which he had thought forgiven. The record of the sins of youth still seems to stand in the Divine book. Remembrance turns the past to pain. Men look indulgently on the "sins of youth," both in themselves and others. But here is a warning against these light views of transgression. The sowing of "wild oats" is certain, sooner or later, to be followed by a bitter harvest (comp. Ps. XXV. 7).

V. THE SENSE OF BEING FETTERED AND WATCHED. (Ver. 27.) He is like a criminal with his feet fastened in a block of wood, which he must carry with him wherever he goes. And all this power and violence, this watching and restraint, is put forth on one who is as helpless and broken as a worm-eaten, moth-gnawed garment (ver. 28).—J.

Ver. 15.—*Faith in God, bringing resignation.* "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Thus doth Job declare his unshaken affiance in God. He lifts his thoughts from the reasonings of his friends; he rises superior, at least for the time, to the oppression of his sufferings, and with a boldness that does him honour, and a confidence warranted by his belief in the Divine Name, he gives utterance to an expression of faith which has passed from lip to lip all through the ages, and has been a classical formula of faith for the saddest and most deeply afflicted amongst the children of men. How is the world indebted to them who, with a true heroism, declare their faith in the wisdom and goodness of the Lord!

I. FAITH IS NEEDED IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE MANY HEAVY TRIALS OF THE HUMAN HEART. External sources of help are often cut off. They altogether fail. There is no hand of strength, no word of power, no sufficient consolation. In bodily affliction the skill of the wisest may be set at nought. In the trials of life all help from outward sources may fail. The sorrow is too deep for an unaided heart to bear up under. Where shall the afflicted soul hide? There is help only in spiritual sources. God is the final goal of the afflicted spirit. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," is the ultimate utterance of the soul when all resources of help are cut off. But for this faith is needed—faith that apprehends the unseen and spiritual. The soul at such times is borne up only by faith, and the faith that is needed is a supreme, lowly, unhesitating faith. Happy he who has it.

II. FAITH IS WARRANTED BY THE CHARACTER OF GOD. This is the one unfailing refuge. This, of all, is most worthy of trust. We cannot always trust the words of human kindness, even friendship. The good resolves may fail from inability to fulfil

them. We may be mistaken. Our trust may rest on a deceitful foundation. Our staff may break and pierce our hand. But we always know that the character of God is unassailable. He has an assured ground of confidence who trusts in the Name of the Lord, whose repose is in the Divine character. Absolute goodness, perfect wisdom, infinite love,—these form the warrant of faith.

III. It is right and wise, therefore, THAT FAITH BE DECLARED. Let him who has learnt where the soul may find refuge and help declare it to others. Let him glorify God by his feeble tribute. It is his best, if his lowliest, offering. How great an indignity we feel if any one disputes our veracity! But he who confides in our word and character, even in times when both are aspersed, pays to us the highest tribute of friendship and of faith. So let us bring our humble offerings of trust, of thankfulness, and love—our spiritual gold, frankincense, and myrrh—and lay them at the feet of the everlasting King. Though he lay the heaviest burdens upon me, I will not doubt his goodness; though he treat me as a dog, yet will I cleave to him. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

IV. Such a faith is SURE TO BE REWARDED. 1. It has its reward in the peace of mind which it brings. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." The driven sparrow finds its house, and the swallow its nest. The dove returns to the ark. When there is no rest for the wounded spirit, it turns and finds its rest in God. Here it hides and waits in an assured hope. Job was brought to the very earth; but the Lord, who seemed to be slaying him, raised him up and gave him an abundant reward. 2. A further reward is secured in the character gained. 3. And yet a further one in the final Divine approbation of the faithful, trusting, submissive, obedient servant. Such faith shall not lose its reward. —R. G.

Ver. 24.—*The reasons for sorrow.* It has ever been a longing of the suffering heart of man to know why afflictions are permitted. Job is a striking example of the sufferer reduced to questioning. He makes his appeal for the reasons. "Wherefore hidest thou thy face?" Others have urged this inquiry. Even the Exemplar of all patient, submissive, trustful, obedient sufferers cried aloud, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But the answer comes not to Job with the quickness he may have desired. Yet though he giveth none account of his ways, all may be assured his purposes are wise and good. In the light of later teachings we may read "the end of the Lord." That which we "endure" we know "is for chastening." This, then, is the answer in general to the cry, "Wherefore hidest thou thy face?" Then, as far as we can interpret the answer to the cry to which no answer is immediately given, we may say—

I. A reason for sorrow may be found in ITS FITNESS TO BE A TEST OF FAITH. That faith should be tested, and so developed and perfected, is an obvious propriety. But for such testing it would be a dead, inoperative faculty. As the wing of the young eagle is strengthened by the demands made upon it when borne aloft, and then committed to its own unaided effort, so faith grows in strength by every appeal made to it. It is here experience is gained. By this men grow. The heart is made acquainted with "the ways of the Lord." The exercised faculty becomes familiarized with its duties. It learns to bear a heavier strain. Each successful performance of duty leaves it better fitted to act in future. The strong faith is the faith that has borne the severe test.

II. A second reason may be found in THE NECESSARY DEVELOPMENT OF PATIENCE. The heroic fortitude of the soul that can endure "as seeing him who is invisible" is not gained with suddenness. By slow steps is this height reached. By slow accretions is this grace perfected. The man unaccustomed to discomfort is unwilling to leave his freedom and ease, and to undertake toilsome and painful service. Sorrow oppresses the soul, but it thereby develops that power by which the soul is upheld. The slothful, self-indulgent spirit is unfitted for hard toil; and the world needs the willing labourer. There is a schooling of the soul by self-denial, by fasting. The substitute for the self-imposed training is the divinely imposed trial. The trial of faith is very precious if it leaves the soul steadier in patient endurance. By such trained souls is the world's great work to be done.

III. SORROW PERFECTS THE SOUL IN A LOWLY SUBMISSION TO THE DIVINE WILL. "It

is the Lord: let him do as seemeth him good," may be a defiant cry of rebellion: "Do thy worst;" or it may be a lowly, trustful, resigned committal of the life to the Divine purposes: "What he wills is best." The school of affliction is a hard school, but its patient scholars are well taught. And though "no affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby."

IV. SORROW MAY BE THE MEANS OF EVOKING THE MOST SINCERE AND BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLES OF OBEDIENCE. The histories of human suffering present us with examples of consummate and unflinching obedience, rendered in unquestioning acquiescence in the Divine purpose and in the pure love of the heart. The highest point ever reached by the obedient spirit was that of our great Pattern, who, in the depth of darkest affliction and sorrow of soul, patiently reiterated the sublime expression of a wholly consecrated service, "Nevertheless not my will, but thy will, be done."—R. G.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Trite sayings.* Job's complaint is that there was nothing new in his friends' pretentious harangues. All their pompous airs of superiority and authority did not deceive the patriarch, and prevent him from detecting the essentially commonplace character of their ideas.

I. MOST SAYINGS ARE TRITE. It is not often given to a man to discover a new truth. Even when a person makes a remark that is original in him, *i.e.* that he has not derived from any other man, the probability is that some one else has said something very like it before. Too often, when a man is pretentious of novelty, what is fresh is only the garb of his notion. The newest extravagances in religion are generally only old heresies exhumed and magnetized into a semblance of life. It is foolish to think of astounding the world with our ideal. Even in Job's day people were weary of the little stock of notions that was in circulation among the most intelligent classes.

II. THE FUSSY REPETITION OF TRITE SAYINGS CAN DO NO GOOD. Job's three friends only vexed the sorrowing man by repeating what he knew as well as they. The same mistake is often made in foolish attempts at administering consolation. No sayings are so trite as those that treat of suffering and its uses. The very commonness of the lot of suffering, and the very obviousness of some of its circumstances, have made the stock precepts of sorrow very familiar to all of us. It is useless to go to a person in trouble and repeat them once more. It would be better to be silent. Silence might affect him as a most original novelty.

III. TRITE SAYINGS MAY BE TRUE AND IMPORTANT. 1. *True.* It is not to be supposed that men are generally the victims of delusions. One reason why certain sayings have become trite is that they have been proved by experience to be true. Had they been false they would have been discarded long since. No doubt there are venerable errors. Job's friends' trite sayings were so one-sided that the truth of them was lost by perversion; but still most trite sayings must have a considerable amount of truth in them to stand the test of time. 2. *Important.* The triteness is generally a testimony to the importance; for if the sayings were of slight moment they would have been neglected. The current use of them presupposes some value attached to them. The gospel of Christ has become a trite saying to many. Yet it is as true and momentous as ever.

IV. PERSONAL APPLICATION AND SYMPATHY MAY REVIVE INTEREST IN TRITE SAYINGS. 1. *Personal application.* It is difficult to be in earnest with a trite saying. Such a saying tends to become a mere form of words. It wears like a coin that has lost its effigy and legend. "Truths," says Coleridge, "of all others the most awful and interesting, are too often considered as *so* true that they lose all the power of truth, and lie bedridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors." But he adds, "There is one sure way of giving freshness and importance to the most commonplace maxims—that of reflecting on them in direct reference to our own state and conduct, to our own past and future being." 2. *Sympathy.* The three friends applied the trite sayings to Job, but he would not take them home to himself. He justly considered that they did not apply to him in the way his friends supposed. They applied them without sympathy, and therefore without understanding Job. We may repeat very familiar words, and yet if the ring of sincerity and the tone of sympathy be in them they will still awaken interest.—W. F. A.

Ver. 4.—"*Physicians of no value.*" Job's friends were physicians of no value. They came to heal, but they only aggravated his complaint.

I. CONSIDER WHERE WE MEET WITH PHYSICIANS OF NO VALUE. 1. *In dealing with sorrow.* How rare is a truly helpful friend in a time of great sorrow! Many well-wishers try their hand at consolation, but most of them bungle painfully. We endure their visits of condolence because we do not wish to be ungrateful and disagreeable, but we are relieved when they have left us alone with our grief. 2. *In treating sin.* No human being can cure sin. Men may blame sin, but they cannot cast it out. Here is a disease that no medicine of man's can touch. But there is room for some action of ours. We ought to be able to bring the Divine remedy. Yet how often we fail to do so! How conscious we must be that our efforts are not reaching the sinner and really helping him! 3. *In meeting social trouble.* There are plenty of wild theorists, but none of them have been able to set right the disorganized state of society. Philanthropists too often show more zeal than judgment.

II. INQUIRE WHY THE PHYSICIANS ARE OF NO VALUE. 1. *Ignorance of the state of the patient.* If the doctor has not rightly diagnosed his case he is not likely to be successful in his treatment of it. We must understand those whom we would benefit. 2. *Lack of skill in the use of remedies.* The doctor must understand his drugs, or he will poison his patients. If we would benefit men we must first know them; then we must know the Divine medicine. They who do not apprehend the gospel of Christ themselves cannot be physicians of value to others. We must study truth as well as men; and we must go further, and be familiar ourselves with those great saving ideas which we would apply to others. 3. *Absence of sympathy.* Here was the secret of Job's friends' failure, although at first they seemed to have evinced the deepest sympathy. We can never help the miserable till we sympathize with them. The first essential to success in a mission among the poor is brotherliness. If this is wanting, the mission must fail though any amount of energy and money may be expended on it.

III. REMEMBER THAT THERE IS ONE PHYSICIAN OF INESTIMABLE VALUE. Christ fulfils all the requisite conditions. He knows us, for he is one of ourselves—tempted in all respects as we are, though without sin. He is familiar with the needed remedy, for he is one with God, and is perfectly at home among those great spiritual facts from which the cure of the world's evil must come. He, too, is full of sympathy. Of old he cured the sick because he was "moved with compassion." The great, tender heart of Christ beats in warm sympathy for all his brother-men. Now we have to see in experience that our good Physician is able to do what the physicians of no value have failed to accomplish. Christ is the Friend to help in sorrow; he alone can cure sin. Christ in the world brings the kingdom of heaven, and so corrects the social troubles. Christ as a living Saviour, as an active Physician now in our midst, can heal, and we know this because we see he does heal wherever he is trusted to do so.—W. F. A.

Ver. 7.—*Speaking wickedly for God.* Here was the great fault and sin of the three friends. They affected to be God's advocates, yet they spoke wickedly. Thus they endeavoured to support their view of providence by uncharitable assumptions and theories that were not in accordance with the facts. Such conduct was culpable, displeasing to God, and most injurious to the true interests of religion.

I. THE TEMPTATION TO SPEAK WICKEDLY FOR GOD. This comes from the notion that the end justifies the means. If the object is to serve God, it is assumed that whatever process is employed must be right. Thus it has been a doctrine among the Jesuits that equivocal conduct which would be condemned in the work of the world is to be condoned when it is turned to the advancement of the Church. The apparently unselfish character of the action adds to the subtle deceptiveness of the temptation. What is said is not for our own sakes, but for the glory of God. Further, it is argued men have no right to complain, because the true servants of God will rejoice in what glorifies him; and they who are not of the Church are out of court, and can have no ground on which to plead a complaint. Yet even they might profit, it is further urged; if they were led to the Church by fraud, when once they were in, would they not bless the fraud that saved them? All this is but the sophistry of a temptation from the devil.

II. THE GREAT SIN OF SPEAKING WICKEDLY FOR GOD. This is peculiarly hateful to

him, for he is a God of righteousness. Several points go to make up the exceeding badness of such conduct. 1. *It destroys truth.* If we may lie for God, truth itself is humiliated. The permission of mere equivocation which is intended to deceive lowers the standard of truth. This is a break-up of the rigorous moral law. 2. *It is fatal to charity.* The plea is that man must be sacrificed for the sake of God. But God has said, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." He will not accept the service that is rendered at the cost of cruelty to a brother. 3. *It is dishonouring to God.* His holy Name is dragged down to man's low conduct, and enlisted in the service of evil. What is done for his glory is supposed to carry his sanction. Thus the God of truth and love is made to appear as the champion of lies and hatred. This is a most abominable insult to God. 4. *It is a miserable cloak for sin.* It would seem that men would not think of speaking wickedly for God unless there were wickedness in their own hearts. It is true they may be foolish enough to imagine that their conduct will really minister to the Divine glory, and it is only fair to admit that people who are deluded by Jesuitical casuistry will do for the Church what they would not dream of doing for themselves. Thus these people are not really so bad as their conduct suggests. Still, unless they are utterly duped by their system, unless their consciences have been warped into a kind of moral insanity by their training—and it must be allowed that this is possible—we cannot but say that their action must spring from a low tone of morality. At all events, it must tend to produce this, must be distinctly degrading and demoralizing. 5. *It is doomed to failure.* Nothing more injures the cause of Christ than the unworthy conduct of his followers, especially when this pleads his glory as its excuse. Nothing so favours unbelief as the suspicion of want of candour in defenders of the faith. It is fatal to cling to a bad argument because of its tendency to support the right. We can only please and serve God when we follow truth and love. This is the method of Christ, who scorned all subterfuges, and chose the apparent failure of the cross rather than the triumphs of safe diplomatic policy.—W. F. A.

Ver. 23.—*Sin revealed by God.* Job is in a sad perplexity. His friends accuse him of great sin as the cause of his great trouble, but his conscience does not echo their accusation. Can it be that he has sinned unconsciously, that God is really angry with him for some offence which he has not recognized?

I. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO SIN UNCONSCIOUSLY. It is not to be supposed that a man could be as guilty as Job's friends assumed the patriarch to be, and yet possess the clean conscience that was the one mitigating condition in his terrible distresses. The glaring contradiction proved the error of the comforters. Moreover, nobody can sin unconsciously, because the evil deed that is done apart from consciousness possesses no moral character. A hypnotized person who killed another would not be a murderer, nor would one who did so in the delirium of a fever. To sin in ignorance is not really to sin at all. All sin lies in the motive, and the motive must be evil for the deed to be sinful. But we cannot have an evil motive without knowing it.

II. IT IS POSSIBLE NOT TO BE FULLY CONSCIOUS OF ONE'S SIN. 1. *The guilt of it may be minimized.* A man knows that he has done wrong, and this very knowledge sets him to work on the ingenious search for excuses. He puts his conduct in the best light, hides its more ugly features, hunts up extenuating circumstances, pleads weakness, necessity, custom, ulterior good, etc. 2. *The fact may be ignored.* We keep the door locked on the skeleton in the cupboard. We do not care to rake up ugly memories. We tread lightly over the weak places in our life's story. When this careful ignoring of sin has gone on for some time, conscience itself is soothed and charmed into peace.

III. IT IS MOST DESIRABLE THAT OUR SIN SHOULD BE REVEALED TO US. The revelation has many good results. 1. *It leads to repentance.* We never know how odious our sin is till we look at it in God's light. Hidden and forgotten sin is not repented of. Pride grows on the graves of buried sins. The sins must be exhumed and scattered to the winds, if we are to take the humble ground of penitents. 2. *It helps us to conquer sin.* The sin that lives within us is not recognized in its deadly character till God reveals it to us. Thus our excuses for sin encourage the reign of sin. To destroy it we must see it in its true character.

IV. IT IS WELL TO PRAY THAT GOD WOULD REVEAL OUR SINS TO US. 1. *He can.*

For he knows the sin better than we know it, and he is in close contact with our consciences. The awakened conscience perceives sin with a shock of horror, and it is the Spirit of God that awakens conscience. 2. *He will at last.* Sin cannot remain hidden for ever. The secrets of all hearts must be dragged to the light in God's great day of judgment. If we will not have our sin revealed to us now, it will be revealed to all then. 3. *We should seek a revelation.* Thus we may anticipate and prevent the future revelation. For the sin that is repented of and forgiven will never be revived. Meanwhile the longer our sin is hidden the worse it is for us. It is a viper in the breast, poison in the blood, death in the heart. Sin itself, not its consequences, is our worst enemy. Therefore let us pray, not in the perplexity of Job's cruelly misjudged situation, but in the simple contrition of the psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24).—W. F. A.

Ver. 24.—*The hiding of God's face.* I. THE SORROWFUL EXPERIENCE. The thought that God's face is hidden is most distressing to Job. Let us see what he is thinking of, and why he is distressed. The unveiled countenance is a sign of favour; the veiled, or averted face, of displeasure. Therefore Job's word suggests an idea of God's withdrawal of favour. He explains himself by adding, "And holdest me for thine enemy." But Job means more than the withdrawal of manifested favours, as gifts of grace flowing from the bounty of God. God is more than his gifts. The light of God's countenance is better than the blessings of God's storehouse. The very smiting by God is itself a supreme source of life and gladness. As the plant blooms in the sunshine and grows pale and sickly in the dark, so the soul blooms in the light of God's love and fades into desolation when that is hidden. To some, indeed, the hiding of God's face is no trouble. They cannot exclaim with delight, like Hagar, "Thou God seest me." Such words are to them only the expression of a great terror. But souls that know and love God bask in the sunshine of his presence. To lose the consciousness of God's loving presence is to such souls the desolation of a Siberian winter, the darkness of a storm-girt night.

II. THE MYSTERIOUS CAUSE. The cause is a mystery. We may see it afterwards, or in regard to the experience of others. But, while we are passing through the great darkness, its meaning is hidden from us, and this is part of its deepest trouble. Even Christ, in the human limitations of his earthly sufferings, exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46); and there came no reply like that which followed immediately on other words of Christ addressed to his Father in heaven (*e.g.* John xii. 28). Still some hints of the cause may sometimes be gathered up. If we are conscious of sin, this is sufficient. The only wonder is that God has not withdrawn his countenance before this. If we have lost our first love (Rev. ii. 4) and have wandered from God, we may well look back with regret to the happier past; but we can scarcely be surprised at our present depression. Then we can say with Cowper—

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his Word?

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

Possibly, like the author of the Olney Hymns, we may be suffering from morbid subjective feelings. It may be that God has not hidden his face, but that our eyes are dim with needless tears, so that we cannot see his gracious countenance.

III. THE LIGHT BEHIND. God may be hiding his face, but he has not changed it. The sun has gone behind a cloud, but it still shines. God has not turned his love into hatred when we can no longer see his kind countenance. He loves us in the dark as much as in the light. He has not withdrawn his face in hiding it. The veil does not increase the distance between us and God; it only prevents us from seeing him, though

he is really as near to us as ever. Nay, he may be most near when we cannot see him. We are warmed and vitalized by the sun even while it is hidden by the cloud. God does not cease to bless us when we cease to perceive him. Yet the greatest blessing is with the unveiled countenance. That blessing of the beatific vision is reserved for the pure in heart (Matt. v. 8).—W. F. A.

Ver. 26.—*Suffering for the sins of one's youth.* Job is perplexed. He cannot see what he has done to merit such terrible troubles as he is now experiencing. It certainly seems to him that no recent conduct of his can be deserving the punishment from which, according to his friends, he is suffering. Can it be that long-forgotten sins of his youth are brought up against him, and that he is suffering from those old offences?

I. THE SINS OF YOUTH ARE NOT TO BE LIGHTLY IGNORED. 1. *Because they were done in haste.* Youth is thoughtless; still it has moral responsibility. 2. *Because youth is inexperienced.* Youth will not be judged by the standard of more enlightened years, but by its own light, which is sufficient to warn from sin. 3. *Because of their distant past.* Though they were committed long ago, if they have never been repented of, they stand in the record against us still. Time does not condone guilt. 4. *Because of subsequent amendment.* This is the strongest plea. Yet it will not stand. For the subsequent conduct was no better than it ought to have been. There were no "works of supererogation" in it that could serve as an atonement for past offences.

II. THE SINS OF YOUTH BEAR FRUIT IN AFTER-YEARS. They do so in this life. Disease and early decrepitude are the bitter fruits of youthful dissipation. If the golden opportunities of youth are wasted, the after-life must suffer. If opportunities of educational improvement are neglected in youth, it is impossible to make up for them in manhood. The young man who spends the best years of his life in idle pleasure-seeking instead of laying the foundation of his future work, is sure to come to a day when he will bitterly repent his folly. There is a unity in life. We cannot slice it into detached periods, having no connection with one another. The present is a product of the past, and the ultimate future will be a result of our whole life, not of the last moments of it. Future judgment deals with the deeds of the life, not with the mood of the death-bed.

III. SINS OF YOUTH MAY BE FORGIVEN. They cannot be undone. Some of their consequences are inevitable. Therefore the hope of pardon is no encouragement for folly and wickedness. Still, when a man repents and seeks the grace of God, his case is never treated in Scripture as hopeless. Though a certain loss and suffering may remain, God forgives and heals the repentant soul. Therefore it is foolish to forget or to defend a misspent youth. The only hopeful thing is to own it before God, and to show ourselves heartily ashamed of it. It is far better to give to God every hour of life; but if the early hours have been misspent—miserable as is the thought of them—it is possible to mend our ways, and enter the vineyard even at the eleventh hour. The right use of reflection on the sins of youth is to make a man humble, and to lead him to sympathize with young men, and to try to warn them, lest they make the sad mistake which has thrown a shadow over all his subsequent life. For who that is converted in later age would not give all he has to go back and begin again, and so avoid the ugly, unchangeable past?—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIV.

Vers. 1—22.—This chapter, in which Job concludes the fourth of his addresses, is characterized by a tone of mild and gentle expostulation, which contrasts with the comparative vehemence and passion of the two preceding chapters. It would seem that the patriarch, having vented his feelings, experiences a certain relief, an interval of calm, in which, his own woes pressing less heavily upon him, he is content to moralize on the general condition of humanity.

Ver. 1.—Man that is born of a woman. In this fact Job sees the origin of man's in-

herent weakness. He is "born of a woman," who is "the weaker vessel" (1 Pet. iii. 7). He is conceived by her in uncleanness (Ps. li. 5; comp. below, ver. 4), brought forth in sorrow and pain (Gen. iii. 16), suckled at her breasts, placed for years under her guidance. No wonder that he shares the weakness of which she is a sort of type. **Is of few days**; literally, *short of days*. Length and shortness of days are, no doubt, relative; and it is difficult to say what term of life would not have seemed short to men as they looked back upon it. To Jacob, at the age of a hundred and thirty, it appeared that "*few* and evil had the days of the years of his life been" (Gen. xlvii. 9). Methuselah, perhaps, thought the same. We all, as we come towards old age, and death draws manifestly near, feel as if we had only just begun to live, as if, at any rate, we had not done half our work, and were about to be cut off before our time. But would the case be seriously different if our tale of years were doubled? **And full of trouble** (comp. ch. v. 7).

Ver. 2.—**He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down.** Few similes are more frequently used in Scripture (comp. Ps. ciii. 15; Isa. xxviii. 1, 4; xl. 6, 7; Jas. i. 10, 11; 1 Pet. i. 24), and certainly none could have more poetic beauty. Eastern flowers do not often last much more than a day. **He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not** (comp. ch. vii. 2; viii. 9; 1 Chron. xxix. 15; Ps. cii. 11; cix. 23; Eccles. vi. 12, etc.). Shadows are always changing; but the shadows which flee away the fastest, and which Job has probably in his mind, are those of clouds, or other moving objects, which seem to chase each other over the earth, and never to continue for a single minute in one stay.

Ver. 3.—**And dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one?** Is it compatible with God's greatness, unchangeableness, and majesty to take any notice of so poor, weak, and unstable a creature as mortal man? The question has been often asked, and answered by many in the negative, as by the Epicureans of old. Job does not really entertain any doubt upon the point; but only intends to express his wonder that it should be so (comp. Ps. viii. 4, and above, ch. vii. 17). **And bringest me into judgment with thee?** Especially astonishing is it, Job says, that God should condescend to try, pass judgment on, and punish so weak, worthless, and transitory a creature as himself.

Ver. 4.—**Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.** It is scarcely true to say that "the fact of original *sin* is thus distinctly recognized" ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 61). Original uncleanness and infirmity are recognized; but the uncleanness is material, and removable by material expiation (Lev. xii. 2—8). It is rather man's weakness than his sinfulness that is here under discussion.

Ver. 5.—**Seeing his days are determined.** Job here returns to the consideration of the shortness of man's life. "His days are determined;" *i.e.* they are a limited period, known to and fixed beforehand by God. They are not like God's days, which "endure throughout all generations" (Ps. cii. 24). **The number of his months are with thee.** "With thee" means here "known to thee," "laid up in thy counsels." **Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.** "His bounds" are "the limit of his lifetime." The *three* clauses are pleonastic. One idea pervades them all.

Ver. 6.—**Turn from him, that he may rest**; literally, *look away from him*; i.e. "Cease to watch him and search him out so continually" (comp. ch. vii. 17, 18). "Then he will be able to have a breathing-time, an interval of peace and rest, before his departure from the earth." What Job had previously desired for himself (ch. x. 20) he now asks for all humanity. **Till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day.** Hired labourers are glad when their day's work is over. So man rejoices when life comes to an end.

Ver. 7.—**For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down.** God's vegetable creation is better off, in respect of length of days, than man. Let a tree be cut down, it is not therefore of necessity destroyed. There is yet hope for it. The bare dry stump will sometimes put forth tender branches, which will grow and flourish, and renew the old life. Or, if the stump be quite dead, suckers may spring up from the root and grow into new trees as vigorous as the one that they replace (comp. Isa. xi. 1). Herodotus considered that all trees had this recuperative power, except the φοῖνιξ, a species of fir (Herod., vi. 37), and the traveller Shaw says that when a palm tree dies there is always a sucker ready to take its place. Pliny also observes of the laurel, "Vivacissima est radix, ita ut, si truncus inaruerit, recisa arbor mox lætius frutificet" ('Hist. Nat.,' i. 15. § 30). **That it will sprout again.** That is, from the spool or stump. Some trees, as the Spanish chestnut, if cut down flush with the ground, throw up shoots from the entire circle of the stump, often as many as fifteen or twenty. **And that the tender branch thereof will not cease.** The vigour of such shoots is very great. In a few years they grow to the height of the parent tree. If they are then removed they are quickly replaced by a fresh growth.

Vers. 8, 9.—**Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant.** After the stump is actually dead, suckers may be thrown up from the roots, if sufficient water be supplied to them; and these will put forth branches luxuriantly.

Ver. 10.—**But man dieth.** "Man" is here גֶּבֶר, "the brave, strong man," not אָדָם or אֱנוֹשׁ, and the meaning is that man, however brave and strong, perishes. **And wasteth away;** *i.e.* "comes to nought, retains no strength or vitality." **Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?** "Where is he?" Job could not answer this question. He might say, "In Sheol." But where was Sheol, and what was Sheol? There was no written revelation on this subject, and no traditional knowledge on which dependence could be placed. The Hebrew notions on the subject were very vague and indeterminate; Job's notions are likely to have been still vaguer. There is no reason to believe that he had any exact acquaintance with the tenets of the Egyptians. He may have known the Chaldean teaching, but it would not have carried him very far (see above, pp. 178, 179). Doubt and perplexity beset him whenever he turned his attention to the problem of man's condition after death, and, excepting when carried away by a burst of enthusiasm, he seems to have regarded it as the highest wisdom, in matters of this kind, "to know that he knew nothing." The question, "Where is he?" is an acknowledgment of this profound ignorance.

Ver. 11.—**As the waters fail from the sea.** The allusion seems to be to the actual desiccation of seas and rivers. Job, apparently, had known instances of both. A formation of new land in the place of sea is always going on at the head of the Persian Gulf, through the deposits of the Tigris and Euphrates; and this formation was very rapid in ancient times, when the head of the gulf was narrower. The desiccation of river-courses is common in Mesopotamia, where arms thrown out by the Tigris and Euphrates get blocked, and then silted up. **And the flood decayeth and drieth up;** rather, *and the river decayeth*, etc. (see the comment on the preceding clause).

Ver. 12.—**So man lieth down, and riseth not.** This is not an absolute denial of a *final* resurrection, since Job is speaking of the world as it lies before him, not of eventualities. Just as he sees the land encroach upon the sea, and remain land, and the river-courses, once dried up, remain dry, so he sees men descend into the grave and remain there, without rising up again. **This is the** established order of nature as it exists before his eyes. **Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake.** This order of things, Job believes, rightly enough, will continue as long as the heavens and the earth endure. What will happen afterwards he does not so much as inquire. It is remarked, ingeniously, that Job's words, though not intended in this sense, exactly "coincide with the declarations of the New Testament, which make the resurrection simultaneous with the breaking up of the visible universe" (Canon Cook). **Nor be raised out of their sleep.** If "the glimmer of a hope" of the resurrection appears anywhere in vers. 10—12, it is in the comparison of death to a sleep, which is inseparably connected in our minds with an awakening.

Ver. 13.—**Oh that thou wouldest hide me in the grave!** literally, *in Sheol*, which here does not so much mean "the grave," as the place of departed spirits, described in ch. x. 21, 22. Job desires to have God's protection in that "land of darkness," and to be "hidden" there by him until his wrath be past. It has been generally supposed that he means after his death; but Schultens thinks his desire was to descend to Sheol *alive*, and there remain, while his punishment continued, hidden from the eyes of men. **That thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past.** Job assumes that, if he is being punished for his youthful sins (ch. xiii. 26), his punishment will not be for long—at any rate, not for ever; God's anger will at last be satisfied and cease. **That thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!** How long he may have to suffer he does not greatly care. Only let it be "a set time"—a fixed, definite period—and at the end of it, let God "remember" him.

Ver. 14.—**If a man die, shall he live again?** The question is clearly intended to be answered in the negative. It is not a dispassionate inquiry, but an expression of hopelessness. Let a man once die, and of course he cannot live again. Were it otherwise, then, Job says, **all the days of my appointed time will I wait;** or, rather (as in the Revised Version), *all the days of my warfare would I wait;* i.e. I would patiently endure any sufferings in the larger hope that would then be open to me. I would wait **till my change** (rather, *my renewal*) **come.** The exact nature of the "renewal" which Job seems here to expect is obscure. Perhaps he is pursuing the idea, broached in ver. 13, of his being conveyed *alive* to Hades, and looks forward to a further renewed life after he is released from that "land of darkness."

Ver. 15.—**Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee;** rather, *thou shouldest call, and*

I would answer thee (see the Revised Version). In that case, when I quitted Hades, and renewed my life, thou wouldst assuredly summon me to thee, and I would respond to the summons. There would be sweet colloquy between us; for **thou wilt** (or, rather, *wouldest*) **have a desire to the work of thine hands** (comp. ch. x. 8—11). Job assumes that God must love whatever he has created, and be drawn towards it by a secret, strong desire.

Ver. 16.—**For now thou numberest my steps**; rather, *but now*. Job, at this point, proceeds to contrast his actual condition with the ideal one which (in vers. 13—15) his imagination has conjured up. God's actual attitude towards him he regards as one, not of protecting love, but of jealous hostility. His "steps" are observed, counted—every divergence from the right path is noted—a false step, if he makes one, is at once punished. **Dost thou not watch over my sin?** (comp. ch. x. 14). Job's sins, he thinks, are watched for, spied out, taken note of, and remembered against him.

Ver. 17.—**My transgression is sealed up in a bag** (comp. Deut. xxxii. 34); *i.e.* God keeps account of all my transgressions. It is as if he put them all into a bag (compare "Put my tears into thy bottle," Ps. lvi. 8), whence they can be taken out and brought against me at any moment. They are "sealed up" in the bag for greater security. **And thou sewest up mine iniquity.** (So Ewald, Dillmann, Canon Cook, and the Revised Version.) Others think the meaning to be, "Thou addest to my iniquity [continually];" *i.e.* by placing fresh sins to my account. (So Schultens and Rosenmüller.)

Ver. 18.—**And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought.** Job here resumes the lament over human infirmity, with which the chapter opens (vers. 1—12); but he has, perhaps, in this passage, his own case more distinctly presented to his consciousness. With the wealth of metaphor which characterizes his utterances, he compares the ruin of a prosperous man (1) to the sudden collapse of a mountain; (2) to the removal of a rock out of its place; (3) to the wearing away of stones by the constant flow of streams; and (4) to the destruction of alluvial tracts by floods. Mountains collapse, either by volcanic agency, which is quite as much shown in the subsidence as in the elevation of the soil, or by landslips, which are most usually the results of heavy rains. **And the rock is removed out of his place.** Rocks are sometimes split by frost, and topple over when a thaw comes; at other times, heavy floods remove them from their accustomed place; occasionally earthquakes overturn them, and cause them to fall with a crash. There is also a removal of rocks to much greater distances, by means of glaciers and icebergs; but of these Job is not likely to have known.

Ver. 19.—**The waters wear the stones.** The power of the soft element of water, by continual washing or dripping, to wear away the hardest stone, has often been noticed, and is a frequent topic in poetry. Deep ravines have been worn in course of time, through broad and lofty mountain ranges by rivers, the stone yielding little by little to the action of the water, until at last a broad chasm is made. So the continual wearing action of calamity often lays low the prosperous. **Thou washest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth**; rather, as in the Revised Version, *the overflowings thereof wash away the dust of the earth*; i.e. "overflows of water, inundations, floods, not only make a way through rocks, but often carry off great tracts of rich soil, hurrying the alluvium down to the sea, and leaving in its place a marsh or a waste." **And thou destroyest the hope of man.** Even thus from time to time does God ruin and destroy the hopes of a prosperous man.

Ver. 20.—**Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth**; rather, *thou puttest forth thy power against him perpetually*; i.e. thou art continually oppressing him, and crushing him by afflictions; and the consequence is that "he passes;" *i.e.* "he passes away, disappears, ceases to be." **Thou changest his countenance.** "Alterest," *i.e.*, "its expression from cheerfulness to sadness, and its complexion from the hue of health to the sickly pallor of disease; settest the stamp of death upon it, and further disfigurest it in the dreadful process of decay." **And sendest him away.** That is to say, "Thou removest him from the earth, dismissest him to Sheol, where thenceforth he remains."

Ver. 21.—**His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not.** The meaning seems to be, "If his sons come to honour, it is of no advantage to him; in the remote and wholly separate region of Sheol he will not be aware of it." The view is more dismal than that of Aristotle, who argues that the fate of those whom they have loved and left on earth will be sure to penetrate, in course of time (ἐπί τινα χρόνον), to the departed, and cause them a certain amount of joy or sorrow ('Eth. Nic.,' i. 11). **And they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them.** Equally, in the opposite case, *if* his sons are brought low, he is ignorant of it, and unaffected by their fate.

Ver. 22.—**But his flesh upon him shall have pain.** The best rendering is probably that which is placed in the margin of the

Revised Version, *only for himself his flesh hath pain, and for himself his soul mourneth.* Nothing more is intended than to negative the idea that the future condition of his children will seriously affect a man who is suffering under God's afflicting hand, either in this life or afterwards. He cannot but be occupied solely with himself. His own sufferings, whether of body or mind, will absorb all his attention.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Job to God:* 2. *The death-wail of humanity.* I. THE WAIL OF HUMANITY IN THE EAR OF GOD. 1. *The constitutional frailty of man.* Moses, in the Book of Genesis (i. 26; ii. 7), sets forth the dignity of man (Adam) as the crown of creation (Ps. viii. 6), as the handiwork of God (ch. x. 8; Ps. c. 3; Isa. xv. 12), as the image of his Maker (Gen. ix. 6; Acts xvii. 29; 1 Cor. xi. 7). Job here supplies the companion picture of the misery of man by representing him as: (1) Descended from woman, who was not only taken out of weak man, but is expressly declared to be the weaker vessel (1 Pet. iii. 7), and is the subject of a special doom of weakness in herself and offspring in consequence of having been first in the transgression (Gen. iii. 16; 1 Tim. ii. 14)—all which may be said to entail on the human race, as it were by a threefold necessity, the pitiable heritage of frailty. (2) Sprung from the dust, out of which man emerged, and still emerges, like a flower (Ps. ciii. 15; Isa. xl. 6; Jas. i. 10), and to which again, like the flower, he shall in due course return (Gen. iii. 19); in the meanwhile, as he hovers between the cradle and the grave, his birthplace and his place of sepulture, being like the flower, a structure of exquisite loveliness and of admirable symmetry (Ps. cxxxix. 14), but after all delicate and tender as a flower, being, like it, only a handful of dexterously fashioned and beautifully painted dust. (3) Insubstantial as a shadow, which is not so much a thing as the image and reflection of a thing, the projection on the ground of an opaque body whose dark form intercepts the light of heaven, a metaphor applied already by Bildad to man's days (ch. viii. 9; cf. Ps. cii. 11; cxliv. 4), but here with greater boldness appropriated to depict the utter insignificance of man himself. 2. *The extreme brevity of human life.* The period of man's continuance on earth is sorrowfully exhibited as: (1) Of definite extension (ver. 5; cf. ch. vii. 1, 2). Uncertain in the eye of man himself (Eccles. ix. 11, 12), the hour of each one's departure from this sublunary scene is accurately known by God (Jer. xxviii. 16), in whose hands are not only the souls of all living things and the breath of all mankind (ch. xii. 10), but their times as well (Ps. xxxi. 15), to whose all-seeing eye the number of their months is as well known as the number of their hairs (Luke xii. 7), who hath not only appointed the bounds of their habitation (Acts xvii. 26), but also determined their days, setting a bound to their goings on the face of the earth as effectually as he does to the waves of the sea (ch. xxxviii. 11). And this doctrine of each man on earth having a predestined career is as philosophical as it is scriptural, the foreordination of the Almighty not interfering with the operation of natural laws and secondary causes. Nor is it contradicted by those texts of Scripture which seem to teach that the limit of man's pilgrimage is determined by purely accidental circumstances (ch. xv. 32; xxii. 16; Ps. lv. 23; Eccles. vii. 17). (2) Of short duration (vers. 1, 2, 5, 6). Whether the expression, "of few days," literally, "curtailed as to days," contains an allusion to the fact that human life was shorter than it would have been had man continued innocent, or that in Job's time it was shorter than it had been in the world's infancy, it is certain that an exceedingly impressive picture is presented by the phrases and images here employed, human life at the longest being characterized as "months," then "days," and these only "few," and after that as "a day," as the brief season during which a flower blooms, as the short time during which the shadow runs. Contrasted with the age of the race, the duration of the earth, the lifetime of God, yea, contrasted with itself in prospective anticipation, the life of man, especially in the retrospect, is "but a handbreadth" (Ps. xxxix. 5). (3) Of quick transition. Coming forth like a flower, man has scarcely begun to bloom when he is cut down (cf. 'Henry VIII.,' act iii. sc. 2). The few days that God allots him to live refuse to linger, but hurry on, like the shadow on the dial, never hasting, never resting, but ever moving, moving, moving on.

"'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine;
And after one hour more, 'twill be eleven;
And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,
And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot."
('As You Like It,' act ii. sc. 5.)

3. *The intense severity of human sorrow.* Besides being of few days, woman-born man is full of trouble, literally, "full of unrest," of inward commotion and of outward motion, its inevitable sequence and result. Though perhaps it is not true of any that their existence on earth is so completely "satiated with sorrow," that no interludes of joy remain, it is yet true of most that affliction forms a principal ingredient in their cup (ch. v. 7), while of all it may be said that a considerable portion of their troubles springs from the spirit of unrest with which they are surcharged, and of which the primal cause is sin. "A few seem favourites of fate, in pleasure's lap caressed," though even these are not "likewise truly blest" in the highest sense of the expression.

"But oh! what crowds in every land
Are wretched and forlorn,"

through bodily disease, mental anxiety, domestic sorrow, through "man's inhumanity to man," through the fierce raging of inward passion, through the terrible canker-worm of sin! 4. *The inherited corruption of man's moral nature.* "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one?" (ver. 4). Read as a wish, "Oh that a pure one could come from an impure!" (Delitzsch), the idea is the same, that purity is impossible to man because of his origin. Descended from woman, he brings with him into life a legacy of physical frailty, and, what is worse, of uncleanness. The language may perhaps be regarded as giving enunciation to the doctrine of original sin, *i.e.* of the hereditary corruption of human nature—a doctrine pervading Scripture (Gen. v. 3; vi. 5; viii. 21; Ps. li. 5; 1 Cor. xv. 22; Rom. v. 12—20; Eph. ii. 3); involved in the universal prevalence of sin (ch. xi. 12; Ps. lviii. 3; Prov. xxii. 15); presupposed in the necessity of regeneration (John iii. 6); confirmed by the experience of God's people (ch. xl. 4; Ps. li. 5; Isa. vi. 5; Rom. vii. 14); and harmonizing with the all-pervading law of nature that like begets like.

II. THE APPEAL OF HUMANITY TO THE HEART OF GOD. 1. *Deprecating judgment.* "And dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?" (ver. 3). A favourite idea with Job that the very frailty and sinfulness of man should have been his protection against the Divine inspection and judicial visitation, that it was scarcely worthy of the Divine Majesty to set a watch upon a creature so insignificant and feeble as man, or consistent with equity to arraign at his bar a being whose weakness was constitutional and hereditary. But that original sin or hereditary weakness does not destroy the consciousness of individual responsibility, is proclaimed by Scripture (Gen. iv. 7; Exod. xxxii. 33; ch. xxxi. 3; Ezek. xviii. 4), attested by conscience, and believed by society. And, though man is frail, he is neither powerless for evil, nor unimportant as a factor in the history of earth. Hence he cannot safely be overlooked. Neither is he unjustly brought into judgment. Still God allows himself to be moved to compassionate forbearance by both a contemplation of man's frailty (Ps. ciii. 14), and a consideration of his inherited corruption (Gen. vi. 3, 5). 2. *Supplicating mercy.* "Turn from him [literally, 'look away from him'], that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day" (ver. 6). Considering that man has only a short day to live, Job entreats that that day may be mercifully exempted from such special sufferings as spring from a Divine marking and punishing of sin, in order that man, the poor hireling, may be able to perform his appointed task. On human life as a term of hard service, and man as a miserable hired drudge, see ch. vii. 1 (homiletics). The prayer tells us that no man can adequately execute the tasks assigned him by God on earth whose body is racked by pain and whose mind is tormented by spiritual fear. The soul that cannot look on God as a Friend, or upon whom God seems to look as an enemy, can never be at perfect rest (Isa. lvii. 21). But he from whom God averts his face in the sense of not marking iniquity (Ps. xxxii. 1), and much more upon whom God makes his face to shine in loving favour (ch. xxxiii. 26; Ps. lxxxix. 15; John xvi. 22; Acts ii. 28),

possesses the true secret of happiness, and the noblest inspiration for Christian work. In Christ the face of God is turned mercifully away from human sin, and compassionately towards human sorrow.

Learn: 1. There is no room for pride of ancestry in man, since all alike are woman-born. 2. The lowly origin of man should impress the heart with humility. 3. Since man's days are so full of trouble, it is a mercy they are few; and since they are so few, man should study to be patient under trouble. 4. The swift approach of death should stimulate to diligence and promote heavenly-mindedness. 5. The heart of God can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. 6. God will never open his eyes to judge their sins who first open their eyes to behold his mercy. 7. One special reason of our requiring mercy is our inherited corruption, since it proves that we are, root and branch, depraved.

Ver. 2.—*Man as a flower.* I. IN HIS ORIGIN. He springeth from the ground.
II. IN HIS CONSTITUTION. He is composed of dust.
III. IN HIS STRUCTURE. His physical organism is as beautiful and delicate as that of a flower.
IV. IN HIS FRAILTY. He is as easily destroyed as a flower.
V. IN HIS EVANESCENCE. He is as short-lived as a flower.
VI. IN HIS END. Like a flower, he returns to the dust.
LESSONS. 1. Lowly thoughts of self. 2. Care of the body. 3. Preparation for the end.

Vers. 7—15.—*Job to God:* 3. *A glimpse into the life beyond.* I. "IF A MAN DIE, SHALL HE LIVE AGAIN?" No! 1. *The voice of nature is against it.* "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again," etc. (vers. 7—9). But nothing like this occurs in the case of man, of whom rather the cheerless proverb holds that, as the tree falls, so shall it lie (Eccles. xi. 3). Hewn down by the axe of death, or laid prostrate by age beneath the sod, there is in his decaying body no vital germ which can send forth tender sprouts. The earth contains no revivifying principle for him as for trees. The fine manly fellow, rejoicing in his vigorous health, begins to droop and to die; he gives up the ghost, or expires, and where is he? (ver. 10). There is no subsequent resuscitation for him. No! Man's appropriate emblem is not the trees, but the streams and the lakes. When man dies, he disappears completely from the present scene, like the dried-up waters of a lake, or of a mountain torrent that have forsaken their accustomed bed. 2. *The testimony of experience is against it.* A phenomenon so stupendous as the return of a dead and buried man to life has never once been witnessed. With a terrible uniformity of sadness, each age has followed its predecessor to the tomb. And there are those who affirm that this dreary monotony has never been interrupted; that the sum of human experience is the same to-day as it was in Job's time; that "man lieth down, and riseth not" (ver. 12); and that there is no reason to anticipate that it ever will be different, but much cause to conclude that for evermore it will continue the same (Eccles. i. 9). But (1) uniformity of past experience cannot with absolute finality determine future events in a world governed by Omniscient Wisdom and Infinite Power; (2) in numerous instances already the principle of reckoning from past uniformity has been found to be unsafe, as *e.g.* the successive appearance of new species of living creatures on earth, according to either geological science or biblical revelation, the occurrence of the Deluge, the manifestation of Christ; (3) in particular the uniformity of experience referred to, viz. of the non-return of men from their graves, has, on the evidence of human testimony, been broken at least once by the resurrection of Christ; and (4) even had it not been broken once, such uniformity of past experience cannot be regarded as valid against the doctrine of a resurrection such as Scripture teaches, viz. a return of mankind to the earth, not successively at different times and in divers parts and parcels, but simultaneously in one united body. 3. *The verdict of science is against it.* Not of true science, but of arrogantly talking, much asserting, materialism. What Job uses as beautiful similitudes (vers. 7, 11, 18, 19) modern sages employ as scientific truth. Man, according to their findings, is of a piece with the great material world by which he is surrounded, in which there is continually going on a resistless process of disintegration and dis-

solution, before which he sooner or later succumbs, like the trees and the rocks, the mountains and the streams. To expect, therefore, that a dead man shall return to his place on earth is as unscientific as to anticipate that the alluvial deposits of the plain shall replace themselves upon the mountain's sides from which they have been taken, or that the shattered rock shall resume its station in the crevice out of which it has fallen, or that the water of a lake which has evaporated shall again cover its desiccated bed, or the fleecy cloud which has dissolved and been dispersed shall recombine itself upon the face of heaven.

II. "IF A MAN DIE, SHALL HE LIVE AGAIN?" YES! 1. *The phenomena of nature suggest it.* "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again." Why, then, should there not be hope of a man reviving from the bed of death? Why should not man have his springtime as well as the plants and flowers and roots? "Everything in nature is a sign of something higher and more living than itself, to follow in due course, and in turn announce a yet higher one; the mineral foretells the plant, the plant the animal, all things in their degree foretell mankind" (Leo Grindon, 'Life: its Nature,' etc., p. 301). Again, "The presignificance of animal forms and economy by plants extends to the whole of their organic functions, to many of their organs, even to their spontaneous movements, their habits and qualities" (ibid., p. 306). Many of the functions usually supposed to be characteristic of animals have a marvellous foreshadowing in vegetables, as *e.g.* the processes of eating and digesting food, the procreation and birth of offspring, the act of respiration and the repose of sleep. May it not, then, be maintained that the constantly recurring winter death, and spring revival of trees and plants and flowers, are prefigurements, not only of the sleeping and waking of animals generally, but also of the death and resurrection of man? 2. *The instincts of humanity desire it.* "Oh that thou wouldest hide me in Sheol!" etc. (ver. 13). Job had not, indeed, perfect certainty on the subject of his returning from Hades, but in the deepest yearnings of his soul, which here flashed up into momentary brightness, he longed for such a revival as is implied in the resurrection. And the argument derived from this is that the existence of such a hope in the human soul renders probable at least the doctrine of a resurrection. "Intuition is worth volumes of logic" (Grindon, p. 287). "Where in the plan of nature do we find instincts falsified? Where do we see an instance of a creature instinctively craving a certain kind of food in a place where no such food can be found? Are the swallows deceived by their instinct when they fly away from clouds and storms to seek a warmer country? Do they not find a milder climate beyond the water? When the may-flies and other aquatic insects leave their shells, expand their wings, and soar from the water into the air, do they not find an atmosphere fitted to sustain them in a new stage of life? Yes. The voice of nature does not utter false prophecies. It is the call, the invitation, of the Creator addressed to his creatures. And if this be true with regard to the impulses of the physical life, why should it not be true with regard to the superior instincts of the soul?" (Reimar, 'Truths of Natural Religion,' quoted by Grindon, p. 287). 3. *The dignity of man demands it.* "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands" (ver. 15). It was utterly inconceivable that God could be happy so long as man, the noblest specimen of his handiwork, whom his own hands had fashioned with tender care and infinite skill (ch. x. 3, 9), upon whom, as it were, he had impressed the stamp of his own Divinity (Gen. i. 26), and whom he had set at the very apex of creation (Ps. viii. 6), was lying mouldering in the dust; nay, by the very necessities of the case, God would yearn (grow pale with anxiety and wan with longing) after his absent creature and child, and, eventually breaking in upon the silence of the grave, would summon the unconscious sleeper to arise. "Do you suppose," Job virtually asks, "that if I yearn after God as I do, God does not likewise yearn after me; that if it would add to my felicity to see God in the flesh, and to talk with him as a man talketh with his friend, it would not likewise intensify his blessedness to have me in my complete manhood by his side?" And in this idea of the essential dignity of man as God's handiwork and God's child, we are warranted to find, if not a certain demonstration, at least a strong presumption that man will yet attain to an embodied life beyond the grave. 4. *The witness of revelation proclaims it.* Like other parts of the gospel scheme, the doctrine of a resurrection was only gradually unfolded. In antediluvian times it may have been suggested to

thoughtful minds by the translation of Enoch. In the Abrahamic period the hope of a better country, even an heavenly, was strong in pious hearts; but it is not certain that this implied more than a belief in immortality, or in a continuous existence beyond the grave, though the case of Job clearly shows that even then men had begun to speculate about the probability of a return to the embodied state after death, and the practice of embalming among the Egyptians has been held to prove that such a doctrine had even then become a popular belief. In the age of David the hope of a resurrection burned brighter and clearer (Ps. xvi. 11; xvii. 15). Isaiah spoke of a rising of Jehovah's dead body, and of the earth casting forth her dead (Isa. xxvi. 19); Ezekiel, of an opening of the graves (Ezek. xxxviii. 9, 13); Daniel, of an awaking out of sleep (Dan. xii. 2). But not until the times of the gospel was the doctrine fully declared. Christ affirmed it (John v. 28, 29); St. Peter proved it (Acts ii. 25—32; xii. 34); St. Paul preached it (Acts xvii. 31) and wrote concerning it (Rom. viii. 11, 12; 1 Cor. xv. 12—20). 5. *The resurrection of Christ secures it.* "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that sleep" (1 Cor. xv. 20). The resurrection of Christ being as certain a fact of history as his death, the resurrection of his people at least is conclusively established (John xiv. 19; Rom. viii. 11; 1 Thess. iv. 14), and the question of Job finally answered.

LESSONS. 1. The importance of using life well, since no man returns to the present scene. 2. The strong consolation which the saint finds in the hope of a resurrection.

VERS. 16—22.—*Job to God:* 4. *Falling back into the darkness.* I. BROODING OVER HIS MISERY. 1. *A sudden transition.* Job's anticipation of the future resurrection-life was a momentary inspiration; not a calm, clear, steady light, diffusing a cheerful radiance within his soul, and shining on his onward progress to the grave, but a bright meteoric flash shooting up before his mind's eye, dazzling it for an instant by celestial splendours, and then plunging across the firmament of his soul into darkness. Like Moses on the summit of Mount Pisgah, looking out over Jordan towards the promised land; like Christ upon the snowy crown of Hermon, gazing far beyond the cross to the glory that was to follow, this great prophetic soul, with his vision clarified through suffering, having been set down by the grave's mouth, looked across the dark Hadean world, and descried the resurrection-life beyond. But, alas! like the Pisgah-glimpse of Canaan and the transfiguration-glory of Mount Hermon, the beatific vision was not of long duration. It was a momentary parting of the veil before the undiscovered country —nothing more. It came, it paused not, it passed, it vanished. The old stream of sorrowful emotion, out of which Job had been lifted for a season, as St. Paul was caught up into the third heaven, resumed its course. He was once more in the full current of his misery. Such transitions are not infrequent in the Christian life—from light to darkness, from joy to sadness, from peace to trouble, from delightful anticipations of heaven to sorrowful forebodings of impending disaster. 2. *An extraordinary misconception.* Losing sight of the light from beyond the tomb, he is once more a wretched creature whose steps are watched, and whose sins are marked by an angry Judge. God appears to be dealing with him as a criminal, lying in wait, as it were, to detect his sins, preserving a careful enumeration of them, storing them up in a bundle as legal documents; or, better, in a purse as money or precious stones, and sealing it to ensure their production on the day of trial—nay, for that purpose, sewing them up in a sort of interior scrip (Cox), or tying them up together (Fry, Good), or stitching on to them additional charges (Gesenius, Delitzsch). The experience through which Job here passes was not new to himself (ch. vii. 18; xiii. 27), and has sometimes been approximated to by believers under the Law (Ps. xxxviii. 1—4; lxxxviii. 7, 16), though, in the case of Christians, it should for ever be impossible, proceeding as it does upon a total misconception of the character of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Even under the Law such a picture as Job here sketches of the Divine treatment of a believing sinner should scarcely have been possible. As discovered to Moses, the character of Jehovah was "merciful and gracious" (Exod. xxxiv. 7); as known to David, "ready to forgive" (Ps. lxxxvi. 5); as proclaimed by Micah, "delighting in mercy" (Micah vii. 18). Much more as published by him who is the Image of the invisible God (Col. i. 15), and who came to declare the Father (John i. 18), it is essentially love. The only being whom God ever treated as a criminal on account of

sin was his own Son (Isa. liii. 6, 10; Rom. iv. 25; 2 Cor. v. 21). In view of Christ's propitiatory work he dealt with men in a way of mercy even before the advent; since the sacrifice of Calvary God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses (2 Cor. v. 19). Yet the language of Job is true in the case of sinners who are wilfully impenitent. Their iniquities are all observed by God, remembered by God, and, unless repented of and forgiven, will eventually be produced by God for their condemnation. 3. *A strange contradiction.* A moment before exulting in the thought that God's affection for him when dead would be so great as to require the resuscitation of his lifeless body (ver. 15), Job now pictures the same God as a malignant Adversary and an angry Judge. The two conceptions will not hold together. A little calm logic would have enabled Job to see this; but men are seldom logical at the grave's mouth or in the grasp of an awakened conscience. It were well for Christians, and for men generally, to be distrustful of those representations of the Divine character which are cast up before the mind's eye by either the soul's fears or fancies. Pictures of the Deity evolved from the inner consciousness, whether by philosophers or theologians, are seldom congruous with one another, but are as variable as the passing moods of the changeful spirit. In the face of Jesus Christ alone can God be either fully or clearly seen; and there he is "without variableness, or shadow of turning."

II. DESPAIRING OF HIS LIFE. Job foresees nothing for him but the early extinction of that hope of life which has hitherto sustained him; and that for two reasons. 1. *Decay appeared to be the universal law of nature.* The most stable things on earth were incapable of resisting this inherent tendency to dissolution. Mountains, rocks, stones, the very soil, yielded to the well-nigh omnipotent forces of nature (vers. 18, 19); how much less could weak and frail man overcome that all-pervading *vim disintegrationis* by which he was assailed, or escape that slow but inevitable destruction which engulfed all mundane things! "The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces," etc. ('Tempest,' act iv. sc. 1). 2. *God seemed to have decreed his destruction.* The consideration of man's frailty, which might have been expected to move God to pity, in Job's estimation had rather stirred him to relentless severity. He had instituted laws against which even the most durable things of earth were unable to stand; "and," as if these same laws were not sufficient of themselves to accomplish his destruction, "thou destroyest the hope of man" (ver. 19). The hope of eluding death is a delusion (Heb. ix. 27). But if God destroys man's hope of life, he mercifully supplants it, in the cause of believers, with a hope of immortality (1 Pet. i. 3).

III. ANTICIPATING HIS DEMISE. This Job expected would be: 1. *Irresistible.* "Thou prevailest for ever," either overpowerest (Gesenius, Davidson, Carey) or seizest him (Delitzsch) "for ever" (ver. 20). The struggle of life against death, represented as a contest of man with God, who always proves the Victor (Eccles. vi. 10), so that "no man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death" (Eccles. viii. 8), but from all men equally their breath is taken away, and they return to the dust (Ps. civ. 29). 2. *Speedy.* "And he passeth," literally, "he goeth," *i.e.* into the unseen world. Notwithstanding all man's attempts to resist the decree of dissolution, not much is required to complete his subjugation. His removal is easily effected. Simply God speaks to him (Ps. xc. 3), or breathes upon him (Isa. xl. 7), and he moveth on, his valour overcome, his wisdom defeated, his strength paralyzed, his noble form prostrated in stillness and decay. 3. *Humiliating.* "Thou changest his countenance." Time writes wrinkles on the brow, care ploughs furrows on the cheek, affliction ages and enfeebles the most stalwart frame; but, O Death! for rudely marring and disfiguring the fair temple of the body, man accords thee the palm. Death, which is exaltation to the spirit, is degradation to the body. To the one the gateway of glory, it is also to the other, though only for a time, the door of dishonour. 4. *Final.* "Thou sendest him away," as it were into perpetual banishment. If the language implies that man continues to preserve a conscious existence after departing from the earth, it as emphatically bars the way against any return to the present life.

IV. REALIZING THE DISEMBODIED STATE. 1. *A complete severance from mundane things.* When man vanishes from this mortal scene, not only does the place which knows him now know him no more for ever (ch. vii. 10; xx. 9; Ps. ciii. 16), but he himself has no more knowledge of the place. His connection with the world is

completely at an end (Eccles. ix. 5). He returns no more to his house (ch. vii. 10), neither is he more concerned with the fortunes of his family (ver. 21). How far this correctly represents the Hadean world it is impossible to say. That disembodied spirits should retain the power of apprehending what transpires on earth is neither impossible nor inconceivable; and that they do may seem to derive countenance from Scripture (Luke xv. 7; xvi. 27; Heb. xii. 1). Still, it is doubtful if as many and potent arguments cannot be adduced against it; while it is certain that, even if departed souls are cognizant of mundane affairs, they will not be profoundly interested in such things as the temporal prosperity or adversity of their families. 2. *An exclusive occupation with the interests of self.* "But," or only, "his flesh upon him," or on account of himself, "shall have pain, and his soul within him," or on account of itself, "shall mourn" (ver. 22). The dead man's body is regarded as a sentient creature suffering extreme physical tortures while undergoing the process of dissolution; the dead man's soul is depicted as filled with inconsolable sorrow on account of its unhappy lot. Scarcely removed from the conceptions entertained by heathen writers, such a picture as Job here outlines of the realm of departed saints is only true of the impenitent who die unsaved, but is as widely astray as possible from the truth concerning the spirits of just men made perfect, who, if they are occupied exclusively with their own affairs, do not bemoan an undone eternity, but exult in an exceeding, even an eternal, weight of glory, and who, if they do grieve over their absent bodies, lament not the pains they are suffering, but long for their emancipation from the power of death—"waiting for the adoption, even the redemption of the body" (Rom. viii. 23).

Learn: 1. To think of God's mercy as beyond disputation. 2. To contemplate death's approach as inevitable. 3. To reflect more upon the glory of heaven than upon the gloom of the grave. 4. To keep the soul as much as possible disengaged from the affairs of time. 5. To seek for ourselves and children that honour which cometh from above. 6. To realize that a saint leaves all pain and mourning behind him when he enters the unseen world. 7. To thank God for all the light which has been shed around the grave and upon the future world by the gospel of Christ's resurrection.

Ver. 19.—*Blighted hopes.* I. A COMMON EXPERIENCE. It is not more true that man hopes, than it is that he sooner or later becomes acquainted with disappointment. Young and old, rich and poor, wise and unwise, have their unrealized expectations.

II. A DIVINE ARRANGEMENT. Blighted hopes are no more accidents than are buds that never fulfil their promise. They form part of the great world-plan which has been devised by Infinite Wisdom.

III. A SALUTARY DISCIPLINE. When God breaks a man's earthly ideas, it is that he may find nobler ones in heaven; that, turning away his heart from mundane things, he may seek those things which are above.

LESSONS. 1. Thank God for earth's disappointments. 2. Seek to be possessed of that hope which fadeth not away.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—1. *Self-defence before God:* 2. *Pluint of the weakness and vanity of mankind.* Job's troubles are typical of the common doom of mankind—the "subjection to vanity." And again (comp. ch. iii. 7; vii. 1—5) he bursts forth into lamentation over the universal doom of sorrow.

I. HIS NATURAL WEAKNESS. (Vers. 1—2.) His *origin* is in frailty; he is "born of woman." His *course* is *brief*, and *full of unrest.* He sees himself mirrored in all natural things that fleet and pass: (1) in the flower of the field, briefly blooming, doomed to the speedy scythe; (2) in the shadow, like that of a cloud, resting for a moment on the ground, then vanishing with its substance. "Man is a bubble," said the Greek proverb (*τομφόλυξ ὁ ἄνθρωπος*). He is like a morning mushroom, soon thrusting up its head into the air, and as soon turning into dust and forgetfulness (Jeremy Taylor). Homer calls man a leaf; Pindar, the "dream of a shadow."

II. HIS MORAL WEAKNESS. (Vers. 3, 4.) On the natural frailty is founded the moral. And this poor, weak being is made accountable, dragged before the tribunal

of God. And yet, asks Job, how is it possible that purity should be exacted of him? How can the product be diverse from the cause; the stream be of purer quality than the source?

III. REASONING AND EXPOSTULATION FOUNDED ON THESE FACTS. (Vers. 5, 6.) If man, then, is so weak, and his life determined by so narrow bounds, were it not the part of Divine compassion and justice to give him some release and respite until his brief day of toil and suffering be altogether spent (comp. ch. vii. 17; x. 20)? It seems to Job, in the confusion of his bewildered thought, that God is laying on him a special and extraordinary weight of suffering, which makes his lot worse than that of the common hireling.

IV. FURTHER IMAGES OF DESPONDENCY. (Vers. 7—12.) Casting his eye upon the familiar scenes of nature, it seems that all things reflect the sad thought of the transiency and hopelessness of man's fate, and even to exaggerate it. 1. *Image of the tree.* The tree may be hewn down, but scions and suckers spring from its well-nourished root; an image used by the prophet to symbolize the spiritual Israel. The stump of the oak represents the remnant that survives the judgment, and this is the source whence the new Israel springs up after the destruction of the old (Isa. vi. 13). But when man is broken down and falls like the trunk of the tree, there is an end of him. This is undoubtedly a morbid perversion of the suggestion of nature. She by the sprouting scion teaches at least the great truth of the continuity and perpetual self-renewal of life, if she can tell no more. 2. *Image of the dried-up waters.* (Ver. 11.) These forsake their wonted channels and flow in them no more (comp. ch. vii. 9). So, it seems to the eye of nature, man passes away in a mist from the earthly scene and leaves no trace behind. 3. *Image of the abiding heavens.* (Ver. 12.) This is introduced, not in illustration of the transient life of man, but in contrast to it (comp. Ps. lxxxix. 29, 36, 37). The heavens appear eternally fixed, in contrast to the fluctuating scene below. They look calmly down, while man passes into the sleep of death, and into Sheol, whence there is no return. But when man rises into the full consciousness of his spiritual nature through the revelation of life and immortality, all seems passing compared with the life in God. The heavens shall vanish away like smoke, but God's salvation shall not be abolished. He that doeth the will of God shall abide for ever.—J.

Vers. 13—15.—*Self-defence before God*: 3. *Dawning of a new hope.* The thoughts of the sufferer now carry him beyond the confines of the present life. He has just been speaking of Sheol, or Hades, as his destined end, and now the reflection occurs—What may happen then? It is the nature of thought to travel on and on, to know no bounds that it will not seek to overleap. It is perpetually asking, when one goal has been reached, for the after, the beyond. And in some such way must human thought have travelled towards the light of immortality, before the truth dawned by revelation on the world. Job evidently sees a glimmer of the truth, though it soon fades out, for want of definite knowledge, into darkness.

I. LONGING FOR CONCEALMENT IN HADES FOR A SEASON. (Ver. 13.) The intense desire, so frequently repeated, for a respite, marks the extremity of intolerable anguish. And if the source of it be God's wrath, perhaps in time his heart will relent. Then let the appointed judgment be held, and the decision be made. At least may the wrath of God not pursue him into the darkness of the other world!

II. A FUTURE LIFE SUGGESTED. (Ver. 14.) For if there is to be a future judgment, there must be a future life to be the subject of it. Perhaps this is the greatest question man can ask without the light of the gospel. But some preliminary answer is here suggested for a moment, though Job does not grasp it firmly, that the future life is guaranteed by the justice and the love of God. But it is observable how the very faintest thought of the possibility gives a new turn to feeling. *Patience* can only exist when there is hope. And Job feels he could patiently wait all the days of his earthly service were that hope assured. It awakens *joy*. A happy change must occur. The misunderstandings of the present will clear away. And with this is connected again the glimmering of—

III. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF MAN'S ETERNAL RELATION TO GOD. *The heart is made for God.* How gladly, when he appears from out the clouds and darkness that surround him, will the heart respond to his call! *God yearns for man.* Man is his

creature, his handiwork, his offspring. He cannot but regard man with tenderness, with eternal interest. Here again we find at the bottom of the patriarch's heart the germ of that faith which the bright rays of the gospel were to bring to flower (ver. 15). *The revolt of the heart from false views of God.* The picture of One who numbers his steps, and has an eye only for his sins, is inconsistent with the filial consciousness of God (ver. 16). Yet there may be insufficient knowledge or faith to overcome this prevailing mood of despair (comp. ch. x. 8—12).—J.

Vers. 17—22.—*Self-defence before God: 4. Relapse into despondent imaginations.* I. HE STILL ABOUNDS WITH VARIED FIGURES, THE VERY ELOQUENCE OF COMPLAINT. God has taken his sins and placed them as in a bag, sealed for safety of deposit, that they may be reproduced against him. He appears like an accuser who heaps up scandals and offences against the unhappy object of his wrath (ver. 17).

II. IN THIS LIGHT OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE HE FURTHER CONTEMPLATES THE CONDITION OF MANKIND. 1. *The impossibility of resistance to their doom.* (Vers. 18, 19.) Mountains and rocks are dissolved, hard stones are gradually dislocated, by the continuous action of water; their fragments are carried away by the flood. Much more must the feeble body of man give way at last. And so his *mind* must surrender the kindled light of God, which God destroys! 2. *The overmastering power of God.* (Vers. 20—22.) The mighty warrior overcomes the feeble resistance of his foe, and releases him only when he has set him before his face and given him a proof of his prevailing force. So God only releases man in death when all his beauty has passed away, and there remains but the hideous corpse. In the lower world consciousness fails him; he knows nothing of the things of earth, joyous or sad; can render no help to the dear ones who survive him. In the lower world the dead man, without activity or energy, endures his bodily and mental pain in dreary solitude and stillness. So ends again this address with the gloomiest, most despondent outlook as to the other world, relieved only for a moment by the fugitive hope of the life to come.

LESSONS. 1. The heart has an instinct for immortality, derived from its revolt from extreme pain. Something within us tells us that we were not made to be eternally, irrecoverably miserable. 2. The truth of a future life comes in flashes upon the mind; for its retention we need the support of positive revelation. 3. The natural weakness and frailty of man is complemented by his spiritual power and greatness as partaker of an endless life.—J.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Lessons from the brevity of human life.* These words are consecrated to a supreme moment. Chosen to be the words spoken at the side of the grave, "while the corpse is made ready to be laid in the earth," they bear a solemn and overwhelming testimony to a truth men are apt, in the heat of the day, to forget. So many are the duties and toils of men that the hurry of a short life is hardly noticed, save when, by enforced attention, the thoughts recur to it. The truth is established—man's life is short, it is sorrowful, its early promise is destroyed, it hurriedly passeth away, it lacks permanence and stability. What, then, is the proper course of conduct to pursue in such circumstances?

I. IT IS WISE TO BE DILIGENT IN THE FULFILMENT OF DUTY. Days lost cannot be recovered. The duty omitted cannot be afterwards attended to without intrenching upon some other. A watchfulness over the moments saves the hours. Diligence prevents waste, and the days are numbered. Diligence is imperative if life's large work is to be done in its little time. He learns the value of time who diligently applies himself to his work. And no one has any time to lose.

II. The brevity of life is AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO PATIENCE UNDER TROUBLE. The way is not long. The strength is taxed, but not for long. The life of "few days" is "full of trouble." Happily it is but for a "few days." Life is not stretched out beyond endurance. And the vision of immortality may gild the horizon as the light of a setting sun. All the future to the humble and obedient is bright, and the present weary march is not longer than can be borne, even by feeble human strength.

III. The brevity of human life may properly act as A SALUTARY CHECK AGAINST ENTERTAINING TOO HIGH AN ESTIMATE OF EARTHLY THINGS. The things of time have their importance—their very great and solemn importance. And he who has a just

view of the future will be the more likely to place a just estimate on the present. But he will "sit loose" to things of time. He will remember he is but a sojourner. That the goods and possessions he now calls his own will soon be held by other hands. He will therefore see that he must not put so high a price upon the present as to barter away the future and more durable possessions for it. Life opens to him like a flower in its beauty; it "cometh forth like a flower" in its promise, but it "is cut down." It is vain to build too confidently on such a hope. It is unwise to live wholly for so uncertain a tenure, that fleeth as a shadow and continueth not.

IV. The brevity of human life MAKES IT NEEDFUL THAT MEN SHOULD LOSE NO OPPORTUNITY OF LAYING HOLD ON THE LIFE IMMORTAL. The true preparation for the life to come—the permanent and enduring life—is to occupy this present one with careful and diligent fidelity. Great issues depend upon it. The condition of the future; the attainment of character; the recorded history; the everlasting approval or disapproval of the manner in which life has been held, which the eternal Judge will pass upon it, and which will be reflected in the solitudes of the individual conscience. —R. G.

Vers. 7—10.—*Sad views of life.* If the tree be cut down, it springs again; but if man dieth, he wasteth away. Certainly, then, man's hope is not in this life. The dismal views given in these few verses demand the full assurance of the resurrection. This is a feature of the Book of Job. It presents a negative view of human life. There is always a demand to be met. Only the fuller teachings of the New Testament meet it. Consider this aspect of human life with its demand for supplementary views in order to completeness and satisfaction. The complementary character of subsequent revelations.

I. THE PRESENT LIFE OF MAN PRESENTS CHARACTERISTICS OF IMPERFECTNESS WHICH INDICATE THAT THIS CANNOT BE THE COMPLETE VIEW OF LIFE.

II. THE MORAL, SPIRITUAL, AND INTELLECTUAL CAPABILITIES WHICH ARE OBVIOUSLY BUT PARTIALLY CALLED INTO PLAY DEMAND OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES FOR THEIR FULL DEVELOPMENT, AND INDICATE THE INCOMPLETENESS OF THE VIEW OF LIFE WHEN CONFINED TO THE PRESENT ONLY.

III. THE ASPIRATIONS OF MEN TOWARDS CONDITIONS THAT CANNOT BE ATTAINED IN THIS LIFE ARE A TESTIMONY TO ITS INCOMPLETENESS.

IV. THE IDEALS OF LIFE ARE SO FAR SUPERIOR TO THE REALIZATIONS, THAT THEY BECOME A CONSTANT PROPHECY OF SOMETHING BETTER AND HIGHER THAN THE PRESENT LIFE.

V. THE HOPE OF HIGHER CONDITIONS THAN THE PRESENT IS STRONGEST IN THE BEST AND PUREST SOULS.

VI. THE PAINFULNESS OF THE PRESENT WITH THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF CAPACITY FOR GREAT AND PURE ENJOYMENT A FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE INCOMPLETENESS OF LIFE IF THE VIEW BE RESTRICTED TO THE PRESENT.

VII. ALL IS SATISFIED IN THE SUBSEQUENT REVELATIONS, AND IN THE CALM ASSURANCE THEY GIVE OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD AND THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME.—R. G.

Ver. 14.—*The future life.* "If a man die, shall he live again?" The true answer to this solemn question is the only sufficient response to the sad wail of the previous verses. "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, . . . but man dieth, and wasteth away." The answer cometh from afar. It is difficult to determine the measure of light that Job had on the question of the future life. Read in the light of our New Testament teaching, some of his phrases are full of hope; but we may have put the hope there. Generally it is the language of inquiry, and often of inquiry unsatisfied. Sometimes faith bursts through all doubt and gloom, and the confidence of a strong and assured hope takes the place of tremulous fear. Still the question rings in every breast; still the longing for a fuller life in which the ideals of the present may be reached prevails; still men go to the side of the dark river and look into the gloom, and hoping and half fearing ask, "If a man die, shall he live again?" The only satisfactory answer to this comes to us from the lips of the Redeemer, and that is wholly and entirely satisfactory. We mark—

I. THE EAGER, UNSATISFIED CRY OF MEN APART FROM DIVINE REVELATION.
II. THE PARTIAL UNFOLDING OF THE TRUTH IN THE EARLIER REVELATIONS.
III. THE PERFECT AND UNEQUIVOCAL REVELATION MADE BY JESUS CHRIST. Of this last we may notice: 1. Christ's teachings all proceed on the assumption that there is a future life. 2. His teachings are constantly supported by an appeal to the future conditions of reward and punishment. 3. Very much of his teaching would be unmeaning and inexplicable in the absence of such future. 4. But he crowns all his teaching by himself becoming the Disputant, and affirming and demonstrating the future life. "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed in the place concerning the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now he is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him." 5. He crowns all by the raising of the dead to life, and by the example of his own triumph over death. But Job had not this consolation, and he still abides in gloom, as must all who have not the perfect revelation of God.—R. G.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The flower and the shadow.* I. THERE IS A COMMON CHARACTER IN ALL HUMAN LIFE. Job seems to be suffering from exceptional troubles. Yet he regards his condition as typical of that of mankind generally. He turns from himself to "man that is born of a woman." We differ in external circumstances, possessions, honours; in bodily, mental, and moral characteristics. But in our fundamental constitution we are alike. The points of resemblance are more numerous than the points of difference. 1. All born of women come in the common descent from the first parents. 2. All are frail and short-lived. 3. All suffer from the troubles of life. 4. All sin. 5. All have Christ for their brother, able and willing to be also their Saviour. 6. All may enter the eternal life and dwell for ever in the love of God, on the same conditions of repentance and faith.

II. MAN SHARES THE CHARACTERISTICS OF NATURE. Job sees in nature types of human life. We are a part of nature, and the laws of nature apply to us. This fact should save us from amazement when trouble comes upon us. It is just in the course of nature. We have not been singled out for a miracle of judgment. It is not that God is writing bitter things against us in particular. Ours is part of the general experience of all nature. Our greatest evil, however, is not that which befalls us in the course of nature, but that which we bring upon ourselves unnaturally. There is something monstrous about sin. We feel a gentle pathos in natural sorrow, but we recognize a terrible tragedy, a dark and dreadful curse, in our self-made sorrow of sin. That is infinitely worse than the fading of flowers and the fleeing of shadows.

III. NATURE SETS FORTH THE SAD SIDE OF LIFE. 1. *Brevity.* Man is "of few days." The age of nature is maintained by succession, not by continuance. The race goes on, the individual passes. 2. *Trouble.* "Full of trouble." "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together" (Rom. viii. 22). The advance of nature is through conflict and struggle. 3. *Frailty.* Man is born of a woman, "the weaker vessel" (1 Pet. iii. 7). The flower, which is the most beautiful thing in nature, is the most fragile. Crushed by a careless step, or nipped by frost, or withered by the very sun that drew out its life and painted its loveliness, it is yet the type of human life. The most exquisite flowers may be the most delicate, and the finest souls the most sensitive. The hot Southern sun quickly turns a garden into a desert. The same fate is found among the most cultivated and valued lives. The flowers are not saved by their beauty and fragrance. Some of the most precious lives are cut down in their prime. The scythe that mows the meadows cuts off the summer flowers in the height of their short-lived beauty. The rough, common fate of man is indiscriminate, laying low the best of men together with their less-valued companions 4. *Unreality.* A mere shadow! and a moving shadow! What could be more unsubstantial and transient? Yet the frailty and changefulness of life make our human existence appear no more real.

CONCLUSION. Observe another side of the scene. The very melancholy of the picture suggests that it does not cover the whole field. Nature is not dissatisfied with her changefulness. The flowers do not bewail their untimely end. Man alone looks with sorrow on his fate. The reason is that he is made for something greater. The Divine instinct of immortality is in him. He is more than a part of nature. A child

of God, he is called to share a larger life than that of the natural world. The Christian who is cut down as a frail flower on earth will yet bloom as an immortal flower in Paradise.—W. F. A.

Ver. 4.—"*A clean thing out of an unclean.*" Job seems to mean that man cannot transcend his origin. He comes from the frail, imperfect, human stock; how, then, can he be expected to manifest the traits of perfection and immutability? Job's question and the difficulty it contains may be applied in various ways.

I. EVOLUTION. We are not now concerned with the scientific aspect of the question of evolution. That must be determined by the men of science. But there is a religious aspect of it that calls for attention, because some are dismayed as though evolution had banished God from his universe. Now, if this idea of the world is set forth as a substitute for the theological conception of creation and providence, it is removed from its rightful sphere and made to trespass on a foreign domain, where it cannot justify the claims of its supporters. There it is confronted by Job's question, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Evolution signifies a certain kind of progress. But the cause must be equal to the effect. It is contrary to the very law of causation that dead matter should produce life, and that the merely animal should produce the spiritual human being. For every elevation and addition a corresponding cause is needed. If the unclean ape were the ancestor of a saint, something must have been added that was not in the ape. Whence was this? It must have had a cause. Thus we may see that evolution requires the idea of the Divine, not only at the primal creation, but throughout the process.

II. HEREDITY. Men inherit their parents' characters. The man who is not the heir of any estate is yet perforce an heir of the most real kind of property. Now, the past of our race is stained with sin, steeped in iniquity. It is not to be supposed that the succeeding generations will be spotless. Moral guilt cannot be charged till the individual soul has chosen evil, and consented to sin in its own freedom. But the degradation of evil tendencies is in us from our birth. Men are shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (Ps. li. 5).

III. REDEMPTION. This is offered by God. It cannot come from man. No sinful man could redeem his brethren. To do this would be to bring the clean out of the unclean. We must have a sinless Redeemer. Moreover, as sin has lowered the whole of life, there is need of a perfect Man to raise the type of the race. Even this would not be enough, for the great work is not to set an example, but to transform the world. None but God who created it can do this. Thus we need what we have in Christ—a sinless, perfect Man, who is also the only begotten Son of God.

IV. REGENERATION. 1. *In the individual man.* He must first be regenerated. All prior attempts at goodness fail. Really clean words cannot come out of a foul heart. Clean deeds must spring from a clean soul. All the corrupt man's conduct is besmirched with the filth of his own inner life. He must be pure in heart in order to live a truly pure life. The sinner must have a new heart before he can live a new life. 2. *In Christian work.* He who would lead others from sin must first forsake sin himself. The reformer must be a reformed man. The missionary must be a Christian. To do good we must first be good.—W. F. A.

Ver. 6.—*The day's work.* Job prays that at least God will turn aside from vexing his short-lived creature, and let him finish his day's work. Then he will be no more. This is a prayer of despair, and it springs from a one-sided view of life and providence. Yet it has its significance for us.

I. MAN IS GOD'S SERVANT. He is more than the hireling, for whom a hard master cares nothing so long as he can exact the full tale of work. Still, he is the servant. We are not our own masters, and we are not put into the world to do our own will. Our business is to serve. 1. *To work.* To live for a purpose. Idleness is sin. The man who needs not work to earn his bread should still work to serve his Master. 2. *To obey.* Our business is just to do God's will in God's way. It is not for us to choose; our duty is to follow the Master's orders.

II. MAN HAS AN ALLOTTED TASK. Each man has his own life-work. Some may be slow in discovering their peculiar vocation. With many this may not be at all

what they would have chosen for themselves. Still, if the thought of duty is foremost, all may see that there is something that duty calls them to do. It gives us a great sense of confidence to discover this, and to fling all wild fancies aside in the single desire to accomplish our true life-task. Often the only rule is "Do the next thing;" and if we will but do it, that is just the one task God has called us to.

III. MAN HAS A DAY FOR HIS WORK. 1. *A full day.* There is the opportunity. God can never require what man is unable to perform. He does not seek the work of eternity from the creature of a day. 2. *Only a day.* There is no time to be lost. We have but one day for our day's work. If we waste the morning we shall have no second opportunity. This short season should be well filled. If the work is hard it is not interminable. Diligence and patience are becoming in a man who has but one short life for his work.

IV. MAN IS EXPECTED TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WORK. His business is not merely to sway his limbs and exercise his muscles, but to do something effective, to produce. We should all aim at a definite end in our life's work. The village blacksmith can enjoy his rest because

> "Something attempted, something done,
> Has earned a night's repose."

A busy life may be a fruitless one. But no life need fail of fruitfulness, inasmuch as the work to which we are all called is designed to lead to useful ends.

V. MAN CANNOT ACCOMPLISH HIS WORK WITHOUT GOD'S CO-OPERATION. Job prays that God will not hinder him. If, indeed, God did oppose a man in his life's work, that man would be certainly doomed to failure. It is hard enough to succeed in any case; it is impossible to do so when God is frustrating our efforts. No one can defeat Providence. But it is not enough to be let alone. Job desires that God will look away from him, for the look of anger blasts and withers. But we may pray that God will look upon us in favour and helpfulness. The greatest success in the world was accomplished by men who were "fellow-workers with God" (2 Cor. vi.).—W. F. A.

Vers. 7—14.—*Is there a life beyond the grave?* We have here one of the dim Old Testament speculations on the life beyond, that stand out in startling contrast to the prevalent obscurity and apparent indifference of ancient Hebrew thought in regard to the great future. This serves as a good starting-point from which to approach the more full Christian light on the resurrection.

I. THE CRAVING FOR IMMORTALITY IS INSTINCTIVE. The craving may be hidden by more pressing desires of the moment; it may even be crushed by despair. But it is not the less natural and instinctive. For when we come to ourselves and calmly reflect on life and its issues, we cannot be satisfied that death should end all. Then there wakes up in us a deep, insatiable hunger for life. The essential characteristic of this desire is its craving for more than the repose of a future that is rescued from the turmoil of this present time; its object is life. It is not enough for us that an end may come to our present troubles. That is all Job desired at first (see ch. iii.), but now a deeper thought stirs in his breast, and he thinks of the possibility of living again. Surely it is a miserable degradation of this instinct of immortality that represents the future blessedness as chiefly consisting in indolent repose.

II. NATURE DOES NOT SATISFY THE CRAVING FOR IMMORTALITY. Job turns to the analogies of nature. They are obscure and contradictory. The tree that has been cut down will sprout again from its roots. But is this life the fate of man? "Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" Has he any root remaining that can be quickened at the scent of water? Then if the tree sprouts again, there are other things in nature that cease altogether, *e.g.* the stream that is entirely dried up. May not man's fate be like these temporal things that come to an end? We look for analogies in the awakening spring, in the emerging of the butterfly from the chrysalis, in the return of day after night. These analogies afford but faint suggestions, little more than fanciful illustrations. Nature does point to the existence of an unseen universe, but she gives us little, if any, hints as to our share in the life beyond the present and the seen.

III. CHRIST SATISFIES THE CRAVING FOR IMMORTALITY. He has brought "life and

incorruption to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). 1. *By his revelation of God.* In Christ we see God as our Father. Such a God cannot mock us with a delusion, cannot plant an instinct in us for which there is no satisfaction. All other instincts have their objects provided. A good Father will not let this starve and pine into disappointment. 2. *By his direct teaching.* Christ said little about the future life, but that little was clear, unhesitating, emphatic. He made no mention of harps and palms, but he said, "I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John xi. 25). 3. *By his own resurrection.* He is "the Firstfruits from the dead" (1 Cor. xv. 20). One man has risen. This is enough to show that death does not end all. 4. *By his saving grace.* He not only reveals the life beyond. He gives the life eternal. A mere shadowy existence in Hades would be no boon; an existence of torment in Gehenna would be a curse. We want a full and glorious life. That is not ours by nature; it is the gift of God (Rom. vi. 23); and it is received through Christ (1 John v. 11, 12).—W. F. A.

Ver. 17.—*Sealed transgression.* Job seems to think that God has sealed his transgression up in a bag, keeping it in reserve to bring out against him at some future judgment.

I. WE CANNOT TAKE BACK OUR SINS. They are ours before we have let them loose on the world. Then they pass out of our control. They may wander far in their mischievous effects, or they may be checked by the providence of God. But, in any case, they have passed away from us beyond all chance of recovery. The bag in which God puts our sins is sealed, and it is impossible for us to break the seals. We may well be on our guard against producing those evil things that we cannot hold in or suppress.

II. OUR SINS ARE WITH GOD. He has them in his bag. We may not have thought that he noticed our conduct, and we may not have considered that our wickedness was an offence against God. Yet God could not be indifferent to our violation of his laws. Our first dealings with our sins was in the privacy of our own hearts. When we next meet them they will be in God's possession, thoroughly examined by him, and ready to be used as he thinks fit in his judgment of us.

III. OUR SINS ARE RESERVED FOR THE FUTURE. We do not now see them; they are sealed up in God's bag. The judgment is not yet. Because it is delayed many men refuse to expect it, and grow indifferent to their guilt. But time will not alter it. We cannot expect future immunity because we enjoy present forbearance. Now is the time for repentance. If the opportunities the present affords are neglected, can they be pleaded in extenuation of our guilt when at last we are called up for judgment?

IV. IT IS OUR IMPENITENCE, NOT GOD'S WILL, THAT CAUSES OUR SINS TO BE SEALED UP IN GOD'S BAG. In the dreadful anguish and perplexity of his soul, Job seemed driven to the conclusion that God was carefully treasuring up his sins out of a spirit of opposition to him. Such an idea is quite impossible to one who knows God as he is revealed in Christ. God cannot delight himself in retaining our sins. They are no treasures for him. He would much rather be rid of them. The seal that holds them is our hard heart.

V. THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST BREAKS THE SEAL OF SINS. Those sins that are still retained can yet be cast away, and the offer of forgiveness means that the bag may be opened. The past is not irreparable. Although it cannot be reversed, it may be forgiven and forgotten. Christ has taken the great bag of the world's sins as a heavy burden upon his own shoulders. He has carried it with him to the grave. He has left it there, buried with the dark, bad past, and he has risen without it in a new life, triumphant and redemptive. Now, the preaching of his gospel is the declaration that for every sinner who repents and trusts Christ the bag of sins is gone; it will be remembered no more. Those who dread the reappearance of their sins as witnesses against them may have a sure hope of escaping them in the atoning work of Christ.—W. F. A.

Ver. 19.—*How waters wear the stones.* I. THE PROCESS. Job compares the process of providence to the action of the winter torrents in the wadys of a desert region. Few phenomena in nature are more striking to those who examine them than those of

erosion. A small trickling stream cuts through a great hill, and makes a deep winding valley. Water constantly flowing over granite rocks smooths the hard stone and wears it away, eating its course through the most solid cliffs. The falls of Niagara are receding, and in front of them is seen an ever-lengthening chasm as the river continually cuts away the rock over which it pours. This process is compared by Job to the friction of time and trouble. 1. *From apparently feeble causes.* The water does not seem capable of effecting the marvellous results that are attributed to it. Slight causes may have great issues. 2. *By slow degrees.* The worst and the best things are both produced slowly. We cannot judge of the process by its immediate effects. 3. *With irresistible force.* We cannot resist time. The slow course of providence is a river that cuts through all opposition. It is impossible for man to succeed when he opposes God; for the very rock is worn by the waters that wash over it. Thus vain hopes perish. The worst troubles are not sudden blows, but wearing anxieties and gnawing griefs.

II. ITS LESSONS. Job drew from the process only a conclusion of despair, or at best an expostulation with God for bringing his irresistible might to bear on so feeble a creature as man. But other and wider conclusions may be inferred. 1. *It is foolish to trust in our own hopes.* They may be solid as granite, and yet time and disappointment may wear them away. The robustness of the hopes is no guarantee of their permanence. The sanguine man is not kept secure by his self-confidence. 2. *We should examine the character of our hopes.* Low hopes fail first. The stream runs through the valley, sparing the crags on the mountain-top, though these are exposed to all the fury of the gale, and only wearing those that lie in its sunken course. There is safety in elevation of character. 3. *The failure of earthly hopes is designed to turn our mind to heavenly hopes.* God does not frustrate every hope of man. Job's idea is the fruit of his despair. Foolish hopes are destroyed, and even innocent hopes, in some cases, in order that we may build higher and found our true hopes on the immovable rock of God's truth. The Rock of Ages is never worn by the waters of time or trouble. 4. *The destroying process carries away much that we are glad to lose.* It does not select the rich treasures and pleasant experiences of life. Job thought that God carefully sealed up his sin in a bag (ver. 17), while he destroyed his hope as with the waters that wear the stones. But when a man truly repents, God washes away his sins, and gives him a good and enduring hope. Many troubles are worn away by the slow but sure erosion of the waters of time. Even while we fear them they are being lessened for us. God's destructive agencies are all directed by his supreme goodness. We need not fear the wearing waters if we are reconciled to the God who directs their course, and says to the flood, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."—W. F. A.

SECTION III. CH. XV.—XXI. SECOND COLLOQUY BETWEEN JOB AND HIS FRIENDS.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XV.

The second colloquy between Job and his friends is, like the first (ch. iii.—xiv.), one in which all of them take part, and the same order of speakers is maintained. Job answers each speaker in turn; Eliphaz at some length (ch. xvi., xvii.), the other two more briefly. The present chapter contains the second speech of Eliphaz. Compared with the first, it is harsh and violent in tone, assuming Job's guilt, and reproaching him fiercely and rudely. It naturally divides into three portions: (1) a direct reproof of Job for presumption and impiety (vers. 1—6); (2) a sarcastic reflection on him for conceit and arrogance (vers. 7—16); (3) an exposition of God's ways with man, based upon the experience of ancient sages (vers. 17—35).

Vers. 1, 2.—**Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said, Should a wise man utter vain knowledge?** literally, *knowledge of wind*—knowledge, *i.e.*, which is vain, idle, inflated, without solidity or substance. Job, as setting up to be "a wise man," should not have indulged in such empty and foolish speaking. It is observable that

Eliphaz does not point out what part of Job's discourses he considers objectionable, but condemns the whole of them under this broad and general description, which even he could not have regarded as applicable to more than a portion of what Job had said. **And fill his belly with the east wind?** The east wind was regarded as the worst of winds. In Palestine it blew from the great Syrian and North Arabian desert, and was of the nature of a sirocco. (On its deleterious effects, see Gen. xli. 6, 23; Jer. xviii. 17; Ezek. xvii. 10; xix. 12; xxvii. 26; Hos. xiii. 15, etc.)

Ver. 3.—**Should he reason with unprofitable talk?** Such, Eliphaz implies, had been Job's talk, altogether idle and unprofitable. A wise man should have abstained from such profitless arguments. They were speeches wherewith he could do no good.

Ver. 4.—**Yea, thou castest off fear.** To Eliphaz, Job's words—his bold expostulations (ch. xiii. 3, 15, 22, etc.), his declarations that he *knows* he will be justified (ch. xiii. 18), and that God will be his Salvation (ch. xiii. 16)—seem to imply that he has cast off altogether the fear of God, and is entirely devoid of reverence. Some of his expressions certainly seem over-bold; but, on the other hand, his sense of God's purity, perfectness, and transcendent power is continually manifest, and should have saved him from the rude reproach here launched against him (comp. ch. ix. 1—13; xii. 9—25; xiii. 11, 21, etc.). **And restrainest prayer before God**; rather, *and hinderest devout meditation before God.* Eliphaz means that Job expresses himself in a way so offensive to devout souls, that he disturbs their minds and prevents them from indulging in those pious meditations on the Divine goodness which would otherwise occupy them (comp. Ps. cxix. 97). Thus, according to Eliphaz, Job is not only irreligious himself, but the cause of irreligion in others.

Ver. 5.—**For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity.** Some render, "Thine iniquity teacheth thy mouth," causing it to utter such profane speeches (Vulgate, Dillmann, Canon Cook, Revised Version); but the translation of the Authorized Version is defensible on grammatical grounds, and yields a good sense, so that no alteration is necessary. **And thou choosest the tongue of the crafty**; or, *the tongue of the subtle* (comp. Gen. iii. 1, where the epithet assigned to the serpent is the same). Eliphaz probably means to tax Job with cloaking his real impiety under a pretence of religiousness.

Ver. 6.—**Thine own mouth condemneth thee.** So of a greater than Job it was said, "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death" (Matt. xxvi. 65, 66). Malevolence delights in misunderstanding and misinterpreting the utterances of the righteous. **And not I.** A weak disclaimer! As if Job's supposed guilt did not depend on the construction put upon his words. **Yea, thine own lips testify against thee.** Therefore, "what further need of witnesses?"

Ver. 7.—**Art thou the first man that was born?** That is, "Dost thou claim to have the wisdom of that first human intelligence, which, proceeding direct from God (Gen. i. 27), was without fault or flaw—a perfect intelligence, which judged all things aright?" It is not clear that Eliphaz had ever heard of Adam; but he evidently believed in a "first man," from whom all others were descended, and he attributed to this first man a mind and intellect surpassing those of all other men. His question is, of course, rather a scoff than an inquiry. He knows that Job makes no such foolish pretence; but he throws it in his teeth that, from what he has said, men might suppose he took some such view of himself. **Or wast thou made before the hills?** This is a taunt of the same kind as the previous one, but intensified. Wisdom is the result of experience. Art thou older than all the rest of us—older than the earth itself, than "the everlasting hills"? There were Greeks who claimed to be ethnically προσέληνοι, "older than the moon," but no inhabitant of earth was ever so foolish as to imagine himself individually more ancient than the earth on which he lived.

Ver. 8.—**Hast thou heard the secret of God?** or, *Hast thou been a hearer in the secret counsel of God?* (comp. Jer. xxiii. 18, "Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it?"). No mortal man was ever admitted to the secret counsel of the Most Highest (comp. Rom. xi. 34). **And dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?** or, *Dost thou confine (appropriate) wisdom to thyself?* i.e. Dost thou suppose that thou art the only wise man in all the world? (comp. ch. xii. 2, where Job had brought the same charge against his three friends).

Ver. 9.—**What knowest thou, that we know not?** So far as worldly wisdom went, this was probably quite true. Job was not more advanced in knowledge than Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. But he had a keener spiritual insight. He was wiser in the "wisdom which is from above." Perplexed and confused as were his thoughts concerning the Divine government of the universe, they were nearer the truth, more worthy of the

Divine nature, than those of his adversaries. In his reply, without claiming any special wisdom, he pours contempt on their pretentions to spiritual understanding (ch. xvii. 4, 10). **What understandest thou, which is not in us?** A mere repetition of the first member of the verse in different words.

Ver. 10.—**With us are both the grey-headed and very aged men.** "With us" seems to mean "of our party," or "on our side." Eliphaz claims that all the greybeards of the time, as well as all the ancient men of past times (comp. ch. viii. 8, and below, ver. 18), are on his side, and think as he does. **Much older than thy father.** Men, *i.e.* not merely of the preceding, but of much more distant generations. His claim to be supported by the voice of antiquity was, no doubt, in strict accordance with fact.

Ver. 11.—**Are the consolations of God small with thee?** By "the consolations of God" Eliphaz probably means the hopes which he and his friends had held out, speaking in God's Name, that if Job would humble himself, and confess his guilt, and sue to God for pardon, he would be restored to favour, recover his prosperity, and live to a good old age in tranquil happiness (see ch. v. 18—27; viii. 20—22; xi. 13—19). He wishes to know if Job thinks lightly of all this, regards it as of small account, will make no effort to obtain the blessings held out to him. This is all reasonable enough from his standpoint, that Job is conscious of secret heinous guilt; but it can make no impression on Job, who is conscious of the reverse. **Is there any secret thing with thee?** rather, *And is the word* [*of small account that dealeth*] *gently with thee?* Eliphaz considers that his own words and those of his two companions have been soft words, dealing "gently" with Job's refractoriness, and that Job ought to have been impressed by them.

Ver. 12.—**Why doth thine heart carry thee away?** or, *Whither doth thine heart carry thee away?* i.e. to what a pitch of presumption and audacity do thy proud thoughts carry thee? **And what do thy eyes wink at?** or, *Wherefore do thy eyes roll?* The verb used occurs only in this place. Its meaning is very doubtful.

Ver. 13.—**That thou turnest thy spirit against God.** To Eliphaz and his companions, the wild remonstrances of Job, his vehement expostulations and despairing outcries, are, one and all, nothing better than indications of a proud and rebellious spirit, that sets itself up against the Almighty, and openly contends with him. They view Job, after the speeches that he has made, as a declared rebel, and no longer regard it as incumbent upon them to use any "gentleness" in their reprimands. **And lettest such words go out of thy mouth?** It is remarkable that neither Eliphaz nor either of his friends ever points out what *particular* words of Job they object to and regard as impious, so as to give him the opportunity of defending, explaining, or retracting them. They take refuge in vague generalities, with which it is impossible to grapple. But this vagueness and want of logical accuracy is characteristic of the Oriental nations, who scarcely ever reason cogently or bring matters to a point.

Ver. 14.—**What is man, that he should be clean?** A vain "beating of the air." Eliphaz had asserted the same truth in his first speech, when he said, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he taxeth with folly: *how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay*, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?" (ch. iv. 17—19); and Job had given his full assent to it, when he exclaimed, "I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand" (ch. ix. 2, 3). The true question was not whether Job or any other man was "clean," *i.e.* wholly sinless, but whether Job had sinned so deeply and grievously that his sufferings were the natural and just punishment for his sins. And a mere repetition of the statement that all men were sinful and unclean was off the point—*nihil ad rem*—altogether futile and superfluous. **And he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?** (comp. ch. xxv. 4). The clause is a mere variant of the preceding one.

Ver. 15.—**Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints;** rather, *in his holy ones* (see the Revised Version). The word "saint" has in course of time come to be so exclusively attached to holy *men*, that it can no longer be applied, without danger of being misunderstood, to angels. Eliphaz here, as in ch. v. 1, speaks not *of* holy men, but of the holy angels. Without taxing them with sin, he is strongly convinced of their imperfection—their defective wisdom (ch. v. 18), weakness, and untrustworthiness. His views are decidedly peculiar, and not borne out by the rest of Scripture. **Yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.** The material heavens are probably intended. That limpid liquid blue in which the human eye sees no stain or speck, to the Divine eye is tinged with uncleanness. The idea is that neither animate nor inanimate nature contains any form of being that is absolutely without spot or blemish. In God alone is there perfect purity.

Ver. 16.—**How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like**

water? rather, *How much less one that is abominable and impure, a man that drinketh in iniquity*, etc.? It cannot be doubted that Job is individually pointed at. Not mankind generally, but a particular man, is intended; and the particular man can be none other than Job. Thus we see how the progress of the controversy has tended to exasperate the disputants, and change the "comforters" from smooth-tongued friends into open enemies and accusers.

Ver. 17.—**I will show thee, hear me; and that which I have seen I will declare.** Eliphaz here introduces, with an elaborate preface (vers. 17—19), what is either a citation from a book, as Professor Lee thinks, or a studied description by himself of the proceedings and consequent sufferings of the wicked. This description extends from ver. 20 to the end of the chapter, and is plainly levelled at Job, though it may originally have been intended to apply to some other person or persons.

Ver. 18.—**Which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid it** (comp. ch. viii. 8—10). Whether the words are his own or not, the sentiments, at any rate, Eliphaz declares to have come down to him from remote times. The "wise men" to whom he refers may have been men of the Beni Kedem (ch. i. 3), who were noted for their wisdom (1 Kings iv. 30), or possibly Egyptians or Babylonians. Books containing moral aphorisms and instructions were certainly composed both in Egypt and in Babylonia at a very ancient date (see 'Records of the Past,' vol. ii. pp. 11—16; vol. iii. p. 135; vol. vii. pp. 119—122).

Ver. 19.—**Unto whom alone the earth was given.** The reference is clearly to a very remote time, when men were comparatively few, and lived in quiet possession of their own lands, undisturbed by invasions, wars, or struggles for territory. Professor Lee thinks that the times immediately after, and even those before, the Flood are glanced at; while Schultens regards Eliphaz as alluding to the first settlements of the Joktanidæ in Arabia. In either case, the passage tells in favour of, and not against, the antiquity of the Book of Job, since it marks the composer as "living at a time when the memory of an age of patriarchal simplicity was yet fresh in men's minds" (Canon Cook). **And no stranger passed among them.** Races were not mixed up one with another, and so the purity of primitive doctrine remained undisturbed.

Vers. 20—35.—Schultens calls this "a magnificently elaborate oration, crowded with illustrations and metaphors, in which it is shown that the wicked cannot possibly escape being miserable, but that the punishment which they have so richly deserved assuredly awaits them, and is to be inflicted on them, as an example and terror to others, by a holy and just God, because, just as he loves virtue, so he pursues vice with a fierce and deadly hatred" ('Liber Jobi,' p. 104, edit. R. Grey).

Ver. 20.—**The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days.** Certainly an over-statement of the truth. With a much nearer approach to the facts of the case, the Psalmist remarked, "I was grieved at the wicked: I do also see the ungodly in such prosperity. For they are in no peril of death, but are lusty and strong. They come in no misfortune like other folk; neither are they plagued like other men" (Ps. lxxiii. 3—5). **And the number of years is hidden to the oppressor**; rather, *even the number of years that is laid up for the oppressor*. So Merx and the Revised Version. Another possible meaning is, "And a [small] number of years is laid up," etc. If we take the former view, we must regard the clause as exegetical of "all his days."

Ver. 21.—**A dreadful sound is in his ears**; literally, *a sound of terrors*. Fears of all kinds beset him, lest he should lose his prosperity. Sometimes they seem actually to sound in his ears. Prosper as he may, he feels that **in prosperity the destroyer shall one day come upon him.** "The destroyer" may be either the destroying angel, or the avenger of blood, or a robber-chief at the head of a band of marauders.

Ver. 22.—**He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness.** He has no hope of recovering his prosperity, when calamity has once stricken him down, since he knows that his calamity is deserved, and feels that it is God's judgment upon him for his sins. **And he is waited for of the sword.** He feels as if an enemy was lying in wait for him at every turn, with his sword drawn, ready to slay him. Professor Lee compares the words of Cain, "It shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me" (Gen. iv. 14).

Ver. 23.—**He wandereth abroad for bread,** saying, Where is it? This, again, might appropriately have been said of Cain, who was "a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth" (Gen. iv. 14), and may at times have had difficulty in procuring his daily bread. At any rate, it is the frequent experience of the wicked who lose their ill-gotten gains, and are brought down to abject poverty, and actual want of the necessaries of life. "He wanders abroad *to be the food of vultures*" is a translation of the passage suggested by some moderns (as Merx), and has the

support of the Septuagint, *κατατέτακται εἰς σῖτα γυψίν*. But it requires a slight change in the pointing. **He knoweth that the day of darkness is nigh at hand.** "The day of darkness" is probably the day of his decease: this he "knows," or at any rate, surmises, to be near.

Ver. 24.—**Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid**; they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle. Eliphaz seems covertly to allude to Job's misfortunes, which came against him with such force, and crushed him as a mighty king crushes his foes in battle.

Ver. 25.—**For he stretcheth out his hand against God.** The wicked man ventures even to threaten the Almighty. So in Eastern legend Nimrod was supposed to have done, and in Greek legend the giants. **And strengtheneth himself against the Almighty**; rather, *behaveth himself proudly*. See the Revised Version, and compare Schultens, who renders the Hebrew יתגבר by "ferocius et insolentius se gessit."

Ver. 26.—**He runneth upon him, even on his neck**; rather, *with his neck*. It is not God who runneth upon the wicked man, as our translators seem to have supposed, but the wicked man who rushes furiously against God. Like an infuriated bull, he makes his charge *with his neck*, i.e. with head lowered and neck stiffened, thinking to carry all before him. **Upon the thick bosses of his bucklers**; rather, *with the thick bosses of his shield*. The metaphor of the bull is dropped, and God's enemy represented as charging him like a warrior, with the shield-arm outstretched, and the heavy bosses of the shield pressing him down.

Ver. 27.—**Because he covereth his face with his fatness.** The ground and origin of the wicked man's audacity is his luxurious and intemperate living. In the days of his prosperity he pampered his body, freely indulged all his carnal appetites, and gave himself up to gluttony and gourmandism. This depraved his moral nature, separated between him and God, and finally produced in him the insolence and presumption described in vers. 25, 26. **And maketh collops of fat on his flanks.** The same idea, only very slightly varied, as so often in the second member of a verse.

Ver. 28.—**And he dwelleth in desolate cities.** Not only was he sensual and gluttonous, but he was covetous and rapacious also. He dwelt in cities which his hand had desolated—**in houses which no man inhabiteth**—since he had driven their owners from them—and which were **ready to become heaps**, *i.e.* were in a ruinous condition.

Ver. 29.—**He shall not be rich**; *i.e.* he shall not increase, or maintain, his riches. **Neither shall his substance continue.** His riches shall make themselves wings, and take their departure. **Neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth**; rather, *neither shall their possessions be extended upon the earth*. (So Rosenmüller, Professor Lee, and Renan.) The transition from the singular to the plural is not unusual, when it is a class, and not an individual, that is really spoken of.

Ver. 30.—**He shall not depart out of darkness** (comp. ver. 23, where the wicked man is threatened with "a day of darkness"). When the darkness once falls, it shall continue; there shall be no escaping out of it. **The flame shall dry up his branches**; rather, *a flame*. The "flame" intended seems to be the wrath of God. **And by the breath of his mouth**; *i.e.* "of God's mouth" (comp. ch. iv. 9). **Shall he go away**; or, *pass away*; i.e. disappear, be consumed, perish.

Ver. 31.—**Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity**; rather, *let him not trust in vanity* (or, *in falsehood*), *deceiving himself* (see the Revised Version). All the supports and stays of the wicked are vanity—unsubstantial, futile, utterly vain and useless. It is only a man who "deceives himself" that can trust in them. **For vanity shall be his recompense.** Such as do so trust gain nothing by it; they sow vanity and reap vanity.

Ver. 32.—**It shall be accomplished before his time.** "It [*i.e.* the recompense] shall be accomplished [or, 'paid in full'] before its time [*i.e.* before payment is due]." A vague threat, probably intended to signify that death will come upon the wicked man prematurely, before he has lived out half the days of his natural life. **And his branch shall not be green**; *i.e.* he shall wither and fade, like a tree not planted by the waterside (Ps. i. 3).

Ver. 33.—**He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine.** Blight and untimely cold cause the vine to drop its grapes before they are mature. So the wicked man will be deprived, one by one, of his possessions. **And shall cast off his flower as the olive.** The olive often sheds its blossoms in vast numbers. "In spring," says Canon Tristram, "one may see the bloom, on the slightest breath of wind, shed like snowflakes, and perishing by millions" ('Natural History of the Bible,' p. 375). According to some commentators, this happens regularly in alternate years.

Ver. 34.—**For the congregation of hypocrites** shall be desolate; or, *shall be sterile*, or *barren*, like the vine and olive of the preceding verse. The entire company of the wicked shall suffer this punishment. **And fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery.** God's lightning shall fall from heaven, and burn up the tents (*i.e.* the habi-

tations) of those who take bribes to pervert justice. It is suggested that Eliphaz intends to accuse Job of the two secret sins of hypocrisy and corruption.

Ver. 35.—**They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity**; rather, as in the margin, *iniquity*. **And their belly prepareth deceit.** Internally, *i.e.* in their inner nature—in their heart, as we should say—they make ready deceits. "The viscera," as Professor Lee observes, "are often made by the Hebrews the seat of thought."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—16.—*Eliphaz to Job: Resumption of the second controversy:* 1. *An overwhelming indictment.* I. OLD ACCUSATIONS REPEATED. 1. *Unprofitable talk.* The replies given by Job in the preceding colloquy Eliphaz characterizes as (1) unbecoming, altogether unworthy of a wise man such as Job had professed (ch. xii. 23; xiii. 2), and had indeed been recognized (ch. xxix. 8, 9, 21, 23),to be—an allegation which, though not in point as directed against the patriarch, may suggest the propriety of wise, and much more of good, men always speaking and acting in character, watching over their words as well as works, and studying, if possible, to avoid even the appearance of inconsistency, especially in the eyes of weak brethren (Rom. xiv. 21); (2) unsubstantial, mere empty harangues and impassioned tirades, "vain knowledge," literally, knowledge of wind (ver. 2; cf. ch. viii. 2; xi. 2), instead of sound and solid sense—a character, again, which could not fairly be ascribed to Job's reasonings and supplications, though, alas! it not inaptly describes much of human speech and speculation; (3) worthless, being, in respect of use, only "unprofitable talk," "speeches by which no good is done" (ver. 3), which, however magniloquently set forth and wearisomely iterated, contribute nothing towards the elucidation of a great problem, and serve in no degree to aid the speaker in making good his case; and (4) pernicious, in their ultimate results being comparable to nothing so appropriately as to the scorching (Jonah iv. 8), blasting (Gen. xli. 23), vehement (Exod. xiv. 21), and destructive (Ps. xlviii. 7) east wind (ver. 2)—and few things are more injurious to the minds that conceive them, or more hurtful to society at large when it must endure them, than such windy orations, "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," like "tales told by idiots," such as are alluded to by Eliphaz, although amongst such it was incorrect to number the burning thoughts and winged words of Job. 2. *Manifest impiety.* Eliphaz had already (ch. iv. 6) insinuated that Job was devoid of true religion; here he regards the insinuation as substantiated by the conduct of Job himself in three particulars. (1) The adoption of irreligious sentiments (ver. 4). The views propounded by Job were calculated to subvert the fundamental principle of all religion, viz. the fear of God, and to put an end to the outward expression of religion in devout meditation or prayer. Though wrong as to the estimate he put on Job's theology, Eliphaz was right in regarding reverence for God as the foundation of all piety in man, in thinking that no man's religion can be genuine which does not engender the spirit, and lead to the practice, of prayer, and in maintaining that good men should be careful of either entertaining views or promulgating doctrines which have a tendency, however slight, to hinder devotion or destroy veneration in themselves or others. (2) The publication of infidel opinions. Not only had Job allowed himself to form such unhallowed notions, but he had openly proclaimed them (ver. 5). Hence Eliphaz inferred his heart could not be right with God. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he" (Prov. xxiii. 7); and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Luke vi. 45). And certainly the deduction is a sound one, that no truly pious man will receive, far less disseminate, principles subversive, or even seemingly so, of the fear and worship of God. Only of such behaviour Job had not been guilty. (3) The defence of damnable heresies. It was impossible that wickedness could further go than it had done with Job, who had not only for himself embraced heretical beliefs, but had fearlessly stated them, and even unblushingly attempted to prove them, using for that purpose "the tongue of the crafty" (ver. 5), of which he was a master. Undoubtedly it was outrageous ungodliness, if only the theology of the friends upon which Job had poured his withering scorn, biting sarcasm, and scalding indignation had been the infallible truth of God, which it was not. But Eliphaz and his brethren, thinking it to be so, pronounced Job a self-convicted sinner (ver. 6). 3. *Astounding presumption.* Stung by Job's ridicule of himself and his colleagues (ch. xii. 2), and forgetful that "a

soft answer turneth away wrath," while "grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. xv. 1), Eliphaz retorts, with a keen-edged irony scarcely second to Job's, that no doubt Job was a wise man, a very wise man, in fact the only wise man, since (1) Job had been born first of men (ver. 7), and as a consequence enjoyed "the most direct and profound insight into the mysteries of the world, which came into existence at the same time as himself" (Delitzsch); (2) had even preceded the mountains in his appearance upon earth (ver. 7)—the mountains and hills being represented as the oldest of created things (Ps. xc. 2), and the language being applied to Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs (viii. 23—26); (3) had been admitted to the cabinet of heaven, and listened to the councils of the Supreme (ver. 8), the allusion being to the divan of an Oriental prince; nay (4) as a consequence had engrossed or monopolized wisdom to himself, like some grand vizier whose soul was burdened with state secrets; and (5) was possessed of sources of information immensely superior to theirs, although with them were both the grey-headed and very aged men, much older than his father (ver. 10). 4. *Contemptuous indifference.* (1) To the consolations of God (ver. 11). That God is pre-eminently the God of all comfort and consolation (2 Cor. i. 3; vii. 6); that he can comfort with a mother's tenderness (Isa. lxvi. 13), a father's pity (Ps. ciii. 13), a husband's love (Hos. ii. 14); that in Christ (Phil. ii. 1) he hath provided rich consolations for his people (2 Cor. i. 5), suitable for every circumstance and situation that may occur in their lives (2 Cor. i. 4); that delightful wells of consolation are sometimes found in the events of providence (2 Cor. vii. 6), and always in the promises of the gospel (2 Pet. i. 4), especially when applied to the heart by the Holy Ghost (John xiv. 26); that these consolations are not small in themselves, being abundant (2 Cor. i. 5), satisfying (Isa. lxvi. 11), strong (Heb. vi. 18), and everlasting (2 Thess. ii. 16), and should by none be reputed small or lightly esteemed, considering the source whence they come, the love of God, the channel through which they flow, the cross of Christ, the Agent by whom they are applied, the Holy Spirit, the comfort they impart, the peace of God which passeth understanding, and the freeness with which they are bestowed, without money and without price; that all these are precious truths is undeniable; but Eliphaz understood by God's consolations the promises held forth by himself and his friends in their discourses, which, however applicable they may have been to an unconverted sinner, were not suitable to meet the case of a suffering saint like Job. (2) To the kindness of men. Without doubt sincerely Eliphaz commends his own and his friends' orations as gentle addresses, the utterances of tender pity (ver. 11); and, if they were so, unquestionably Job erred in receiving them with such palpable scorn as he did. Kindness honestly offered, even when mistaken, and somewhat harsh and ungracious, should be politely, and even thankfully, received. But it is not so obvious as it seemed to Eliphaz that either he or Bildad, not to mention Zophar, had spoken tenderly. 5. *Passionate rebellion.* Job allowed his feelings to get the better of his understanding—his passion to overwhelm his judgment. It is the part of wisdom and the work of grace to restrain angry emotions (Prov. xxix. 8; Eph. iv. 26). Uncontrolled excitement leads to sin (Prov. xxix. 22). It had hurried Job into vehement expressions against God, which seemed to show an embittered and hostile spirit in (1) insolent grimaces, the winking of the eyes (ver. 12) having the significance, it is probable, of the similar expressions in Psalms (xxxv. 19), Proverbs (vi. 3), and Isaiah (iii. 16); (2) wrathful opposition, the turning of the spirit (or of one's rage) against God (ver. 13) being a characteristic of wicked men (Rom. viii. 7; Gal. v. 17); and (3) foolish speaking, Job's discourses being styled "words," *i.e.* words as contrasted with wisdom, words destitute of meaning and intelligence.

II. OLD THEOLOGY RESTATED. The crowning sin of Job, in the estimation of Eliphaz, was his persistent attempts at self-justification. As if to give this tremendous heresy its final quietus, the solemn Arabian seer once more advances the humbling doctrine of man's universal depravity, which he establishes from a fourfold consideration. 1. *Man's constitutional frailty.* Man is essentially a frail and diseased creature, *enosh* (ver. 14); and, although physical weakness is not the same thing as moral pollution, yet the former is inconceivable except as the result of the latter. 2. *Man's depraved origin.* Mortal man is descended from fallen woman, and, as a consequence, inherits her depravity. So Job admitted (ch. xiv. 2), David bewailed (Ps. li. 5), and Christ taught (John iii. 6). To this law human history knows of only one exception. Christ, though

the Seed of the woman, was untainted by hereditary corruption. Holy in his birth (Luke i. 35), he continued throughout life "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). The moral purity of Jesus was indispensable to his mediatorship (Heb. vii. 27). 3. *Man's inferiority to the angels.* Man occupies a lower place in the universe than the angels who inhabit heaven (ver. 15). Yet even these bright intelligences appear tarnished in God's sight. How much less, then, can a claim of moral purity be made good for man? If God's holiness, the standard of all creature excellence, is so absolute that even the heavens with their holy inhabitants are not pure in his sight (ver. 15), it is sheer folly to expect that man can establish his moral cleanness before the eyes of the Omniscient One (cf. ch. iv. 17, 18, homiletics). On the contrary, man must be entirely abominable in the estimation of a holy God, because wholly corrupt (ver. 16), sin being that abominable thing which God hates (Jer. xliv. 4), and which renders everything it infects hateful, because of changing its nature, and making sour, putrid, corrupt, disorganized, what God had at first pronounced fair, orderly, and very good. 4. *Man's habitual practice.* This the culminating proof of man's total and universal depravity. Wherever man exists he is found to drink up iniquity like water; *i.e.* to commit sin as regularly, eagerly, abundantly, easily, naturally, as the ox or the horse drinks up water.

Learn: 1. Men often fail to see in themselves the faults they condemn in others. 2. The faculty of speech was given to every man to profit withal. 3. The tongue is badly used when it is employed to either afflict saints or encourage sinners. 4. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." 5. Prayer is one of the natural instincts of the human heart. 6. A man's creed is commonly an index to his character. 7. The man who condemns himself need not wonder if he be condemned by others. 8. The older a man grows the wiser should he become. 9. Divine consolation may be, but is not always, administered by man. 10. "Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." 11. The mouth should never be allowed to go without a bridle. 12. The doctrine of man's depravity is very old.

Ver. 4.—*Restraining prayer.* Of the reasons leading men to either neglect or discontinue the exercise of prayer, these will be found to be the chief.

I. THERE IS NO GOD TO PRAY TO. This the reason of the atheist. But the existence of a supreme First Cause, possessed of intelligence and moral character, is to faith assured by: 1. *The intuitions of the human mind,* which may sometimes attempt to argue itself out of, but never needs to reason itself into, the belief in a Divine Being. 2. *The witness of the creatures,* which, by countless instances of special contrivance and design, attest the eternal power and Godhead of their Artificer (Rom. i. 20). 3. *The intimations of Scripture,* which never demonstrate, but always assume, that a God exists, and man knows it. Hence, since there is a Supreme Being, the folly, as well as sin, of withholding from him that tribute of devotion which is his due.

II. THERE IS NO EFFICACY IN PRAYER. The usual objections to the possibility of prayer may be here stated, such as that the whole universe having been placed under the dominion of fixed and invariable law, there can, properly speaking, be no room for the exercise of prayer; that the Bible itself, by representing all things as coming to pass in accordance with a prearranged plan, seems expressly to exclude the idea of prayer; that the multiplicity and even contradictoriness of human interests is so great as to reduce the whole business of praying to an absurdity; and that, as no one pretends to be able to dispense with his own labours even while he prays, it seems hard to know precisely wherein lies the special virtue of devotion. Without replying to these *seriatim* in this place, it may suffice to observe: 1. *The exact import of the assertion* that there is no efficacy in prayer, which is that the individual so asserting has been able to place himself precisely where God stands in relation to the universe, to make a survey of the entire compass of created things, to sound the unfathomable depths of the Divine resources, and, as the result of his examination, to announce that prayer cannot be answered; in other words, such a confident dogmatist arrogates to himself the attributes of God. 2. *The complete worthlessness of the assertion* when set against the testimony of the human consciousness, especially when supported by the evidence of incontrovertible fact that prayer can be, and has been, answered.

III. THE ABSENCE OF A FELT NEED OF PRAYER. This is the reason of the worldling.

The things he regards as constituting the *summum bonum* of existence—wealth, pleasure, fame, power, and such like—seem to belong to a sphere that is not much affected by prayer; while, having never experienced any desire for those spiritual realities comprehended in the gospel, blessing of salvation, viz. the pardon of sin, the renovation of the heart, the spirit of adoption, and so on, he has never deemed it necessary to trouble the King of heaven with supplications for their bestowal. But (1) the blessings of the gospel are none the less indispensable for the soul's happiness that the soul does not realize its lack of them; (2) the absence of any felt necessity for prayer is the best proof the soul can desire that prayer is in reality its one thing needful; (3) the exercise of prayer will not interfere with a just devotion to the ordinary businesses and duties of daily life; (4) not even the most material of earthly blessings belongs to a region that lies beyond the influence of prayer (Phil. iv. 6).

IV. THE LACK OF ANSWERS TO PRAYERS. This is the reason of the faithless Christian. And it is undoubtedly hard for a soul to keep on praying when to all appearance the ear of God is deaf. But in such circumstances the petitioner should consider (1) whether a prayer might not be answered without the praying one being distinctly conscious of it at the time; (2) whether the prayer to which no answer is returned may not simply be delayed, and not denied; (3) whether, even on the hypothesis of its denial, it may not after all be for the best that the thing asked for should be withheld; (4) whether the indispensable conditions of true prayer, such as faith (Heb. xi. 6; Jas. i. 6), humility (Gen. xxxii. 10), sincerity (Ps. lxvi. 18), etc., have been complied with.

V. THE WANT OF ANY TRUE RELISH IN PRAYER. This is the reason of the spiritually declining saint. Now (1) it is certain that *the exercise of prayer ought to be delightful to the Christian*, prayer being as much a natural function of the gracious soul as breathing is of the body. But (2) it is equally apparent that *over spiritual as well as physical functions times of languor steal*, these being induced in the former mostly by a want of watchfulness against the encroachments of the world, or by a careless dalliance with sin, or by a growing spirit of formality. Hence (3) so far from being a reason for discontinuing devotion, *the lack of spiritual relish should rather stir the praying soul to greater earnestness and zeal.*

VI. THE INDULGENCE OF KNOWN SIN. This is the reason of the conscious backslider. Nothing so effectually extinguishes the altar-fire of a spiritual devotion as the practice of secret sin. (1) It disqualifies for coming to the throne (Isa. i. 15); (2) it prevents God from listening to prayer (Ps. lxvi. 18); (3) it deadens the spiritual life from which prayer comes (Ps. xxxii. 3); (4) it represses all desire within the soul for converse with God; and (5) it finally silences the voice of prayer altogether.

Vers. 17—35.—*Eliphaz to Job*: 2. *More wisdom from the ancients.* I. THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS WISDOM. 1. *Old*; i.e. derived from a remote antiquity. The traditionary lore about to be cited by Eliphaz had been manufactured by primeval sages, from whom it had been carefully transmitted to the "wise men" who had told it to Eliphaz. The "fathers," "unto whom alone the earth was given," and "among whom no stranger passed," were either patriarchal descendants of Noah prior to the time of Peleg, when the earth was divided (Gen. x. 25), or the early progenitors of the Arabian races. 2. *Pure*; i.e. unmixed with foreign elements. Whether the ancients were pre-Pelegites or post-, the fact to which Eliphaz calls attention remains unaltered. "Purity of race was from the earliest times considered by the sons of the East as the sign of highest nobility" (Delitzsch). That this isolation of the Arabian fathers would tend to preserve the current of primitive tradition pure and unalloyed, and might even favour the healthy development of independent views, "derived from their own experience and undisturbed by foreign influence," can scarcely be questioned. It would seem also as if in the world's infancy other methods of conserving Divine truth were impracticable. At least Israel was separated from the other nations of the earth in order to serve as a depositary for the gospel promise in order to preserve it till the fulness of the times. Hence she was forbidden to make marriage or other alliances with the nations around for fear of learning their ways. But now the truth of God, under the Christian dispensation, has been revealed with such clearness and fulness of illumination, that it does not require to be hedged about by safeguards of race, nationality, etc.; though it is still true of Christian people that "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv.

33). 3. *Certain*; i.e. verified by experience. In the preceding colloquy Eliphaz had treated Job to wisdom he had learnt in ecstatic vision (ch. iv. 12); here he lays before him the results of observation through the ordinary channels of information. He does not claim for his approaching utterances the high authority of messages from the spirit-world; still, he guarantees their veracity on the double testimony of eye and ear. What the wise men had reported to his sense of hearing he had taken care to verify by the organ of seeing; so that practically he seems to say, "In the mouth of two witnesses is every word established."

II. THE PURPORT OF THIS WISDOM. Briefly, it is the dogma that a moral order exists in the world, that good always comes to the good, and in particular that evil never fails to overtake the evil. 1. *The wicked man's doom.* Painted in lurid colours, as consisting mainly in two things. (1) The terrors of an evil conscience, which are represented as: (*a*) Self-inflicted. "The wicked man writhes or torments himself" (ver. 20). Conscience always is its own avenger. Gagged for a season, it eventually speaks out with greater power because of previous repression. "No man ever offended his own conscience, but first or last it was revenged upon him for it" (South). (*b*) Excruciatingly painful, like the pains of parturition. "Conscience is a thousand swords" ('King Richard III.,' act v. sc. 2). "Methought a legion of foul fiends environed me" (ibid., act i. sc. 4). "The mind that broods o'er guilty woes is like the scorpion girt by fire" (Byron 'Giaour'). (*c*) Never ceasing; the anguish of the stricken wretch continuing "all his days." Except in rare instances, this part of Eliphaz's description can scarcely be regarded as literally correct. Yet it teaches that, from one end of life to the other, the wicked man enjoys no security against his guilty fears, which may spring forth upon him at any moment, the exact instant when they shall do so being hidden from his view (ver. 20). (*d*) Horribly terrifying; filling him with dismal forebodings of evil. The sound of approaching calamity ever ringing in his ears (ver. 21), every footfall appears to be that of a destroyer: "How is't with me, when every noise appals me?" ('Macbeth,' act ii. sc. 2); and "The wicked flee when no man pursueth" (Prov. xxviii. 1). His imagination suggests, even in the midst of prosperity, that the devastator is upon him (ver. 21), that every one who finds him shall slay him (Gen. iv. 14), that his destruction will be sudden and complete—a fate reserved for unbelievers in the great day of the Lord (1 Thess. v. 3). His guilty conscience peopling the dark with assassins causes him to live in constant terror of the sword (ver. 22)—"Thus conscience does make cowards of us all" ('Hamlet,' act iii. sc. 1). His feeble spirit agonized by fears of starvation even in the midst of abundance (ver. 23), roams abroad in search of bread, saying, "Where is it?" and he becomes a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, like another Cain (Gen. iv. 12), and like wicked men generally whose evil hearts are restless as the troubled sea (Isa. lvii. 20). His crowding fears of impending calamity so unman him that when trouble and anguish gather round like royal armies prepared for battle, they paralyze him with dread, and render resistance or escape impossible (ver. 24). (2) The miseries of an evil fortune form the second ingredient in his unhappy lot. He shall never attain to true, permanent, or abundant wealth. If he make money, he shall make nothing else. And that money shall take wings and flee away. So that, notwithstanding his apparent success, he shall be always a poor man. It is often true of the wicked that they make money only to put it into a bag with holes (Hag. i. 6). Ill-gotten wealth never lasts long. The wicked man shall never be out of misfortune, in himself or in his family. "He shall not escape darkness" (ver. 30). He shall eventually be overwhelmed in ruin; painful, like the burning of a flame; speedy, like a blast of wind; divinely sent, the agent of his destruction being the breath of God's mouth, which will ultimately consume the enemies of Christ (2 Thess. ii. 8; Rev. xix. 15); and therefore complete and final, the wicked perishing utterly, as all the ungodly will do hereafter. 2. *The wicked man's crime.* (1) Tyrannical oppression of men (ver. 20). The ungodly persons alluded to by Eliphaz were proud imperious sinners who trampled recklessly on the rights of others. All sin is more or less an infringement of the rights and liberties of men; and much of the wickedness with which earth is overrun partakes of this character—the strong tyrannizing over the weak, the ambitious making stepping-stones of those who are humble the powerful treading down the feeble and unresisting (cf. Cowper, 'Task,' bk. ii.). The giants of Noah's (Gen. vi. 4) and the Arabian

robbers of Job's time (ch. xii. 6; xx. 19) were men of this type. (2) Defiant antagonism to God (vers. 25, 26). Hostility to God is the natural characteristic of the sinful heart (Rom. viii. 7); but all tyrannical oppression of men is practically a fighting against God. And the particular aggravation of the wicked man's offence lies in this, that, though clearly understanding himself to be acting contrary to God's Law, and thus virtually entering the lists against Jehovah, he persists in his nefarious behaviour, with much braggadocio "stretching out his hand," and "affecting to play the hero against God" (ver. 25); with immeasurable insolence "strengthening himself against the Almighty," a feeble worm presuming to contend with the Lord of hosts; with infinite zest "running upon him," as if eager to close in mortal combat with his celestial Adversary (ver. 26); with fierce determination, "with a stiffened neck," expressive of haughty resolution; with amazing self-sufficiency, dashing up against him with "the thick bosses of his bucklers" (ver. 26), as if expecting to overwhelm the Supreme with ignominious defeat. Examples of such defiers of God may be found in Pharaoh (Exod. v. 2), Sennacherib (Isa. xxxvi. 20), the crucifiers of Christ (Ps. ii. 1; Acts iv. 25—27); though all sin is essentially an insolent rejection of God's rule and defiance of his authority (Luke xix. 14, 27). (3) Licentious indulgence of self (ver. 27). The language describes one given over to gluttony, a person whose "god is his belly" (Phil. iii. 19). Luxurious living an object of ambition to most men (Luke xii. 19); a frequent mark of wicked men (Ps. xvii. 14; lxxiii. 7; Luke xvi. 19); a special danger for all men (Deut. viii. 12). Fat feeding and fair clothing have a tendency to beget and foster pride. "It is a common proverb that provender pricketh men" (Calvin). When Jeshurun waxed fat he kicked (Deut. xxxii. 15). If in politics and civil matters "lean men are dangerous" ('Julius Cæsar,' act i. sc. 2), in religion it is mostly otherwise. Hence the wisdom of Agur's prayer (Prov. xxx. 8, 9). (4) Complete insensibility to sin (ver. 28). The wicked man takes up his abode in cities like Jericho (Josh. vi. 26), which God's curse has rendered desolate through some overwhelming visitation, thus evincing not so much his insolent defiance of God, as the stolidity of his wicked soul, his utter want of pious feeling, the complete callousness and deadness of his moral and spiritual nature. All sin gravitates towards "a conscience past feeling" (Eph. iv. 19).

III. THE APPLICATION OF THIS WISDOM. 1. *A wicked insinuation.* "Let not him that is deceived" (ver. 31), *i.e.* Job. Eliphaz charges Job with a false confidence in his own integrity. Though not true of Job, it is certain that of many it is not false. Hence the propriety of self-examination as to the grounds on which our assurance rests. If it rest on the Spirit's witness to our faith in Christ, it is good and will never disappoint our expectations; if it is based on any of those "vanities" alluded to by Eliphaz, it is false, and will eventually overwhelm us in despair. 2. *An excellent admonition.* "Let him not trust in vanity." Everything outside of God and his favour, on which a human soul grounds its confidence of safety, or in which it thinks to find happiness, is vanity—moral excellence, evangelical fervour, general philanthropy, intellectual power, social position, commercial credit, political influence, no less than successful wickedness and unchecked antagonism to God. Yet the human heart is insanely prone to clasp these to its bosom, saying, "Be thou my confidence," instead of trusting in the living God. But to do so is the merest self-deception. For none of these things, nor all of them, can satisfy a human soul. Only God can so occupy the heart as to fill it with happiness and render it secure. God alone is the saint's portion and trust. 3. *A fearful prediction.* "Vanity," probably in the sense of calamity, "shall be his recompense" (ver. 31). And this reward, for which the self-deceived man toils, shall be paid: (1) Fully; "it shall be accomplished" (ver. 32), *i.e.* his punishment will be fully measured out, his wage paid to the full—that wage being death (cf. Rom. vi. 23). (2) Prematurely; "before his time," *i.e.* before the natural termination of his life, sin having a tendency to shorten (Ps. lv. 23), as godliness has to prolong life; before any of his schemes have reached completion, like a vine shaking off its unripe grapes and an olive casting off its flowers (ver. 33). (3) Sadly; involving his family in his ruin, for "the family of the hypocrites shall be desolate" (ver. 34), the wicked man carrying the contagion of ungodliness into his home, and bringing down upon it the curse of God (Prov. iii. 33), as certainly as the good man surrounds his children with an atmosphere of salvation (Luke xix. 9; Acts xvi. 31), and draws down upon them

by his prayers the benison of love. (4) Utterly; the judgments of the Almighty consuming the tabernacles of bribery and their wicked inhabitants, who conceive mischief and bring forth vanity, and whose belly prepareth deceit (ver. 35). A description, again, which, though inapplicable to Job, for whom it was wrongfully meant, has sometimes been realized, as in the case of the cities of the plain.

Learn: 1. That the true Divider of countries to nations and of lands to individuals is God. A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above. 2. That if the intercourse of peoples and tribes with one another be productive of good, it is by no means unattended with danger. Sinful practices and opinions are more easily adopted than their opposites. 3. That the way of transgressors is commonly as hard to themselves as to their victims. "Evil pursueth sinners." 4. That the fiercest enemy a soul has to encounter is an awakened conscience. It is hard to contend against a foe through whose face God looks. 5. That the biggest coward upon earth is a bragging tyrant who oppresses the weak. Man's moral strength rises in proportion to the meekness with which he can endure, not the cruelty with which he can inflict, wrong. 6. That the man who thinks to conquer God in battle is a fool. The way to victory with God is by faith and prayer, humility and submission. 7. That a fat body may become the grave of a lean soul. The man that would have a prosperous and luxuriant soul must keep the body under. 8. That the best-deceived man on earth is he who trusts in earthly vanities. If he who trusts in his own heart is a fool, what must he be who trusts in unsubstantial nothingness? 9. That wicked men's families are often ruined by their parents. A father should lead his child to heaven by holy deeds, not point him the way to hell by transgression. 10. That the ultimate perdition of ungodly men is sure. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—19.—*Perversity and impenitence rebuked.* In the next six chapters the controversy between Job and his friends takes a new and embittered turn. They muster their forces to put down the daring speaker, who as they deem has challenged the justice of God. They seek to humiliate him as a late-born, ignorant, and passionate man, who has incurred fresh guilt by his impious questionings and blasphemies. Eliphaz gives a terrible representation of the general truth that the wicked man, living for himself alone, must ever be exposed to torment, and his property and condition must ever be insecure, leaving Job to apply all this to himself. In the war of words the hope of reconciliation and mutual understanding is further and further banished. The present chapter (xv.) falls into two divisions: the first containing argument; the second the authoritative utterance of wisdom (vers. 2—19, 20—35).

I. ARGUMENT: INTRODUCTION. (Vers. 2—6.) Eliphaz, as the oldest and most experienced of the friends, seeks to abash and humiliate Job by raising doubts of his sense and wisdom. 1. The characteristics of unwisdom are indulgence in *windy* words—in "words from the *paunch*," the seat of wild and ungovernable passion, as contrasted with words that are uttered from the heart (ch. viii. 10), and are those of experience, sense, and truth; in words that are useless because there are no corresponding deeds. Here is a good test of the value of speech—Has it any tendency to bear fruit in deeds? can it be followed up and expressed in deeds or no? Those words are vain on which we dare not set the stamp and seal of action. 2. *Proofs of guilt.* These wild speeches are not only idle, but worse, mischievous. The tongue is a powerful *agent*, either of good or evil. It builds up those who listen in faith and goodness, or loosens the root of piety in the soul. Further, the tongue may be used as the weapon of the crafty—a disingenuous means of defence. And does not this show that Job is utterly corrupt; that, like an unprincipled scoundrel, he would attempt to clear himself by throwing blame on others?

II. HUMILIATING CENSURES. (Vers. 7—13.) 1. *Ironical rebuke of his assumption.* Is he the first-born man—older than the hills? Does he stand at the head of mankind, and, therefore, know better than all his fellows? So Ezekiel satirizes the King of Tyre, "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty" (xxviii. 12). The Hindus have a proverb used in the same sense, "Yea, indeed, he is the first man;

no wonder that he is so wise." The great Greek sage, on the other hand, being declared the wisest of men, interpreted the oracle as meaning that he alone of men knew that he was ignorant. It is better to place one's self on a level with the meanest and the most ignorant than to assume superiority in matters about which all men may reasonably think themselves equally well informed. 2. *Expostulation against a bitter temper.* It is a temper that will not soften at the word of comfort, as the rock will not melt in the sun. Eliphaz thinks that all his good instruction and consolation have been lavished in vain upon this obdurate heart. The "refusing to be comforted," the obstinate nourishing of grief, is a temper that must be changed, otherwise the mental view cannot become clear and calm. Other signs of temper are pride; the heart carried away by its passionate egotism; the gleaming or rolling eyes (ver. 12), and the unbridled wildness of the tongue. These symptoms prove a disease, and that disease is self-will.

III. THE RIGHT OF COMPLAINT AGAINST GOD DENIED. (Vers. 14—16.) Here the speaker repeats himself, for he has nothing more deeply impressed upon his own mind than the folly and impatience of complaints from infirm man against the supreme and all-holy One (comp. ch. iv. 17—v. 7). 1. The hereditary taint in man (ver. 14). 2. The relative impurity of heavenly beings in the sight of God. 3. Man's choice of sin (this is especially emphatic here). All these considerations show the impiety of daring to question any action of God. Man has a *thirst* for sin (ver. 16): shall such a creature, from the edge of its muddy pool, lift itself presumingly against Heaven?

IV. DEMAND FOR ATTENTION TO INSTRUCTION. (Vers. 17—19.) In this short preface the wisdom of the speaker is described as (1) derived from personal experience; (2) confirmed by ancient tradition; (3) as pure, unadulterated wisdom, coming from a time when foreign opinions and foreign manners had not corrupted the simplicity of ancient truth.—J.

Vers. 20—35.—*Warnings from the wisdom of experience.* I. THE TERRIBLE TORMENTS OF THE WICKED. (Vers. 20—24.) 1. *Lifelong pain.* Notwithstanding all appearances of ease and prosperity, the bad man inly suffers. The sword seems ever suspended above the tyrant's head. The serpent is ever busy with the tooth of remorse at his heart. 2. *Dread fancies* throng through every sound into his imagination; he is ever in terror of some sudden doom. He sees a darkness coming upon him from which there is no possibility of escape. In the glance of dread fancy he sees himself already singled out for the fatal sword-stroke. The gaunt shape of famine seems to haunt his steps; from his soft couch and splendid table he looks out into a dark scene, and realizes it as present; he is overcome by anguish and trouble, as a king is borne down amidst the turmoil of battle. Thus conscience makes the guilty man a coward, and the "native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." "A guilty conscience! I ask no other hell."

II. THE CAUSE OF HIS SUFFERINGS. (Vers. 25—28.) 1. *Rebellion against God.* This is presented under the powerful figure of a warrior, rushing against his foe, on the field, in headstrong fury. Self-will, leading to contempt of the moral order of God, and this to violent resistance to all moral restraint; here is the genesis and development of sin. See the history of Pharaoh. 2. *His selfish life.* He lives in luxury, pampering his body till he becomes a gross mass of flesh, full of carnal appetite. In his unsocial ambition and greed he has laid waste flourishing cities rich in men, that he may abide in them alone, as if he could not find place enough for the dwelling of his body, and preferred to live alone amidst wide desolation, rather than peacefully among a multitude of the happy. So in Isa. v. 8, "Woe to them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!" "He enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people" (Hab. ii. 5). "He builds a town with blood, and lays its foundations in iniquity" (Hab. ii. 12). The picture is one of grasping, insatiable greed and covetousness, which shut a man out from the sympathy of his fellows. Some, however, take ver. 28 as referring further to an act of disobedience in fixing his dwelling among ruins, cursed by God and forbidden to future habitation.

III. THE INSTABILITY OF THE WICKED. (Vers. 29—33.) His hopes are disappointed, riches elude him, his accumulations melt away. Unlike the heavy harvest of the

waving corn, he is rather like the tree whose roots do not sink deeply into the earth (ver. 29), so that every outward misfortune becomes an extreme source of danger—all his blossoms and fruits are cast away before the time of gathering! Then, again, the figure of darkness returns, which he only escapes, to fall into the glowing breath of God's anger, which blasts everything that is green and fair in his prospects.

IV. THE VANITY AND FOLLY OF THE WICKED. (Vers. 34, 35.) He begins by trusting in vanity, in what is baseless, such as all absence of moral principle; and vanity, according to the moral constitution of the world, must be the end of his schemes. The time of ripeness and harvest must be that of destruction; or like the blossoms of the olive in certain years, which fall off without fruit being formed, his plans never come to maturity. The "brood" of the wicked man is unfruitful; the fire devours his tent. Or like the woman who has falsely conceived, and remains long in deception, but at last perceives with grief the nothingness of her hopes, so with the wicked man (comp. Ps. vii. 14—17; Isa. xxxiii. 11).

LESSONS. 1. Goodness alone has substance, vitality, endurance, fruitfulness. 2. Evil is emptiness; it carries with it self-delusion; its end is disappointment and failure.—J.

Vers. 2, 3.—*The wise man speaketh wisdom.* There is a fitness of things, and wisdom becomes the wise man—the man who is either truly wise or who would presume to be wise. Let his words testify to the justness of his profession. Consider—

I. THE INCONGRUITY OF WORDS OF FOLLY PROCEEDING FROM THE LIPS OF THE WISE. All may reasonably hope that he who is tutored with knowledge, and who has accustomed himself to direct his knowledge to good ends, will speak only words of truth and soberness—words trustworthy and useful. For one known to be wise, or professing to be wise, to use words of foolishness is an utter incongruity. The speech is the expression of the soul. Out of the heart the mouth speaketh. The world has need of wisdom—need of its salt—to save it from the corruptions of error and folly. "Should a wise man utter vain knowledge?" It is inconsistent; it is misleading; it is destructive.

II. THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THE WORDS OF HIM WHO TRULY SPEAKETH WISDOM. To assume the position of the teacher, to dare to guide the ignorant, to set up one's self as a ruler in the world of thought, is to assume a position of the highest possible importance. Knowingly or unknowingly, the world is led by the words of its teachers, good or bad. The souls of men are in the hands of the teacher. His words lead to life or death. The bulk of men are ignorant and timid, and therefore under the control of the stronger minds. The world's sad history proves that men, like a flock of sheep, may be led into any path by their teachers. The dry and arid sands will not keep the feet of the sheep from following their leader and shepherd, nor will the rugged and stony ground. The world is led by the ears. How precious, then, to the world are words of true wisdom! Truly the feet of him who publisheth peace, and bringeth good tidings, are beautiful. The world is more indebted to its teachers of wisdom than to its chieftains in valour. Error binds men in chains; but words of wisdom, which are words of truth, set them free.

III. THE TRULY WISE MAN IS HE WHO DOTH NOT "REASON WITH UNPROFITABLE TALK," AND WITH WHOSE SPEECHES IT CANNOT BE SAID, "HE CAN DO NO GOOD." He is truly wise who, with words which he has good reason to believe are wise words, seeks to lead the world in paths of safety—paths of light, joy, and blessing. Let the man be judged by his words, and by his words condemned before the universal bar. Let the world cast its uttermost condemnations on him who by false words leads the unsuspecting fool into the path of peril; but let the world gather its garlands for him who with wise words proves himself to be wise, and leads the feet of men into the way of life. To be able to do good by speech is a great endowment; to be faithful in the use of right speech is to be truly wise, and a wise word is a word of life.—R. G.

Vers. 14—16.—*Human sinfulness.* Eliphaz accuses Job of his attempt to justify himself, and speaks with great apparent acerbity of spirit. His words are cutting and cruel. He secretly declares Job to be sinful in proportion to his sufferings. He branches into generalities, and affirms the general human sinfulness with the quiet accusation,

"All men are sinful; therefore thou art. Sorrow is the punishment of the wicked; therefore thy suffering is proof of thy guilt." Eliphaz's view is imperfect, and needs to be supplemented. Job, in his struggling, cries aloud for that supplement. It is found only in the assurance of the future, and in the fact that, with the future in view, it pleases the Almighty to discipline and prepare men for it. Suffering is seen to be a method of that discipline. Of human sinfuluess it is affirmed—

I. IT IS AN INHERENT CONDITION OF HUMAN LIFE. "What is man, that he should be clean? and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" as though he had said, "It is of the nature of man to be unclean." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." The human nature derived from the imperfect and unholy is necessarily unholy and imperfect. Evidences of this may be seen in the general observed depravity of man: in the necessity for very powerful influences to check sinfulness; in the constant recognition of the Fall in Holy Scripture; in the difficulty with which even good men preserve their goodness; and in the sad examples of deep degradation in all lands.

II. THIS SINFULNESS IS MOST APPARENT TO THE DIVINE JUDGMENT. Men are not always alive to their own sinfulness. Not apprehending righteousness, they have not an accurate standard by which to judge themselves. But in the Divine view the very angels, who are superior to men, are not pure: "The heavens are not clean in his sight."

III. THIS SINFULNESS EXHIBITS ITSELF IN GREAT IMPURITY OF LIFE AND SPIRIT. Happily there are many exceptions, and we live in brighter, better times than did Job; yet how truly is it still to be said, "How much more abominable and filthy is man!"

IV. THIS SINFULNESS IS ESPECIALLY SHOWN IN AN ACTIVE PREFERENCE OF EVIL BEFORE GOOD. He "drinketh iniquity like water." Eliphaz has been led from general views to single out the sad cases which all may observe, and which bear such painful testimony, that if human life be not checked in its natural tendencies, it degenerates to the worst conditions of evil.

Therefore: 1. Life to be guarded with great care, lest degenerating influences exert destructive power over it. 2. The most potent corrections to be sought; the need of regeneration. 3. The instruction, grace, and sanctification of the Spirit of God to be thankfully received and most carefully cherished.—R. G.

Vers. 20—30.—*The consequences of evil-doing.* It is impossible that wrong-doing should go wholly unpunished, for were there no positive penal inflictions, the mere natural consequences of wrong-doing would bring inevitable penalties. The words in these verses refer to the present natural consequences of wrong-doing, not to the final penal inflictions which must follow. The evils which the practice of wickedness tends to bring upon the head of the evil-doer, though many may escape, are thus stated.

I. HE ENDURES "PAIN ALL HIS DAYS." The reference is probably to inward sufferings, and the anxieties which a course of wrong must cause. But the physical pains are also great. Perhaps most physical pain is the consequence of wrong-doing. Keeping the righteous Law of God by man would free the human life from suffering as truly as it frees the life of the beast or the bird. Broken law, known or unknown, must, in the disturbance it brings, cause pain.

II. Another source of punishment to the evil-doer is in THE CONDEMNATIONS OF CONSCIENCE WHICH HE INCURS. The seat of all true judgment is the conscience. It is the sum of all the soul's powers—the great tribunal before which all actions are brought. There the verdict is passed; there the penalty imposed—"a dreadful sound is in his ears." If the conscience be indurated, the life is so much the more degraded and the punishment the greater.

III. The wicked man suffers in THE FEARS WHICH HE EXPERIENCES. "He knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand." A dark day awaits him, and he knows it. He carries his fear with him wherever he goes. Judgment has been passed upon his evil-doing by his own conscience—by himself. The penalty has been awarded, and he goes about expecting its infliction. The fear of punishment hangs over his head.

IV. ALL THIS DEEPENS INTO A DARK DREAD BY WHICH HE IS HAUNTED. His spirit has no rest. "Trouble and anguish make him afraid." They wage war against him and despoil him. They "prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle."

V. Further evils follow in HIS OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. His dwelling shall be desolate (ver. 28). 2. His riches fade away. He holds everything by an uncertain

tenure. 8. He shall dwell in gloom. "He shall not depart out of darkness." 4. He finally perishes by the breath of God. "By the breath of his mouth shall he go away." This is the portion of the man who "stretcheth out his hand against God." The assured Christian hope is bright, clear, comforting. It changes "the night into day;" it makes the darkness short, because of light; the "grave" is exchanged for the "house" on high; "corruption" puts on incorruption; "the bars of the pit" are burst; and the resting "together in the dust" passes into the "rest in him."—R. G.

Ver. 4.—*Restraining prayer.* Eliphaz thinks that Job's wild words are a reproach to religion, and that the effect of them will be to undermine faith and discourage prayer. His is a common alarm of short-sighted, cautious people who think it safest to suppress doubt, and to whom the hasty utterances of a disturbed mind are most dreadful, although the fact is that the cold repetition of narrow and erroneous dogmas is far more hurtful to the cause of spiritual religion.

I. THE EVIL OF RESTRAINING PRAYER. However it may be brought about, there cannot be two opinions of the evil of this course of action. It may be said that we need not pray because God knows what we require without our telling him—knows it even better than we know it ourselves. The answer to this excuse or difficulty is that the object of prayer is not to add to God's information, but to commit our needs to him. 1. *We lose what God gives in response to prayer.* He expects us to entrust ourselves to him. He has bidden us seek his face (Ps. xxvii. 8). Christ has told us to ask, that we may receive (John xvi. 24). St. James explains that we "have not" sometimes just "because we ask not" (Jas. iv. 2). 2. *We miss the spiritual blessedness of prayer.* The chief good of prayer is not in the gifts it calls down from heaven, but in the very exercise itself. It is a greater blessing than any of the things that it is the means of bringing to us. To be in communion with God is better than to receive any favours from God.

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath."

Restraining prayer is the soul holding its breath. This must end in death. Even when it is not complete, the stifling of the spiritual activities must result.

II. THE CAUSES OF RESTRAINING PRAYER. 1. *Whatever leads to unbelief.* This was Eliphaz's thought, though he misapplied it, for he imagined that Job's extravagant utterances would discourage men's faith in religion and in the efficacy of prayer. But the truth is that the dreary formalism, the dismal orthodoxy which clung to antiquity and ignored spiritual instincts, the harsh uncharitableness that killed the spirit of religion while defending the name of it, were the greater hindrances to faith. When faith is thus hindered prayer freezes on our lips. 2. *Worldly living.* Some men are too busy to find time for prayer. But Luther is reported to have said he had so much to do that he could not afford less than four hours a day for prayer, regarding prayer as the secret of strength for work. It is possible to be much in prayer, however, without giving a long time to acts of devotion; for prayer is inward and spiritual. It is not the occupation of one's time, but the ensnaring of one's heart with worldly things, that restrains prayer. 3. *Sin.* The penitent sinner may and will pray, casting himself on the mercy of God. Christ's model of the prayer that is acceptable to God is the cry of the penitent, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." But sin harboured and loved completely crushes the spirit of prayer. No man can really pray who will not renounce his sin. Of course, it is possible to cry out selfishly for some gift from God. But the real prayer, which is communion with God, must be repressed and restrained by sin, because sin is separation from God.—W. F. A.

Ver. 6.—*A man condemned by his own mouth.* These words have a singular and quite unintentional application as they proceed from one of Job's comforters. Eliphaz means them for his victim, but they rebound on their author. The three friends afford striking instances of men condemned by their own mouths. As we read their pretentious and unsympathetic sentences, we cannot but also read between the lines the self-condemnation of the speakers. The only safe way to use so dangerous a weapon as that which Eliphaz here employs is to turn it against ourselves. Let us each inquire how we may be condemned by our own mouths.

I. BY CONFESSION. 1. *The duty.* This is the most obvious and direct method of

self-condemnation, and it is the most honourable. It is shameful to sin, but it is more shameful to deny our guilt and try to hush up our evil-doing. There is something manly in daring to own one's own wrong deeds. It would be better if we could do it more among men, confessing our faults one to another (Jas. v. 16). It is absolutely necessary that we should do it to God. Confession is the first condition of forgiveness. 2. *The difficulty.* Now, this confession is by no means so easy as it appears before we have attempted it for ourselves. Not only is there pride to be overcome and the fear of obloquy to be mastered, but the subtle self-deceit of the heart must be conquered. For we are always tempted to plead excuses and extenuating circumstances. Yet no confession is worth anything that keeps back part of the guilt. Confession must be frank, unreserved, whole-hearted, or it will run into hypocrisy. It is better not to confess our sins at all than to try to make them appear in a good light. The true attitude of penitence is one of utter self-abandonment, one of profound self-abasement.

II. BY ACCUSING OTHERS. Thus Eliphaz thought Job condemned himself by trying to bring a charge against God, and at the same time Eliphaz succeeded in condemning himself by accusing Job. The beam is never so visible in our own eye as when we are attempting to remove the mote from our brother's eye. A censorious spirit brings a person into odious notoriety and invites criticism. He should be well able to stand a searching cross-examination who enters the witness-box against his neighbour. But further, the very spirit of censoriousness is evil, and the exhibition of such a spirit is self-condemnatory. While we condemn our brother for unorthodoxy, our very spirit and action condemn us for want of charity—a much greater fault.

III. BY ALL OUR SPEAKING. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." We cannot be long with a person without some of his true character revealing itself. Men are not such inscrutable enigmas as they flatter themselves with being. The general conversation must reflect the normal tone of the life. Particular deeds of wickedness may be hidden in impenetrable silence, but the evil heart from which they spring cannot be thus hidden. Therefore we are to be judged by every idle word (Matt. xii. 36)—not because careless speech is a great sin, but because our unreflecting language reveals our true selves. It is the straw that shows the set of the current.—W. F. A.

Ver. 11.—*Unappreciated consolations.* Eliphaz is disappointed at the failure of the consolations which he and his two friends intended for the mitigation of Job's sorrows. He coolly assumes that these consolations are from God, and that Job despises their Divine worth. So he asks—Are the consolations of God small things to Job, and the gentle words in which they are conveyed but little appreciated? Let us see how it comes about that consolations are not appreciated. The fault may lie with the consoler or with the sufferer.

I. WHEN THE FAULT IS WITH THE CONSOLER. It is very difficult to offer true consolation. Too often we only chafe the sore which we would soothe, and hurt when we think to heal. Where is the cause of failure? 1. *A false assumption.* Eliphaz assumes that he and his friends have been bringing to Job the consolations of God, whereas they have been doing nothing of the kind. Their hard doctrine of exact temporary retribution is not true, and it could not have come from God. Truth is the first requisite in all speech and counsel. It is a common error to confound man's notions with God's truth. Very often the protest which we take to be a rejection of the gospel is only urged against our unworthy presentation of it. The failure of people to receive the truth of Christ is frequently due to the ugly and odious ideas of man with which that truth is confused. 2. *A mistaken judgment.* Job could not accept the well-meant consolations of the three friends because they implied that he was a great sinner, and called him to repent of what he knew he should not have been credited with doing. The injustice of the charge soured the consolation, and its balm was turned to bitterness. We must learn to understand men if we would help and comfort them. 3. *An unsympathetic method.* The three friends did not appreciate Job's sufferings; therefore he could not appreciate their consolations. Sympathy is the most essential ingredient of comforting influences. Until we can feel with the sufferer, all our attempts to aid him will be but bungling failures. The Divine Spirit is the great Comforter, because he enters our hearts and lives with intelligence and sympathy.

II. WHEN THE FAULT IS WITH THE SUFFERER. 1. *Impenitence.* It might have been as Eliphaz had supposed, and in some cases it is so, and then the guilty man excludes the Divine consolations by refusing to confess his sins. So long as the sinner declines to admit his guilt he cannot receive God's comfort. The grace of God is sufficient for all the needs of all his children, and yet none of it is effective with his disobedient and unrepentant children. 2. *Rebellion.* Possibly no great sin has been committed, and no great guilt incurred, and still the attitude of the sufferer towards his God may exclude consolation. He must submit in order to be comforted. Resignation is a condition of Divine consolation. When the wind is opposed to the tide, it tears off the crests of the waves and flings them about in wild spray; whereas when wind and tide flow together, the great rollers run smoothly on to the beach. It is our rebellion against the tide of providence that tears our life and makes its bitterest agony. When we have learnt to say, "Thy will be done," our harmony with God's will smooths down the height of the trouble and prepares for the Divine peace. 3. *Unbelief.* Until we can trust God his consolation seems small to us. It is not valued till it is tried. Unbelief minimizes grace. According to our faith is the blessing, great or small.—W. F. A.

Ver. 12.—*Heart-wanderings.* Eliphaz cannot understand Job. He will assume that the sufferer is guilty, and that, when he protests his innocence and refuses the consolations offered on condition of repentance, the patriarch is betrayed by his own heart into turning his spirit against God. As usual, what Eliphaz says, though it is not applicable directly to Job, still in itself contains an important lesson.

I. WE ARE LED BY OUR HEARTS. 1. *The inner life.* All life flows outward from hidden, deep-seated springs, as the Jordan at Banias bursts out of the cave of Pan beneath Mount Hermon, a full river, whose secret origin is too remote and deep for any man to discover it. 2. *The thought.* The heart in the Bible stands for the whole inner life, and therefore it includes the thinking faculty. Now, we are governed largely by our ideas of things; not by things as they are, but by things as they appear to us. Therefore we need to think truly. 3. *The affections and desires.* We are chiefly moved by what we love. The love of sin is the parent of sin. If the heart is betrayed into entertaining low desires, a degraded conduct follows.

II. OUR HEARTS ARE PRONE TO ERR. 1. *In weakness.* We have not fixed thoughts and affections. The life within is in continuous change and movement. At the same time, its weakness makes it peculiarly liable to be led astray. 2. *In sinful inclination.* We inherit tendencies to evil. Our own self-chosen conduct creates habits of evil. Thus our heart tends downward. Left to itself, it will go astray and drag us down to ruin. The human heart is ever wandering and rebellious until it has been renewed.

III. THE WANDERING HEART LEADS TO RUIN. We are tempted to neglect the evil on three accounts. 1. *That it is internal.* Thus it seems to be a secret thing, not concerned with conduct. But as it is the spring of all our conduct, the excuse is a delusion. 2. *That it is under our control.* The idea is that we can stop before we have gone too far. We are not the slaves of another, we are our own masters. This is also a delusion, for the heart gets out of control. 3. *That it only concerns ourselves.* It is only our heart that wanders, and our heart is our own possession. This is to assume that we are not accountable to God. But the supreme Judge takes account of the heart as well as of the outward act, and condemns for heart-sins (Matt. xv. 19).

IV. THE WANDERING HEART NEEDS TO BE RENEWED. SIN comes from the heart; then sin must be cured in the heart. Clean hands are of little use without a clean heart. 1. *Cleansing.* The guilt of sin needs to be washed away; the love and desire of sin also need to be purged out of the heart. This is so difficult a work that only the Creator can do it. "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Ps. li. 10). 2. *Recovery.* The wandering heart must be brought back to God. It is not enough that sin is cast out. The love of God must be planted, and the heart must be restored to fellowship with God. These are blessings which come with the reception of Christ into the heart. 3. *Preservation.* We are bidden to keep our heart with all diligence (Prov. iv. 23). But we find the treacherous heart eluding our utmost vigilance, and

wandering in spite of all our care. Therefore we have to find safety in obeying a second command, "My son, give me thy heart" (Prov. xxiii 26).—W. F. A.

Vers. 14—16.—*God's holiness and man's sin.* Eliphaz takes up Job's words (ch. xiv. 1—4), but turns them against their author. Job had spoken of inherited frailty as a ground for pity; Eliphaz seizes on it as an accusation of guilt. How dare this puny, imperfect creature, man, boast of his innocence in the sight of the holy God?

I. GOD'S HOLINESS IS INCOMPARABLE. This is an idea which we take for granted. Yet it was not found in most heathen religions. Monotheism is commonly reckoned as the great peculiarity of the Hebrew faith; but a more striking peculiarity is holiness. The neighbouring divinities were just representations of magnified human passions, often more degraded and immoral than men. The revelation of the true God shows that he is not only above all human passion; he is perfect in holiness. We can find no image with which to compare his purity. The mountain is high above the plain, but mountain and plain are equally low when we think of the stars. Our goodness may mean something among men, but it does not extend to God (Ps. xvi. 2). Even the very angels veil their faces before him, awed by the majesty of absolute goodness. Yet God's goodness in being absolute is not so because he is infinite. If it were, it would be unfair to complain that we could not approach it. An inch of snow may be as pure as an acre of snow.

II. GOD'S HOLINESS REVEALS MAN'S SIN. We do not know our sin till we see it in the light of God. There are in the farmyard fowls black and white. But when the snow has fallen the white fowls look so no longer, because by the side of the Heaven-sent purity of the snow their plumage is seen to be of a very impure colour. There are men of various character, and some are accounted white-souled saints. But when placed by the side of God's holiness these are the first to confess that their righteousness is as filthy rags. Christ revealed the sin of his age in contrast to his own holiness. We do not own our sinfulness because we do not know God's goodness. It is not the Law, but God's goodness in Christ, that most makes us feel our sin.

III. GOD'S HOLINESS CANNOT ENDURE SIN. Sin may stand unrebuked and unchecked in the world, because all are "tarred with the same brush." Thus there is a dangerous condoning of conventional evil. But this is not possible with God. Holiness and sin are opposed as light and darkness. The thought of God's holiness alone makes men tremble.

> "Eternal Light, Eternal Light!
> How pure the soul must be
> When, placed within thy searching sight,
> It shrinks not, but with calm delight
> Can live and look on thee!"

Therefore God must deal with sin, to banish and destroy it. If the sinner cleaves to his sin he cannot but share in its doom. If, however, he will detach himself from it, it will be destroyed, while he is saved. God hates the sin, not the sinner. Now, God's holy hatred of sin should be regarded by us as a reason for great thankfulness. For the sin he hates is just our most deadly enemy. If he destroys our sin, he saves our soul from its fatal foe. On the other hand, only God can give the purity which is needed for his presence. We may make ourselves seem fair before man. Only God can purify us so that we are fit for his presence, only the blood of Christ can cleanse from *all* sin (1 John i. 7).—W. F. A.

Ver. 31.—*Trusting in vanity.* I. THE HABIT OF TRUSTING IN VANITY. The vanity spoken of is any empty ground of trust, like an island of floating weeds on which careless people build their homes, but which will be shattered, with all that is on it, in the first storm. 1. *A delusion.* We may be persuaded to accept what is not true. Our belief does not give any reality to the delusion; we are then trusting in vanity. 2. *Self.* We are all too ready to think our own resources greater than they are. Yet every man who trusts to himself supremely is trusting in vanity, for all are sinful, frail, and prone to err. 3. *Man.* The psalmist warns us against putting our trust in man (Ps. cxviii. 8). (1) As a friend. The best friends cannot help us in our greatest needs—in the guilt of sin, in the sorrow of a terrible loss, in the hour of death. (2) As

a priest. Some trust to the priest to do their religious duties for them, although they would not express themselves thus boldly. But the priest is a man, a sinner, needing himself the Saviour to whom every one of us can go directly for himself. 4. *A creed.* The creed may be true, yet if we trust to that, and not to Christ, we trust in vanity. Faith which saves is not the mental consent to a string of propositions; it is living confidence in a personal Saviour. 5. *A Church.* We are members of a Church, professing the Christian faith and in communion with the brotherhood of Christians. Yet if our confidence is in the Church rather than in Christ our hope is vain. The Church is the body of those who are being saved; it is not the Saviour.

II. THE FATE OF TRUSTING IN VANITY. "Vanity shall be his recompense." Here, as elsewhere, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Let us consider the nature and course of this fate. 1. *A postponed result.* The vanity tempts with a plausible appearance of substantiality. It is not discovered the moment it is trusted. A man may so blind himself as to trust in vanity all his life, and at last die in his delusions. How great and fearful must be the final awakening of such a self-deceiver! There will be enough punishment for some men in the very discovery of the utter vanity of their hopes. 2. *A sure result.* Every man's future is moulded according to what he relies upon. His fate is determined by his God. If he worships mammon, self, or sin, his condition in the future will be the direct outcome of the present devotion of his heart. This is just a case of natural causation running into the spiritual life. 3. *A miserable result.* The vanity does not appear to be a very dreadful thing when it is first seen. Yet to possess it for ever as an inheritance is the punishment of its dupe. For when it is found out it must be loathed. Though we may trust in what is unsubstantial, we cannot live upon it. The soul that tries to support itself on lies and pretences will starve as surely as the body which is fed on nothing but air. 4. *A merited result.* The trust was not in evil, only in vanity. There was no choice of a positively bad or hurtful thing. The worst is vacancy and negation. Yet vacancy and negation are justly recompensed after their kind. The empty soul goes deservedly to outer darkness. We need a positive ground of faith. The only sure ground, the one Foundation, is Jesus Christ. He who trusts the Rock of Ages will not be recompensed with vanity.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVI.

Job answers the second speech of Eliphaz in a discourse which occupies two (short) chapters, and is thus not much more lengthy than the speech of his antagonist. His tone is very despairing. He finds no help at all in the speeches of the "comforters" (vers. 2—6), and turns from them to consider once more the dealings of God with him (vers. 7—14). Next, he describes his own proceedings under his afflictions, and appeals to earth and heaven, and God in heaven, to take up his cause and help him (vers. 15—22). In ch. xvii. he continues much in the same strain, but with an intermixture of the topics, which is somewhat confusing. In vers. 1, 2 he bewails himself; in ver. 3 he makes an appeal to God; in vers. 4, 5 he reflects upon his "comforters;" in vers. 6—9 he returns to himself and his prospects; while in the remainder of the chapter (vers. 10—16) he alternates between reproaches addressed to his friends (vers. 10, 12) and lamentations over his own condition (vers. 11, 13—16).

Vers. 1, 2.—**Then Job answered and said, I have heard many such things.** There was nothing new in the second speech of Eliphaz, if we except its increased bitterness. Job had heard all the commonplaces about the universal sinfulness of man, and the invariable connection between sin and suffering, a thousand times before. It was the traditional belief in which he and all those about him had been brought up. But it brought him no relief. The reiteration of it only made him feel that there was neither comfort nor instruction to be got from his so-called "comforters." Hence his outburst. **Miserable comforters are ye all!**

Ver. 3.—**Shall vain words have an end?** literally, as in the margin, *words of wind;* i.e. words which pass by a man "as the idle wind which he regards not." Will his friends never bring their futile speaking to

a close? **Or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?** rather, *what provoketh thee?* (Revised Version). Job had begged that his friends would be silent (ch. xiii. 5, 13). He supposes that they would have complied with his wish if he had not provoked them, but professes an inability to see what provocation he had given. His last speech, however, had certainly not been conciliatory (see ch. xii. 1—3; xiii. 4, 7, etc.).

Ver. 4.—**I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you.** It is only too easy to heap up rhetorical declamation against an unfortunate sufferer, whose physical and mental agonies absorb almost his whole attention. If you were in my place and condition, and I in yours, I could moralize in your tone and spirit for hours. **And shake my head at you.** A Hebrew mode of expressing condemnation of a man's conduct (see Ps. xxii. 7; Isa. xxxvii. 22; Jer. xviii. 16; Matt. xxvii. 39, etc.).

Ver. 5.—**But I would strengthen you with my mouth.** The meaning is somewhat doubtful, and different renderings have been proposed. But the rendering of the Authorized Version is quite defensible, and is accepted by our Revisers. This gives the sense, "I, if I were in your place, would not act as you have acted, but, on the contrary, would do my best to strengthen you with words of comfort and encouragement." **The moving of my lips should assuage your grief.** (So Rosenmüller and our Revisers.) The words are a covert reproach of the three "friends" for not acting as Job declares that he would have acted if the positions had been reversed.

Ver. 6.—**Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged: and though I forbear, what am I eased?** As it is, nor speech nor silence are of any avail. Neither of them brings me any relief. My sufferings continue as before, whichever course I take.

Ver. 7.—**But now.** These words mark a transition. Job turns from complaints against his "comforters" to an enumeration of his own sufferings. **He hath made me weary.** God has afflicted him with an intolerable sense of weariness. He is tired of life; tired of disputing with his friends; tired even of pouring out his lamentations and complaints and expostulations to God. His one desire is rest. So I have seen in the *piombi* of Venice, where political prisoners were tortured by cold and heat, and hunger and thirst, for long weeks or months, and brought to despair, such scratchings as the following: "Luigi A. implora pace," "Giuseppe B. implora eterna quiete." Job has entreated for this boon of rest repeatedly (ch. iii. 13; vi. 9; vii. 15; x. 18, etc.). **Thou hast made desolate all my company.** The loss of his children has desolated his household; his other afflictions have alienated his friends.

Ver. 8.—**And thou hast filled me with wrinkles.** So St. Jerome, Professor Lee, Dr. Stanley Leathes, and others; but the generality of modern commentators prefer the rendering, "Thou hast bound me fast," *i.e.* deprived me of all power of resisting or moving (comp. Ps. lxxxviii. 8, "I am so fast in prison that I cannot get forth"). Which **is a witness against me**; *i.e.* a witness of thy displeasure, and so (as men suppose) of my guilt. **And my leanness rising up in me beareth witness to my face**; rather, *my leanness, rising up against me.* This emaciation is taken as another witness of his extreme sinfulness.

Ver. 9.—**He teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me**; literally, *his wrath teareth, and he hateth me.* God treats Job as severely as if he hated him. That he is actually hated of God Job does not believe; otherwise he would long since have ceased to call upon him, and pour out his heart before him. **He gnasheth upon me with his teeth** (comp. Ps. xxxv. 16; xxxvii. 12). **Mine enemy** (or rather, *adversary*) **sharpeneth his eyes upon me**; *i.e.* makes me a whetstone on which he sharpens his angry glances.

Ver. 10.—**They have gaped upon me with their mouth.** The "man of sorrows" of the Old Testament is, in many respects, a type of the "Man of sorrows" of the New; and, in the Messianic psalms, David constantly applies to Christ expressions which Job had used in reference to himself (see Ps. xxii. 13). **They have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully** (comp. Micah v. 1; Matt. xxvii. 30; Luke xxii. 64; John xviii. 22). **They have gathered themselves together against me** (see Ps. xxxv. 15, and compare, in illustration of the literal and historical sense, ch. xxx. 1, 10—14).

Ver. 11.—**God hath delivered me to the ungodly.** All that Job had suffered at the hands of wicked men, the gibes of his "comforters," the insults and "derision" of "base men" (ch. xxx. 1, 8—10), the desertion of many who might have been expected to have come to his aid, being by God's permission, is attributed by Job to God himself, who has "delivered" him up to these "ungodly" ones, and permits them to add to and intensify his sufferings. He was not so ruthlessly treated as his great Antitype; he was not bound with thongs, or crowned with thorns, or smitten with a reed, or scourged, or crucified—even the smiting on the cheek, spoken of in ver. 10, was probably metaphorical; but he suffered, no doubt, grievously, through the scorn and contumely that assailed him, through his friends' unkindness, and his enemies' inso-

lent triumph, and the rude jeers of the "abjects," who made him their "song" and their "byword" (ch. xxx. 9). **And turned me over into the hands of the wicked.** Job speaks as if God had wholly given him up, made him over to the wicked, to deal with him exactly as they chose. This, of course, was not so. If the malevolence of Satan was limited by the Divine will (ch. i. 12; ii. 6); so, much more, would the malevolence of man be limited.

Ver. 12.—**I was at ease** (compare the picture drawn in ch. i. 1—5). Job had been "at ease," tranquil, prosperous, happy. He had been almost without a care, when suddenly "trouble came." **But he hath broken me asunder**; rather, *he brake me asunder* (see the Revised Version). In the midst of his ease and tranquillity, God suddenly poured out his chastisements, and "brake Job asunder," *i.e.* destroyed his life, ruined it and broke it down. **He hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces**; or, *dashed me to pieces*. **And set me up for his mark**; *i.e.* as a target for his arrows (comp. Deut. xxxii. 23; ch. vi. 4; Ps. vii. 13; xxxviii. 2, etc.; Lam. iii. 12).

Ver. 13.—**His archers compass me round about.** God is represented, not as himself the shooter of the arrows, but as surrounding Job with a body of archers, who are under his command and carry out his will. So, generally, Scripture represents the judgments of God as carried out by inferior agents (see 2 Sam. xxiv. 16; 1 Chron. xxi. 15; 2 Kings xix. 35, etc.). **He cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare.** The allusion is probably to Job's physical sufferings, which included severe pains in the lumbar region. **He poureth out my gall upon the ground.** The rupture of the gall-bladder causes the contents to be spilt upon the ground.

Ver. 14.—**He breaketh me with breach upon breach.** As an enemy, when he besieges a town, crushes its resistance by means of "breach upon breach," so is Job crushed by one attack after another. **He runneth upon me like a giant**; *i.e.* with overwhelming force—a force that is quite irresistible.

Ver. 15.—**I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin.** Another transition. Job turns to the consideration of how he has acted under his severe afflictions. In the first place, he has put on sackcloth, not for a time merely, as ordinary mourners do, but for a permanency, so that he may be said to have sewn it to his skin. There is, perhaps, also an allusion to the adhesion of the garment to his many sores. **And have defiled my horn in the dust.** "My horn" is equivalent to "my pride," "my dignity." Job, when he left his state, and put on sackcloth, and "sat down among the ashes" (ch. ii. 8), denuded himself of his honour and dignity, and as it were trailed them in the dust.

Ver. 16.—**My face is foul with weeping.** He has wept so much that his face is stained with his tears. **And on my eyelids is the shadow of death.** There is an awful shadow on his eyes and eyelids, portending death.

Ver. 17.—**Not for any injustice in mine hands**; or, *not that there is any violence in my hands* (comp. Isa. liii. 9, where the expression used of the Messiah is nearly the same). Job repudiates the charge of rapine and robbery which Eliphaz has brought against him (ch. xv. 28, 34). His hands have not done violence to any. **Also my prayer is pure.** Neither has he been guilty of the hypocrisy which Eliphaz has also charged him with (ch. xv. 34). His prayers have been sincere and genuine.

Ver. 18.—**O earth, cover not thou my blood!** There was a widespread belief in the ancient world that innocent blood, spilt upon the ground, cried to God for vengeance, and remained a dark blot upon the earth till it was avenged, or until it was covered up. Job apostrophizes the earth, and beseeches it not to cover up his blood when he dies, as he expects to do, shortly. **And let my cry have no place**; *i.e.* let it have no hiding-place, but fill earth and heaven. Let it continue to be heard until it is answered.

Ver. 19.—**Also now, behold, my Witness is in heaven**; rather, *even now* (see the Revised Version). Job claims God for his Witness, looks to him for an ultimate vindication of his character, is sure that in one way or another he will make his righteousness clear as the noonday in the sight of men and angels (see ch. xix. 25—27, of which this is in some sort an anticipation). **My record**—or, *he that vouches for me* (Revised Version)—**is on high**—one of the so frequent pleonastic repetitions of one and the same idea.

Ver. 20.—**My friends scorn me**; literally, *my scorners are my companions*; i.e. I have to live with those who scorn me (comp. ch. xxx. 1—13). **But mine eye poureth out tears unto God.** It is not to his "friends," or "companions," or "comforters," or any human aid, that Job turns in his distress. God alone is his Refuge. Forced by his woes to pass his time in weeping and mourning (see ver. 16), it is to God that his heart turns, to God that he "pours out his tears." Hardly as he thinks God to have used him, bitterly as he sometimes ventures to complain, yet the idea never crosses him of looking for help or sympathy to any other quarter, of having recourse to any other support or stay. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (ch. xiii. 15), expresses the deepest feeling of his heart, the firmest principle of

his nature. Nothing overrides it. Even "out of the depths" his soul cries to the Lord (see Ps. CXXX. 1).

Ver. 21.—**Oh that one might plead for a man with God!** The original here is obscure. It may mean, *Oh that he* (i.e. God himself) *would plead for a man with God!* i.e. would become a Mediator between himself and man, plead for him, undertake his defence, and obtain for him merciful consideration. Or, nearly as in the Authorized Version, *Oh that one might plead for man* (i.e. mankind at large) *with God!* interest him on their behalf, and obtain a merciful judgment for them. The former rendering is to be preferred. **As a man** pleadeth **for his neighbour**; literally, *as a son of man* (or, *as the Son of man*) *pleadeth for his neighbour*. If we take the simpler rendering, "as a son of man," then the meaning is simply, "Oh that God would plead for man with himself, as a man is wont to plead for his fellow-man!" But if we prefer the other rendering, "as the Son of man," a Messianic interpretation will be necessary. (So Professor Lee and Dr. Stanley Leathes). But Messianic interpretations of passages that do not require them, and that have no such traditional interpretation, require extreme caution.

Ver. 22.—**When a few years are come**; literally, *a number of years*, which generally means a *small* number. **I shall go the way whence I shall not return.** This verse would more fitly begin the following chapter, which opens in a similar strain, with an anticipation of the near approach of death.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Job to Eliphaz:* 1. *Unacceptable comfort and unassuaged grief.* I. UNACCEPTABLE COMFORT. Job characterizes the offered consolation of Eliphaz and his companions as: 1. *In its nature commonplace.* "I have heard many such things." Not that Job imagined self-evident and obvious maxims could not be true, or objected to a good lesson because it was common, or was himself "one of those nicelings who are always longing for I wot not what novelties, and cannot abide that a man should tell them one tale twice" (Calvin), like the Athenians (Acts xvii. 21), and some Christians of whom St. Paul writes (2 Tim. iv. 3); but that either he desired to rebuke the assumption of the friends, who had pretentiously styled their stale platitudes "the consolations of God" (ch. xv. 11), by discovering them to be exceedingly trite observations, or he wished to draw attention to the greatness of his misery which refused to be comforted by common means. 2. *In its pertinence powerless.* "Shall vain words [literally, 'words of wind'] have an end?" If Job meant, by designating Eliphaz's oration "words of wind," to repay him for the compliment contained in ch. xv. 2, most unquestionably Job was wrong, since good men should be meek (Gal. v. 23; 1 Cor. xiii. 7; Eph. iv. 2), and meek men should rather bear reproach than resent it (1 Pet. ii. 20), being called thereunto by Christ's precept (Matt. xi. 29), promise (Matt. v. 5), and example (1 Pet. ii. 21); but if Job simply designed to direct attention to the fact that a truth might be precious in itself as well as eloquently set forth, and yet possess no relevancy to the subject under consideration—whistling past it, in fact, like the idle wind—he gave utterance to a valuable remark. The public ear groans at the quantity of windy talk, irrelevant observation, impertinent argument, and pointless discussion to which it is obliged to listen. It is, however, a mistake to suppose that good people and religious literature enjoy a monopoly of this sort of wisdom. As much weak (Scotticè "feckless") palaver may be heard in parliaments and scientific congresses as in pulpits and sermons. 3. *In its spirit irascible.* "What emboldeneth [literally, 'goadeth'] thee that thou answerest?" Eliphaz had thrown off the somewhat calm and philosophic manner that had distinguished him in his first address, had given way to temper, and allowed the heat of his spirit to communicate a degree of sharpness to his tongue. Between the two, the tongue and the temper, there is an intimate connection. It is hard to pour forth floods of glowing eloquence when the soul is like an icicle; but equally it is a task for the wisest, when the whole inner man is on fire, to keep the conflagration from shooting out lambent flames, and emitting fiery sounds from the mouth. "It is good to be zealously affected in a good thing;" but "the discretion of a man deferreth his anger," "lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults," and because "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," while "an angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression." 4. *In its utterance facile.* "I also could speak as you

do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you." The allusion seems to be to the glibness with which Eliphaz and his copartners tossed their trite maxims from their tongues; which, says Job, is not a great thing after all, but, on the contrary, is rather a poor accomplishment, in which I myself could rival you. Fluent speech is a great ornament, as well as a powerful handmaid, to fine wisdom; but, as a substitute for wisdom, it is wholly contemptible. Nimble-tongued talkers should also remember that sometimes those hear them who could eclipse them at their own trade, but are restrained from doing so, if not by regard for their fellows, by respect for themselves. 5. *In its character insincere.* "I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace of my lips would soothe you." The same sort of consolation they offered him, he could with perfect ease present to them—mere lip-salve, comfort proceeding from the teeth outward. But of course he would not, as they very well knew who had been acquainted with his previous manner of life (ch. xxix. 11—17), and had even been constrained at the outset to acknowledge (ch. iv. 3, 4). Sincerity, that becomes and is binding upon all in every situation of life, is specially required of sympathizers. That which comes not from the heart never finds its way to the heart. Comfort without honesty wants the first element of success (1 Cor. xiii. 1), and is as hateful to God as it is distasteful to man (Prov. xxvii. 14). 6. *In its result irksome.* "Miserable comforters [literally, 'comforters of trouble'] are ye all." Instead of soothing, it annoyed; instead of healing, it wounded; instead of helping, it weakened. And no wonder, if its character was as above depicted.

II. UNASSUAGED GRIEF. Job declares that, much as his misery demanded right and effectual consolation, he was not able to find it in God, his friends, or himself. 1. *No comfort from God.* Not because God failed to appreciate his need of comfort (Gen. xxi. 17; Exod. iii. 7; Isa. xl. 7), or that his case exceeded the Divine resources (2 Cor. i. 3), or that the will on God's part was wanting to alleviate his sorrow (Ps. ciii. 13; Isa. xxvii. 8; xlii. 3; lxvi. 13; 2 Cor. vii. 6); but that God sometimes, for wise and good purposes of trial and discipline, hides his face from afflicted saints (Isa. liv. 7, 8). 2. *No help from man.* Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar had only proved "comforters of trouble," broken reeds that pierce the hand of those who lean upon them. Job had not gone to them for consolation; it was they who had proffered comfort to him. But, in either case, the result would have been the same. Man's resources in the shape of sympathy are soon exhausted. 3. *No ease from himself.* If he spoke, his grief was not assuaged; if he remained silent, he experienced no alleviation (ver. 6). Common woes are usually relieved by tears or talking; and great sorrows, at least by great souls, full-orbed, self-contained, self-sufficient men, can be restrained, if not abated, by silent endurance; but Job's misery refused to yield to any medicine. This should have moderated Job's indignation against his friends, since if he, who best knew his own trouble, was unable to find a crumb of comfort in it, it was worse than foolish to expect that men, who in a manner only spoke at a venture, would be successful in ministering to a malady which they did not understand.

Learn: 1. That truths which seem original to ordinary minds are often recognized by wiser and better-informed persons as exceedingly trite and commonplace. 2. That well-meaning people sometimes bandy words with one another, and call each other bad names, like vulgar scolds and common sinners. 3. That it is no uncommon thing for men in trouble, whether saints or sinners, to meet with miserable comforters and physicians of no value. 4. That the three requisites for comfort are sincerity, sympathy, and sagacity. 5. That God can place the most capable of men in positions which shall reveal their insufficiency.

Vers. 7—17.—*Job to God: resumption of the third controversy:* 1. *The sorrows of a weary man.* I. DIVINELY SENT. Whether directly addressed in the second person (vers. 7, 8), or indirectly alluded to in the third (vers. 7, 9, 12, 14), it is ever God to whom Job traces back his sufferings. It is faith's function, as well as faith's delight, to recognize God's hand in affliction as in felicity; but not seldom sense intervenes to misconstrue the end and motive of God's dealings with the saint, and to regard as indicative of anger and enmity what, rightly viewed, is rather symptomatic of affection and care (ver. 17; Ps. xciv. 12; Prov. iii. 12; Heb. xii. 6; Rev. iii. 19). From the first Job had connected his adversity with God's appointment (ch. i. 21; ii. 10). For

a long time he had struggled bravely, against the eloquent representations of his friends, to maintain his confidence in God's affection, notwithstanding all untoward appearances. But now, under extreme pressure of misery, he is on the eve of giving way—talking quite openly of God as his enemy, whose wrath tears him and makes war upon him, and whose teeth sharpen themselves against him (ver. 9). The stern facts which appear to shut him up to so reluctant an inference are three. 1. *The inward testimony of his own consciousness.* Though it would be wrong to say that this witness of an anguish-laden spirit expressed the maturely formed and definitely fixed judgment of the patriarch, it would yet be equally erroneous not to recognize that, for the moment, Job did believe that God had turned against him. Such a complete reversal of a good man's consciousness was exceptional; the result, not of affliction alone, however severe and protracted, but of Satanic influence and temptation. It discloses the extraordinary power the devil has to work upon the human spirit. If he can so handle "a perfect man and an upright," it is not at all surprising he should be able to lead captive at his will "silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts" (2 Tim. iii. 6), and even proud and imperious men who oppose themselves to the truth (2 Tim. ii. 26). It reveals also how far a saint may go in a course of unbelief and backsliding without renouncing his integrity; and is fitted to suggest hope concerning many who are supposed to have lapsed entirely from the truth. It sheds a light upon the Divine Father's forbearance and mercy, that he can see a saint misconstrue his providences, and calumniate his character, and yet lay not his sin to his charge (ch. xlii. 7). 2. *The expressed judgment of his fellow-men.* Eliphaz had cited, as one of the items in the sinner's doom, the desolation of his family (ch. xv. 34), and the obvious allusion to this remark in Job's language, "Thou hast made desolate all my household" (ver. 7), seems to intimate that Job regarded the cruel verdict of his friends upon his case as substantially correct. He could see, from a comparison of his sad condition with the sentiments they had uttered, that they, as well as he, had arrived at the inference that God was against him. 3. *The palpable witness of his misery.* His emaciated body, his weary and pinched face, his feeble and wasting frame, all covered over with ulcers, seemed to rise up and tell him to his face that God was dealing with him as with a convicted criminal. According to the theology of the period, this was strong circumstantial evidence against the patriarch; but circumstantial evidence often lies. Here it notoriously did, as afterwards it did in the case of Christ, whose marred face was no proof that he was "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isa. liii. 4). "A marred and meagre visage may testify to our grief, but not to our guilt" (Robinson).

II. EXTREMELY SEVERE. 1. *Their variety.* Almost every form of calamity was heaped upon the patriarch. (1) Bodily distress; consisting of complete exhaustion of physical vigour (ver. 7), unsightly emaciation of the countenance (ver. 8), lamentable wasting of the once strong and goodly frame (ver. 8). (2) Mental anguish; occasioned by the overthrow of his family (ver. 7), the alienation of his friends, who beheld in his miseries a witness to his condemnation (ver. 8); the opposition and insolence of wicked men, to whose mercy God had apparently abandoned him, who gaped upon him with their mouths, rejoicing in his misfortune, smote him upon the cheek reproachfully, adding insult to enmity, and conspired against him, in order to complete his destruction (ver. 10)—an experience which in all its parts was predicted of Messiah and fulfilled in Christ (cf. Ps. xxii. 12—21 with Matt. xxvi. 59, 67; and Ps. ii. 1 with Acts iv. 25—27). (3) Spiritual sorrow; arising, as above explained, from a sense of abandonment by God. 2. *Their unexpectedness.* Job had been at ease, prosperous and contented, fearing God and eschewing evil, when all at once misfortune leaped upon him, and God, seizing him, broke him in pieces. And this was an aggravation of the sufferer's distress, that without apparent cause, and certainly without warning, he was hurled from the pinnacle of prosperity to the lowest depths of adversity; as the wicked will eventually be (Ps. lxxiii. 19), and as at any moment, though not for the same reason, the godly may be. Therefore let no one indulge in a vain confidence like David, that his mountain shall stand strong for ever (Ps. xxx. 6, 7); or like Job, that he shall die in his nest (ch. xxix. 18); or like the daughter of the Chaldeans, that she shall be a lady for ever (Isa. xlvii. 7); but being forewarned, as the patriarch of Uz was not, let him also be forearmed. 3. *Their violence.* Job pictures the dreadful hostility of God

against himself by means of three striking figures, in which he represents God as (1) a mighty Hunter, with wrathful soul and gnashing teeth and flaming eyes (ver. 9) pursuing a poor frail, timid creature with a pack of fierce and yelping curs (ver. 10), to which the prey when caught is mercilessly thrown (ver. 11); (2) a gigantic Wrestler, strong in thew and sinew, seizing his antagonist by the neck, triumphantly holding him aloft in his clenched fist, and then furiously dashing him to the ground (ver. 12); and (3) a skilful Archer, who, tying up his helpless enemy to a post, makes his arrows whistle for a time round the wretch's head, so as to fill him with consternation without inflicting mortal injury, and then, having sported with him for a while, as a tiger might do with its prey, sends a shaft into a vital part (on the emptying of the gall-bladder, consult the Exposition), so that the miserable victim writhes in mortal agony. 4. *Their degradation.* The abject humiliation to which Job had been reduced by his sufferings is set forth in four particulars. (1) The sewing of sackcloth upon his loins. Sackcloth, the symbol of mourning (Gen. xxxvii. 34; 1 Chron. xxi. 16; Ps. xxxv. 13; Jonah iii. 5, 6), is here represented as not only put upon the patriarch's person, but sewed upon his skin; partly, perhaps, because of the ulcerous condition of his body, but partly also, it is probable, to indicate the depth of Job's abasement. (2) The defiling of his horn with dust; the horn being the emblem of personal dignity and social honour (Ps. cxxxii. 17), and the meaning being that all Job's glory was completely tarnished and laid low. This is one of the expressly designed results of affliction; and they who defile their horns in the dust before God when overtaken by his chastisements have taken the first step towards the final exaltation of their horns (Ps. lxxxix. 17). (3) The reddening of the eyes with weeping. Great grief makes strong men weep. Yet weeping for a sufficient cause is not unmanly. Examples: Abraham (Gen. xxxii. 2), Joseph (Gen. xliii. 30), David (2 Sam. xviii. 33), Hezekiah (2 Kings xx. 3), St. Paul (Phil. iii. 13), Jesus (Luke xix. 41; John xi. 35). (4) The shading of the eyelids with gloom; an indication of approaching death. Death makes the eyelid droop, and wraps the eye itself in darkness. It was an aggravation of Job's misery that it had brought him to the confines of the grave.

III. WHOLLY UNDESERVED. 1. *His life had not been wicked.* There had been no injustice, wrong, or evil deed of any kind in his hand, as his friends asserted. The hand being the instrument of action, clean hands are the symbol of an upright life (ch. xvii. 9; Ps. xxiv. 4). Where the hands are not clean the heart cannot be pure. 2. *His devotions had not been insincere.* Notwithstanding the imputations of his friends to the contrary (ch. xv. 4), his conscience told him that his prayer was pure. Genuine sincerity is one of the first requisites of devotion. "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are" (Matt. vi. 5).

Learn: 1. That the same God who makes a saint weak and weary beneath life's burdens can also impart strength and cheerfulness to bear them. 2. That one of the hardest works faith has to do is to oppose those representations of the Divine character and providence that are given by sense. 3. That, while the saint's calamities are not always sent in punishment of sin, they are mostly designed to produce within the saint a spirit of self-humiliation. 4. That God never abandons a saint to the ungodly, though he will yet deliver over the ungodly to perdition. 5. That, next to the comfortable shining of God's face upon a human soul, which Job at this time wanted, the best lodestar, while struggling over and through a sea of trouble, is the ineradicable conviction of one's own sincerity, the testimony of a good conscience before God.

Ver. 17.—*Acceptable prayer.* I. WHEN ADDRESSED TO THE RIGHT OBJECT. God (Ps. lxv. 2). Not, however, the God of our imaginations, or the God of nature simply; but the God of revelation and the God of grace, the God who hath manifested forth his glory in the Person of Jesus Christ.

II. WHEN PRESENTED THROUGH THE RIGHT MEDIUM. Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. ii. 5), the one Advocate for sinful men (1 John ii. 1), the one High Priest over the house of God (Heb. vii. 25), the Daysman for whom Job longed (ch. ix. 33), the Redeemer to whom he looked forward (ch. xix. 25).

III. WHEN OFFERED IN THE RIGHT SPIRIT. 1. Sincerely (Isa. xxix. 13; Matt. xv. 8). 2. Humbly (Gen. xxxii. 10; Isa. lxvi. 2; Luke xviii. 13). 3. Believingly (Matt.

xxi. 22; Heb. xi. 6; Jas. i. 6). 4. Holily (1 Tim. ii. 8); i.e. with renunciation of sin (Prov. xv. 8; xxi. 27; xxviii. 9; Ps. lxvi. 18), and with kind and forgiving dispositions (Mark xi. 25).

IV. WHEN ASKING FOR THE RIGHT THINGS. Things contained within the promises. These give to prayer a scope at once ample and sufficient. 1. Ample; since the promises are exceeding great and precious in their variety (2 Pet. i. 4). 2. Sufficient; since they contain all things pertaining to life and godliness.

Vers. 18—22.—*Job to God: 2. An appeal to God against God.* I. A SUBLIME INVOCATION. "O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place!" (ver. 18). 1. *The explanation of the language.* The allusion seems to be to Gen. iv. 10, where the blood of Abel is represented as crying to God from the ground for vengeance upon its destroyer; and Job, in the lofty consciousness of his innocence, while momentarily anticipating death, calls upon the earth not to drink up his blood, but to permit its cry to "urge its way unhindered and unstilled towards heaven without finding a place of rest." But the student may consult the Exposition. 2. *The import of the language.* It contains a declaration on the part of Job that, though about to perish, he was innocent; and, since he regarded God as the Author of all his sufferings, it was virtually an accusation of God as the Shedder of his innocent blood. The style of address here employed is certainly not one that a good man may with safety imitate.

II. A CONFIDENT APPEAL. 1. *To what quarter?* Not to his friends who had mocked him (ver. 20), but to God himself who had assailed him, to whom nevertheless he clung as for dear life, and whom he describes by a threefold characteristic. (1) His name; Eloah, the All-powerful Supreme, in contrast to man, to strong men and weak men alike, who are all at the best but dust; the mighty Maker of this universal frame, who giveth power unto the faint, and to them that have no might increaseth strength (Isa. xl. 29), and who hath revealed himself most graciously as a Refuge for the oppressed (Ps. ix. 9; Deut. xxxiii. 27; Jer. xvi. 19). (2) His occupation; that of a Witness, an Eye-witness, whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good (Prov. xv. 3), as those of Christ, the faithful Witness, are in the midst of the golden candlesticks (Rev. ii. 1); and in particular whose eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose hearts are perfect toward him (2 Chron. xvi. 9). The thought that God is a constant Eye-witness of everything on earth, and a silent Spectator of all that transpires within the deep places of the human heart, may fill the wicked with alarm, but is fraught with special comfort to the saint. (3) His dwelling-place; the heights, or heaven. God has three dwelling-places—eternity, the Church, and the saint's heart (Isa. lvii. 15); and he is never really absent from the third any more than from the second or the first. But when the saint, by reason of doubt, sorrow, or sin, cannot perceive him in the second or third, he may always find him in the first, seated on his high and glorious throne of grace. 2. *In what spirit?* Clearly (1) with firm faith. "Behold, *my* Witness is in heaven;" the first personal pronoun pointing to the existence of appropriating faith. So David says, "The Lord is *my* Shepherd" (Ps. xxiii. 1). And (2) with confident expectation. "Behold!"—a note of triumph, as if a gleam of bright exultant hope had already begun to make sunshine in the sufferer's soul.

III. A FERVENT SUPPLICATION. 1. *The earnestness of Job's prayers.* They were: (1) Persistent. His friends mocked him, accused him of impiety, insinuated that he had abandoned the habit of devotion; but, in spite of slander and misrepresentation, he continued "instant in prayer." Not fitful and intermittent devotion succeeds with God, but habitual and continual. Therefore pray without ceasing. It is a high mark of grace to be able to persevere in well-doing, and to keep on praying in face of opposition and ridicule from friends. (2) Tearful. Job presented not cold, formal, and listless petitions to the throne of grace, but warm, urgent, and forceful entreaties. When the eye waters, the heart melts. It is the stream of penitential feeling, or the flood of believing desire, which, welling up from the soul's depths, sends liquid drops through the open gateway of the eye. David mourned after God with tears (Ps. xlii. 3). The father of the lunatic boy cried out with tears, "Lord, I believe" (Mark ix. 24). 2. *The burden of Job's prayers.* (1) That God would plead with himself in behalf of man; *i.e.* that he would vindicate Job against himself, by declaring him (Job) to

be innocent. What Job here desired for himself has in a more exalted sense been done for all men by Christ, who through his cross has made intercession for the transgressors, not to demonstrate their sinlessness or integrity, but to establish their righteousness before God. (2) That God would plead for the son of man against his friend; *i.e.* for Job against his friends, who wished to put him down as a hypocrite. This also God will do for all, if not here, in a future world. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. xiii. 43).

IV. A PATHETIC REASON. 1. *The brevity of life's term.* "When a few years are come" (ver. 22). The short period of life that still remained would soon be ended. Time flies with all, but especially with the dying. 2. *The hopelessness of man's return from the tomb.* "Then I shall go the way whence I shall not return (cf. ch. x. 21).

Learn: 1. That the God of faith alone is the true God. 2. That faith's God is found in the page of revelation and in Jesus Christ, not in the mere conceptions of the human mind. 3. That faith's God is the enemy of no man, but the Friend of all. 4. That the ear of faith's God is never heavy that it cannot hear, or his hand shortened that it cannot save.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—22.—*Deep dejection and irrepressible hope.* In this reply Job refuses to make a direct rejoinder to the attack upon him; he is too utterly bowed down in his weakness. But—

I. The first part of his speech consists of A BITTER SARCASM UPON THE IDLE TALK OF HIS FRIENDS. (Vers. 1—5.) Their speeches are useless. They mean to comfort (ch. xv. 11), but their reasonings produce an opposite effect on his mind. They should cease; there must be something ailing those who are thus afflicted with the disease of words. Words will not heal the broken bones nor soothe the wounded heart. Were it so, then Job could act the part of comforter as well as they, in the case of their affliction. Thus with scorn he repels their futile attempts to "charm ache with air, and agony with words," to "patch grief with proverbs."

> "Brother, men
> Can counsel, and speak comfort to that grief
> Which they themselves not feel; but, tasting it,
> Their counsel turns to passion, which before
> Would give preceptial medicine to rage,
> Fetter strong madness in a silken thread,
> Charm ache with air, and agony with words;
> No, no; 'tis all men's office to speak patience
> To those that wring under the load of sorrow:
> But no man's virtue, nor sufficiency,
> To be so moral, when he shall endure
> The like himself: therefore give me no counsel:
> My griefs cry louder than advertisement."

II. Next, he relapses into a MELANCHOLY CONTEMPLATION OF HIS EXTREME MISERY. (Vers. 6—17.) 1. *The alternative of silence or of speech is equally unbearable.* (Ver. 6.) A healthy man can give vent to his feelings in talk; but no words suffice to check the flow of this immense grief. Would he do well to be silent? But, then, what grief would depart from him? None! There is no riddance either way. Speak or not, his suffering remains the same. 2. *The instinct to pour forth his woe proves irrepressible, and he proceeds with the description of his terrible sufferings.* (Vers. 7—14.) His strength is exhausted. His house is desolate. His wrinkled and emaciated body is a spectacle to move his own pity. But still keener are the sufferings of his mind. The thought that God has inflicted this suffering, that he is, as he supposes, an object of the Divine wrath, fills his mind with intolerable gloom. And not only is God against him, but evil men seem to be employed as instruments of his wrath. They, envious of his former prosperity, and of his goodness, now gather around to heap every insult upon his head. Tracing again all to God, Job conceives of him under the image of a furious warrior, who has advanced against him in utmost violence, caused a shower of arrows

to fall upon him, pierced him as with a sword, battered him into ruins as a strong wall is battered into breaches by the violence of the battering-ram. 3. *His present condition.* (Vers. 15—17.) Humbling himself beneath the rod, he has adopted all the symbolic language of penitence and grief. He has put on the sackcloth; bowed his head to the dust; given himself to weeping until his eyes are heavy and his face is red. And all this "though there is no wrong in his hand, and his prayer is pure."

III. THE HEAVEN-PIERCING CRY OF INNOCENCE. (Vers. 18—22.) So soon as in the course of these sad reflections Job once more recurs to the consciousness of his innocence, new courage is born to his heart; in his very exhaustion he can still cry to Heaven in the might of a confidence that will yet wring an answer from God. He calls upon the earth not to hide his blood, and may his cry have no resting-place. The allusion is to the ancient sacred custom of blood-revenge (Gen. iv. 10, 11; comp. Isa. xxvi. 21; 2 Sam. i. 21). But the circumstances under which the desire not to die unavenged here appears are quite unusual. As one persecuted, not merely by man, but far more by God, near to death, he maintains his innocence before man and God. Here is a seeming contradiction between the dark thoughts just expressed of God, and this profound faith in the invisible and just Judge. Grief is full of inconsistencies and contradictions, arising from the imperfection of the understanding. They cannot be solved by thought, only as here by faith. Thus we come to another moment of calm amidst this terrible tempest of grief—another break in the sky amidst these storms. The chapter leaves the deposit of a noble consolation at our feet. 1. The existence of the Witness in heaven. An all-intelligent Witness, a feeling Witness, an all-remembering Witness of innocent suffering, is our heavenly Father. There may be ever an appeal to him from the unfeeling conduct and the mocking observation of men. 2. The certainty of a just decision in the end. "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." In all the sense of life's mystery, and the temptation to doubt whether God be perfectly good and kind, let Patience, supported by faith, have her perfect work. Let us "remember Job," and "consider the end of the Lord."—J.

Ver. 6.—*Sorrow without hope.* Unalleviated by the words of his friends, Job turns round upon them, and in painful, half-passionate words retorts upon them their incompetency to give him consolation. "Miserable comforters are ye all." He is driven almost to despair. The painful alternative of speech or silence is before him; but neither offers him any hope, and he is compelled to reflect upon his helpless condition. He is exhausted. The future presents no prospect of alleviation. He has sorrow without hope. Such sorrow distinguished—

I. BY ITS EXTREME PAINFULNESS. To endure pain of body or mind is hard enough, and many succumb to it. But if there be a gleam of hope the aching spirit clings to it and is upborne. When, however, no ray of brightness is apparent, when only the darkness of an undiminished sorrow is present, then is the painfulness of the circumstances in which the sufferer is placed heightened in a great degree. To suffer without hope of a termination is the very perfection of suffering. The poor heart searches for some avenue of escape, but none is present. It is thrown back again and again upon itself. This is extremest sorrow. To see only the long, unvaried line of suffering drawn out to the utmost future, and no break appearing, robs the soul of its one consolation in extreme trial—the hope of release. If a bound be put to sorrow it may be endured; but if no limit can be traced, and all probability of limitation be cut off, the case is desperate. The worst that can be said of any evil is—It is hopeless.

II. Sorrow without hope is AN EXCESSIVE STRAIN UPON THE ENDURANCE OF THE SUFFERER. To lose hope is to lose heart. The strong can bear up under the heavy burden, but the weak must yield. It is to add to the weight of the burden by every hour that elapses. Time, which so often comes to relieve the sorrowful, but brings a heavier load. The exhausted spirit bravely fighting against its oppressive surroundings is more and more driven to the conclusion that all effort is unavailing, and the added experience of every hour but confirms the assurance that there is no hope left. It is the severest of all strains that the spirit can be subjected to. It is the inevitable precursor of despair.

III. Such sorrow reaches a climax of severity when, as in this case, THE APPEAL TO GOD, THE GREAT HELPER, IS UNAVAILING. "He hath made me weary." He hath

exhausted me. It is true a real help is in reserve for Job, but he does not know it. He suffers without hope. He has turned to man and found no relief. His cry to God is unavailing. If he "speak," his "grief is not assuaged.' His cry returns upon him. If he "forbear," still he is not "eased." The world is indebted to this sufferer for the painful experiment of which he is the subject. Now the world knows that in patient endurance and unswerving fidelity there is assured hope. The hand of help may be hidden, but it is there. God may seem to be inattentive to the sorrowful cry, but he is only testing and proving his faithful servant, and the severity of the test marks the measure of the final award. Hence may we learn (1) that the apparent hopelessness of human sorrow is not a perfect representation; (2) the wisdom of maintaining the spirit of hope, even when we seem to have no encouragement to do so; (3) the certainty of a final relief and reward to the faithful.—R. G.

Vers. 11—17.—*The severity of the Divine judgments.* The mystery of the Divine dealings is revealed in this book. The view from a human standpoint is given. Job and his friends see not the spiritual side of the whole transaction. The Divine purpose is hidden. Job knows not that it is "Satan" that has instigated all these afflictions. He knows not that God has given permission for his trial. Nor does he know the limitations put upon that trial, nor the final issue. The severity of the Divine judgments (so are they in Job's view) is represented in striking language.

I. AS A DELIVERING OVER TO THE UNGODLY. He is cast into the hands of the evil-doer.

II. AS A DESTRUCTION OF EXTERNAL PROSPERITY. "I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder."

III. AS AN INFLICTION OF SEVERE PAINS. "He cleaveth my reins asunder."

IV. AS A SUCCESSION OF REPEATED INFLICTIONS. "He breaketh me with breach upon breach." These judgments evoke from Job: 1. The lowliest humiliation. He bows in "sackcloth," and lays his "horn in the dust." 2. He pours out his soul in penitence, and his face is even "foul with weeping." 3. Over him hangs the gloom—"the shadow"—"of death." 4. In the consciousness of integrity he makes his "pure" prayer to God. The interest of these few lines is very great in the general working out of the plot of the history. Happy he who in the midst of his sorrows can bow in lowly penitence under the severities of the Divine judgments, still retaining the assurance of his sincerity, and waiting the final award.—R. G.

Vers. 19, 20.—*The appeal of innocence to the highest tribunal.* Job now turns from man to God. He has the assurance of faith—the full assurance which faith gives—that God will requite the injured and justify the pure. Man's judgment is imperfect. He sees only the outward circumstance; God looketh upon the heart. To him who knoweth all things Job turns; and to God his "eye poureth out tears." Before man can commit his cause to God with confidence the following is needful—

I. A THOROUGH CONVICTION OF THE INSUFFICIENCY OF HUMAN JUDGMENTS. Job had thoroughly proved this. Howsoever wise the sayings of his friends, or however just their reflections, Job knew that their accusations of him were unfounded, and that therefore their conclusions were unjust. Hence he turned from them to that "record" of his life which was "on high."

II. But this must be supported by A CONSCIOUS INTEGRITY. None can truly commit his cause to God who knows within himself that he is guilty. At the final bar he knows most assuredly that his sin will find him out. But he whose spirit bears him witness of his uprightness, as Job's did, and as the Divine judgments afterwards affirmed, may with calmness commit his way unto God. He knows that his true "Witness is in heaven." He shall bear testimony to Job's integrity, uprightness, and purity.

III. Further, AN UNHESITATING FAITH IN GOD'S RIGHTEOUS DEALINGS is needed in order to a calm committal of all to his arbitrament. Job, the "servant" of God, knew in whom he could confide. He feared God. On that fear faith builds with safety and assurance. A conception of God which is so low that it inspires no faith must preclude all loving, helpful hope in him.

IV. On such foundations may rest A CALM PATIENCE TO AWAIT THE FINAL DIVINE

AWARD. The upright, sincere, but misunderstood sufferer leaves all to the final judgment. The "witness" and the "record" are "on high." To that tribunal which is also on high he appeals, and with the "scorn" of his "friends" breaking his already afflicted spirit he turns his tearful eyes "unto God." Self-assured integrity may always thus make its appeal to God, "the righteous Judge" to whose judgment-seat it is the highest wisdom of assailed innocence to appeal.—R. G.

Ver. 2.—*Miserable comforters.* Job is able to rise above his foolish, narrow-minded friends, and look down upon them with good-humoured, pitying irony. So little do they understand him! So proudly do they trust in their empty words! And it is all a delusion. Job is almost ready to forget their impertinence as he turns to the far more important question of God's dealings with him. But first he gives them their true character. They are all "miserable comforters."

I. MISERABLE COMFORTERS FAIL FOR LACK OF SYMPATHY. This thought is continually recurring in the course of the dramatic dialogue. It is at the root of the whole controversy. All the elaborate argumentation of the three wise men is so much empty wind, because they lack the first condition of consolation. We can never be reminded too often that sympathy is the first and absolute condition of all mutual helpfulness. But how is it that well-meaning friends lack it? There can be but one answer. The enemy of sympathy is selfishness. While we think much of ourselves, our own opinions, position, conduct, we must fail in sympathy, and our attempts to help others must come to the ground without any good results. In visiting the poor, nursing the sick, raising the fallen, saving the lost, teaching children, sympathy is the primary requisite for success. Christ is the true Friend of the suffering, because Christ sympathizes profoundly with all sufferings. We make a mistake when, like Job's comforters, we try to console by offering advice. The sufferer wants not advice, but sympathy. Why should his misfortune give us a right to pose as his counsellors? He is more fitted to be our teacher, for he has been to the best of schools, the school of affliction.

II. MISERABLE COMFORTERS ADD TO THE GRIEFS WHICH THEY VAINLY TRY TO ASSUAGE. Thus Rousseau writes, "Consolation indiscreetly pressed upon us, when we are suffering under affliction, only serves to increase our pain and to render our grief more poignant." The reasons for this are not difficult to discover. 1. *Disappointment.* We expect something better from a friend. He should give us his sympathy, and if he fails to do so we feel ourselves to be unkindly treated, or at least we miss a comfort for which we were looking. 2. *Weariness.* The sufferer wants quiet. The look and tear of sympathy may console him, but many words are wearying to him. He is too full of his own sad thoughts to find room for the ill-judged observations of untimely advisers. 3. *Injustice.* You cannot be just to a man without sympathy, because you cannot understand him till you enter into his deeper feelings. But nothing is more distressing than unjust treatment. Much of Job's greatest trouble came from this source.

III. WE NEED DIVINE GRACE TO HELP US TO BE TRUE COMFORTERS. Perhaps we shrink from the task, seeing its difficulties. We would avoid the house of mourning lest our bungling attempts at consolation should add to its sorrows. But this is not brotherly. The Christian duty is to "weep with them that weep" (Rom. xii. 15). To be true sympathizers we need to have self conquered by the grace of Christ. Perhaps one reason why some of us have much trouble is that we may be able to understand the trouble of other people, and so may become true comforters.—W. F. A.

Ver. 6.—*Incurable grief.* Job does not know what to do; neither speech nor silence will assuage his grief. It appears to be incurable.

I. GREAT GRIEF SEEMS INCURABLE TO THE SUFFERER. 1. *It cannot be measured.* Feeling destroys the sense of proportion. Every one who suffers much is tempted to think himself the greatest of sufferers. A passion of emotion sweeps away all standards of comparison. The stormy sea appears to be unfathomable. 2. *It excludes the thought of anything but itself.* The black cloud shuts out the heavens and narrows the horizon. The world of sorrow is shrunken to the range of present, personal experience. Thus in overwhelming grief there is no room or power in the soul to conceive of a means of escape. The absorbing interest of pain will not allow a rival consciousness. 3. *It is*

found to be irresistible. If a man thought he could conquer his grief or escape from it, surely he would not tamely submit to his torments unless he were a fanatic of ascoticism. But if the pain cannot be set aside at once, it is difficult to believe that it will not endure for ever, for agony destroys the sense of time.

II. GREAT GRIEF MAY NOT BE CURABLE BY MAN. There are diseases that no medicine can heal, and sorrows that no human aid can touch. Grief naturally tends to endure by its own creation of a habit of grieving.

> "Sorrow, like a heavy-hanging bell,
> Once set on ringing, with his own weight goes:
> Then little strength rings out the doleful knell."
>
> (Shakespeare.)

Some sorrows are evidently incurable by man. 1. *The loss of those greatly beloved.* No human comforter could bring back Job's seven sons and three daughters from the dead. What word or work of man could touch his sorrow of utter bereavement? We know only too well that nothing on earth can make up for our greatest losses by death. 2. *The discovery of a wasted life.* When the old man comes to himself and finds that he has been living in a delusion, when he sees with bitter remorse that he has been squandering his years in folly and sin, what can man do to comfort him? The past can never be recovered. 3. *The despair of guilt.* If this is soothed by flattery and falsehood, a fatal mischief is done. But if the conscience is fairly roused, it cannot be thus soothed. To man sin is incurable.

III. GRIEF THAT APPEARS TO BE INCURABLE MAY YET BE ALL CURED BY GOD. No child of God should despair, for infinite love and almighty energy can know of no impossibility. The gospel of Christ offers complete cure. 1. *Present peace.* (1) If the trouble is from sin, the peace is in pardon. All sin is curable by Christ, for "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Heb. vii. 25). (2) If the trouble is from any other cause, the peace is in the love of God. This love, which also brings the peace of forgiveness, is itself an infinite consolation. It is better to be Lazarus with God than Dives with purple and fine linen. 2. *Future blessedness.* The dead will not return to us. But we shall go to them. Christ promises to his people a home in the great house of God. There "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 17). The old wasted life cannot be given back in its pristine innocence. But the renewed soul may live a new life in God's eternity.—W. F. A.

Ver. 12.—*Shattered when at ease.* This was Job's awful fate. All was calm when the thunderbolt fell and dashed him to the ground.

I. GOD GIVES TIMES OF EASE. This should be acknowledged even in the hours of suffering. Take life as a whole, and the intervals of ease are with most people much longer than the periods of trouble. Yet we are tempted to neglect them when giving the story of our life, and, like Jacob, to describe our days as "few and evil" (Gen. xlvii. 9). Quiet times come from God quite as much as troublous times. It is an unjust view of providence to suppose that our ease comes from ourselves and the world, and only our trouble from God.

II. TIMES OF EASE WILL NOT ENDURE FOR EVER. It is needless to be anticipating future trouble. Christ bids us not be anxious for the morrow. But we should be prepared for trouble. The man who has insured his house against a fire need not be always dreaming that it is in flames. Having made a proper provision, he can set aside all thoughts of danger. We require to have just so much perception of the uncertainty of life as to lead us to make the requisite provision for a reverse of fortune. The storm may come. Where shall we be when it is upon us?

III. TIMES OF EASE ARE NOT IN THEMSELVES SECURITIES AGAINST TIMES OF TROUBLE. As they may give place to very different times, they cannot ward off the unacceptable succession. The great temptation of the rich man is to trust in his wealth for what it can never purchase. Seeing that its range is wide, he is in danger of missing its limits. So the prosperous man is tempted to trust to his good fortune, as though the mere occurrence of what is agreeable were a cause of the same in the future. But trouble comes from outside a man's circumstances, or from his own heart, which may be bankrupt while his estate is perfectly sound.

IV. TIMES OF EASE SHOULD HELP US TO PREPARE FOR TIMES OF TROUBLE. Joseph laid up stores during the seven years of plenty in preparation for the coming seven years of famine. The prudent man will always try to put something by for a rainy day. Old age must be provided for by the forethought of earlier years. Thrift is a duty a man owes to his family whom he ought to support, and to his neighbours to whom he ought not to become a burden. Higher considerations require the same method of conduct. These present calm days afford us good opportunities for spiritual preparation. It is rare indeed that a man has power and disposition to enter into the deeper religious experiences on his death-bed if he has not made himself acquainted with them during the days of health and strength. Then death may surprise us at any time, and the only safety is in being always ready. A good use of the long, quiet, prosperous summer-time of life should leave us prepared to meet whatever wintry storms it may please God to send us. If we have the peace of God in our hearts, the most shattering blows will not destroy it, and that peace even in trouble will be far more precious to us than the times of ease of the lotus-eaters, with whom it was "always afternoon," but who knew not the deeper blessedness of peace in sorrow. —W. F. A.

Ver. 17 (last clause, "My prayer is pure").—*Purity of prayer.* The impure prayer cannot be heard by God. It may be earnest, passionate, vehement, yet it must fall back rejected and confounded. Let us, then, consider in what purity of prayer consists.

I. REALITY. The prayer that is not felt and meant in the heart is an impure offering of hypocrisy. Though it be uttered in the becoming phrases of devotion, it is to God as the howling of blasphemous demons. If there be no other sin in our prayer, insincerity is fatal. But it is not easy to be always true and real, especially in public acts of devotion, when a multitude of people are expected to be joining in the same prayer at the same moment. If, however, the heart is set on truly seeking God, he will not count the wandering thought of casual distractions as a mark of insincerity. The spirit may be willing while the flesh is weak (Matt. xxvi. 41), and God looks to the heart. What is essential is a true purpose and effort to worship God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth (John iv. 24).

II. PENITENCE. We are all sinners, and therefore can only come to God as suppliants confessing our sin. Any other method of approach is false to our character and deeds. In the parable of the publican and the Pharisee it is just the contrition of the publican that meets with God's approval. If we hold to our sin we cannot be received in our prayer. Though we may forget the ugly thing, or suppose that we have left it behind us, it is with us in the very house of God; it is even standing between us and God, a black and impenetrable barrier.

III. FAITH. We cannot pray purely till we trust God. The prayer of unbelief is a wild cry in the darkness wrung from a soul by its utter distress. Surely God will pity such a cry, and in his infinite compassion he will do what is possible to save his benighted child. But the strength of communion with God that comes in prayer is only possible when we can trust God as our Father and completely confide in him. It is by believing, by trusting God, that we win great blessings in prayer.

IV. SUBMISSION. If our prayer is a self-willed mandate claiming certain things from God which must be just according to our mind, it is defiled by impurity. We have not to dictate to God what he is to do for us. Our duty is to lay our case before God and then to leave it with him. He must do what he thinks best, not what we demand. The pure prayer will be submissive, saying, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

V. UNSELFISHNESS. Even in our submission we may still be selfish, for we may be convinced that it is best for ourselves that God should do with us what he thinks best, and may think of nothing else. Such prayers as "Bless *me*; save *me*; comfort *me*; fill *me* with good things," are narrow, and when they stand alone they are selfish. Christ's model prayer is in the plural number, "*Our* Father, . . . give *us*," etc. We need to enlarge our petitions with intercession for our brethren, and to include the wants of the world in our prayers. The purest prayer is one that chiefly seeks the glory of God—Christ's prayer, "Father, glorify thy Name."—W. F. A.

Vers. 19, 20.—*The Witness in heaven.* Job turns from man to God. On earth he

is misjudged, but in heaven there is One who sees all, and can witness both his woe and his integrity. More than this; he turns from God as the source of his calamity to God as his Saviour. Dr. S. Cox has pointed out that Job has here made a great discovery. He has found a higher God, a God of love, above the God who torments. Or rather, he has seen the true God above the false, conventional idea of God. To this God he appeals as his Witness in heaven.

I. THERE IS A WITNESS IN HEAVEN. 1. *He is far above us.* "In heaven." God is not to be confined to the narrow range of earthly experiences. He sits above the dust and din of the battle, above all the clouds and storms of earth. He is free from the passion, the limited vision, the personal prejudice of the immediate actors in the earthly scene. Though intimately associated with all we are and do, he is yet so great as to enjoy that detachment of mind which allows of fair and impartial judgment. He looks with other eyes than ours; from his high station he sees all things in their right proportion, and he takes in the whole panorama of existence. 2. *He takes note of earthly things.* A "Witness." God is not uninterested in earth, like an Epicurean divinity. He looks into all human affairs, and they are all open to him. Every human deed is done under the eye of God; even the darkest and most secret crimes are perfectly open to his all-penetrating scrutiny. He too sees things truly, as they are; and the greatest wrong and injustice is quite clear to him. God never misunderstands any of his children. 3. *He can be appealed to.* Job even calls God "*my* Witness." He feels that God is on his side, and he believes that he may call upon God to testify against the enormous wrong that is being done to him. God does not reserve his knowledge uselessly, like a student who is always learning, but never employing what he acquires. We may appeal to God to come and speak and act for our deliverance, pouring out tears unto him.

II. THE WITNESS IN HEAVEN IS TRUE AND GOOD. It is useless to appeal to a false witness, or to one who will give an unfavourable version of what he sees. Satan was a witness of Job's life; but Satan's testimony was one-sided, suspicious, and as damaging as the facts could allow. Job appeals without fear to the supreme Witness, knowing that his testimony can be relied upon. Goodness and truth are supreme. The lower earthly experiences of God are contradictory and confusing. What we see in this world of nature and providence perplexes us with hard thoughts of apparent indifference, injustice, cruelty. Some have even supposed that the Creator of a world with so much evil could not be good. Browning's Caliban imagined, in his poor, dim, low-minded speculation, that his god Setebos made the world "out of spite." This was a common belief with the Gnostic sects. But Caliban, like the Gnostics, saw that there was a Supreme who did justly. The notion appears in modern times. Dr. Jessopp relates a conversation in which an old countryman said that Providence was always against him. This year it was the potato-disease, and last year the oats were blighted. But looking up, he added, "I reckon there's One above that will call him to account." The delusion is in separating the two divinities. We have to see that the one God appears in lower scenes of darkness and mystery, and also in the heights above as perfect love. Clouds and darkness are round his footstool. But his countenance is gracious.—W. F. A.

Ver. 21.—*Pleading with God.* Job still maintains the higher strain of thought which he took up when he appealed to his Witness in heaven. The one desire of his heart is to be right with God, and he is persuaded that only God himself can make him so.

I. OUR GREATEST NEED IS TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD. What is the use of the flattery of man if God, the one supreme Judge with whom we have to do, condemns us? But, then, where is the mischief of man's censure when our Judge acquits us? Far too much is made of the opinion of the world, and far too little of the verdict of Heaven. We need to rise above the little hopes and fears of human favour to the great thought of God's approval. When we think first of that, all else becomes insignificant. The reasons for doing so should be overwhelming. 1. *God knows all.* 2. *He is Almighty*—able to bless us or to cast us off. 3. *He is our Father.* And it is better for the child to stand well with his parent than with all the world.

II. WE HAVE TO OWN THAT WE ARE NOT RIGHT WITH GOD. 1. *This is apparent*

in the experience of life. Job felt there was something wrong between him and God, though the foolish error of his friends had confused his mind, so that he could not see where the wrong lay. The dark shadows that creep between us and God, and hide from us the joy of heaven, are felt in experience. They certainly bear witness to some condition of error or evil. 2. *This is also confirmed by the testimony of conscience.* A voice within interprets the dark scene without. We learn from Job's distresses that calamities are not necessarily indicative of sin. But we must all own that nothing puts us so wrong with God as our own misconduct.

III. WE NEED AN ADVOCATE TO SET US RIGHT WITH GOD. We cannot represent our own case aright, for we do not understand ourselves, and our "hearts are deceitful above all things." We certainly do not know the mind and will of God. How, then, can we find our way back to him? A trackless desert lies between, and the night is dark and stormy. Even if we were before him we could not answer him "one of a thousand." Thus there is a general feeling among men that some mediator, intercessor, advocate, priest, is required.

IV. GOD IN CHRIST IS THE ADVOCATE WITH GOD THE FATHER. Job could not see as far as this; but he saw the essential truth, *i.e.* that God must provide the way of reconciliation. Only God can plead with God for man. Therefore we flee "from God to God." We escape from the lower experiences of the Divine in life which strike us as harsh, and even as unjust, to the higher vision of God which reveals him as all truth and goodness. We call upon God in his love to reconcile us with himself. This, the New Testament teaches, he does in Christ, who is the Revelation of God's love. "We have an Advocate with the Father," etc. (1 John ii. 1). We want no human priest to plead our cause, for we have a great High Priest who "ever liveth to make intercession for us." When we truly pray in Christ's Name we have a right to trust that he will plead for us. By all the merits of his cross and Passion his pleading is mighty to prevail for the sinner's salvation.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVII.

Vers. 1—16.—The general character of this chapter has been considered in the introductory section to ch. xvi. It is occupied mainly with Job's complaints of his treatment by his friends, and his lamentations over his sufferings (vers. 1—12). At the end he appeals to the grave, as the only hope or comfort left to him (vers. 13—16).

Ver. 1.—My breath is corrupt; or, *my spirit is oppressed.* But the physical meaning is the more probable one. A fetid breath is one of the surest signs of approaching dissolution. **My days are extinct;** or, *cut off.* The verb used does not occur elsewhere. **The graves are ready for me;** or, *the chambers of the grave are mine already.* The plural form is best explained by regarding it as referring to the niches commonly cut in a sepulchral chamber to receive the bodies of the departed (see Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. iii. pp. 1528—1536).

Ver. 2.—Are there not mockers with me? literally, *mockeries*—the abstract for the concrete. (For the sentiment, comp. ch. xvi. 20 and xxx. 1—14.) **And doth not mine eye continue in their provocation?** *i.e.* "Have I anything else to look upon? Are not the mockers always about me, always provoking me?"

Ver. 3.—Lay down now; or, *give now a pledge* (see the Revised Version). The terms used in this verse are law terms. Job calls upon God to go into court with him, and, first of all, to deposit the caution-money which the court will require before it undertakes the investigation of the case. Next, he goes on to say, **put me in a surety with thee;** or rather (as in the Revised Version), *be surety for me with thyself,* which is either the same thing with giving a pledge, or a further legal requirement. Finally, he asks the question, **Who is he that will strike hands with me?** meaning, "Who else is there but thyself, to whom I can look to be my surety, and by striking hands (comp. Prov. vi. 1) with me to accept the legal responsibility?" As Dr. Stanley Leathes says, "It is wonderful the way in which the language of Job fits in with what we have since and elsewhere learnt concerning the Persons in the Godhead."

Ver. 4.—For thou hast hid their heart from understanding. My so-called friends will certainly not undertake for me, since thou hast blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts against me. **Therefore shalt**

thou not exalt them. God will not exalt those who are without understanding.

Ver. 5.—**He that speaketh flattery to his friends**; rather, *he that denounceth his friends for a prey.* Job means to accuse his "comforters" of so acting. By their persistent belief in his grievous wickedness they give him up, as it were, for a prey to calamity, which they pronounce him to have deserved on account of his secret sins. **Even the eyes of his children shall fail.** Whoever so acts shall be punished, not only in his own person, but also in the persons of his descendants (comp. Exod. xx. 5).

Ver. 6.—**He hath made me also a byword of the people.** God, by the unprecedented character of his afflictions, has made Job a byword among the surrounding nations—a byword, that is, for an afflicted person. Job, by the manner in which he bore his afflictions, made himself a byword for patience and endurance among God's people throughout all ages (see Jas. v. 11). **And aforetime I was as a tabret**; rather, *I am become an abomination before them*; or, as our Revisers translate, *I am become an open abhorring* (comp. ch. xxx. 10).

Ver. 7.—**Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow** (comp. Ps. vi. 7; xxxi. 9). Excessive weeping, such as stains the cheeks (ch. xvi. 16), will also in most cases dim and dull the eyesight. **And all my members are as a shadow.** Weak, that is, worn out, unstable, fleeting, ready to pass away.

Ver. 8.—**Upright men shall be astonied at this.** When Job's case comes to be known, "upright men" will be astonished at it. They will marvel how it came to pass that such a man—so true, so faithful, so "perfect" (ch. i. 1)—could have been allowed by God to suffer so terribly. In a world where, up to Job's time, prosperity had been taken as the measure of goodness, the marvel was naturally great. Even now many a Christian is surprised and disturbed in mind if he gives the case prolonged and serious attention, though he holds the clue to it in that most enlightening phrase, "perfect through sufferings" (Heb. ii. 10). **And the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite.** On astonishment will follow indignation. When it becomes generally recognized that, in a vast number of cases, the righteous suffer, while the wicked enjoy great prosperity, good men's feelings will be stirred up against these prosperous ones; they will wax indignant, and take part against them.

Ver. 9.—**The righteous also**; rather, *yet the righteous.* A strong opposing clause. Notwithstanding all the afflictions that befall him, and all the further afflictions which he anticipates, yet the truly righteous **man shall hold on his way**; *i.e.* maintain his righteous course, neither deviating from it to the right hand nor to the left, but holding to the strict line of rectitude without wavering. Job is not thinking particularly of himself, but bent on testifying that righteous men generally act as they do, not from any hope of reward, but from principle and the bent of their characters. **And he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.** Not only will the just man maintain his integrity, but, as time goes on, his goodness will be more and more firmly established (comp. Aristotle's 'Theory of Habits').

Ver. 10.—**But as for you all, do ye return, and come now.** A challenge to his detractors. Return, all of you, to your old work of detraction, if you so please. I care not. Your accusations no longer vex me. **For I cannot find one wise man among you.** If I could the case would be different. But, as you have all shown yourselves wholly devoid of wisdom (comp. ch. xlii. 8), what you say has no real importance.

Ver. 11.—**My days are past. My days** are slipping away from me. Life is well-nigh over. What, then, does it matter what you say? **My purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart**; literally, *the possessions of my heart*, all the store that it has accumulated—my desires, purposes, wishes. I no longer care to vindicate my innocence in the sight of men, or to clear my character from aspersions.

Ver. 12.—**They change the night into day.** They, my detractors, who are also my so-called "comforters," pretend to change my night into day; assure me that the cloud which rests on me is only for a time, and will ere long give place to the brightness of day, to a glorious burst of sunshine (see ch. v. 18—26; viii. 21, 22; xi. 15—19). **The light (they say) is short because of darkness**; or, rather, *is near because of the darkness.* The extreme darkness shows that dawn must be near, that the day must soon break when my sorrow will be turned into joy. Job had not found himself comforted by these assurances, which lacked the ring of sincerity, and could not be accomplished except by miracle, which he did not feel that he had any right to expect.

Ver. 13.—**If I wait, the grave is mine house**; rather, *surely I look for the grave (Sheol) as my house*; i.e. I expect no return of prosperity, no renewal of life in a sumptuous mansion, no recovery of the state and dignity from which I have fallen—I look only for Sheol as my future abode and resting-place—there, in Sheol, I have made my **bed in the darkness**; *i.e.* I regard myself as already there, lying on my narrow bed in the darkness, at rest after my afflictions.

Ver. 14.—**I have said to corruption, Thou**

art my father; *i.e.* I do not murmur; I accept my lot; I am ready to lie down with corruption, and embrace it, and call it "my father," and henceforth remain with it. The idea that the soul is still with the body in the grave, more or less closely attached to it, and sensible of its condition and changes, was widely prevalent in the ancient world. Where bodies were simply buried, the horrible imagination of a close association with corruption naturally and almost necessarily intruded itself, and led to such reflections as those of Job in this verse. It was partly to get rid of this terrible nightmare that the Egyptians were so careful to embalm the bodies of their dead, and that the Babylonians deposited them in baked clay coffins, which they filled with honey (Herod., i. 198); while others still more effectually prevented the process of corruption by cremation. The modern revival of cremation is remarkable as indicating a peculiar form of atavism or recurrence to ancient types. For many ages after the coming of Christ, men so separated between the soul and the body after death that the corruption of the grave had no horror for them. Now materialistic ideas have so far recurred, that many of those who believe the soul to live on after death are doubtful whether it may not still be attached to the body more or less, and, dreading contact with the corruption, of the latter, fall back upon the old remedy. **To the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister.** An expansion of the idea contained in the previous clause.

Ver. 15.—**And where is now my hope?** (comp. ch. xiv. 18—15). At first sight it might seem that to one in Sheol there could be no hope. But Job is too conscious of his own ignorance to dogmatize on such a subject. What does he know of Sheol? How can he be sure that it is "God's last word to men"? There may be hope even to "the spirits which are in prison." Job's question is, therefore, not to be taken as one of absolute incredulity, but as one of perplexed doubt. Is there hope for me anywhere? If so, where? **As for my hope, who shall see it?** *i.e.* what eye can penetrate the darkness of the future, and solve the riddle for me?

Ver. 16.—**They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust.** There is great difficulty in determining the subject to the verb "go down," which is the third person plural *feminine*, whereas the only plural substantive at all near—the word translated "bars"—is masculine. Some suppose Job's *hopes* to be meant, "hope" in the preceding verse having the force of any number of "hopes" (so the Revised Version). Others disregard the grammatical difficulty of the plural *feminine* verb, and, making "bars" the nominative, translate, "The bars of Sheol shall go down," *i.e.* "be broken down, perish;" or interrogatively, "Shall the bars of Sheol go down?" This rendering is thought to be "in harmony with the whole undercurrent of thought in the chapter;" but it has not approved itself to many commentators. The present commentator must acknowledge that he is unable to attach any satisfactory meaning to the words of the Hebrew text.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—16.—*Job to God:* 3. *The requiem of a dying man.* 1. ANTICIPATING HIS IMMEDIATE DISSOLUTION. With three pathetic sighs the patriarch bemoans his dying condition. 1. *The total collapse of his vital powers.* Indicated by the shortness and offensiveness of his breath, announcing the approach of suffocation and decay. "My breath is corrupt." And to this at last must all come. The most vigorous physical health, as well as the feeblest, contains within it germs of putridity. Essentially, notwithstanding all its strength and beauty, the corporeal frame is "this corruptible." Therefore, "Thus saith the Lord . . . let not the mighty man glory in his might" (Jer. ix. 23). 2. *The speedy termination of his life.* The complete extinction of the already feebly burning taper of his terrestrial existence was at hand. "My days are extinct." Life is fittingly compared to a candle (ch. xxi. 17; Prov. xxiv. 20; cf. 'Macbeth,' act v. sc. 5), in respect of its definite extent, the rapidity with which it burns, the facility with which it can be extinguished, and the certainty that it shall at last burn out. 3. *The actual opening of his grave.* Contemplated as having already taken place. "The graves are ready for me." Job's wasted skeleton made it all too evident that he was prepared for them, and could with propriety exclaim, as afterwards the aged Gaunt—

> "Gaunt am I for the grave, gaunt as a grave,
> Whose hollow womb inherits nought but bones."

It is well betimes to contemplate the narrow house appointed for all the living; to

"sit upon the ground," and "talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs;" to reflect that—

> "Nothing can we call our own, but death;
> And that small model of the barren earth,
> Which serves as paste and cover to our bones."
> ('King Richard II.,' act ii. sc. 1; act iii. sc. 2.)

It is well to realize that the tomb is but a step from the youngest, the fairest, the wisest, the strongest of Adam's children, and prepare ourselves for it, as already it is prepared for us.

II. BIDDING FAREWELL TO HIS FRIENDS. 1. *Describing their character.* He calls them mockers, who had trifled with his misery, laughed at his innocence, openly accused him of flagrant wickedness, consummate hypocrisy, and daring impiety (cf. ch. xii. 4). This vehement reassertion of Job's estimate of their behaviour would fall with the greater force and impressiveness upon their ears, because of proceeding from the lips of a dying man (cf. 'King Richard II.,' act ii. sc. 1, and 'King Henry VIII.,' act ii. sc. 1, in which John o' Gaunt and Buckingham call attention to the weightiness of dying men's words). It would sound like the malediction of an expiring prophet. 2. *Brooding over their calumnies.* Their wicked insinuations had stung him to the quick, and were still rankling in his bosom. Not even death's shadow or the grave's gloom could hide them from his mental vision. As if with an evil fascination, his soul's eye fastened on them, found a lodging with them, and could not shake them off. Easily had they been spoken, but not so easily could their remembrance be effaced. "Cutting words and cruel reproaches are not easily banished," especially when spoken by those from whom sympathy and kindness were expected. Hence the care which should be exercised not to inflict with the tongue wounds that only death can heal. 3. *Predicting their discomfiture.* "Therefore thou shalt not exalt them" (ver. 4). Job means that in the hotly waged controversy between himself and his friends they will not be allowed to triumph, but be utterly routed and put to shame. And of this he points out the premonitory symptom, in that moral and spiritual blindness with which God had suffered them to be overtaken—"for thou hast hid their heart from understanding" (ver. 4). Either they had wilfully called good evil, and put darkness for light, or they were wholly incapable of understanding true religion or appreciating spiritual integrity. Hence, in either case, it was impossible that they could be right. Apart altogether from their applicability to the friends, Job here lays hold of important truths; as *e.g.* (1) that the highest function of the spiritual understanding is to "discern spirits" (1 Cor. xii. 10; 1 John iv. 1); (2) that the capacity of distinguishing the true from the false in religion belongs to no man by nature, but must be imparted by God (Matt. xi. 25; 1 Cor. xii. 11; 1 John i. 20); (3) that the absence of this power to recognize true moral worth and spiritual integrity not only disqualifies an individual from acting as a judge in the sphere of religion, but, *ipso facto*, proclaims him to be as yet outside of that sphere altogether; and (4) that God will certainly in the long run award the triumph to his own people and his own cause. 4. *Announcing their punishment.* (1) Its severity. Their wickedness should be avenged, not alone upon themselves, but upon their children, whose "eyes should fail," or languish (ver. 5). That children suffer for the sins of parents is a fact of everyday experience; *e.g.* the families of drunkards, profligates, murderers, traitors, etc. It is a special sign of excessive wickedness when its results affect the innocent descendants of its perpetrators. Hence God is said to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate him (Exod. xx. 5). The sin of Achan was visited on himself and his sons and daughters (Josh. vii. 24, 25). The wickedness of Ahab was avenged on himself and his posterity (1 Kings xxi. 20). The leprosy of Naaman clung to Gehazi and his descendants (2 Kings v. 27). Over against this, however, stands the blessed fact that, though grace does not run in the blood, the piety of parents has a tendency to reproduce itself in the characters, as certainly it draws down blessings on the heads, of children. And as no greater felicity can be bestowed upon a parent than to contemplate the happiness of his household, so no greater sorrow can be his than to witness its destruction or dishonour. And such was the portion Job foretold for his mocking friends. (2) Its naturalness. It would be a punishment in all respects befitting their offence. They had trampled on their best affections, delivering up him,

their friend, to be a spoil (ver. 5); and so would they in turn be wounded in their parental loves. God's retributions often show a striking correspondence to the crimes they avenge. Though the *lex talionis* has been abrogated by the gospel, it is still not unfrequently observed that they who take the sword perish by the sword (Matt. xxvi. 52), and that "with what measure a man metes it is measured to him again" (Matt. vii. 2). 5. *Proclaiming their folly.* With contemptuous disdain he invites them to renew their efforts to establish his guilt, to attack him with another round of arguments, telling them he has no fear of their success, knowing them, as he does, to be essential fools (ver. 5). If the language evinces (1) amazing self-confidence, Job standing with his foot in the grave, and yet lifting up his head with unfaltering assurance to the skies; and (2) keen intellectual penetration, the speaker clearly discerning the fallacious character of the friends' consolation that, if he repented, he would yet be restored to a life of prosperity; it also displays (3) extraordinary acerbity of feeling for a good man who might have been expected to hush his angry passions before lying down to sleep in the grave; and (4) excessive heat of language which ill became a saint, even of the days of Job.

III. SEEKING REFUGE IN THE MERCY OF GOD. 1. *The bold request.* Turning from his friends and confronting death, Job entreats with a sublimely daring faith, which rises clear above the mists of despondency and the hurricanes of passion that alternately fill his breast, that God himself would strike hands with him, and engage to be Surety for his innocence against himself (ver. 3). It is a by no means dim anticipation of the fundamental notion of the gospel, that, for the answering of all that God, as a righteous Lawgiver, can lay to the charge of man, God has himself become the Sponsor or Bondsman. What Job's faith, standing as it were on the headlands of human thought, and looking out with prophetic eye into the vast *terram incognitam* that spread out before him, craved for himself, that God would undertake the task of replying for him, not alone to the aspersions of his human calumniators, but also to the accusations and charges preferred against him by his Divine assailant, viz. God himself—this astounding entreaty on the part of poor, feeble, sinful humanity, as represented by Job, has been answered by the gospel of Jesus Christ, who came in the fulness of the times as God incarnate to champion the cause of lost man, and vindicate, not his innocence, but his righteousness before God. 2. *The fourfold reason.* Job bases his supplication on a variety of grounds. (1) The impossibility of finding help in any other quarter but with God. "Who else [but God] should furnish surety to me?" (ver. 3). Not man, since Job's friends rather exulted in his conviction and condemnation as a criminal. Hence, if any one could act the part of bondsman, it must be God himself. So is it God alone who can either clear up the saint's integrity or establish the sinner's righteousness before God. "No hope can on the Law be built of justifying grace;" nay—

> "Vain is all human help for me;
> I dare not trust an earthly prop!
> My sole reliance is on thee;
> Thou art my Hope."
>
> (Elliot.)

(2) The fact that God himself was the Author of his troubles. Humiliating as these were (ver. 6), they had not come upon him accidentally, but by Divine permission. In so far, therefore, as they proclaimed him an object of God's judicial wrath, they likewise made it clear that only God could effectually interpose for his deliverance. As Job was made a proverb and an object of contempt to his age (ch. xxx. 9, 10), so was David (Ps. xxxv. 15, 16), and the Messianic Sufferer spoken of in the Psalter (Ps. xxii. 6, 7; lxix. 7, 11, 12, 19), and the prophets (Isa. l. 6; liii. 3), and Christ (Matt. xxvi. 67; xxvii. 28, 29, 41—44), and so may Christians expect to be (1 Cor. iv. 9, 11, 13). (3) The circumstance that under the pressure of deep debasement he had wasted to a skeleton. Nothing impairs the strength or exhausts the vitality of the body like mental sorrow. Such inward anguish as Job had been subjected to makes the eye dim, the hair gray, the face old, and the entire frame feeble. Man's frailty, and even man's guiltiness, are recognized in Scripture as an argument for God's merciful interposition (Ps. vi. 2, 5, 7; xxv. 11). (4) The danger of all moral distinctions becoming confused if his integrity were not cleared up. If allowed to pass away under a cloud, the truly

pious would be astonished at so mysterious a dispensation, as afterwards they were at Christ (Isa. lii. 14), and might even be led, like David (Ps. xxxvii. 7), Asaph (Ps. lxxiii. 3), and Jeremiah (xii. 1), to envy the lot of the ungodly, who, notwithstanding their impiety, are allowed to prosper. This danger is hardly possible under the gospel, which has made it patent, first in Christ, and then in his people, that a righteous servant of God may be a sufferer. Still the suretyship of God in Christ for man has established moral distinctions on a firmer basis than they ever were before (Rom. iii. 31).

IV. EXULTING IN FINAL VICTORY. Job's life is seemingly about to expire in gloom. Job himself, nevertheless, avows his confident expectation that the righteous and pure-handed man, like himself, shall be ultimately vindicated (ver. 9). The words suggest: 1. *The purity of the righteous.* They are a people who have "clean hands." Not that they are righteous or justified because of their clean hands. Even Job (ch. ix. 2), as well as David (Ps. cxliii. 2) and St. Paul (Gal. ii. 16), proclaimed that a man could not be justified by works before God. But clean hands are evidence of a pure heart. And holiness is a sure mark of faith. Nay, if purity of life be absent, the spirit of piety is not present. Faith without works is dead. Hence we are justified (as to the sincerity of our faith) by works; hence also "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." 2. *The progress of the righteous.* They shall "wax stronger and stronger;" "They shall go from strength to strength." They shall progress: (1) Certainly. Wherever life is there must be growth. The soul possessed of grace cannot remain stagnant. A Christian not advancing towards the stature of a perfect man is unhealthy and unnatural. (2) Gradually. The full measure of their advancement will not be attained at once. From stage to stage go the heavenward pilgrims. First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear, is the law according to which the seed of the Word, no less than the seed of the field, ripens. First the new-born babe, then the youth, and after that the mature man, is the order of development for life spiritual as well as life physical. (3) Proportionately. They shall grow in such a way as to wax stronger and stronger. That is, they shall advance in all the parts and properties of the Christian life in brightness and tenacity of faith, in depth and sincerity of penitence, in ripeness and beauty of outward holiness, in warmth and fulness of love, in cheerfulness and joyousness of hope. 3. *The perseverance of the righteous.* They shall hold on their way (1) in spite of every sort of difficulty—the accusations of conscience, the power of indwelling corruption, the feebleness of faith, the pressure of affliction, the opposition of the world, the misrepresentations of friends, the wiles of the devil; (2) with willing determination, whatever else may be helpful to their progress, the co-operation of their own personal faith, intelligence, purpose, will, being absolutely indispensable, and these never failing entirely in the case of those who are truly upright in their hearts; (3) by the help of Divine grace, since, after all, "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," neither is it by man's unaided strength alone, but rather by the power of God, that he is kept unto salvation; and (4) to the journey's end, for it is written of God's pilgrims that they shall all come to Zion, and of Christ's sheep that they shall never perish.

V. PLUNGING AGAIN INTO DARKNESS. Descending from the lofty altitude upon which his faith had for a moment stood, the patriarch a second time takes his stand beside the opened tomb, and finishes his requiem where he began it, by contemplating: 1. *The approach of death*, as: (1) The ending of his days,—"My days are past" (ver. 11); which it is to every one—the finishing of life's years and moments, the termination of days pleasant and prosperous as well as of days miserable and adverse, of days of toil and days of rest, days of suffering and days of rejoicing, days of sinning and days of praying, alas! also days of grace and days of discipline. (2) The interrupting of his thoughts,—"My purposes are broken off, even the thoughts," or cherished possessions, "of my heart" (ver. 11); which again is true of all, of good and bad, of wise and foolish, of rich and poor alike, death's hand remorselessly arresting the subtle thoughts of the busy brain, be it of philosopher or poet, statesman or merchant, and marring with equal unconcern the projects of the pious and the plots of the ungodly, the schemes of the tradesman and the intrigues of the diplomatist, the ambitious enterprises of the rich and the modest plans of the poor. (3) The disappointing of his hopes of life, the utter extinction of that expectation which his friends had so often urged him to cherish, viz. the hope of a return to prosperity on this side the grave, but which he had never seriously entertained, and which, if he had entertained it, was now completely shattered,

the bare idea of looking for a restoration when one was manifestly stepping into darkness being as foolish as to look for daylight when the night was near. And so death deals with all men's hopes—hopes of life, of prosperity, of happiness, of usefulness on earth,—intercepts them, cuts them off, engulfs them in darkness as the night does the day. 2. *The descent into Sheol*, which he regards as: (1) The resting-place of his body. "If I hope, it is for Sheol as my house. In darkness I make my bed" (ver. 13). The grave is frequently spoken of as a house (ch. xxxviii. 17), the house appointed for all living (ch. xxx. 23), the long home of the departed (Eccles. xii. 5); and the only expectation of a worldly sort entertained by Job was that of entering this sepulchral habitation, in which already he had as it were spread his couch. (2) The habitation of his relatives, these relatives being corruption whom he esteemed as his father, and the worm whom he named his sister or his mother. "What an impressive description, and yet how true it is of all! The most vigorous frame, the most beautiful and graceful form, the most brilliant complexion, has a near relationship to the worm, and will soon belong to the mouldering family beneath the ground" (Barnes). (3) The shelter of his true hope, the hope of a vindication, which, descending with him to the bars of the unseen world, might be lost to the eye of man, and in large measure to himself, but would rest beside him in the dust till the moment arrived for its public manifestation.

Learn: 1. That death is never more than a step from any man. 2. That those who are daily travelling towards the grave should begin betimes to prepare for their future homes. 3. That the whips and scorns of time, the mockings and calumniations of friends or foes, can pursue a man no further than to the bounds of life. 4. That God's people have already been delivered from their greatest adversary by the willing suretyship of Christ. 5. That the royal road to heavenly exaltation is the inward illumination of the mind. 6. That good men should never rejoice in, though they may sometimes foresee, and even foretell, the punishment of their enemies. 7. That the best safeguard of a saintly man in trouble is to trace every affliction to the hand of God. 8. That Christ's followers should not now be astonished at the tribulation of themselves or others. 9. That the just man who perseveres in holiness will attain to everlasting life. 10. That if death terminates the life of man on earth, it begins the existence of a saint in heaven. 11. That man possesses nobler relatives than the worms and corruption. 12. That death may finish all terrestrial hopes, but it cannot injure the hope of everlasting life, laid up for us in heaven.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—16.—*The just holds on his way.* "The pencil of the Holy Ghost hath laboured more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon," says Lord Bacon. "Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes, and adversity is not without comfort and hopes. We see in needleworks and embroideries it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground; judge, therefore, of the pleasure of the heart by the pleasure of the eye." On this dark monotonous background of trouble, the bright colours of a spiritual faith and hope stand from time to time most brilliantly forth. Another example of this occurs in the present chapter.

I. The first feeling presented is that of RELUCTANCE TO DIE UNDER MISCONSTRUCTION. (Vers. 1, 2.) But for this, he is resigned to his fate. He must in the course of a short time renounce life, for disease is fulfilling its course; and he would do so willingly, if only the mockery of his friends did not continually vex him, and his eye were not provoked by their incessant irritation. There is generally something, even in a state of extreme suffering, which makes it hard to die. But to die misunderstood; under the cloud of a false accusation; like one who, mistakenly condemned, has languished in the cell of a prison, and gone to a felon's grave;—this must surely be the sharpest sting of death.

II. The agony of this thought impels him to RENEWED RECOURSE TO GOD. (Ver. 3.) As none among men will give the promise and take upon him to vindicate Job's innocence after death, will God be bound as Surety for him, and undertake this duty? Thus once more we see how the extremity of suffering forces Job upon his deepest

faith, can never force him from it. And he is bound to exchange his darker thoughts of God for these truer ones, apparently unconscious that they are inconsistent with one another.

III. But there comes another RELAPSE INTO DESPONDENCY. (Vers. 4—7.) He looks without, at the irritating spectacle of those complacent, unfriendly friends, and complains of their want of understanding, defying their authority. He accuses them of betraying him (ver. 5 should probably be, "he that maketh a spoil of his friends," etc.), and threatens them with sorrow in consequence. Then again he turns to God as the source of all his sufferings, who has made his name, once so fair in reputation, now a byword and a scoff, and has brought him into his present utter languor and exhaustion (ver. 7).

IV. But once again there is a REVIVAL OF HIGH COURAGE AND HOPE. (Vers. 8, 9.) He contemplates himself in this light as a reproach to all who behold him or know of his fate. The upright are thrown into amazed confusion, they are shocked at the spectacle; and the innocent are stirred up against the profligate in indignation at their prosperity. But the just man will hold on his way, until the light again shines upon it; and he who has clean hands will, despite his present weakness, increase in strength. His words are "like a rocket which shoots above the tragic darkness of the book, lighting it up suddenly, though only for a short time" (comp. Ps. lxxiii.).

V. He then turns again upon his friends with a SHARP REPROOF OF THEIR FOOLISH, UNCONSOLATORY WORDS. (Vers. 10—16.) The sharp rebuke of ver. 10 is followed by reasons. His strength is consumed, and his end is drawing near; his days are past, his plans cut off, and the fondest desires of his heart; and the light which they think to bring in consolation, is like to darkness (vers. 11, 12). He goes on to justify himself for seeing nothing but darkness and night before him, and to reject the hope which they hold out of better days. His hope is fixed on Hades, on the dark, lower world alone (ver. 13). He has said to corruption, "Father!" the worm he has designated "mother and sister"! And where, then, is this hope of restored health and prosperity of which you vainly talk? It disappears through the gates of Hades, and yonder in the dust will be alone his rest (vers. 14—16). But how unlike are God's thoughts and ways to those of man! Job thinks his fate is sealed; he will neither live nor recover his former joy. Yet God has strangely and gloriously ordained that both life and joy restored shall be his, as the happy issue of his sufferings shows. Thus does he lead to the gates of hell and bring up again (1 Sam. ii. 6), leads through suffering to conquest over the fear of death, and to the germination and unfolding of a hope that is centred in the unseen.—J.

Ver. 9.—*Progress in virtue.* A later book declares "the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." So here the stability and progressive character of the righteous is assured.

I. PROGRESS IN VIRTUE IMPLIES A CAREFUL CHOOSING OF A GOOD WAY. It is characteristic of a righteous man that he has committed himself to a carefully chosen way. It is "his way." It describes a path and manner of life. It embraces his entire "conversation." He is not driven as with a wind and tossed from one course to another. One only path is before him, narrow it may be, and often hidden as a rugged mountain-path, demanding toil and watchfulness and effort to find it and to keep it. But this "his way" is chosen, and to it he has committed himself. He follows the path whithersoever it may lead him.

II. Progress in virtue on the part of a righteous man implies that HE PERSEVERES IN HIS CHOSEN AND WELL-SELECTED PATH. Fickleness and vacillation are not qualities of true righteousness; but patience in well-doing always marks the truly righteous one. The high character of virtue, the gravity of the interests involved in the practice of virtue, the strong motives of virtuous principle, together with the apprehension of the rewards of righteous doing, are all motives to perseverance; whilst to them is added the ministry of Divine grace. God helps the good and obedient and striving soul. Thus the inward principle of virtue, and the support which it gathers to itself, alike help to secure a steady progress. But steady progress in the path of virtuous living must issue in growth and perfectness of virtuous character.

III. Steady progress in virtue is MARKED BY INCREASING STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

AND CONVICTION. The righteous man waxes "stronger and stronger." Holy principles gain a firmer hold upon his convictions. His life settles into a definiteness and stability of habit. He has greater power to resist evil; he has greater power over his own heart; he exerts a greater power over others around him. He is not moved from his integrity either by the fierce onslaughts of temptation or by the severities of trial. His life is pledged to a course of obedient living—to purity, truth, goodness. More and more he is established in his goings. He rises to greater brightness as the sun to greater strength. He gathers strength even from his afflictions. Deeper and deeper principles of holy living strike their firm roots into his whole spirit. He pursues his chosen and holy way undeterred by the many forms of temptation that assail him. In his righteousness he can "hold on his way," and with his "clean hands" he waxes "stronger and stronger" day by day.—R. G.

Ver. 11.—*The premature arrest of the purposes of life.* Job looks out from the sadness of his present condition, and turns in thought to his past days, to the purposes of those days—the hopes he had cherished, the plans he had laid, even the thoughts of his heart. Alas! they are dashed—broken off. His purposes not accomplished, his plans useless, his hopes frustrated, his thoughts disappointed, his very days are past! How sad! how painful! We may reflect—

I. ON THE LIABILITY, TO WHICH EVERY ONE IS SUBJECT, OF HAVING THE PURPOSES OF HIS LIFE BROKEN OFF. No one can certainly calculate on the prolongation of his life. The plans wisely laid even for good and holy purposes may be frustrated. The thoughtfully devised scheme for usefulness, even for the highest service to men, as well as the prudent endeavour to promote the felicity of home, or to advance personal culture, may all be torn asunder or broken, snapped off without coming to maturity. None can calculate on the future.

II. ON THE WISDOM OF SO FRAMING OUR ESTIMATE OF LIFE THAT WE ALWAYS TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE UNCERTAINTY OF ITS TENURE. No man has a just view of his life who does not consider how soon life's plans may be overset, torn to shreds. Life is not assured to us. We have no pledge that we shall have time to finish the work we have begun. Hence it is wise to frame our estimate of life in view of the possibility that all our hopes may be disappointed, our purposes broken off, and the thoughts of our hearts never fulfilled.

III. THE POSSIBLE ARREST OF LIFE'S PURPOSES PREMATURELY MAKES IT NEEDFUL THAT EVERY ONE SHOULD SEEK DILIGENTLY TO DO HIS WORK WHILE OPPORTUNITY IS AFFORDED. Some work is given to every man to do, and time is given in which to do it. For no man is expected to do that for which he has not time. But no time may be wasted. The great lesson is again and again read in our hearing, "Work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh when no man can work." The uncertainty of our life's duration makes diligence imperative; it checks too confident an assurance of the future, and it makes it all-important that the life be grasped whose duration is assured. Happy he who can form good purposes and find time to fulfil them!—R. G.

Vers. 13—16.—*The darkened hope.* Sad indeed is the hope which is attained only in the grave, which has no clear vision beyond. Unillumined, uncheered, it has no brightness, no comfort. All that Job seems at present to hope for is the silence, the darkness, the rest, of the grave. There certainly does not dawn upon him the clear light of the future; at least the assurance of it is not declared in his words. It is the grave, the grave, and the grave only. Contemplate the condition of such as have this hope only.

I. NO LIGHT IS CAST UPON LIFE'S DARKNESS. Job's condition one of extreme sadness. He bears up with much bravery; but when his spirit is sorely pressed he buries his thoughts in the tomb. "I have made my bed in the darkness." No light comes from these dark shades to make brighter life's gloom. "The grave," "darkness," "corruption," "the worm," "the bars of the pit," "the dust,"—to these Job is reduced; he cannot rise above them. No ray of light can come thence to make his present path brighter.

II. THIS HOPE GIVES NO EASE IN LIFE'S SORROWS. It awakens no holy emotion. It is a gloomy despair. Life ends in a tomb. The purposes of life are broken off with

the ending of the day. Pain may cease then; but no ease comes thence to the afflicted one. To cry "father," "mother," "sister," to the worm and to corruption has no element of cheerfulness in it, no inspiration of brightening hope to relieve the gloomy sorrowfulness of the present. Such a future could not be anticipated but with the uttermost dread and abhorrence save by one pressed out of mind by the severity of his present afflictions.

III. SUCH A HOPE IS INSUFFICIENT, INCOMPLETE, UNSATISFYING. It leaves the soul with an unfilled void. In its incompleteness and unsatisfying character it points to the necessity for a better and brighter hope. Human life lacks a harvest in the absence of something brighter than this. For the best life to go down into the grave as its final condition seems so anomalous that everywhere the longing for a brighter condition exists.

IV. SUCH A HOPE STANDS IN CONTRAST TO THE CLEAR, COMFORTING, ASSURED HOPE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. Life and immortality had not been brought fully to light when these gloomy words were written. It remained for the perfect revelation and the all-perfect Revealer to make known the brightness of that future which awaits the godly. Israel held possession of the hope of the resurrection; but it is part of the skilfulness of the teaching in this book that anything short of a fully assured immortality of blessedness is insufficient to meet the utmost requirements of the human soul.—R. G.

Ver. 3.—*A pledge from God.* Job is assured by faith that God will ultimately vindicate his innocence; but meanwhile his horrible disease is eating into his very life, so that he fears he may not live to see the end when all shall be made clear. Therefore he prays for a pledge of the future liberation from calumny and vindication of his character. In other experiences we crave a pledge of the fulfilment of our most choice hopes. Let us consider what pledges God offers to us, and their significance.

I. OBSERVE THE MANY KINDS OF PLEDGE WHICH GOD GIVES TO US. 1. *In nature.* Nature is full of promise. She is eloquent with prophecy. Her parabolic significance points to the spiritual and the eternal. The messages of God's goodness in spring flowers and autumn fruits are real pledges from the hand of God, earnests of his greater goodness. 2. *In instinct.* God has implanted in our breasts ineradicable desires—thirst for truth, hunger for love, yearning for holiness. The very existence of these instincts are pledges of the satisfaction of them, for God would not mock his children and torment them with delusive hopes. We may all have some delusive hopes, indeed; but not by nature as original instincts. 3. *In revelation.* God reveals himself in nature and in instinct, but more explicitly in the utterances of inspired human teachers. The Bible is a Divine pledge. Its self-evidencing inspiration confirms his truthfulness. God will not, cannot lie. Therefore the promises of Scripture, and even its precepts, carry with them pledges of the future when what is then portrayed will be seen in experience. 4. *In Christ.* He is the great Pledge from God. By giving us his Son God has confirmed his Word. He has not only fulfilled Messianic prophecy; he has given a token of his changeless purpose of love, and an earnest of his future redemption of the race. Christ is the one greatest Pledge from God.

II. CONSIDER THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIVINE PLEDGE. 1. *To reveal truth.* (1) A pledge of pardon. Christ is to us a sign that God is willing to forgive sin and to welcome his penitent children. We are not left to vague surmises; we have a definite assurance in the mission and work of Christ. (2) A pledge of love. The root from which the pardon comes is love. Christ is the Proof that God loves us. (3) A pledge of character. The new Christian life is first seen in the Person of Christ. He lived it, and his experience is the pledge of what it will be when it is perfectly followed by his disciples. (4) A pledge of hope. Nature, instinct, and revelation point vaguely to the immortality of which Christ is the sure Pledge. He is the Firstfruits of the resurrection, the Pledge of eternal life to his people. 2. *To confirm faith.* Job longed for a pledge from God. We have received pledges, and one of them of highest worth. The supply of what Job desired should have a great effect upon us. We are unreasonable if we disregard the pledge of God, and turn aside from it to plunge into despairing scepticism. Like Moses, we can see the promised land. We have a better assurance than Gideon's fleece, in Christ and his resurrection. Therefore our attitude should be one of calm,

unflinching faith. It must be only of faith, however; for we have not the inheritance as yet, but only a pledge of it. Still God's pledge is an absolutely safe security.—W. F. A.

Ver. 4.—*The heart that is hidden from understanding.* Job is persuaded that God will not desert him. He even takes the very delusions of his tormentors as the pledge from God for which he has been praying; for these delusions seem to come from God, and to show that he has hidden the heart of the three friends from understanding. If it be so, they will not be exalted by God to trample on the sufferer in his misery.

I. UNDERSTANDING DEPENDS ON THE CONDITION OF THE HEART. If the heart is wrong the judgment will be at fault. We do not judge simply as we see with our eyes. The mental and spiritual condition within largely determines the shape and character of our convictions. Observe some of the states of the heart that hide it from understanding. 1. *Obtuseness.* The heart may be simply dull and blind to truth. If the light shines with meridian splendour, the man who has cataracts in his eyes will stumble into the ditch as surely as if he were walking in midnight darkness. Some men have no eyes of sympathy with which to see their neighbours; they cannot understand them. Some have no spiritual perceptions of God; and they cannot understand him. 2. *Prejudice.* We see with the mind as well as with the eyes. Our perception is an amalgam of sight and thought. If the thought is warped, the perception will be crooked. A prejudiced heart excludes truth from the understanding. 3. *Passion.* Strong feeling blinds the judgment by its own fiery fury. The enraged heart, the sin-loving heart, the ill-regulated heart, are all void of understanding. We need a new and clean heart that we may receive God's truth.

II. THE HEART FROM WHICH UNDERSTANDING IS HIDDEN CANNOT ENJOY THE FAVOUR OF GOD. His favour does not depend on intellectual conditions. Purely mental perplexity is no barrier against the soul in its enjoyment of the Divine love, for God does not wait for perfect orthodoxy before he will help and bless his children. But we have now to do with quite another kind of error. The error which cuts off from God's favour is moral; it springs from a perversion of heart. For this we are to blame, and therefore the loss it entails is justly deserved. The loss of God's favour is seen throughout, both in the origin and in the results of the error. 1. *In its origin.* The startling thought of Job is that it is God who has hidden the heart from understanding. The blindness is judicial, a result of God's action. This may look like attributing moral evil to God. If Job in his terrible darkness meant anything of the kind, of course we know that he must have been in error. (1) But without going so far as this, we may see that God would withdraw his aiding Spirit from the perverse heart. The result would be to hide that heart from understanding. (2) The laws of human life and thought which connect perversity of heart with lack of understanding proceed from God. (3) It is not well that truth should be understood by the perverse heart. Christ bade his disciples not cast their pearls before swine. The ideas for which we are not morally fit would be misapplied and degraded if we could receive them. 2. *In its results.* All error is dangerous, and moral error is fatal. God pities the bewildered doubter; he is angry with the perverse and wilful thinker, who goes wrong in thought because his heart is wrong. Such a man cannot prosper under the favour of God.—W. F. A.

Ver. 7.—*The eye that is made dim by sorrow.* Job has just been saying that God had hidden the heart of his tormentors from understanding (ver. 4). Now he sadly observes that sorrow has dimmed his own eye. It is not easy to see clearly through a veil of tears. Excessive weeping induces blindness. The sad soul sits in darkness.

I. SORROW PREVENTS US FROM SEEING ALL THE TRUTH. It limits the range of vision even when it does not drive us down to the darkness of despair. 1. *It is an emotion,* and as such it absorbs our consciousness with internal feeling, and therefore does not permit it to look out in external observation. All subjectivity is unobservant. 2. *It is a depressing influence.* It tends to lower our vitality. It will scarcely let us lift up our eyes to see even when we have the power of vision. Poor Hagar was too broken-hearted to notice the well which was to restore life to her child. Thus in great grief the soul cannot see the Divine purpose, nor the love that is above all. Black clouds hide the heavens. A rain of tears blots out the earthly landscape. To the sorrowful eye there are no flowers in spring.

II. SORROW SHOULD LEAD US TO EXERCISE FAITH. What if the eye be dim? We are not dependent on sight. Our part is to walk by faith. Too clear a landscape excludes the sense of mystery, and absorbs our attention in connection with things earthly and visible. It is well to feel our littleness, our darkness, our limitation. Then our sorrow really enlarges our lives, by leading us to look at the things which are not seen, but which are eternal (2 Cor. iv. 18).

III. SORROW MAY OPEN OUR EYES TO NEW TRUTHS. The tears which blind us may also purge our vision. Shutting out the familiar sight of common scenes, they may open to us a new sight of heavenly truths. There have been revelations in sorrow. Jacob saw heaven opened when he was a fugitive for his life; Joseph interpreted dreams in prison, and Daniel in exile; Moses saw the burning bush in the wilderness; John beheld his great apocalypse when he was banished to Patmos. Poets learn in sorrow what they teach in song.

IV. IT IS CRUEL TO BE HARSH WITH THOSE WHOSE BLINDNESS COMES FROM SORROW. We must learn to distinguish this blindness from the lack of understanding which springs from a perverse heart, like that of the three friends (ver. 4). Sinful and reckless scepticism deserves a severe rebuke. But this is very different from the doubt which is born of sorrow. In the hour of deepest grief it may be that all the heavens seem blurred and confused. The old landmarks are washed away in the deluge. We cannot see God, and his love is lost sight of. Even Christ in his bitter agony exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

V. ULTIMATELY GOD WILL GIVE CLEAR VISION TO THE SORROW-BLINDED EYE. When he wipes away the tears he will restore the sight. The burden of the mystery will not be borne for ever. We have only to walk for a season in the darkness. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. xxx. 5). Then the very background of old troubles will throw up the new joys with the more intense splendour, and the previous blindness will make the new vision the more vivid and gladsome.—W. F. A.

Ver. 9.—*Holding on and growing stronger.* This is a cheering thought breaking out of Job's doleful despair. Job is rising from pessimism to hope and confidence. He gives us a double picture—the righteous holding on his way, the man with clean hands growing stronger and stronger.

I. HOLDING ON. We see the righteous man quietly going forward, not turned aside by any obstacle, not cast down by any opposition, nor rushing madly forward, but not hanging back in fear, weariness, or indolence—like Goethe's star, "unhasting and unresting." 1. *Pursuing a continuous course.* The righteous man has a way, and it is to this that he holds on. We must have a purpose if our life is not to be broken and become a failure. 2. *Keeping to the course.* The idea is that of holding on to the one right course. Here is persistency and perseverance. The way being right must not be forsaken on account of any difficulties. 3. *Overcoming opposition.* There may be no brilliant victory. But the righteous man succeeds in holding on his way. That is enough. That secures his success. The constantly flowing stream cuts through the granite cliff and scoops a huge valley out of the mountain-side. Patient perseverance wins in the end. 4. *Walking in a right character.* It is the righteous man of whom Job makes the glad assertion. The bad man may hold on for a time, when he does not meet with serious opposition; but he is not upheld by principle, and he is doomed to a final overthrow; for though his road is broad and popular, it leads to destruction. Only a true moral and spiritual character has strength to hold on continuously when severely tried; only this character will be blessed by being allowed by God to go on to victory. Time is the great test of character. Weak and unworthy people may do brilliant things, and achieve temporary triumphs. It is the character of true worth that is "faithful unto death," and that holds on to the end. Many vessels that leave the port make shipwreck on their course; only those that are sound and well steered reach their desired haven.

II. GROWING STRONGER. The second thought is more emphatic. The progress is of the best kind. 1. *With increase.* The Christian course is more than a race; it is an ascent; it is a growth. God's servant is not set to a treadmill. His walk is not a weary round. There is no monotony in the true Christian life. As he endures, so he

is enlarged and enriched. 2. *In strength.* This is the special kind of increase to which Job refers. No doubt he was already beginning to feel it. He had lost wealth, but he had gained strength. Already the blows of adversity had begun to weld together tough fibres in his soul. He was stronger now than when all men bowed to him as the most powerful emir of the East. Here is the fruit of the victory won by overcoming opposition. Battle strengthens the hero. Climbing the "Hill Difficulty" develops the Pilgrim's muscles. Now, God looks for energy in his servants. It is not enough that he shelters them in trouble. He gives them strength with which to bear it. "To them that have no might he increaseth strength" (Isa. xl. 29). 3. *On condition of purity.* The strength is for the man with clean hands. Sin enervates. Innocence is strong. The sinner may recover strength when his sin is forgiven and his heart purged. Therefore our business is to resist sin and cultivate purity of life; then God will give ever-increasing strength.—W. F. A.

Ver. 11.—*Broken purposes.* Job seems to be sinking back into despair after the hopeful and confident utterance of ver. 9. Perhaps the explanation of the situation lies in the difficulty the patriarch experiences in squaring the convictions of his rising faith with the actual condition in which he now lies. He wonders how his innocence can be vindicated, how he can hold on and increase in strength, although he is now persuaded that God will help him ultimately to do so. Meanwhile all his purposes are broken. Let us notice three kinds of broken purposes.

I. BAD PURPOSES. Surely these should be broken. It is absurd to suppose that because an evil design has been conceived in the dark recesses of the imagination it must be effected. Bad purposes may be frustrated. 1. *Broken by God.* He knows the thoughts of men's hearts, and can "frustrate their knavish tricks." What we call accidents are providential events; and how often has the purpose of sin been checked by these events! The destroying angel mows down the Assyrian host (2 Chron. xxxii. 21); A storm scatters the Armada. "Gunpowder treason" is discovered just before the meeting of Parliament. 2. *Broken by their authors.* The repentant sinner can stay his hand from further wickedness. He need feel under no obligation to fulfil his vows of evil. Indeed, there is no true repentance without the breaking off of bad purposes. Let us be thankful if all our bad purposes are not executed.

II. GOOD PURPOSES. These also may be broken. 1. *By adverse events.* God will not frustrate a really good design. But we may find it impossible to accomplish the best of purposes. God purposed the salvation of the world, yet how far is his good purpose even from fulfilment! We know that he must triumph finally. But in the mean time the spirit of evil hinders. Job's purposes were broken by Satan. God's purposes are not only hindered by Satan; they are checked by the free will of men who are reluctant to acknowledge them. 2. *By their authors.* Good resolutions have paved a large place. How many of the plans of youth have been carried out in manhood? and how many of them have melted away as idle dreams? How far have the purposes of the Christian life been adhered to? Has the old sin been avoided, as we vowed it should be? Have we served God with singleness of heart? Have we denied ourselves and followed Christ, as we dreamed of doing when we first gave him our hearts? Have we lived unselfishly and in charity towards our neighbours? Do not such questions rouse a sickening sense of failure? Verily we have broken our good purposes most miserably.

III. MISTAKEN PURPOSES. These are of an intermediate character. Good in intention, they would not have turned out well if we had been permitted to execute them. Therefore God has frustrated them. Some of these are quite excellent, only they are altogether beyond our reach. The brave lifeboat crew tries to save the shipwrecked sailors, but, alas! the sea runs too high to permit them to approach, and their purpose is broken. Some whole lives seem to be failures simply because their owners have mistaken their vocation. The man who is a failure as a barrister might have become an excellent farmer; he has chosen an unsuitable sphere. We wish to do good. Then let us pray for light lest we blunder into mischief-making in the very effort to help our neighbours.—W. F. A.

Ver. 15.—*The lost hope.* Not only are Job's purposes broken off. His hope is lost.

At all events, it seems to be melting away, so that all chance of seeing its accomplishment appears to have gone.

I. A VAIN HOPE MUST BE LOST. The reality will not depend on a man's sanguine temperament, but upon its own causes. It is possible for a person to persuade himself into a condition of blissful confidence concerning his future, but the self-persuasion will not alter facts; and if he is drifting towards the rocks they will shatter him as surely as if he went in terror of their fatal neighbourhood. Note, then, some of the vain hopes that must perish. 1. *The hope of success in cheating God.* Some men live as hypocrites not merely to secure the favour of their fellows, but in the foolish fancy that by some jugglery they may even wriggle into the favour of Heaven. Such a hope must fail. 2. *The hope of succeeding without God.* This is not outrageously impudent like the hope last referred to. But it cannot succeed, for no man is sufficient of himself to overcome all the difficulties of life. 3. *The hope of worldly sufficiency.* It is thought that if Providence is kind, and a man has much laid by for days to come, he may look forward with confidence. This is the hope of the rich fool (Luke xii. 20), and the unexpected changes of life, or death at last, must shatter it.

II. A TRUE HOPE MAY BE LOST. 1. *The Christian hope.* This is a true hope. (1) It is founded on God's strength, and he can never fail. We are encouraged to hope for salvation from One who is almighty. (2) It is secured by God's truth. "He is faithful that promised" (Heb. x. 23). To grow faint-hearted with the Christian hope is to distrust God. The hope depends on his Word, which cannot be broken. (3) It is guaranteed by Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Christ is God's Pledge of hope to his children. God would have wasted Christ on the world if he were not to fulfil the hopes that his Son raised. 2. *The possibility of losing it.* This must be considered in spite of the absolute security of the hope itself; for the hope may be good, and yet we may cease to hold it. The anchor may be sound, but the chain that unites it to the ship may be cut. (1) The hope may only be lost to consciousness. We may cease to enjoy it, cease to feel the hope within us. Yet we may not really be cut off from what the great hope of Christ promises. Job exclaims, "Where is now my hope?" only because he is blinded with grief. Our despair is not the measure of our faith. The mountain has not vanished because the fog has hidden it. Doubt does not destroy truth. Many a despondent Christian will realize the hopes which he is too faint-hearted to enjoy in anticipation. (2) The hope may be really lost. It is possible to see the hope afar off, as Balaam saw Israel's hope, and yet to have no share in it ourselves. Or we may hold to the Christian hope in error without living the Christian life. Then we must be bitterly disappointed. Or, lastly, we may prove faithless and fall away from Christ. Therefore let us pray to be kept true, seeing that God is true, so that our fidelity is the only condition we now need to be assured of in order that our hope may not be lost.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Vers. 1—21.—Bildad's second speech is no improvement upon his first (ch. viii.). He has evidently been exceedingly nettled by Job's contemptuous words concerning his "comforters" (ch. xvi. 2, 11; xvii. 10); and aims at nothing but venting his anger, and terrifying Job by a series of denunciations and threats. Job has become to him "the wicked man" (vers. 5, 21), an embodiment of all that is evil, and one "that knoweth not God." No punishment is too severe for him.

Vers. 1, 2.—**Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, How long will it be ere ye make an end of words?** (So Rosenmüller, Gesenius, Welte, Merx, Lee, and Canon Cook.) Others render, "How long will ye *lay snares for* words?" which is a possible translation, but does not give a very good sense. Bildad, a tolerably concise speaker himself (see ch. viii. 2—22; xxv. 2—6), is impatient at the length of Job's replies. He had already, in his former speech (ch. viii. 2), reproached Job with his prolixity; now he repeats the charge. The employment of the second person *plural* in this and the following verses is not very easily accounted for. Bildad can scarcely mean to blame his friend Eliphaz. Perhaps he regards Job as having supporters among the lookers-on, of whom there may have been several besides Elihu (ch. xxxii. 2). **Mark**; rather, *con-*

sider; i.e. think a little, instead of talking. **And afterwards we will speak.** Then, calmly and without hurry, we will proceed to reply to what you have said.

Ver. 3.—**Wherefore are we counted as beasts?** The allusion is probably to ch. xvi. 10, where Job spoke of his "comforters" as "gaping upon him with their mouths." **And reputed vile in your sight?** or, *reckoned unclean.* Job had spoken of his "miserable comforters" as "ungodly and wicked" (ch. xvi. 11), without wisdom (ch. xvii. 10) and without understanding (ch. xvii. 4). But he had not said that they were "unclean." Bildad, therefore, misrepresents him.

Ver. 4.—**He teareth himself in his anger.** The Hebrew idiom, which allows of rapid transitions from the second to the third person, and *vice versâ*, cannot be transferred without harshness to our modern speech. Our Revisers have given the true force of the original by discarding the third person, and translating, "Thou that tearest thyself in thine anger." There is probably an allusion to ch. xvi. 9, where Job had represented God as "tearing him in his wrath." Bildad says it is not God who tears him—he tears himself. **Shall the earth be forsaken for thee?** *i.e.* "Shall the course of the world be altered to meet thy wishes, to suit thy case?" Job had wished for all manner of impossible things (ch. iii. 3—6; ix. 32—35; xiii. 21, 22; xvi. 21; xvii. 3). Bildad's reproach is thus not wholly unjust. But he makes no allowance for the wild utterances of one who is half distraught. **And shall the rock be removed out of his place?** Shall that which is most solid and firm give way, and alter its nature?

Vers. 5—21.—Bildad, from this point, turns wholly to denunciation. He strings together a long series of menaces—probably ancient saws, drawn from "the wisdom of the Beni Kedem" (1 Kings iv. 30), and descriptive of the wretched fate of the wicked man, with whom he identifies Job.

Ver. 5.—**Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out.** Whatever the wicked man may at any time have acquired of splendour, glory, honour, wealth, or prosperity, shall be taken from him, and as it were extinguished. **And the spark of his fire shall not shine.** Not a single trace of his splendour, not a spark, not a glimmer, shall remain.

Ver. 6.—**The light shall be dark in his tabernacle.** This is not, as Rosenmüller asserts, a mere repetition of the thought contained in the preceding verse with a change of terms, and a variation of metaphor. It is a denunciation of woe to the whole *house* of the ungodly man, not to himself only. As Schultens says, "Lumen obtenebratum *in tentorio* est fortuna *domus* extincta." **And his candle shall be put out with him;** rather, as in the Revised Version, *his lamp above him shall be put out;* i.e. the lamp which swings above him in his tent, or in his chamber, shall be extinguished. Darkness shall fall upon the whole house of the wicked man.

Ver. 7.—**The steps of his strength shall be straitened.** In the time of his prosperity the wicked man had a wide sphere within which to exercise his activity, and strode hither and thither at his pleasure. When punishment falls on him, his "steps will be straitened," *i.e.* his sphere narrowed, his activity cramped, his powers "cabined, cribbed, confined." **And his own counsel shall cast him down** (see ch. v. 13; and comp. Ps. vii. 14—16; ix. 16; x. 2; Hos. x. 6).

Ver. 8.—**For he is cast into a net by his own feet.** He walks of his own accord into a snare, not necessarily into one that he has himself set for others, as in Ps. vii. 15; ix. 15; xxxv. 8; lvii. 6; and Prov. xxvi. 27; but either into one of his own setting, or into one laid for him by others (see ver. 10). **And he walketh upon a snare.** A mere repetition of the idea expressed in the preceding hemistich.

Ver. 9.—**The gin shall take him by the heel, and the robber** (rather, *the man-trap*) **shall prevail against him.** Fifty years ago man-traps were commonly set at night in gardens and orchards in this country, which held intending thieves until the proprietor came and took them before a magistrate in the morning. (On the employment of such traps in antiquity, see Herod., ii. 121. § 2.)

Ver. 10.—**The snare is laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way;** or, *the noose is hid for him in the ground* (see the Revised Version). Six different kinds of traps or snares are mentioned, "the speaker heaping together every word that he can find descriptive of the art of snaring." The art had been well studied by the Egyptians long before the age of Job, and a great variety of contrivances for capturing both beasts and birds are represented on the very early monuments (Wilkinson, in the author's 'Herodotus,' vol. ii. pp. 77, 78). We may conclude from this passage that it had also been brought to an advanced stage of excellence in Syria and Arabia.

Ver. 11.—**Terrors shall make him afraid on every side.** Vague fears, panic terrors, no longer subjective, but to his bewildered brain objective, shall seem to menace the wicked man on every side, and shall affright him continually. There is an allusion, doubtless, to what Job has said of the

gloomy and terrifying thoughts which come over him from time to time (ch. iii. 25; vii. 14; ix. 28; xiii. 21) and fill him with consternation. **And shall drive him to his feet**; rather, *shall chase him at his heels* (see the Revised Version). Like a pack of hounds, or wolves, or jackals. Jackals are common in Palestine and the adjacent countries. They hunt in packs, and generally run down their prey; but do not, unless hard pressed by hunger, attack men.

Ver. 12.—**His strength shall be hunger-bitten.** (So Dillmann, Cook, and the Revised Version.) To the other sufferings of the wicked man shall be added the pangs of hunger. His bodily strength shall disappear, as destitution and famine come upon him. **And destruction shall be ready at his side.** Ready to seize on him at any moment. Some translate, "ready for his halting," *i.e.* ready to seize on him in case of his tripping or halting (so the Revised Version).

Ver. 13.—**It shall devour the strength of his skin**; literally, *the bars of his skin*, by which some understand "the muscles," some "the members," of his body. The general meaning is plain, that destruction shall always be close to him, and shall ultimately make him its own. **Even the firstborn of death shall devour his strength.** By "the firstborn of death" is probably intended, either some wasting disease generally, or perhaps the special disease from which Job is suffering.

Ver. 14.—**His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle**; rather, *he shall be rooted out of his tabernacle* (or, *tent*), *which is his confidence*, or *wherein he trusteth*; i.e. he shall be torn from the home, where he thought himself secure as in a stronghold. **And it shall bring him**; rather, *one shall bring him*, or, *he shall be brought*. **To the king of terrors.** Probably death, rather than Satan, is intended. None of Job's "comforters" seems to have had any conception of Satan as a personal being, nor even Job himself. It is only the author, or arranger, of the book who recognizes the personality and power of the prince of darkness.

Ver. 15.—**It shall dwell in his tabernacle, because it is none of his**; either, *it* (i.e. terror) *shall dwell in his tabernacle, which is no longer his*; or, *they shall dwell in his tabernacle that are none of his*; i.e. strangers shall inhabit the place where he dwelt heretofore (compare the Revised Version). **Brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation.** As God rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon the cities of the plain (Gen. xix. 24), so shall brimstone be scattered upon his habitation to ruin and destroy it (comp. Deut. xxix. 23; Ps. xi. 6).

Ver. 16.—**His roots shall be dried up beneath.** He shall be like a tree whose roots no moisture reaches, and which, therefore, withers and dries up (comp. ch. xiv. 8, 9; xxix. 19). **And above shall his branch be cut off**; or, *be withered* (comp. ch. xiv. 2, where the same verb is used).

Ver. 17.—**His remembrance shall perish from the earth** (comp. Ps. xxxiv. 16; cix. 13). This is always spoken of in Scripture as a great calamity, one of the greatest that can befall a man. It was felt as such, not only by the Jews, but by the Semitic people generally, whose earnest desire to perpetuate their memory is shown by the elaborate monuments and lengthy inscriptions which they set up in so many places. Arabian poetry, no less than Jewish, is penetrated by the idea. In one point of view it may seem a vulgar ambition; but, in another, it is a pathetic craving after that continuance which the spirit of man naturally desires, but of which it has, apart from revelation, no assurance. **And he shall have no name in the street**; or, *in the world without* (comp. ch. v. 10).

Ver. 18.—**He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world** (comp. ch. x. 21, 22; xvii. 16). What Job represents as a welcome retreat, whither he would gladly withdraw himself, Bildad depicts as a banishment, into which he will be driven on account of his sins.

Ver. 19.—**He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people**; rather, *nor grandson*; i.e. "his posterity shall be clean put out" (Ps. cix. 14). **Nor any remaining in his dwellings**; rather, *in the places where he sojourned* (compare the Revised Version, which gives "in his sojournings"). It is implied that the wicked man shall be a vagabond, without a home, sojourning now here, now there, for a short time. Neither among his own people, nor in these places of his temporary abode, shall he leave any descendant. Bildad probably intends to glance at the destruction of Job's children (ch. i. 19).

Ver. 20.—**They that come after him shall be astonied at his day**; *i.e.* "at the time of his visitation" (comp. Ps. xxxvii. 13, "The Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that *his day* is coming;" and Ps. cxxxvii. 7, "Remember the children of Edom in *the day* of Jerusalem," *i.e.* the day of its overthrow). **As they that went before were affrighted.** His fate shall alarm equally his contemporaries and his successors, or possibly "the dwellers in the West and the dwellers in the East."

Ver. 21.—**Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked.** "Such as I have described is the general condition and manner of life of the man who is wicked." **And this is**

the place (or, *position*) of him that **knoweth not God.** The singular number used both in this clause and the preceding indicates that the whole series of denunciations (vers. 5—21) is levelled against an individual—viz. Job.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—21.—*Bildad to Job: an Arabian orator's discourse.* I. THE FAULTY INTRODUCTION. Bildad possessed at least three qualifications indispensable to successful speaking—fervid imagination, glowing eloquence, and vehement passion. He was characterized also by three fatal defects—want of calmness, or self-containment, want of prudence, and want of sympathetic tenderness. Being destitute of these, he blundered like an inexperienced amateur, starting out on his oration in a hurricane of passion and ill humour, planting daggers in the breast he hoped to win by his eloquence, and forfeiting, by the very keenness of his invective, all possibility of effecting good impressions by his words. He impeached Job of: 1. *Senseless verbosity.* Of speaking at an undue length; of talking for talking's sake; of hunting after words in order to overwhelm his opponents; of speaking without consideration, talking when he ought to have been thinking, making words do duty for ideas; of speaking instead of listening to his betters (ver. 2). The first is the error of the facile-tongued; the second, of the shallow-pated; the third, of the conceited egotist. If Job sinned in either of these respects, he was not undeserving of reproof, much more if he erred in all. But Bildad, whose genius was not original, was probably moved to use the language of censure as much by a desire to imitate Eliphaz (ch. xv. 2), or to retort upon Job (ch. xvi. 3), as by strong repugnance to the patriarch's offence. 2. *Unjustifiable contempt.* Job had accused the friends of lacking spiritual discernment (ch. vii. 4). Bildad interpreted the charge to mean that Job regarded them as brute beasts, devoid of sense and reason (ver. 3). If Job did so, he was guilty of altogether unwarranted depreciation of his fellows. That nature, which God made only a little short of Divinity (Ps. viii. 5; Heb. ii. 6), must for ever be parted by a wide gulf from the irrational creation. Only when men voluntarily extinguish all spiritual susceptibility by continuance in sin can they be legitimately compared to the beasts that perish (Ps. xlix. 12, 20). This the friends had not done; and it is certain Job had not called them beasts. But, being men of a high spirit, they were quick to take offence. 3. *Self-devouring rage.* An old insinuation of Eliphaz's reproduced (ch. v. 2), with a specific allusion to Job's language charging God with tearing him in his anger (ch. xvi. 9), in contradistinction to which Bildad averred that Job tore himself, literally, "his soul," in his anger (ver. 4), meaning that the patriarch's misery was the fruit of his own frantic and excited behaviour, which again was the immediate result of his soul's fretful and wrathful resentment against God's providential inflictions. That Job's behaviour under his unparalleled calamities was not perfect, is obvious; that his impatience was such as to call for censure from men, may be doubted (Jas. v. 11). Yet Bildad's reproach suggests that while all "anger is a short madness," it is supreme insanity to fume and fret at the Divine dispensations, and that the most miserable man on earth must surely be he whose soul swells with rage against God because of his paternal chastisements. 4. *Egotistical presumption.* In the judgment of Bildad, Job appeared to imagine that the Divine Law, which connected suffering with sin, should in his case be suspended; but that, Bildad assured the patriarch, would be as likely to occur as that, in order to oblige him, the earth which God had appointed for man's habitation should become tenantless, or the rock which Heaven's ordinance has rendered fixed and immovable should be suddenly transported from its place (ver. 4). The reign of law in the material universe, and the fore-ordination of events in human history, have been frequently employed exactly as they are here used by Bildad, viz. to demonstrate the non-credibility of miracles, the inefficacy of prayer, the impossibility of such a thing as a special providence, and the intolerable arrogance of a being so mean and insignificant as man imagining that in any of the ways implied in these doctrines God would, in his behalf, interfere with the established order of things. But it is no presumption to believe in what Scripture teaches—the possibility of miracles (Matt. xix. 26), the efficacy of prayer (Ps. lxv. 2; Matt. vii. 7; Jas. i. 5), the reality

of a special providence (Ps. xl. 17; Matt. x. 30); since the first can be proved by adequate testimony, while the second and third are supported and confirmed by the inner witness of conscience. Even the case pronounced by Bildad to be impossible, viz. the suspension of the moral law of retribution, has come to pass. The salvation of man through the cross of Jesus Christ attests the fallacy of Bildad's fundamental assumption. And now Bildad, having proceeded thus far with his oration, for any good he was likely to do to Job, might and should have prudently relapsed into silence. Nevertheless, he preached an eloquent discourse.

II. THE LOFTY THEME. The subject descanted on by Bildad was the inevitable retribution which sooner or later overtook the wicked. Set forth under an emblem familiar to Oriental poetry, viz. the extinction of the fire in a dwelling, and of the lamp depending from the roof of a tent (vers. 5, 6), it was depicted as: 1. *Delayed.* The evil-doer was not arrested by the hand of Providence the moment he set forth on his career, but was allowed for a season to thrive by his ungodliness, to amass wealth, acquire power, and secure friends, to become the head of a family or the chief of a clan, and to possess a tent, or rather a circle of tents, with his own commodious, well-furnished, richly ornamented, brilliantly lighted tabernacle in the midst. So Eliphaz saw the foolish taking root (ch. v. 3), and David beheld the wicked spreading like a green bay tree (Ps. xxxvii. 35), and Asaph witnessed the ungodly prospering until at last they were suddenly overwhelmed (Ps. lxxiii. 13). 2. *Certain.* Nevertheless, *i.e.* notwithstanding all contrary appearances, the sinner's own security, his determination to resist or evade the pursuing Nemesis, his fierce resentment when the hand of the destroyer should apprehend him, "the light of the wicked should be put out." Not absolutely and universally true of their terrestrial career, it is yet positively sure that the prosperity of the ungodly shall decline, if not on earth, at least in the future world. 3. *Complete.* The glow upon the sinner's hearth and the lamp from his roof should be equally extinguished. The light in which he sunned himself, *i.e.* his personal comfort and happiness, and the light in which he shone to others, *i.e.* his greatness and glory, should alike fade and become dark. Sometimes such experience is the lot of God's people, as the case of Job testifies. Happy they to whom Jehovah is an everlasting Light (Isa. lx. 19), and who, when they sit in temporal darkness, can rejoice in his cheering beams (Micah vii. 8).

III. THE BRILLIANT ILLUSTRATION. The wicked man's career, from the moment of his apprehension by misfortune till the hour of his complete destruction, was next represented in a series of graphic pictures. In these he appears as: 1. *Snared by calamity.* (Vers. 7—10.) (1) Unexpectedly; when, at the height of prosperity, in the fulness of pride, and conscious of strength, he stalks forth with giant strides to execute the wicked counsels he has formed (ch. v. 3; Eccles. ix. 12; Luke xxi. 34, 35, 1 Thess. v. 3). (2) Willingly; as if disdainfully defiant of every attempt to arrest his career, marching deliberately into the toils, so that practically "his own counsel casts him down," and "his own feet thrust him into a net." A melancholy example of that "vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself and falls on the other side;" of that self-avenging Nemesis which slumbers in the bosom of every sin, but especially of a great sin; of that terrible infatuation which sometimes seizes on the souls of wicked men, and impels them, with stupid blindness to, or reckless disregard of, consequences, forward to their own destruction. (3) Effectually; the gin taking him by the heel, and the noose holding him fast, so that first his proud steps become straitened, and finally himself is cast down. (4) Inevitably; the snare that is to arrest him lying already in the ground and only waiting his arrival, the import of which seems to be that the moment a transgressor enters on his evil path he starts upon a road that must sooner or later conduct him to ruin. 2. *Haunted by terrors.* (Vers. 11, 12.) The evil conscience that he carries in his bosom, though long slumbering, at last awakes, inspires him with fearful forebodings of impending disaster, peoples all the atmosphere around him with ghostly apparitions which dog his footsteps, summons up before his startled vision, well-nigh every moment of his wretched existence, spectral shadows of coming woe, which paralyze his strength and utterly unman his wicked soul. (Cf. Eliphaz's picture of a guilty conscience (ch. xv. 21), of which Bildad's appears to be an echo and imitation.) 3. *Arrested by disease.* (Vers. 13, 14.) (On the expression, "the first-born of death," see Exposition.) The obvious allusion is to such a malady as Job's

leprosy, which, when it apprehends a sinner, (1) devours the strength (or bars) of his skin, i.e. consumes either the members of the body (Delitzsch), or "the muscles which are to the skin what bars are to a gate, or those passages and orifices, those inlets and outlets of the body, at which many forms of disease first display their presence and power" (Cox); (2) ejects him from his house, causing him who formerly sat in confident security within his tent to remove, as under the ban of Divine displeasure, from the presence and habitations of his fellow-men; and (3) conducts him to the king of terrors, which death must ever be to the ungodly and impenitent, though to them who believe in Christ, who hath conquered death, its character and aspect are completely changed (1 Cor. xv. 55; Heb. ii. 14, 15). 4. *Overwhelmed with destruction.* (Vers. 15—17.) And this in three particulars: (1) the desolation of his homestead, which, being doomed, like Jericho, to remain uninhabited, is henceforth tenanted by "creatures and things strange to the deceased rich man, such as jackals and nettles" (Delitzsch), or haunted ever afterwards by ghostly terrors (Cox)—a thought which Bildad again copies from the preceding speech of Eliphaz (ch. xv. 28, 34); (2) the extirpation of his family, even to its utter destruction, root and branch, so that neither he, the root, shall remain, nor any of the branches, his offspring, shall survive (vers. 16, 19)—"the most terrible calamity that can happen to a Semite" (Wetstein, quoted by Delitzsch); (3) the extinction of his memory, the complete perishing of all remembrance of him, so that his name is never mentioned in the land or on the street (Prov. ii. 22; x. 7; Ps. xxxiv. 16)—a pitiable doom for those to contemplate who have no hope of any immortality beyond the posthumous renown which their great power, extensive fame, or notorious wickedness may enable them to secure, though a comparatively small deprivation for them whose names are registered in heaven, and will be held in everlasting remembrance by God even if they should be forgotten by man. 5. *Thrust into darkness.* (Ver. 18.) Chased from the world as unfit to live longer on the earth (Prov. xiv. 32), as afterwards, though falsely, Christ (Luke xxiii. 18) and St. Paul (Acts xxii. 22); driven away from the light of day into the darkness of death, from the light of prosperity into the darkness of misfortune, from the light of happiness into the darkness of misery—a terribly true picture of the fate of the impenitent. 6. *Loaded with infamy.* (Ver. 20.) Transformed into an object of horror and amazement to (1) the people of all lands—"those who dwell in the East and those who dwell in the West" (Delitzsch); and (2) the people of all times—"them that come after," *i.e.* posterity, and "them that went before," *i.e.* the wicked man's contemporaries. In this sense "the evil that men do lives after them," and "some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some men they follow after" (1 Tim. v. 24). The language of Bildad is true of the Sodomites (2 Pet. ii. 6), Balaam (2 Pet. ii. 15, 16), Judas (Acts i. 18), and transgressors of a like order.

IV. THE MISTAKEN APPLICATION. That Job was the subject of Bildad's sombre sketch is apparent from the portrait of Job's character prefixed by the speaker to his dismal harangue, the resemblance in many points of Bildad's imaginary picture to the actual history of the patriarch, and the sharp incisive manner in which the moral of his tale is pointed out (ver. 21). Yet the preacher completely misdirected his discourse. For: 1. *The character he portrayed did not belong to Job.* Job was not a wicked man, and a man that knew not God, as Bildad was perfectly aware; but, as Job contended, and God himself allowed, "a perfect man and an upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil." 2. *The sermon he preached did not apply to Job.* Even of wicked men it was not always and universally true that retribution overtook them on account of their misdeeds. But of Job it was wholly incorrect that he was suffering for his sins. 3. *The future he predicted was not experienced by Job.* In part it seemed to be, but in its principal ingredients it was not. He was cast down from his prosperity, but he was not chased out of the world. The light was for a season extinguished in his dwelling, but it was afterward rekindled with greater brilliancy than before. His homestead was ruined, but not cursed, being afterwards re-erected and blessed. His first family was taken from him, but a second was bestowed. His name was not consigned to infamy, but has been crowned with everlasting renown.

Learn: 1. That no preacher should carry personalities to the pulpit. 2. That a great text should, if possible, be followed by a great sermon. 3. That an orator should study to be true rather than brilliant in his illustrations. 4. That discourses otherwise good

are sometimes delivered to the wrong hearers. 5. That the predictions of angry prophets are seldom fulfilled.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—21.—*Renewed rebukes and warnings.* Bildad again replies, mentioning that the passionate outbreaks of Job are useless. He holds fast to his original principle, that, according to the Law of God, the hardened sinner will suddenly meet his doom. And some secret sin, he persists, must be the cause of the present suffering.

I. INTRODUCTION: DENUNCIATION OF JOB AS A FOOLISH AND VIOLENT SPEAKER. (Vers. 1—4.) He is one who "hunts after words." Let him be truly sensible and rational, begs this confident Pharisaic preacher. "Why do you treat us as stupid beasts?" he indignantly expostulates. "You tear yourself to pieces in your anger, and think yourself lacerated by God" (comp. ch. vii. 16). Does Job expect the earth to be depopulated and rocks to be removed for his sake? Bildad thinks that Job's repeated assertion of his innocence aims at the subversion of the moral order of the world—the holy order given by God (comp. Rom. iii. 5, 6). It is a grand thought, though misapplied by the speaker. The order of God, alike in nature and the human spirit, is unchangeable, and admits of no exception. But this order is not to be misunderstood by drawing conclusions from the outward to the inward life. Where the higher, the spiritual, is concerned, reason, Scripture, and conscience, rather than any outward tokens, must decide the truth.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE DREADFUL DOOM OF THE HARDENED SINNER. (Vers. 5—21.) Most solemn and pathetic; a masterpiece of dramatic representation. A series of striking figures is made to pass before the eye of imagination. 1. The light of the wicked is put out; no flame leaps from his fire, no cheerful lamp hangs from his tent-roof. This is a favourite image (ch. xxi. 17; xxix. 3; Ps. xviii. 28; Prov. xiii. 9). The Arabs say, "Fate has put out my lamp" (vers. 5, 6). 2. Another figure: his steps are hemmed in—current in the East—and his own counsel overthrows him (ver. 7). 3. Again, the figure of the nets and snares and pitfalls, by which he meets his ruin (vers. 8—10). Terrible thoughts and dread events throng around him, and pursue him, like the Erinnyes of the Greek mythology—messengers from God to disquiet his guilty soul (ver. 11). 4. Disaster and ruin are personified in the poetic description. The one has an eager hunger for him; the other stands ready, like an armed foe, to cast him down (ver. 12).

III. The description now TAKES A MORE PERSONAL DIRECTION—POINTING TO THE STATE OF JOB. 1. His disease—the terrible elephantiasis—the "first-born of death," devours him piecemeal (ver. 13). 2. Expelled from his secure abode, he advances into the power of the "king of terrors" (ver. 14). He dwells in the tent of another, while brimstone from heaven desolates his former habitation (comp. ch. xv. 34; Deut. xxix. 22, 23; Ps. xi. 6). This, it is said, is still at the present day the most dreadful of images to the mind of the Semitic peoples—the desolation of the home (ver. 15). 3. Another figure: he is like a tree, withered at the root, and lopped above (ver. 16). An imprecation was written on the sarcophagus of Eshmunazar, "Let him have neither roots below nor branches above!" (comp. Isa. v. 24; Amos ii. 9). 4. His memory passes away from the land, and his name is known over the wide steppe no more (ver. 17; comp. ch. xiii. 12). He is thrust out of the light of life and happiness into the darkness of calamity and death, and is hunted from the round habitable earth (ver. 18). No scion nor shoot springs from him among the people; none escaped from his utter ruin in his dwellings (ver. 19). 5. An awful impression is felt by all, in East and West alike, who contemplate so dreadful a doom. "Thus," concludes Bildad, "it befalleth the dwellings of the unrighteous, and the place of him that knew not—recognized and honoured not—God" (vers. 20, 21).

Detaching this address from its inappropriate application to the sufferer, it is in itself a noble piece of warning and exhortation. Let us gather from it a few lessons. 1. The curse of the wicked is the extinction of the light of God, who is the Light and Brightness of the righteous (vers. 5, *sqq.*; Ps. xxxvi. 9, 10; cxix. 105). The light, again, may be taken as a figure for the clear knowledge of man's destiny, a clear consciousness in the whole life (Matt. vi. 22, 23). Then the light in the tent enhances the figure, and

beautifully points to this clear consciousness in the daily relations of the house. 2. (Vers. 17, *sqq.*) The memory a man leaves behind is not of so much consequence as the consciousness in life of being known to God. There are many true and hidden ones in the world, whose deeds are done in secret for God's sake (John iii. 21); and many godless ones, who make so great a stir and noise in the world that they are talked of after they are gone. It is a peculiar blessing to the child of God if he be made an example to any, and after his death a sweet savour ascends from his life to God's praise (Prov. x. 7). 3. The repeated descriptions of the doom of the ungodly are intended to quell our envy at the sight of unhallowed prospering, and direct our thoughts to the inward, the only real life. How can we judge whether any one is a true fearer of God? Not from his religious observances, not from the external fortunes which befall him, not from his individual good works; but from the *faith* which he owns, from the whole direction of his life to the Divine, from the frame of mind in which he dies (Ps. lxxiii. 17, 19, etc.; Wohlfarth).—J.

Vers. 5—14.—*The fruits of impiety.* Again Bildad speaks. He is not the sufferer, but the judge. He who came as a comforter utters but miserable words in the ears of the afflicted one. His words are true in themselves, but wrongly applied. Justly he describes the fruits of impiety.

I. TO THE IMPIOUS THE LIGHT OF PROSPERITY IS EXCHANGED FOR THE DARKNESS OF MISFORTUNE. His "lamp is put out." Sorrowfulness, sooner or later, overtakes him. For a time he is in great prosperity; but his sin finds him out. The ill-gotten gain of ungodliness has no blessing upon it, but a withering curse. Sooner or later the heyday of wicked rejoicing is exchanged for the blackness of dark night. Universal experience affirms this. It is a just punishment of wrong, and a warning to the tempted; while it admonishes the obedient, and declares "there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

II. THE EVILLY FORMED PURPOSE OF IMPIETY FAILS. His "steps are straitened," how strong soever they may seem to be. Even his very counsel itself shall be a stumbling-block to cast the wicked down. The hope cherished without God must be disappointed; the selfish design is itself a trap for the feet of the ungodly.

III. IMPIETY ENTANGLES IN DIFFICULTIES. "The snare is laid for him in the ground." The whole kingdom of right and truth is against him. Judgment waits on his steps. Sooner or later his feet will be in "the trap" that is laid "for him in the way." His course is not a plain, direct, clear course. His motives are confused. He hedges himself with difficulties. One wrong exposes him to another. At last "the gin takes him by the heel."

IV. IMPIETY EXCITES TO FEAR AND DREAD. "Terrors make him afraid on every side." The awakened conscience makes a coward of him. He fears the rustling of the leaf. Judgment is passed in the secret chambers of his soul. He cannot escape.

V. IMPIETY WASTES THE STRENGTH AND BRINGS THE LIFE DOWN TO DESTRUCTION. Sin is the transgression of law. Laws of life cannot be broken without the health failing. An impious spirit, unruled and uncontrolled by righteous principle, will pursue evil and dangerous courses, will yield to evil habits, and the strength of the life will be undermined. Then "the firstborn of death shall devour his strength." He becomes the prey of destruction. He is brought "to the king of terrors." Thus the course of impiety ends in ignominy, shame, and destruction. "This is the portion of their cup." Darkness, difficulty, fear, wasted purpose and wasted strength finally issuing in death, are the inevitable fruits of impiety.—R. G.

Ver. 15.—*The home of the wicked insecure.* The blessing of the Lord is upon "the habitation of the just." This is the reward of righteousness. But the Divine judgment against the wicked is shown in permitting his house to become desolate. One of the oft-repeated promises to Israel is the blessing of the Lord upon the habitation. But "the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked." The practice of iniquity tends to destruction. It has no element of stability in it. The habitation of the wicked is insecure because—

1. IT LACKS THE DEFENCE OF RIGHT PRINCIPLES. The righteousness which exalteth a nation establishes a house On the health, the pursuits, the habits, the business,

the family, right principles exert a beneficent influence. The absence of them is the precursor of evil of all kinds. The wall is broken down; protection is wanting. The home is a prey to evil.

II. IT LACKS THE PROMISE OF THE DIVINE PROTECTION AND BLESSING. It is as a field unwatered. There is no spring of hope within it. In the blessing of the Lord lies hidden the secret germ of all true prosperity, and all safety and permanence. Where that blessing is not, the house is as a tender plant unsheltered beneath a scorching sun. The Divine providence cannot be expected to work for the promotion of ends directly contrary to its own. The whole world, with its innumerable laws and its wise administration, is on the side of right, on the side of virtue and goodness. The blessing of the Lord, which makes the field to be fruitful, makes the abode of the righteous to be an abode of safety, of peace, and of blessing. The home of wickedness has none of these things.

III. The home of the wicked finds NO ENCOURAGEMENT TO ITS PROSPERITY IN THE GOOD WILL OF MEN AROUND. The evil companions are not trustworthy. They turn aside as a deceitful bow. They are as likely to rejoice and make sport out of their companion's downfall as to pity him under it; while the ungodly, having separated himself from the righteous, can find no sympathetic spirit amongst them. That the home of evil should be broken up is rather a cause of rejoicing, for it is the putting aside a cause of evil. This is the portion of the man that maketh not God his trust. He fights against his own best interests. He forsakes the only true and safe way. He puts himself in opposition to the great forces of righteousness which ever in the end prevail. He links his interests with that on which the withering curse of God rests, and "brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation." "His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off."—R. G.

Vers. 16—21.—*The curse upon the family of the wicked.* The permanent continuance of the family was one of the most coveted blessings of Eastern nations. Very deeply was this embedded in the minds of the peoples. It was, therefore, a signal curse of God to cut off the remembrance of a family from the earth. With cruel error Bildad points to the cutting off of Job's family—at least, such is the presumption, otherwise his words are inappropriate here—and he seems to charge upon Job the sin of which the punishment was to be found in the death of his children. That Bildad states a true principle of Divine retribution all agree; his error was in its application. The cutting off the family of the ungodly is—

I. A PRINCIPLE OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENT AGAINST EVIL-DOING. It is frequently announced in Holy Scripture. God, the jealous God, visits "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." It is part of his holy and wise and just retribution. As he blesses the sons of the faithful for their fathers' sakes, so he visits upon the children the offences of their fathers. The evil-doer withers as a plant without water. "His roots shall be dried up beneath." Therefore his branches spread not; but they are "cut off." The remembrance of him perishes from the earth, and his name from the street (ver. 17). He dies away without descendant and without remembrance.

II. This judgment is seen to be A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE OF WRONG-DOING. For evil is visited in various ways by the avenging Nemesis that hovers over all life. Evil undermines the health; it tends to habits and pursuits which are destructive of the peace and security and progress of home. It puts man in conflict with his neighbour, and so men drive the evil-doer "from light into darkness." He is "chased out of the world." Even should his posterity be perpetuated, it is lost to sight. It sinks down in the world till it sinks out of view.

III. This judgment STANDS IN DIRECT CONTRAST TO THE LOT OF THE RIGHTEOUS—the man who knoweth God. Over his house is the Divine protection. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." The blessing of God rests upon the home and the doings of the righteous. Even though chastisement and calamity may fall upon him, they do not destroy him; rather, he, as a pruned tree, groweth the more and more fruitful. God's promise is unto the good, and unto their children after them. The family of the good man has the advantage of a holy example. They are screened from a thousand perils, while

innumerable blessings descend upon them in response to the prayer of faith. This will in the end be proved to be true of Job.

IV. These judgments STAND AS A WARNING TO ALL PARENTS. They make the duty of parental piety more and more obvious. They illustrate the solemn responsibility of heads of houses, since their doings descend in their effects upon their children. They owe it to their offspring that they so live as rightly and beneficently to affect their lives. The blessing of God which rests upon the just, and the curse and condemnation of God upon the evil, are warnings to all. Upon those the eye of God rests, but upon these the curse of God. The abodes of wickedness, over which no blessing from on nigh hovers, are abodes of death and destruction. "Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God."—R. G.

Ver. 4.—*The individual need and the universal order.* Bildad accuses Job of being unreasonable in expecting that the universal order should bend to suit a man's individual need. He suggests a common difficulty in regard to the harmony between the particular and the general in the dispensations of Providence.

I. THE INDIVIDUAL MAN IS TEMPTED TO THINK SUPREMELY OF HIS OWN NEED. We are all naturally self-centred, and trouble magnifies our sense of personality and peculiarity. Thus it comes about that each person is inclined to feel his own wants as of paramount importance, and to expect that the whole order of things must shape itself to meet his requirements. If that is not the case, and the world goes on in its large way, treating him as but a unit among the millions, a drop in the ocean of humanity, he feels himself slighted and wronged. A more reasonable view of the whole of God's world and its interests should remove this foolish notion; but it can only be conquered when its moral character is attacked, and selfishness is made to give place to love.

II. GOD GOVERNS THE WORLD FOR THE GOOD OF THE WHOLE CREATION. We cannot judge of it till we can take a large and fair view of the wide field. The shadow which makes a corner look gloomy by itself is necessary for the completion of the whole picture. God is not partial, selecting one for favour and neglecting a multitude. He is not like the aristocratic Roman, who looked down with scornful indifference on the ignoble *plebs*. There is nothing so democratic as nature. Here all alike are under exactly the same laws. As the great ship ploughs her way through the ocean, though children are crying and women are ill, the watch calls out his cheery word, "All's well!" for the vessel is going right in spite of these individual distresses.

III. THE GENERAL CONSTITUTION OF THE WORLD CANNOT BE UPSET TO SUIT INDIVIDUAL NEEDS. Should the earth be depopulated for the sake of one man's convenience? That is Bildad's extravagant way of putting the thought; but the extravagance is only a magnifying of an idea which is foolish even within the smallest dimensions. That a man should ever expect a rock to move out of his path is absurd. As the massive rock will not stir, and as the traveller must either climb over it or go round it, so the course of nature generally will not budge before man's will. He may dash himself against it, but the results will only be bruises and pain. As God has made all things well, and as the laws of nature make for life and welfare, it is a matter of profound thankfulness that foolish, selfish men cannot set them aside.

IV. THE INDIVIDUAL MAN IS HELPED THROUGH THE GENERAL COURSE OF THE WHOLE WORLD. There is a special providence. God does not deal with masses, but with men. The very hairs of our head are all numbered. It is in accordance with God's perfect mind that he should so govern the whole that the result should be good for each. We have to learn to take our places in the great family of God with humility and sympathy for our brethren. Then we shall see that the rules of the household, which cannot be set aside to suit our whims and capricious fancies, are really good for us. It is better the rock should not be carried away. We are trained and strengthened by having to overcome the difficulty. Finally, it is in accordance with these principles that—through his atonement which magnifies the Law and makes it honourable—Christ brings a salvation for each soul which does not disarrange the general course of God's government of the universe.—W. F. A.

Vers. 5, 6.—*The light extinguished.* This is a favourite idea of Bildad's, that occurs

more than once in his harangue (*e.g.* ver. 18). As usual, we may here follow the imagery of the Shuhite without applying it to Job. Wickedness extinguishes light.

I. THE LIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE. Bad men may be learned and good men may be ignorant in regard to the knowledge of the schools and the world. But there is a deeper knowledge from which sin excludes, a light to which wickedness simply blinds the eye. 1. *The knowledge of God.* Spiritual knowledge depends on sympathy. But God is holy. Therefore the unholy, being out of sympathy with him, cannot understand his thoughts or his ways. 2. *The knowledge of goodness.* The wicked life is spent in a state of ignorance concerning the very nature of the Christian life. No one knows what that better life is till he has tried to live it. 3. *The knowledge of the largest truth.* Sin degrades and narrows the soul. It shuts off that wide, comprehensive vision which is only possible when passion and lust and all dark experiences are removed.

II. THE LIGHT OF LOVE. All sin is selfishness. The wicked man degrades the very name of love. Its true meaning is quite unknown to him; or if it dawn upon him in his better moments, as when he takes his little child upon his knee and looks into its innocent eyes, it is like a light from a far-off world, which only makes the foul darkness of the regions his soul inhabits the more visible to his startled apprehension.

III. THE LIGHT OF JOY. There is a mad pleasure in sin, and for a while it seems to fulfil its deceitful promises. But it is not long before its dupe discovers his folly, and finds that his so-called pleasure is a mockery. Of real unalloyed gladness he has none. There are bitter dregs at the bottom of the cup of self-indulgent pleasure which he drinks so greedily. All that he delights in is superficial, transient, unreal. When he has made the most of it, it leaves the deeper hunger of his soul unsatisfied.

IV. THE LIGHT OF LIFE. Light vitalizes; darkness is akin to death. The sinful soul is on the road to the gates of darkness, through which the road leads to the dreadful death which is its rightful wages. Already much of the light of life has faded away, and dim shadows as from the tomb hover about the career of wickedness. He who has chosen sin for his inheritance has chosen a sunless territory overshadowed by the dark wings of death.

V. THE LIGHT OF GOD'S FAVOUR. When God lifts up his countenance upon any one, his light shines forth; for God is Light (1 John i. 5). But the wickedness that offends the Law of God necessarily removes the light of his favour. A certain temporary prosperity may remain, so that the foolish sinner may think himself a favourite of fortune. But there is no grace of God in it; and even in the glaring brightness of its immediate presence it is possible to see the meretricious tinsel, which is very different from the true glory of God's goodness.—W. F. A.

Vers. 8—10.—*The sinner entrapped by his own feet.* According to Bildad's representation, the wicked man needs no huntsman to run him to earth. His own fatuous course will lead him to ruin, his own foolish feet walk into the snare.

I. THE READY SNARE. "The snare is laid for him in the ground." 1. *Its author.* It is laid *for him.* He does not make and set it; he does not know where it is. If he knew, of course he would avoid it. He does not even think of its existence. Were he to do so, he would be on his guard. Another has laid the snare. Man has a great enemy, watching to pounce on him—a robber of souls, who sets traps and gins for the unwary. Let us be on our guard. Like the Pilgrim, we are on the enchanter's ground; this earth has become our foe's territory. 2. *Its character.* A snare is a hidden device. The net is set among the bushes, the wires are hidden by the grass. Men are deluded into ruin. Deceitful appearances lure them to destruction. 3. *Its condition.* The snare is already laid. If we are not ready to meet our foe, he is ready for us. No one can accuse Satan of dilatoriness. He is beforehand with his schemes. He was prepared to entrap the first man. The snare was ready almost as soon as Eden was planted. 4. *Its position.* "In the way." (1) The bad man's way. This is its most usual place. The snares are most numerous on the broad road. (2) The common way. The snares are also to be found on the narrow way that leads to life. The Christian is not out of danger. Bunyan's enchanted ground lay right in the road to the Celestial City. We do not escape the dangers of temptation by becoming Christians.

II. THE UNWARY FEET. The wicked man walks straight into the snare. Here is

the difference between this man and the good man. There are snares about the path of the man of God; but a Divine light reveals them, and a Divine hand draws him back from his great peril. It is otherwise with the godless man. Note the reasons why his feet go straight for the snare. 1. *Darkness.* His light is put out (ver. 5). If he started with a lantern, the foul atmosphere through which he has travelled has extinguished it. Now that he needs it in the place of peril, it is but a useless impediment. 2. *Desertion of God.* We are too blind to see all the snares that are set for our feet, but we may have the help of an unerring Guide. The sinner rejects the heavenly Guide. In proud independence he prefers to go alone. 3. *Proneness to evil.* The sinner sees a fascination in the region of the snare. Perhaps it is set in a bed of flowers, or in an orchard of fruit. It may be that some pleasant shady dell conceals it, or possibly it is hidden by a mossy couch that invites repose. At all events, it is most deceptive and powerful where sin most abounds. 4. *Destiny.* A sort of fatality dogs the footsteps of the sinner. Start how he may, he is sure to direct his feet at last straight for the snare. He is like one mesmerized. He can but walk into the net. The hideous explanation of his fascination for ruin is that he is no longer his own master. He has made himself the slave of Satan. Yet even he may find safety in the mighty deliverance of the Christ who came to destroy the works of the devil.—W. F. A.

Ver. 14.—*The king of terrors.* Men regard death as the king of terrors. Let us consider first the grounds of this notion, and then how it may be dispelled.

I. LET US CONSIDER WHY DEATH IS REGARDED AS THE KING OF TERRORS. Men instinctively think of death as "the grisly terror."

> "I fled, and cried out, 'Death!'
> Hell trembled at the hideous name, and sighed
> From all her caves, and back resounded, 'Death!'"

1. *It is opposed to the natural love of life.* "All that a man hath will he give for his life." Therefore death appears as his enemy. Every living creature shuns it. The fear of it makes a tragedy of the chase. 2. *It is irresistible.* A veritable monarch. We may maintain a state of siege for a time, but we know we must all capitulate at last. When death storms the citadel in real earnest, no power can keep it out. 3. *Its territory is unknown.* The mystery of death adds to its terrors. If we saw more we might fear less. We launch our vessel on a dark sea, not knowing what surges beat on the further shore. 4. *It comes in pain.* We often say that the worst is over with the poor sufferer before the end has come. The bitterness of death has passed before death itself has been reached. Still there is suffering at the end of most lives, and we instinctively shrink from this. We cannot bring ourselves to face the thought of the death-struggle. 5. *It takes us from all the light and joy of earth.* The natural love of life is confirmed by experience. To die is "to lie in cold obstruction." All the sunshine and flowers of this fair world are gone, all the sweetness of companionship with the loved on earth. The soul is severed from its earthly delights. 6. *It comes to each singly.* Each soul must venture alone into the dread unknown. 7. *It ushers us into future judgment.* "After death the judgment." The sinner who dares not give an account of himself before God dreads to hear the summons from the messenger of the unseen. "The sting of death is sin."

II. LET US SEE HOW DEATH CAN BE ROBBED OF ITS TERRORS. Christ dethrones the king of terrors, and wrests his dark kingdom away, flooding it with the light of his grace. The Christian can do more than the Roman hero and the Stoic philosopher who had learnt to meet death "with an equal mind." He can say, "To me . . . to die is gain." 1. *Christ removes the causes of the fear of death.* He does not lull the fear as with an opiate. He dissipates it by abolishing its source, as one dissipates a malarious fog by draining the marsh from which it rises. He goes to the root by conquering sin, which is the most fundamental cause of the terror of death. Bringing pardon for past sin, he dispels the alarm of future judgment; and bringing purification of soul, he removes the indwelling sin that always shrinks from death as the foe of man. Then Christ helps us to face the pain, the darkness, and the mystery of death, by assuring us of his own supporting presence: "It is I; be not afraid." 2. *Christ throws light on the region beyond death.* He would not have us fix our attention on death. That is but a

transient experience. At the worst it is a dark door to be passed through. The Christian will never dwell in the kingdom of death. To him death is

"That golden key
That opes the palace of eternity."

There is a triumph over death for those who, sleeping in Christ, wake to the life eternal. For them the king of terrors has ceased to be. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. xv. 26).—W. F. A.

Ver. 16.—*Root and branch.* Bildad dwells upon his favourite topic of the withering doom of the wicked. It is complete—root and branch are destroyed. A truth again, though inapplicable to Job.

I. THE ROOTS DRIED UP. The roots stand for the sources of life and strength. Roots nourish the tree and hold it in its place. If they fail, all else must perish. 1. *The roots are out of sight.* The most important things are not the most prominent. The secret springs of the soul are of vital interest. All that is visible to the eye may be untouched; yet if the hidden roots of our being fail we must be utterly undone. 2. *The roots depend on nourishment.* They are dried up for lack of moisture in the soil. There may be no defect in the roots; yet if the soil is drained dry they cannot perform their natural function of nourishing the soul. We are all dependent on what is outside us, in soul as well as in body. If the food of the soul is withdrawn, if the water of life no longer flows near to the roots of our spiritual being, no vigour of constitution, no inherent personal life, can survive. 3. *The waters may fail.* The course of the river may be deflected, or there may be a season of drought. We have nothing in ourselves or in the constitution of things to guarantee a continuance of supply in this case of our deepest wants. We have no right to that supply, no claim on the grace of God. The hand that gives may withhold. Therefore our continued prosperity depends absolutely on God's continued favour. The insolent and rebellious independence that forfeits God's grace withers the roots of the soul.

II. THE BRANCH CUT OFF. The branch stands for the external growth. It is seen by all, snowed with blossoms and freshening with new green in the spring, or laden with luscious fruit in the autumn. When the root is dried up, leaves and fruit wither on the branch. But a more untimely fate may overtake it. It may be severed from the tree. Perhaps it is too stout and tough to be torn off in the gale, but it cannot resist the woodman's axe. 1. *The branch is cut off by an external calamity.* This is what had happened to Job. His prosperity was suddenly wrenched away from him. The family into which his life had branched out was smitten; this branch was cut off from the parent stem. What we most love, rejoice in, and pride ourselves upon may be removed by the hand of death, or by some misfortune of life. 2. *The cutting off of the branch may not be an unmitigated evil.* It may be a pruning process. The tree may be running to wood rather than producing fruit. Mere growth of wealth and external prosperity may be taking the place of fruit-bearing in regard to the real good of life. Then it is to be observed that pruning a tree is not felling it. Though the branch is cut off, the trunk is left, and the life of the tree will yet be seen in a new and healthier growth. We must not despair at external disaster. If the life of God is in us, we shall survive it, and even triumph over it. 3. *The most fatal condition is when the dying of the roots goes with the cutting off of the branch.* If the internal resources are dried up when external calamity falls upon us, our condition is desperate. There is then nothing to fall back upon. External ruin only crowns and completes internal decay.

CONCLUSION. The gospel of Christ is as deep-searching and as far-reaching as the evil of sin. It saves roots and branches, giving life to the soul, and also a Divine growth and prosperity.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIX.

Vers. 1—29.—Job begins his answer to Bildad's second speech by an expostulation against the unkindness of his friends, who break him in pieces, and torture him, with their reproaches (vers. 1—5). He then once more, and more plainly than on any other occasion, recounts his woes. (1) His severe treatment by God (vers. 6—13); (2) his harsh usage by his relatives and friends (vers. 14—19); and (3) the pain caused him by his disease (ver. 20); and appeals to his friends on these grounds for pity and forbearance (vers. 21, 22). Next, he proceeds to make his great avowal, prefacing it with a wish for its preservation as a perpetual record (vers. 23, 24); the avowal itself follows (vers. 25—27); and the speech terminates with a warning to his "comforters," that if they continue to persecute him, a judgment will fall upon them (vers. 28, 29).

Vers. 1, 2.—**Then Job answered and said, How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?** Job is no Stoic. He is not insensible to his friends' attacks. On the contrary, their words sting him, torture him, "break him in pieces," wound his soul in its tenderest part. Bildad's attack had been the cruellest of all, and it drives him to expostulation (vers. 2—5) and entreaty (vers. 21, 22).

Ver. 3.—**These ten times have ye reproached me.** (For the use of the expression "ten times" for "many times," "frequently," see Gen. xxxi. 7, 41; Numb. xiv. 22; Neh. iv. 12; Dan. i. 20, etc.) **Ye are not ashamed that ye make yourselves strange to me;** rather, *that ye deal hardly with me* (see the Revised Version). The verb used does not occur elsewhere, but seems to have the meaning of "ill use" or "ill treat" (see Professor Lee's 'Commentary on the Book of Job,' p. 328).

Ver. 4.—**And be it indeed that I have erred;** or, *done wrong*. Job at no time maintains his impeccability. Sins of infirmity he frequently pleads guilty to, and specially to intemperate speech (see ch. vi. 26; ix. 14, 20, etc.). **Mine error remaineth with myself;** *i.e.* "it remains mine; and I suffer the punishment."

Ver. 5.—**If indeed ye will magnify yourselves against me.** If you have no sense of justice, and are disinclined to pay any heed to my expostulations; if you intend still to insist on magnifying yourselves against me, and bringing up against me my "reproach;" then let me make appeal to your pity. Consider my whole condition—how I stand with God, who persecutes me and "destroys" me (ver. 10); how I stand with my relatives and such other friends as I have beside yourselves, who disclaim and forsake me (vers. 13—19); and how I am conditioned with respect to my body, emaciated and on the verge of death (ver. 20); and then, if neither your friendship nor your sense of justice will induce you to abstain from persecuting me, abstain at any rate for pity's sake (ver. 21). **And plead against me my reproach.** Job's special "reproach" was that God had laid his hand upon him. This was a manifest fact, and could not be denied. His "comforters" concluded from it that he was a monster of wickedness.

Ver. 6.—**Know now that God hath overthrown me;** or, *perverted me*—"subverted me in my cause" (see Lam. iii. 6). **And hath compassed me with his net.** Professor Lee thinks that the net, or rather noose, intended by the rare word חרם is the *lasso*, which was certainly employed in war (Herod., vii. 85), and probably also in hunting, from ancient times in the East. Bildad had insinuated that Job had fallen into his own snare (ch. xviii. 7—9); Job replies that the snare in which he is taken is from God.

Ver. 7.—**Behold, I cry out of wrong;** *i.e.* "I cry out that I am wronged." I complain that sufferings are inflicted on me that I have not deserved. This has been Job's complaint from the first (ch. iii. 26; vi. 29; ix. 17, 22; x. 3, etc.). **But I am not heard;** *i.e.* "I am not listened to—my cry is not answered." **I cry aloud, but there is no judgment;** or, *no decision*—"no sentence." All Job's appeals to God have elicited no reply from him. He still keeps silence. Job appears from the first to have anticipated such a theophany as ultimately takes place (ch. xxxviii.—xli.) and vindicates his character.

Ver. 8.—**He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass** (comp. ch. iii. 23; xiii. 27; Hos. ii. 6), **and he hath set darkness in my paths.** Job complains of the want of light; in his heart he cries, Ἐν δὲ φάει καὶ δλεσσον. Nothing vexes him so much as his inability to understand why he is afflicted.

Ver. 9.—**He hath stripped me of my glory.** The glory which he had in his prosperity; not exactly that of a king, but that of a great sheikh or emir—of one who was on a par with the noblest of those about him (see ch. i. 3). **And taken the crown from my head.** Not an actual crown, which sheikhs

do not wear, but a metaphor for dignity or honour.

Ver. 10.—**He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone**; or, *broken me down.* Job compares himself to a city, the walls of which are attacked on every side and broken down. His ruin is complete—he perishes. **And mine hope hath he removed like a tree**; rather, *torn up like a tree.* Job's "hope" was, no doubt, to lead a tranquil and a godly life, surrounded by his relatives and friends, in favour with God and man, till old age came, and he descended, like a ripe shock of corn (ch. v. 26), to the grave. This hope had been "torn up by the roots" when his calamities fell upon him.

Ver. 11.—**He hath also kindled his wrath against me.** It is not what has happened to him in the way of affliction and calamity that so much oppresses and crushes the patriarch, as the *cause* to which he, not unnaturally, ascribes his afflictions, viz. the wrath of God. Participating in the general creed of his time, he believes his sufferings to come direct from God, and to be proofs of God's severe anger against him. He is not, however, prepared on this account to renounce God. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (ch. xiii. 15) is still his inward sustaining thought and guiding principle. **And he counteth me unto him as one of his enemies.** Job felt himself treated as an enemy of God, and supposed that God must consider him such. He either had no glimpse of the cheering truth, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Heb. xii. 6), or he could not imagine that such woes as his were mere chastenings.

Ver. 12.—**His troops come together** (comp. ch. xvi. 13, "His archers compass me round about"). It seems to Job that God brings against him a whole army of assailants, who join their forces together and proceed to the attack. Clouds of archers, troops of ravagers, come about him, and fall upon him from every side. **And raise up their way against me**; rather, *and cast up their bank against me.* Job still regards himself as a besieged city (see ver. 10), and represents his assailants as raising embankments to hem him in, or mounds from which to batter his defences (compare the Assyrian sculptures, *passim*). **And encamp round about my tabernacle**; *i.e.* "my tent," or "my dwelling."

Ver. 13.—**He hath put my brethren far from me.** Job had actual "brothers" (ch. xlii. 11), who forsook him and "dealt deceitfully" with him (ch. vi. 15) during the time of his adversity, but were glad enough to return to him and "eat bread with him" in his later prosperous life. Their alienation from him during the period of his afflictions he here regards as among the trials laid upon him by God. Compare the similar woe of Job's great Antitype (John vii. 5, "For neither did his brethren believe on him"). **And mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me** (comp. Ps. xxxviii. 11; lxix. 9; lxxxviii. 8, 18). The desertion of the afflicted by their fair-weather friends is a standing topic with the poets and moralists of all ages and nations. Job was not singular in this affliction.

Ver. 14.—**My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me** (see Ps. xli. 9).

Ver. 15.—**They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger.** Even the inmates of his house, male and female, his servants, guards, retainers, handmaids, and the like, looked on him and treated him as if unknown to them. **I am an alien in their sight.** Nay, not only as if unknown, but "as an alien," *i.e.* a foreigner.

Ver. 16.—**I called my servant, and he gave me no answer.** Astounding insolence in an Oriental servant, or rather *slave* (עבד), who should have hung upon his master's words, and striven to anticipate his wishes. **I intreated him with my mouth.** Begging him probably for some service which was distasteful, and which he declined to render.

Ver. 17.—**My breath is strange to my wife.** The breath of a sufferer from elephantiasis has often a fetid odour which is extremely disagreeable. Job's wife, it would seem, held aloof from him on this account, so that he lost the tender offices which a wife is the fittest person to render. **Though I intreated for the children's sake of mine own body.** This translation is scarcely tenable, though no doubt it gives to the words used a most touching and pathetic sense. Translate, *and I am loathsome to the children of my mother's womb*; i.e. to my brothers and sisters (comp. ch. xlii. 11). It would seem that they also avoided Job's presence, or at any rate any near approach to him. Under the circumstances, this is perhaps not surprising; but Job, in his extreme isolation, felt it keenly.

Ver. 18.—**Yea, young children despised me.** (So Rosenmüller, Canon Cook, and the Revised Version.) Others translate, "the vile," or "the perverse" (comp. ch. xvi. 11). But the rendering of the Authorized Version receives support from ch. xxi. 11. The forwardness of rude and ill-trained children to take part against God's saints appears later in the history of Elisha (2 Kings ii. 23, 24). **I arose, and they spake against me**; or, *when I arise, they speak against me* (compare the Revised Version).

Ver. 19.—**All my inward friends abhorred me**; literally, *all the men of my counsel*; i.e. all those whom I was accustomed to consult, and whose advice I was wont to take, in any difficulty, by keeping aloof, have shown

their abhorrence of me. And they whom I loved are turned against me (comp. Ps. xli. 9; lv. 12—14; Jer. xx. 10). The saints of God in all ages, and however differently circumstanced, are assailed by almost the same trials and temptations. Whether it be Job, or David, or Jeremiah, or One greater than any of them, the desertion and unkindness of their nearest and dearest, as the bitterest of all sufferings, is almost sure to be included in their cup, which they must drink to the dregs, if they are to experience to the full "the precious uses of adversity."

Ver. 20.—**My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh.** Here the third source of Job's misery is brought forward—his painful and incurable disease. This has brought him to such a pitch of emaciation that his bones seem to adhere to the tightened skin, and the scanty and shrunken muscles, that cover them (comp. ch. xxxiii. 21 and Lam. iv. 8). Such emaciation of the general frame is quite compatible with the unsightly swelling of certain parts of the body which characterizes elephantiasis. **And I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.** The expression is, no doubt, proverbial, and signifies "*barely* escaped;" but its origin is obscure.

Ver. 21.—**Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O my friends.** On the enumeration of his various woes, Job's appeal for pity follows. We must not regard it as addressed merely to the three so-called "friends" (ch. ii. 11) or "comforters" (ch. xvi. 2), Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. It is an appeal to all those who are around him and about him, whose sympathies have been hitherto estranged (vers. 13—19), but whose regard he does not despair of winning back. Will they not, when they perceive the extremity and variety of his sufferings, be moved to compassion by them, and commiserate him in his day of calamity? **For the hand of God hath touched me.** To the "comforters" this is no argument. They deem him unworthy of pity on the very ground that he is "smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isa. liii. 4); since they hold that, being so smitten, he must have deserved his calamity. But to unprejudiced persons, not wedded to a theory, such an aggravation of his woe would naturally seem to render him a greater object of pity and compassion.

Ver. 22.—**Why do ye persecute me as God?** *i.e.* Why are ye as hard on me as God himself? If I have offended him, what have I done to offend you? **And are not satisfied with my flesh?** *i.e.* "devour my flesh, like wild beasts, and yet are not satisfied."

Ver. 23.—**Oh that my words were written!** It is questioned what words of his Job is so anxious to have committed to writing—those that precede the expression of the wish, or those that follow, or both. As there is nothing that is very remarkable in the preceding words, whereas the latter are among the most striking in the book, the general opinion has been that he refers to these last. It is now universally allowed, even by those whose date for Job is the most remote, that books were common long before his time, and so that he might naturally have been familiar with them. Writing is, of course, even anterior to books, and was certainly in use before B.C. 2000. The earliest writing was probably on stone or brick, and was perhaps in every case hieroglyphical. When writing on papyrus, or parchment, or the bark of trees, came into use, a cursive character soon superseded the hieroglyphical, though the latter continued to be employed for religious purposes, and for inscriptions on stone. **Oh that they were printed in a book!** rather, *inscribed*, or *engraved*. The impression of the characters below the surface of the writing material, as in the Babylonian and Assyrian clay-tablets, seems to be pointed at.

Ver. 24.—**That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!** A peculiar kind of rock-inscription, of which, so far as I know, no specimens remain, appears to be here alluded to. Job wished the characters of his record to be cut deep into the rock with an iron chisel, and the incision made to be then filled up with lead (compare the mediæval "brasses").

Ver. 25.—**For I know that my Redeemer liveth.** Numerous endeavours have been made to explain away the mysterious import of this verse. First, it is noted that a *goël* is any one who avenges or ransoms another, and especially that it is "the technical expression for the avenger of blood" (Froude, 'Short Stories,' vol. i. p. 284) so often mentioned in the Old Testament. It is suggested, therefore, that Job's real meaning may be that he expects one of his relatives to arise after his death as the avenger of his blood, and to exact retribution for it. But unless in the case of a violent death at the hands of a man, which was not what Job expected for himself, there could be no avenger of blood. Job has already expressed his desire to have a *thirdsman* between him and God (ch. ix. 32—35), which thirdsman can scarcely be other than a Divine Personage. In ch. xvi. 19 he has declared his conviction that "his *Witness* is in heaven." In ver. 21 of the same chapter he longs to have an *advocate* to plead his cause with God. In ch. xvii. 3 he calls upon God to be *Surety* for him. Therefore, as Dr. Stanley Leathes points out, "he has already recognized God as his *Judge*, his *Umpire*, his *Advocate*, his *Witness*, and his *Surety*, in some cases by formal confession of the fact, in others by earnest longing after, and aspiration for

some one to act in that capacity." After all this, it is not taking a very long step in advance to see and acknowledge in God his Goël, or "Redeemer." **And that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth**; rather, *and that at the last he shall stand up over my dust.* אַחֲרוֹן is not "one who comes after me," but, if a noun, "the last one," as רִאשׁוֹן is "the first one" (Isa. xliv. 6); if intended adverbially, "at the last"—*i.e.* at the end of all things. "At the latter day" is not an improper translation.

Ver. 26.—**And though after my skin worms destroy this body.** The supposed ellipsis of "worms" is improbable, as is also that of "body." Translate, *and after my skin has been thus destroyed*—"thus" meaning, "as you see it before your eyes." **Yet in my flesh shall I see God**; literally, *from my flesh*—scarcely, as Renan takes it, "without my flesh," or "away from my flesh"—"privé de ma chair;" but rather, "from the standpoint of my flesh"—"in my body," not "out of my body"—shall I see God. This may be taken merely as a prophecy of the theophany recorded in ch. xxxviii.—xlii. (see especially ch. xlii. 5). But the nexus with ver. 25, and the expressions there used—"at the last," and "he shall stand up over my dust"—fully justify the traditional exegesis, which sees in the passage an avowal by Job of his confidence that he will see God "*from* his body" at the resurrection.

Ver. 27.—**Whom I shall see for myself.** Not by proxy, *i.e.*, or through faith, or in a vision, but really, actually, *I* shall see him *for myself.* As Schultens observes, an unmistakable tone of exultation and triumph pervades the passage. **And mine eyes shall behold, and not another**; *i.e.* "not the eyes of another." I myself, retaining my personal identity, "the same true living man," shall with my own eyes look on my Redeemer. Though **my reins be consumed within me.** There is no "though" in the original. The clause is detached and independent, nor is it very easy to trace any connection between it and the rest of the verse. Schultens, however, thinks Job to mean that he is internally consumed by a burning desire to see the sight of which he has spoken. (So also Dr. Stanley Leathes.)

Ver. 28.—**But ye should say, Why persecute we him?** rather, *if ye shall say, How shall we persecute him?* That is to say, "If, after what I have said, ye continue bitter against me, and take counsel together as to the best way of persecuting me, then, **seeing the root of the matter** (*i.e.* the essence of piety) **is found in me**, be ye afraid," etc.

Ver. 29.—**Be ye afraid of the sword**; *i.e.* "the sword of God's justice, which will assuredly smite you if you persecute an innocent man." **For wrath** bringeth **the punishments of the sword**; rather, *for wrath is among the transgressions of the sword*; i.e. among the transgressions for which the sword is the fit punishment. It is "wrath" which leads Job's "comforters" to persecute him. **That ye may know** there is a judgment; or, *so that ye will know there is a judgment.* When the blow comes upon them they will recognize that it has come upon them on account of their ill treatment of their friend.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—22.—*Job to Bildad*: 1. *A reply, an appeal, a complaint.* I. JOB'S WRATHFUL REPLY TO HIS FRIENDS. Job accuses his three friends of: 1. *Irritating words.* (Ver. 2.) Their solemn addresses and eloquent descriptions were an exquisite torture, harder to endure than the miseries of elephantiasis. The cruel insinuations and unkind reproaches contained in their speeches crushed him more deeply and lacerated him more keenly than all the sharp strokes of evil fortune he had lately suffered. Wounds inflicted by the tongue are worse to heal than those given by the hand. "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword" (Prov. xii. 18); and to "talk to the grief of those whom God has wounded" (Ps. lxix. 26) is the severest of all kinds of persecution to sustain, as it is the wickedest of all sorts of crimes to commit. 2. *Persistent hostility.* (Ver. 3.) Not once or twice simply had they charged him with being a notorious criminal, but they had harped upon this same string *ad nauseam*; they had carried their insulting behaviour to the furthest limits; the force of their acrimonious opposition could not further go. Their reproaches had well-nigh broken his great heart; cf. the language of David, who in his sufferings was a type of Messiah (Ps. lxix. 20). 3. *Astounding callousness.* (Ver. 3.) Job was simply amazed at the cool indifference with which they could behold his sufferings, the unfeeling ease, if not the manifest delight, with which they could hurl their atrocious impeachments against him, and the utter insensibility which they displayed to his piteous appeals

—amazed that one who claimed to be a friend of his should so completely show himself to be

> "A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch
> Uncapable of pity, void and empty
> From any dram of mercy."
> ('The Merchant of Venice,' act iv. sc. 1.)

4. *Unnecessary cruelty.* (Ver. 4.) There was no "firm reason to be rendered" why they should thus remorselessly pursue him with their hate. They would not be called upon to expiate any of his unpunished crimes. Their theology and their saintly virtues would combine to shield them from that. Believing, as they did, that "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son," but that "the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. xviii. 20), there was no occasion to dread that any portion of the Divine retribution due to him would recoil on them. Hence they might have spared him any wanton aggravation of his woes. Job's language reminds us (1) that men may be guilty of sins of which they are unconscious; (2) that the only thing in which man can claim a true proprietorship on earth is his sin; (3) that in the ultimate issues of Divine government every man must bear his own burden; and (4) that this consideration should move a good man rather to commiserate than condemn the wicked. 5. *Arrogant assumption.* In "pleading against him his reproach," *i.e.* in urging the intolerable miseries he suffered as a proof of his guilt, they were "magnifying themselves against him" (ver. 5), *i.e.* tacitly boasting of their superior goodness. And as much perhaps as by anything in their language, the soul of Job was stung by the solemn Pharisaic aspect which sat upon their marble visages, and the atmosphere of awful sanctity in which they wrapt their holy persons. But true piety is ever meek and humble, never vaunteth herself, and is never puffed up, certainly never gloats over either the sins or the sufferings of others. A good man may magnify the grace of God that is in him (1 Cor. xv. 10), or the office that has been entrusted to him (Rom. xi. 13), but of himself he ever thinks with lowliness of mind, esteeming others better than himself (Phil. ii. 3), whom he regards but as "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. iii. 8), if not as "the chief of sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15). 6. *Conspicuous falsehood.* Bildad had alleged that Job, by his incorrigible wickedness, had been the author of his own misfortunes, that he had been cast into a net by his own feet (ch. xviii. 8), that his calamity had come upon him as the recompense of his own crime; and to this Job replies with a direct contradiction, insisting that it was God who had flung his net about him, and that, if their theory of retribution was correct, God had wrested his cause and wronged him in so doing (ver. 6). That Job's feet were entangled in a net, the testimony of Job's senses proclaimed. That this net had been cast around him by God, the eye of his faith could see. That God could not have done so on account of his wickedness, the inner witness of Job's spirit cried aloud. Hence this theory of the friends, which sometimes lay across his soul like a nightmare, was a blunder, and the allegation of the friends that he was being punished for his iniquity was a lie.

II. JOB'S DOLEFUL COMPLAINT AGAINST GOD. 1. *Treating him like a criminal.* And that in respect of two particulars. (1) Assailing him with violence: "Behold, I cry out of wrong;" literally, "I cry out Violence!" (ver. 7), "like a wayfarer surprised by brigands" (Cox). A strong metaphor, which may describe the suddenness and severity of the saint's affliction, but never can apply to the Divine motive or purpose in afflicting, since God doth not afflict the children of men willingly, but for their profit (Lam. iii. 33; Heb. xii. 10); never rushes on his people like a giant (ch. xvi. 14), or overpowers them like a highwayman, but chastises and corrects them as a father (Heb. xii. 7); and in all his inflictions never does them wrong or evinces hate, but confers on them a blessed privilege and manifests towards them the purest love (Heb. xii. 6) (2) Disregarding his outcries, withholding from him sympathy and succour: "Behold, I cry, but I am not heard;" extending to him neither hearing nor redress: "I cry aloud, but there is no judgment" (ver. 7). A complaint, again, which may sometimes receive colour from the saint's own thoughts and feelings, but which never can be really true of God, who never fails to sympathize with his people in affliction (Ps. ciii. 13; Isa. lxiii. 9; Heb. iv. 15), never disregards the prayer of the destitute (Ps. cii.

17), never declines to aid them in distress (Isa. xli. 10; xliii. 2; 2 Cor. xii. 9), and certainly never denies them justice unless to give them mercy. 2. *Punishing him as a convict.* (Vers. 8—10.) And that by: (1) Consigning him to prison (ver. 8). The image that of a cell, or narrow space, bounded by a high wall or fence, shutting out the light of heaven, and shutting in the captive it confines (cf. ch. iii. 23; xiii. 27). Two frequent effects of affliction: to darken the soul's look—its inward look by bringing sin to remembrance (1 Kings xvii. 18), its upward look by hiding God's face (ch. xiii. 24; Ps. xlii. 3, 10), its onward look by beclouding the path of duty (Isa. l. 10); and to shorten the soul's way, so that it can neither escape from its misery nor enjoy its wonted freedom in religious exercises or in ordinary duties, but feels itself shut up, first to absolute submission, and then to cheerful resignation. (2) Arraying him in prison robes (ver. 9). Job's robe and crown were his righteousness and integrity (ch. xxix. 14). Of these he had been divested, and clothed in the unsightly as well as humiliating garment of affliction, which was to him, what a prison dress is to a convict, an outward badge of guilt. Job in this, however, doubly erred, first in thinking that affliction was either a proof of condemnation or a mark of degradation, and secondly in supposing that he had really lost either his crown or his robe. If by these latter he alluded merely to his former prosperity, that was certainly taken from him; and so whatever of an earthly nature man may glory in—wealth, honour, friends—God can strip him of at any moment. But the crown of righteousness which God sets upon a saint's head is never wantonly displaced, and the garment of salvation which God wraps round a saint's person can never, without his own fault, be removed. (3) Extinguishing his hope of liberty (ver. 10). Like a ruined house whose stones lie scattered on every side, like a great tree plucked up by the roots, Job had no further expectation of seeing the splendid edifice of his prosperity rebuilt, or the expiring life of his sad heart revived. Like the prisoner of Chillon, he had no earthly hope of returning to freedom.

> "I had no thought, no feeling—none;
> Among the stones I stood a stone,
> And was scarce conscious what I wist,
> As shrubless crags within the mist," etc.
> (Byron, 'Prisoner of Chillon,' ix.)

Such a picture is true, not of the saint in the correction-house of affliction (Ps. xxxiv. 17), not even of the sinner in the prison-house of condemnation, who is yet a prisoner of hope (Zech. ix. 12), but only of the lost in the dungeon of everlasting death. 3. *Counting him for an enemy.* (1) Regarding him with anger (ver. 11). Against this conclusion, however, Job manfully struggled, especially when replying to the friends, and ultimately triumphed; but at such times as he fell back to brood upon his inward misery, or turned his weary face upward to God, the thought threatened to overmaster him (cf. ch. xiii. 24; xvi. 9). Yet all the while God was his real Friend, and regarded him with tenderest affection, which shows that God's dealings with his people are often full of painful and inexplicable mystery (Ps. lxxiii. 16; lxxvii. 19), that "behind a frowning providence" God frequently "hides a smiling face" (Rev. iii. 19), that God's people cannot always see the bright light which is in the cloud (ch. xxxvii. 21; John xiii. 7), and that God only is a competent Expounder of his own acts. (2) Besieging him with trouble (ver. 12). The magnificent imagery here employed is borrowed from the operations connected with a siege (*vide* Exposition). God's armies were the calamities that had befallen Job. Afflictions and the causes that produce them, diseases and the germs from which they spring, misfortunes and the instruments that bring them about, are all under God's command (Exod. viii. 8; ix. 6; xi. 4; 2 Kings xix. 35; Luke vii. 7), advancing and retiring as he directs. 4. *Cutting him off from human sympathy.* (Vers. 13—19.) A pitiful picture of abject degradation, even worse than that which Bildad predicted for the wicked man who should be chased from the world (ch. xviii. 19). Surrounded by kinsmen and relatives, and still attended by wife and servants, he is to one and all an object of supreme contempt. (1) Those immediately outside the circle of his household (vers. 13, 14), his "brethren" and "acquaintance," meaning probably his neighbours, with his "kinsfolk" and "familiar friends," who were, as distinguished from the former, his relatives, had abandoned him. (2) Those within the circle of his household, from whom better things might have been expected, had

followed their example. His domestics, not excepting the tender maidens whose sex might have "touched" them "with human gentleness and love," gave him no more obedience than a stranger. His body-servant, who was to him as Eliezer to Abraham (Gen. xxiv. 2), and the centurion's servant to his master (Luke vii. 2), must now be entreated for what was formerly performed at the slightest glance or gesture. Even his wife, the mother of his noble sons and fair daughters, now dead, had forsaken him, her delicate sensibilities unable to endure the offensive exhalations from his body. His own brothers, sons of the same womb, turned away from the intolerable stench. (3) In short, all who saw him poured on him supreme contempt. The boys, probably of neighbouring families or clans, laughed at his feeble efforts to raise himself or stand upon his ash-heap. His "inward friends," those to whom he confided his secret thoughts and plans, now abhorred him. His very friends, to whom he had given his love, meaning probably Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, had turned against him.

III. JOB'S PITEOUS APPEAL FOR HIMSELF. 1. *A pathetic representation.* (Ver. 20.) Indicating the ground of Job's appeal. Bodily disease and mental anguish had reduced him to a skeleton, so that his bones appeared through his skin; the second clause, a *crux interpretum* (*vide* Exposition), probably depicting extreme emaciation. His condition may remind us of the value of physical health, of its instability, and of the ease with which it can be made to consume away like a moth (Ps. xxxix. 11). 2. *A melting supplication.* (Ver. 21.) Expressive of the fervour of Job's appeal. It was not much he craved—only pity, and that on two pleas: (1) The bond of friendship that subsisted between them. His terrible emaciation was enough to

> "Pluck commiseration of his state
> From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint."

Much more, then, from those who were united to him by ties of affection (cf. ch. vi. 14, homiletics). (2) The severe affliction that had been laid upon him. "The hand of God hath touched me." The phrase descriptive of the source of Job's affliction, but pointing chiefly to its intensity. 3. *A tender expostulation.* (Ver. 22.) Were the miseries he was suffering at God's hand not enough to satisfy their insatiable appetite; or was God not able to exact retribution for his supposed iniquities, that they must assist him to crush the poor emaciated skeleton who had become his victim? Was it really come to this, that they were less merciful than God; that God's thirst for vengeance, if so be it was that he was being punished, was more easily slaked than theirs? So, alas! it has been found that man's tender mercies are cruel (2 Sam. xxiv. 14), and in particular that when bigots turn persecutors they never cry, "Enough!"

Learn: 1. There is a limit beyond which even good men are not expected to endure aspersions against their character. 2. It is a shame for professors of religion to indulge in suspicions, or utter slanders, against their brethren. 3. The greatest safeguard a suffering saint has, if also one of his acutest pains, is to connect his afflictions with God. 4. It is better to direct the soul's plaint to God than to utter aloud the soul's complaint against God. 5. The man has fallen low indeed who, besides being deserted by God (or appearing to be so), is also abandoned by man. 6. The woman who forsakes her husband in his hour of sorrow, not only violates her marriage vow, but proves herself unworthy of the honour of wifehood, and brings disgrace upon the name of woman. 7. It is an infinite mercy that God's heart is not so little pitiful as man's. 8. A man's flesh is all that a persecutor can devour.

Vers. 23—29.—*Job to Bildad: 2. The inscription on the rock; or, Job's faith in a redeemer.* I. THE PREFACE TO THE INSCRIPTION; OR, THE FERVENT WISH OF A DYING MAN. 1. *The culture of Job's times.* The origin of writing is lost in the mists of antiquity. The earliest known mode of writing was by means of a sharp-pointed instrument—stylus, or engraving tool, made of iron or steel. The first materials used for writing on were leaves of trees, skins, linen cloths, metal or wax plates, stone columns or rocks. Egyptian papyrus rolls and cuneiform tablets, dating from periods antecedent to the times of Abraham, have been recovered by the labours of modern archæologists. Numerous inscriptions of the kind alluded to by Job have been found by Oriental travellers in Arabia. On the smoothed surface of a solid rock at Hisn Ghorâb at Hadramut, in Southern Arabia, an inscription of ten lines exists, dating, according to some, from the

times of the Adites, the most ancient inhabitants of Arabia Felix, Ad the tribe-father having flourished contemporaneously with the building of the Tower of Babel. The cliffs of the wady Mokatta, on the route of the Israelites, and in the vicinity of the Sinaitic mountains, contain many such inscriptions (on ancient stone inscriptions, see the Exposition). The knowledge of the art of writing at that early period confirms the belief, which other traces of primeval man also suggest, that humanity was not then a babe wrapt in swaddling-clothes, but a vigorous and intelligent adult, already far advanced in civilization. 2. *The certainty of Job's knowledge.* What Job wished engraven on the rock was no mere probable conjecture, happy guess, philosophical speculation, or even secret aspiration, but a firm and certain personal conviction. If it be inquired how Job arrived at this immovable persuasion, it may be answered (1) that the lofty ideas here articulated were perhaps already in the air when Job lived, in confirmation of which may be cited a line from the Adite inscription above referred to: "We proclaimed our belief in miracles, in the resurrection, in the return into the nostrils of the breath of life;" (2) that the superior capacity of Job, manifestly the seer of his time, standing head and shoulders above his contemporaries in respect of intellectual power and poetic genius as well as moral and spiritual intuition, enabled him to discern and formulate the thoughts after which common minds were only dimly groping; (3) that the solemn proximity of Job to death, enabling him to realize the unseen with vividness, may have contributed to his extraordinary mental illumination on this occasion; (4) that the insoluble enigma of Job's own experience appeared to drive him towards the entertainment of such a lofty hope as is here expressed; (5) that over and above all Job enjoyed the inward inspiration of the Holy Ghost. 3. *The importance of Job's words.* (1) The time when they were uttered. They were, to all intents and purposes, his last dying testimony.

> "Oh, but they say, the tongues of dying men
> Enforce attention, like deep harmony," etc.
> ('King Richard II.,' act ii. sc. 1.)

(2) The significance of the words themselves. They formed the last and loftiest utterance of Job's religious consciousness, struggling to embody to itself in well-defined ideas, and to express for others in intelligible language, the great hope which had arisen in his soul, and by which he had been secretly sustained throughout his terrible conflict with bodily affliction, personal calumniation, spiritual apprehension, seeming Divine desertion. They set forth the ground on which he based his assured expectation of an ultimate complete vindication against the misrepresentations of his friends, the accusations of his own affrighted conscience, ay, the apparently hostile assaults of God himself. (3) The value of the words to future times. Job had a clear presentiment that the truth he was about to utter would prove of value to all succeeding ages. Like a new star, it had shot out upon the dark firmament of his soul; and he wished it inscribed in the most permanent form of ancient literature—either engrossed in the state records, or chiselled upon the mountain rock, and filled in with lead to defy the ravages of time, that it might shine on for ever, like a bright particular star of hope, all through the night of time, irradiating the darkness of a sinful world, and cheering the hearts of dying men. 4. *The fulfilment of Job's prayer.* In a sense, and to an extent undreamt of at the time, has the patriarch's desire been granted. His words have been inscribed in the state records of the King of heaven. They have been engraved by the printing-press in a form more imperishable than could have been derived from the sculptor's chisel. They have now been published in well-nigh every language under heaven. One of the latest to receive them was the modern Ethiopic or Abyssinian, which possesses an affinity to the language which Job spoke. They will now be transmitted to the end of time.

II. THE CONTENTS OF THE INSCRIPTION; OR, THE LOFTY FAITH OF A PROPHETIC SOUL. Up to this point five striking passages appear in the Book of Job. In the first (ch. ix. 32—35) Job expresses his ardent longing for a Daysman or Mediator who might lay his hand upon both him and God; in the second (ch. xiii. 15, 16), his confident expectation of acceptance with God, or the strong inward assurance of his salvation; in the third (ch. xiv. 13—15), his deeply seated hope of a resurrection-life beyond the grave and the Hadean world; in the fourth (ch. xvi. 18—21), his belief in the existence of a heavenly Witness who recognized his sincerity, and his earnest prayer that God

might become man's Advocate against himself (God); the fifth, the present passage, seems to gather all the preceding up into one triumphant shout of faith in a living, personal, divinely human Goël, or Redeemer, who should appear in the end of time to vindicate and save Job, and all who, like him, should have died in the faith, by a bodily resurrection from the grave. Analyzed, Job's proposed inscription should contain a declaration of the following sublime truths. 1. *The existence of a personal Redeemer.* The goël, in the Mosaic code, was the next of kin, whose duty it was to redeem a captive or enslaved relative (Gen. xiv. 14—16); to buy back his sold or otherwise alienated inheritance (Lev. xxv. 25, 26); to avenge the death of a murdered kinsman (Numb. xxxv. 12); to marry his childless widow (Deut. xxv. 5). Obviously, the office of the goël, or vindicator, existed in pre-Mosaic times, and was doubtless derived from primeval tradition. It was in accordance with the natural instincts of humanity, and was probably sanctioned by God, both at the first and under the Mosaic institutions, to strengthen the ties of natural affection among mankind, and also, perhaps chiefly, to suggest the hope and foreshadow the advent of the already promised Kinsman Avenger (Gen. iii. 15). Hence Jehovah, the Deliverer of Israel from Egyptian bondage, was styled their Goël (Ps. xix. 14; lxxviii. 35; Isa. xli. 14; xliii. 14). Hence the heavenly Witness, to whom Job looked for deliverance from his troubles, vindication of his aspersed character, emancipation from the power of the grave, and protection against his unseen adversary, whether God or Satan, was styled by him his Goël. And so is Christ the believer's Goël, who redeems him from guilt and condemnation (Rom. iii. 24; Gal. iii. 13; iv. 5; Eph. i. 7; Titus ii. 14), delivers him from the fear of death (Heb. ii. 14, 15; Rom. viii. 23), and shields him from the wrath to come (1 Thess. i. 10). Nay, of Christ, Job's Redeemer was a type in respect of being (1) a living Redeemer, *i.e.* a Redeemer who did not require to come into existence, but even then was, and would continue to be, even though Job himself should disappear amid the shadows of the tomb; (2) a Divine Redeemer, being called here expressly "God" (ver. 26), as indeed Job's language throughout, in the above-cited passages, assumes; and (3) a human Redeemer, since he was not only to be a Daysman (ch. ix. 33), but to appear or stand upon the earth (ver. 25), and be visible to the eye of flesh;—all of which characteristics belong by pre-eminence to him who, while the Son of man (John i. 51; Heb. ii. 14), was yet "the true God and the Eternal Life" (1 John v. 20), "in whom was Life" (John i. 3), and who still claims to be "the First and the Last and the Living One," who "was dead," but is now "alive again for evermore" (Rev. i. 18). 2. *The advent of this heavenly Redeemer to the earth.* (1) Job's language points unmistakably to a visible manifestation of this Divine-human Goël: "He shall stand," or "rise up," *i.e.* to vindicate the cause of his people, the verb being that usually employed to designate the standing forth of a witness (Deut. xix. 15; Ps. xxvii. 12), or the rising up of a helper or deliverer (Ps. xii. 6; xciv. 16; Isa. xxxiii. 10). (2) The scene of this interposition is said to be "on the earth;" literally, "upon the dust," meaning either of the ground or of the grave. As we cannot think Job believed himself to be the only individual in whose behalf the conquering Goël would arise, it is not to be supposed that he expected the apparition would take place exactly over his own particular tomb. Hence it is immaterial whether we supply "grave" or "ground." The phrase seems to point to a terrestrial appearance. (3) The time of this epiphany is declared to be "in the latter days." The word means "the last one;" and the sense of the clause is that "he," the Goël, "shall arise upon the earth as the last one," as the great Survivor who stands forth when the human family has run its course, and pronounces the finally decisive word upon all time's controversies. Or, the word may be taken adverbially, as signifying "at last," at length, at some future date (in which sense some propose to read the clause, "upon the dust," *i.e.* over my dust, when I am dead), and as intimating Job's faith that in the last age (cf. the New Testament phrases, "the ends of the world" (1 Cor. x. 11), "the last time" (1 John ii. 18), for the whole period of the gospel dispensation) this Goël, or Kinsman Redeemer, should appear for the salvation of his people. Job's language will thus include a reference to both the first and second advents of Christ, which, rightly viewed, are not disconnected events, but rather two related acts or scenes, the first and the last, in one great manifestation or epiphany of God's eternal Son for the redemption of a lost world. 3. *The saint's return to an embodied existence on the earth beside his Redeemer.* The

phrase, "in my flesh [literally, 'from, or out of, my flesh'] shall I see God" (ver. 26), may mean no more than that after Job's "skin" or body was destroyed, *i.e.* after he had passed into the Hadean world, he would enjoy a spiritual vision of God, and it may readily be granted that such a rendering accords with the prevailing tone and current of Job's theology and Job's mind, neither of which was familiar with the idea of a resurrection-life beyond the unseen world of disembodied spirits. But Job at this moment was raised above the ordinary level of his spiritual consciousness. As already (ch. xiv. 13—15) he had had a glimpse, transient but real, of such a life, so here it returns upon him once again with equal suddenness, but greater brightness—a glimpse of the happy land beyond the tomb, when, recalled to a physical existence on the earth, to which already his heavenly Goël had descended, looking out from his flesh he should see God; as if to emphasize which he adds, "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another" (ver. 27)—words which in themselves may not necessarily involve the resurrection of the body, but which, when taken in connection with the other considerations mentioned, tend not a little to confirm that interpretation. What Job only momentarily saw, and withal only dimly understood, has now been completely unveiled and expounded in the gospel, viz. the doctrine of a future resurrection. 4. *The saint's beatific vision of God in the person of his Kinsman Redeemer.* Job expected to see God in the Hadean world, according to some; on the earth, in the flesh, according to the interpretation just given. Such a vision of God meant for Job exactly what it means for the Christian—salvation, *i.e.* acceptance before God, protection by God, likeness to God, fellowship with God. In fullest measure such a vision of God will be enjoyed only in the resurrection-life (John xiv. 3; xvii. 24; Phil. iii. 20; Heb. ix. 28; 1 John iii. 2). In measure and degree only second to this will the saint behold God in the intermediate state (Luke xxiii. 43; Phil. i. 23). Even now, in a real though spiritual sense, such a vision is enjoyed by believers (Matt. v. 8). 5. *The saint's earnest longing for this future vision of his heavenly Friend.* Job describes his reins, *i.e.* his heart, as pining away or languishing for the coming of this glorious apocalypse. Job's friends had directed him to set his hopes on a return to temporal prosperity—to health, wealth, friends; in return, Job informs them that his soul desired nothing so much as God and his salvation. So the pre-Christian saints longed for the first advent of the Saviour, *e.g.* Abraham (John viii. 56), Jacob (Gen. xlix. 18), David (Ps. xlv. 3, 4), Simeon (Luke ii. 25), Anna (Luke ii. 38). So Christian believers anticipate his second coming (Rom. viii. 23; Rev. xxii. 17).

III. THE APPENDIX TO THE INSCRIPTION; OR, THE EARNEST REMONSTRANCE OF A PERSECUTED SAINT. On two grounds Job dissuades his friends from attempting further to prove him guilty. 1. *The wickedness of their conduct.* Job's language (ver. 28) points to the studied and systematic character of their attacks upon his integrity. "But ye say, How shall we persecute him, seeing that the root of the matter [*i.e.* the ground or occasion of such persecution] is in me?" Thinking they could discern in Job's guilt ample justification for such invective and condemnation as they hurled against him, they wickedly exercised their ingenuity in devising means to punish him, or at least to make him feel their displeasure. Another rendering, "How shall we find ground of persecution in him?" presents their behaviour in a light extremely odious, recalling the sleepless malignity of Daniel's accusers (vi. 4, 5). To take "the root of the matter" as signifying the fundamental principles of piety is to make their conduct absolutely diabolic, and on a par with that of the scribes and Pharisees towards the Saviour (Matt. xii. 14; xxii. 15; Luke xi. 54; John viii. 6). 2. *The danger of their conduct.* It would inevitably involve them in retribution. "Be ye afraid of the sword" (ver. 29), the sword being a symbol of such judicial recompense, an overwhelming retribution, the absence of the article pointing to what is "boundless, endless, terrific" (Delitzsch), a certain retribution, such crimes as have incurred the vengeance of the sword, literally, the expiations of the sword, ever being, or carrying along with them, wrath, *i.e.* the glow of the Divine anger, a prophetic retribution, foreshadowing a still more awful punishment in the future world, "that ye may know there is a judgment."

Learn: 1. The duty of thankfulness to God for the blessings of civilization, especially for the invention of printing. 2. The illuminating power of sorrow, especially to a child of God. 3. The immortality that belongs to great ideas, especially to such as

come through inspiration. 4. The sustaining influence of a good hope, especially the hope of a Redeemer. 5. The value of Christ's advents to the world, especially of his second advent in glory. 6. The greater light enjoyed by the gospel Church, especially since the resurrection of the Saviour.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—29.—*Unconquerable convictions.* Job feels bitterly hurt by the speeches of Eliphaz and Bildad, and pleads, in face of their harsh constructions, for compassion in his unutterable sufferings. At the same time, he raises himself to bolder confidence in God's help than ever before. He expresses the definite hope that, if not on this side the grave, then on the other side, a justification awaits him by the personal appearance of God.

I. INTRODUCTION: INDIGNANT CENSURE OF HIS FRIENDS AS MALICIOUS SUSPECTERS OF HIS INNOCENCE. (Vers. 1—5.) "How long will ye trouble my soul, and crush me with words?" "Ten times," he says, speaking in round numbers, *i.e.* again and again, have they slandered him by attacks on his innocence; they are not ashamed to deafen him with their revilings. It is true, he again confesses (ch. vi. 24), he has sinned, but his sin remains with him alone; he is answerable to God alone, not to their unfeeling judgment. Is it their desire to magnify themselves—to play the part of great speakers and advocates, and bring home to him his disgrace by ingenious pleas? Vanity and self-conceit are at the bottom of much censoriousness; and Job here lays his finger upon the moral weakness of his self-constituted judges.

II. LAMENT OVER THE SUFFERING CAUSED HIM BY GOD. (Vers. 6—12.) God has wronged him, and surrounded him with his nets, as a hunter takes his prey, depriving it of all means of escape (ver. 6). The sufferer cries out, "Violence!" but no answer is given; and there is no justice in response to his cry for help (ver. 7). His way is fenced in, and darkness is on his paths (ver. 8; comp. ch. iii. 23; xiii. 27; Lam. iii. 7, 9; Hos. ii. 6). God has stripped him of his honour and of his fair esteem in the eyes of men, and taken away the crown from his head (ver. 9; comp. ch. xxix. 14; Lam. v. 16). "Honour" and the "crown" are two expressions for the same thing (Isa. lxi. 10; lxii. 3). God pulls him down on every side, like a building devoted to destruction; roots out the hope of his restoration, like a tree (ver. 10). His warlike bands—wounds, pains, and woes of every kind—come on, and make their way against him as against a besieged fortress (vers. 11, 12; comp. ch. xvi. 14). All this is a true description of the thoughts of the heart from which Divine help has been withdrawn. It is a sore conflict, none sorer, when the mind is driven in its agony to view God as an enemy, treating us unmercifully, willing neither to hear nor to help. Job is tempted to think God unjust; one who promises the forgiveness of sins, yet does not remove the penalty; promises his presence to the suffering, yet seems not to be touched by our woes—nay, even to delight in them. "In so great and glowing flames of hell we must look to Christ alone, who was made in all things like to his brethren, and was tempted, that he might succour them that are tempted" (Brenz).

III. LAMENT OVER THE SUFFERING CAUSED HIM BY MAN. (Vers. 13—20.) In such crises we turn to friendship for solace. But to Job this is denied. In six different forms he mentions his kindred and friends, only to complain of their coldness and alienation (vers. 13, 14). His domestics, too (ver. 15), to whom he had doubtless been a kind master, are become strange to him. His servant does not answer when he calls, so that he is obliged to change parts with him, and beg his help as a favour (ver. 16). His breath and diseased body make him offensive even to his wife, and "sons," or "brethren" (ver. 17). The impudent little boys of the street, like those who mocked Elisha (2 Kings ii. 23, *sqq.*), make a butt of him, indulging in sarcastic taunts when he rises to speak (ver. 18). His bosom-friends abhor him, and those whom he had loved—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—turn against him as violent opponents (ver. 19). His bones cleave to his skin and flesh, can be seen and felt through his emaciated flesh, and only the skin of his teeth, the thin film, has escaped the ravages of his fearful malady. He can only just speak still, without his mouth being filled with boils and matter, as in the last stage of the disease (ver. 20). Friends often fail in the time of

sorest distress; they are summer-birds, and pass away when the colder weather sets in. Men are liars, fickle as the wind. Their alienation is ascribed to God, because he has caused the distress; if he had not caused the distress, they would have remained. Here, again, we are reminded that the child of God may be called to be conformed to the image of the Saviour's sufferings. He knew what it was to be deserted by all men, even his dearest disciples and closest adherents. So we are to learn to build no confidence on man, but on the living God alone, whom faith can hold eternally fast.

IV. RISE TO A BLESSED HOPE IN GOD, HIS ONLY REDEEMER AND AVENGER. (Vers. 21—27.) This section is introduced by a woeful petition to his friends for compassion, "for the hand of God has touched him," alluding to the disease, which from its fearfulness was regarded as a stroke of God's hand; and is it not the office of friendship to lend *its* hand to heal or soothe (ver. 21)? Why, on the contrary, do they persecute him as God, assuming an authority that is superhuman, and so behaving unnaturally to him? They are not "satisfied with his flesh," continually piercing and ploughing it with the envenomed tooth of slander (ver. 22). The appeal seems to be in vain, and he turns once more to God (ver. 23, *sqq.*). Oh that his words were written down, inscribed in a book or roll, that those to come might read the fervent, repeated protestations of his innocence! That they were engraven with an iron pen, or cast with lead, so as to remain an indelible and eternal record! And, so long as there is a God, this wish for the perpetuation of his testimony cannot be in vain. It has been fulfilled. "In a hundred languages of the earth it announces to this day to all peoples this truth: the good man is not free from sufferings, but in the consciousness of his innocence and in faith in God, providence, and immortality, he finds a consolation which suffers him not to fall; and his waiting for a glorious issue of God's dark leadings will certainly be crowned" (Wohlforth). Ver. 25, "And I know that my Redeemer lives." "Redeemer" is probably to be taken, not in the sense of blood-avenger, but in that of *restorer of my honour, avenger of my honour;* but the two meanings are connected. "And as Last One will he rise upon the dust." God is here viewed as he who will outlive all, especially in contrast to Job, now sinking into death. He will rise, stand up for Job's defence and deliverance, on the dust in which he shall soon be laid. Ver. 26, "And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall behold Eloah." He is thinking of the time when he shall be freed from his wretched suffering and lacerated "flesh," and shall see God as a glorified spirit. Ver. 27, "Whom I shall behold for myself," *i.e.* in my own person, "and my eyes shall see, and not a stranger." "My reins be consumed within me," in longing after this glorious view. It is an expression of the desire of the deepest, tenderest part of the man for this high consummation. To discuss the different theological interpretations of this passage does not come within the scope of this part of the Commentary. Perhaps the best is that which steers between two extremes, and is adopted by many eminent expositors of the present day. It is that Job does not here express the hope of a bodily resurrection after death, but of a contemplation of God in the other world in a spiritually glorified state. It is the hope of immortality, rather than that of resurrection, to which he rises, with such clearness and definiteness, above that ancient Israelitish idea of Sheol, which he himself has admitted in earlier discourses. It is a glorious confession of faith—one that, in a fuller sense, may well be that of the catholic Church. And once more *the property and power of faith* are exhibited in all their lustre. It cleaves to life in the very jaws of death; believes in heaven, even when hell is yawning at its feet; looks to God as the Redeemer even amidst anger and judgment; detects beneath seeming wrath his mercy; sees, under the appearance of the condemner, the Redeemer. Faith is here the "substance of things hoped for" (Heb. xi. 1). The best consolation in the trouble of death is that Christ is risen from the dead, and therefore we shall rise (Rom. viii. 11; 1 Cor. xv.). God gives more to his servant, who shows himself inspired by such firm confidence towards him, than he could ask or understand.

V. SOLEMN WARNING TO HIS FRIENDS TO DESIST FROM THEIR ATTACKS. (Vers. 28, 29.) "If ye think, How shall we persecute him? and (if ye think) the root of the matter is found in me"—that is, if you think the reason for my sufferings is solely to be found in myself, in my sin—"be afraid of the sword," the avenging sword of God, "for wrath falls in with the offences of the sword," which may mean either that wrath is a punishment of the sword, or that the punishments of the sword are with wrath—

wrath overtakes them. "That ye may know there is a judgment!" They knew this already, and upon this expectation their own warnings had been founded. But Job gives the thought an application to themselves. "That you may know that God exercises judgment on all the offences of the sword, which you do not own nor fear in your case, and that he severely punishes them." Thus Job opens that wider view of the future, of that day of discrimination, when the first shall be last, and the last first—the innocent shall be justified, and the hypocrite exposed—which corrects the narrow dogmatism of the friends. God punishes many sins in this life; but many are reserved for the last judgment. Temporal suffering may be escaped, and yet sure punishment may be in store. On the other hand, temporal suffering may be innocently endured, but for the true servant of God there will be final acknowledgment and eternal honour.—J.

Vers. 1—21.—*An appeal for pity.* Job is brought lower and lower by the words of those from whom he might have expected a true consolation. He at length declares they "vex" his "soul," and "break" him "in pieces with words." He appeals for freedom. He would be let alone, for, as he had sorrowfully said, "miserable comforters are ye all." The great underlying teaching is the insufficiency of those views of human suffering which find its cause only in judgment upon wrong-doing. Job, the typical sufferer—typical for all future sufferers—undergoes the painfulness of being assailed by helpers who have but a partial and very imperfect view of all the circumstances of his case. And he appeals to them for ease. His cry to them is also a cry to Heaven for relief.

I. His appeal for pity is based ON THE GROUND OF THE WRONGFULNESS OF HIS ACCUSATION. "Behold, I cry out of wrong." His friends have set themselves against him. They have become his judges rather than his consolers or vindicators. They 'reproach" him and make themselves "strange" to him; they "magnify" themselves against him. They try to plead his reproach against him. It is the way of the imperfectly instructed human helper, and more and more clearly makes plain the necessity for a voice to be raised on behalf of the sufferer that shall be of one better instructed.

II. But the appeal is urged ON THE GROUND OF THE SEVERITY OF HIS SUFFERINGS. Job acknowledges his affliction to be of God, and he most tenderly and touchingly refers to the several features of his suffering. He cries out of wrong; he has no impartial and just hearing. He is encompassed by darkness from which he cannot escape; his honour is beclouded; his substance is destroyed; his hope has perished; he is dealt with as an enemy; his acquaintances are estranged; he is forgotten by his best friends; he is treated with indignity in his own home; he is offensive even to his wife; even young children despise him and speak against him—"they whom I loved are turned against me." Through the severity of his disease he is wasted to a skeleton; his "bone cleaveth" to his "skin." Surely this is a call for pity. Yet professed friends can stand by and argue with such a sufferer, seeking to prove his guiltiness and affirming all this to be the just punishment of his sin.

III. He makes his further appeal to their pity ON THE GROUND OF FRIENDSHIP. "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends!" It is reasonable to expect that professed friends will at least show pity to him for whom they have declared their great friendship.

IV. His final appeal to them is ON THE GROUND OF HIS AFFLICTION BEING THE STROKE OF GOD. "The hand of God hath touched me." Against the Almighty he cannot hope to contend. He is crushed under the Almighty's power. This lowly confession does not abate the calm inward assurance of personal integrity. But the solution of the mysterious Divine ways is wanting. He endeavours to abide in patience. But human sympathy should strengthen the sufferer under the pressure of the Divine hand, and not add to the already excessive weight of his calamities. "Why do ye persecute me as God?"

To whom should a sufferer turn if not to his friends? How obvious the office of friendship at such a time: 1. To sympathize. 2. To seek to ease the burden of the sufferer. 3. To strengthen by kindness and pity.—R. G.

Vers. 23—29.—*The Divine Vindicator.* Job awaits a final "judgment," of which he

reminds his friends (ver. 29). At present he is the accused one; and all appearances go to condemn him. True, his "record is on high." He knows that he has held fast his integrity. But he looks forward to a final vindication. He would, therefore, have his words "written," "printed in a book," "graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever." This is the final cry of the consciously upright one. It is the triumph of integrity over false accusation. He can wait for judgment. He has turned his tearful eyes to God, who has delivered him for a time to the ungodly, but who will appear for him yet in due time. It is here that Job makes the noble boast in confidence of a Divine justification. It is one of the grandest utterances of faith. It has become the watchword of hope to succeeding generations. The interpretations of the words have been various. Job may have uttered words the full meaning of which he did not himself wholly perceive. In the Vindicator of his honour he may not have seen the Redeemer of the race; or have guessed that the God in whose redemption he trusted would appear in human flesh to redeem the race from the accuser—to redeem, not from human condemnation merely, but from the Divine, just condemnation. We have the highest warrant for finding in "Moses and all the prophets," and "in all the Scriptures," references to "things concerning" the Christ (Luke xxiv. 27). The passage is an illustration of this progressive character of the revelation. Buried in the old Scriptures were "the things concerning" the Christ; but it was needful they should be "expounded." Even the prophets did not all know "what the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." Thus unconsciously Job, with others, ministers to the faith of the world.

I. In Job's avenger, vindicator, or redeemer, is to be seen THE HIDDEN TYPE AND PROMISE OF THE UNIVERSAL REDEEMER. That for which one looked all may look. Not only the Vindicator of the innocent and the upright, but the "Justifier of the ungodly."

II. In the redemption of Job's honour may be hidden THE WORK OF HIM WHO SHALL BRING BACK THE FORFEITED HONOUR AND RIGHTEOUSNESS OF MEN. As the Person, so the work of the Divine Redeemer is here foreshadowed. The next of kin, to whom "the right of redemption belongs," shall restore the alienated possession. He who shall appear for Job shall appear on behalf of the sinful world, shall make intercession for the transgressors, shall vindicate by his own substitutionary offering the "justification" of "the ungodly."

III. In Job's vision of the appearance of his vindicator at the latter day upon the earth is to be seen THE HIDDEN PROMISE OF THE FINAL APPEARANCE OF THE WORLD'S REDEEMER for judgment, vindication, and salvation—of him who "shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

IV. In Job's assured final vision of God, after the destruction of his body, lies THE COMFORTING PROMISE OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD; not in a frail body of flesh, liable to be torn, consumed, destroyed, but in "a spiritual body." So the Church in confident hope chants at the side of the tomb. Thus are the germs of the future and final revelation held in the earlier; thus is laid the ground for faith and thankfulness; thus is the suffering one cheered; thus shall patience and faith and untarnished integrity, though afflicted, be vindicated; and thus shall the faith of the justified ungodly find its vindication in him who is the Vindicator, the Saviour, the Redeemer of sinful, suffering man.—R. G.

Ver. 29.—*A final judgment.* There is a judgment always proceeding, to be finally manifested when the ultimate rewards and punishments of human conduct will be assigned. A final judgment is—

I. A UNIVERSAL BELIEF.

II. TESTIFIED BY THE CONSCIENCE.

III. NECESSARY ON ACCOUNT OF THE PRESENT INVOLVED CONDITION OF HUMAN AFFAIRS. Conditions are unequal; wickedness seems to triumph, and the wicked to prosper. The good suffer. The reward of faithful service is not attained. The Divine ways are not justified. Human conduct does not meet with due retribution.

IV. TO BE DREADED BY THE UNFAITHFUL.

V. ANTICIPATED BY THE RIGHTEOUS.

VI. LIFE TO BE HELD IN THE LIGHT OF A FUTURE JUDGMENT.—R. G.

Vers. 4—6.—*The erring soul and its God.* Job replies to the intrusive censures of his friends with the indignation of outraged privacy. Granted that he has erred, as his friends assume, that is his own business, not theirs—it is a matter between himself and God only; they have no occasion to meddle in it.

I. THERE IS A PRIVACY IN RELIGION. Each soul has to deal with God alone. Although we may help one another by sympathy, and although our internal religion must show itself in external conduct, still the roots and inner springs of religion are not for public investigation. The breach of reserve on the deepest matters of the soul is like an offence against decency. The language of love is sacred, and is reserved for the ears of one only. When love has been wounded by wrong, the error is still a private concern, and one which strangers have no right to interfere with. No doubt there are ways in which our deepest experiences may be made serviceable to others. We ought to confess our faith, for the honour of Christ and for the encouragement of others. Too often a false shame keeps Christians back in this respect. We ought also to confess our faults one to another. But these faults are deeds in which we have injured one another. No one has a right to expose the secret sins of his brother, or to pry into the inner conflicts of his soul. The religion that is turned inside out in the light of day fades or coarsens. The roots that are dragged from their secret dwelling-place and exposed to the sun, wither and perish. The spiritual experience that is handled by the multitude loses its finer character, if not its very life. We cannot help our brother by destroying his delicacy of feeling. Even if we think him too reserved, though it might be well for him to be more communicative, we cannot be justified in tearing down the veil which he has chosen to wear.

II. THERE MUST BE THE UTMOST OPENNESS WITH GOD IN RELIGION. Here the reserve ceases. Here the most retiring soul must be completely frank. God claims our confidence. To attempt to hide anything from God is foolish, for he knows all our most secret thoughts. But we need to go further, and make our confessions consciously and willingly. The reasons for reserve among men do not apply to our relations with God. As God knows all, so he rightly understands everything. He will never misjudge us. Moreover, his love secures his perfect sympathy with us. Man's prying curiosity subjects the quivering nerves of its victim to a process of vivisection; but God's searching gaze of love and sympathy heals and saves. It is necessary that we should receive this willingly if we are to profit by it. A foolish shyness of God leaves us without the cheering of his presence. It is always a bad thing when one has to say, as a son exclaimed of his lately deceased father whom everybody was praising, "It may be all true; but I cannot say, as I never knew him." It is not our Father's fault if we do not know him. He rewards confidence with an exchange of confidence. Now, our first and most necessary duty is to fling aside all reserve before God, to own that "we have erred and strayed from his ways like lost sheep," to confess ourselves utterly helpless and worthless, and, trusting our emptiness to him, to be ready to welcome the fulness which he always bestows on his trusting children.—W. F. A.

Ver. 7.—*The cry unheard.* I. IT MAY BE REALLY UNHEARD. That is to say, while of course God knows everything, he may not respond, may not heed. Why? 1. *Because the cry is not addressed to the true God.* The heathen priests on Mount Carmel screamed, "O Baal, hear us!" from morning till evening. "But there was no voice, nor any that answered" (1 Kings xviii. 26). Men have their false gods now, *i.e.* their false ideas of God. A god who ignores sin, a god who is only amiable compliance, is not the true God. One who addresses such a god will not be heard. 2. *Because the cry is not true.* It is a formal petition, not a heartfelt prayer. The words may be loud, but the soul is silent. Christ says, "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Matt. vi. 7). 3. *Because the cry is not trustful.* We may cry to God in wild despair; the prayer may be wrung out of an agony of the soul; it may be just the expression of a natural instinct; but it may carry with it no real confidence in God. The Divine response is according to our faith. 4. *Because the cry is not accompanied by penitence.* If we hold to our sin we cannot be saved from our trouble. While we excuse ourselves before God we make his ear deaf to our call. Nothing so effectually seals the gates of prayer as an impenitent heart. 5. *Because the pity sought from God is not given to a*

brother man. The prayer of the selfish is not heard. Every time we repeat the Lord's Prayer we remind ourselves that our trespasses are forgiven in proportion as we forgive those who trespass against us. This is the one, the only thing in the prayer that Christ selected for emphatic comment, adding, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. vi. 15).

II. IT MAY BE ONLY APPARENTLY UNHEARD. 1. *Because there is no audible response.* Our voice goes out into the silence. We strain our ears for one word of reply, but no sound reaches us. Though we spread out our hands and cry aloud, the calm heavens are still and apparently irresponsive. But, then, we are foolish if we expect an answer that shall be audible to our bodily ears, for God is a Spirit. Moreover, if we trust him, we should not think that he does not hear when he does not speak. Silence is not deafness. 2. *Because there is no immediate relief.* At present all seems as it was before we prayed. Does it not appear as though the cry had been wasted on the air? We have to learn patience. It may be well that the trial should last a little longer. In the end God will deliver his suffering children who trust themselves to him, but he may not give them sudden and immediate relief. 3. *Because the response is not what we expected.* God will not be dictated to. He will use his own judgment in his reply to us. He may give the very thing we ask for. But if that be not fitting he will reply in some other way. Assuredly he *will* reply. Therefore we must take a wider view of his action, and be prepared to receive God's response in new and unlooked-for forms. Instead of removing the trouble he may give strength to bear it. Instead of prosperity he may give peace. Then we have no right to think our cry lost and neglected. It is heard.—W. F. A.

Ver. 8.—*The fenced way.* I. GOD HAS A RIGHT TO FENCE UP OUR WAY. Job's complaint is sad, but it does not here indicate an injustice. It is hard to be checked and thwarted. Still God is our Master, and he has a right to choose our inheritance for us, setting us in a large place, or in a narrow way, as he thinks best. When we complain, we forget that our will is not the supreme arbiter of our destiny. If God stops our path we have to remember that we are on his land, and have no right of way across it. When, in his bounty, he sets us free to roam over his domain, this is a favour for which we may well give thanks; it is no privilege that we can demand. The opportunities of life, and our freedom to use them, are given by God; and he who gives may withhold.

II. GOD MAY FENCE UP OUR WAY TO PREVENT US FROM STRAYING. We blunder in the darkness. There are precipices over which we may fall, jungles in which we may become victims to prowling enemies, By-path Meadows that may lead us to Doubting Castle. Therefore God shuts us in. We are annoyed at the restraint, but it is for our soul's preservation. Liberty is not always good. God sees when it may be abused; then in his great mercy he withdraws it. Thus the ambitious man fails to reach the giddy height from which he would soon be flung headlong to ruin. Business does not bring one in the wealth that was expected, for God sees that money is becoming an idol. Many delights are shut off, and a man looks over the fence with great envy towards them; but God knows that they would be poison and death to him.

III. GOD SOMETIMES FENCES UP OUR WAY FOR DISCIPLINE OR PUNISHMENT. We feel ourselves checked and hindered on every side. Our busy activity is stopped. Even our good designs are frustrated. We find it hard to account for such treatment. Possibly it is just the punishment of our sins. This has come not as direct pain and loss, but as hindrance and failure. We feel like the Egyptians when their chariot-wheels stuck in the bed of the sea. But it may be that the cause lies not so much in sin as in a need of wholesome discipline. Perhaps we can serve God better by patient endurance than by vigorous activity. Then what looks like failure is really the divinely chosen method of success. He fences up our way that we may learn to serve by waiting.

IV. GOD WHO FENCES UP OUR WAY ALSO OPENS IT. The fence is but a temporary structure—not a wall. God checks us for a season that we may use our liberty, when it is restored, with the more enthusiastic energy. While he is fencing up one way he is opening out a new way. We wonder why we are hindered, but if we would but lift up our eyes we might see another path, leading us to a far more noble and Christ-like

service than any the path that has been stopped pointed to. Meanwhile let us not complain that our way is hopelessly fenced up till we are quite brought to a standstill. Our fears are premature. The Norwegian fiord seems to be completely locked in by the mountains, and the ship appears to be making straight for the cliffs till a point is reached which suddenly reveals a new expanse of water. We must proceed with the duty within our power, and then the future will open out as we approach it.—W. F. A.

Ver. 21.—*Touched by the hand of God.* Job appealed to the commiseration of his friends. His was no ordinary trouble coming from external circumstances. The hand of God was upon him. Therefore his case was most pitiable.

I. THE HAND OF GOD MAY HURT. His hand holds his children even in the depths of trouble (Ps. CXXXIX. 10). It is a creative, sustaining, blessing hand. Yet it may also be used to smite and bruise. The coming of God is not always for the happiness of his children. He must chastise their sin and folly. Then the trouble is irresistible and overwhelming. It is the contemplation of the Divine source of his trouble that makes Job appeal to his friends as from the depths of an unfathomable misery.

II. GREAT EFFECTS ARE PRODUCED BY THE MERE TOUCH OF GOD'S HAND. Job does not say that God's hand had stricken him; he only complains that it had touched him. But that was enough to plunge him into an agony of soul. A touch of the "Traveller unknown" put Jacob's thigh out of joint (Gen. XXXII. 25). God is so strong and great that his slightest action is irresistible, and pregnant with tremendous consequences. But if his touch is so powerful, how terrible must be his wrathful smiting! A man could not exist for one moment if God really roused himself in anger against him.

III. THE TOUCH OF GOD'S HAND SHOULD ROUSE OUR COMPASSION. The trouble is so great that all thoughts of blame should be swallowed up in a deep feeling of sympathy. Job here seems to reverse his previous conduct. Before this he had appealed from the unfairness of man to the justice of God. Now he appeals from the heavy hand of God to the brotherly compassion of a fellow-creature. Even if the contention of the three friends had been well founded, and Job had been the great sinner they assumed him to be, his sufferings were now so severe that all other thoughts should have been swallowed up in commiseration for them. It is only human to feel sympathy with suffering. The censure that hardens itself against the distresses that it regards as the just punishment of sin is harsh and cruel, and unworthy of any disciple of Jesus Christ.

IV. THE HAND THAT HURTS HEALS. Even the touch of chastisement is meant in love, and if it is received in a right spirit, it will be followed by quite another touch. We ought not to be afraid of the hand of God. As it has sheltered us from the first, so it will protect and save us at last. Job was ultimately blessed by the hand of God. We have God with us in Christ, and Christ's hands bear the nail-prints that tell of love unto death. When he touches us it is with a pierced hand. We may feel pain, but he felt more for us, and the record of his suffering is the pledge of the saving grace which he extends to all who truly seek him. When John was dismayed at his vision of the glorified Christ, the Lord laid his hand on him, and that gracious touch of sympathy dispelled his fears (Rev. i. 17). The healing touch of Christ is with us now, and it really comes from the same hand as that which hurts in our trouble. God only hurts to heal.—W. F. A.

Ver. 23.—*Written words.* Job is supposed to sigh for the very thing that the poet has done for him. His words are written, and they have acquired a permanence and a publicity of which the patriarch could have had no conception.

I. THE DESIRE FOR WRITTEN WORDS. Job is about to set forth a great conviction. He thinks it so important that he would have it recorded in the state chronicle, even chiselled and leaded in the face of the rock, like some great historic inscription. 1. *Conviction of truth.* Job would not want a lie to be recorded against him for ever. It is natural to desire that the truth which we hold should be maintained. 2. *Weight and importance.* Many true words are but of limited and temporary interest. The ordinary talk of social intercourse certainly neither needs nor merits a permanent record. It is natural for it to disappear like the successive waves that break on the beach. But weighty words should endure. There are truths the discovery of which

is a permanent boon to mankind. These truths should be carefully treasured and transmitted. 3. *Craving for justice.* Job is concerned with a personal feeling in his desire. If what he says makes no impression on his immediate circle, it may bring conviction to a wider area of less prejudiced persons, or to a later age.

II. THE USE OF WRITTEN WORDS. 1. *Distinctness.* Job's thought is clearly before us. The Scriptures afford a definite revelation. With written words we are not left to vague surmises. We do not only depend on the inward impulses of the Divine Spirit. The inner light may be very real and precious. But we are in danger of misinterpreting it if we neglect the written Word of the Bible. 2. *Permanence.* Job's great thought of the future life has permanence by being recorded in Scripture. It is fearful to think how the Christian truth would in all probability have been perverted and lost among the shifting currents of tradition if there had been no "New Testament" in which to preserve it. Now we can go back to the very fountain of the gospel. We can leave all the errors of the ages and take our stand on the pure teaching of Christ and his apostles; or if, as is only reasonable, we believe that the course of Christian thought has contributed to the development of the understanding of truth, still we can test that development, and distinguish it from the degeneration that mocks it, by keeping close to the New Testament. So long as the written words of revelation are in our hands there is a grand security for purity of doctrine. 3. *Publicity.* Job desired that the great, new truth he was about to utter should go abroad. No doubt his first wish was that it might lead to the justification of his misunderstood character. But much larger consequences follow. When the voice of the prophet is silent, his written word speaks to the ages and spreads far and wide to multitudes that could never have been affected by his personal presence. The Bible is a means of making God's truth widely known. That truth is not for an elect few of the initiated, but for mankind at large. Therefore it is our duty to do what we can to circulate the Divine Word. At the same time, let us not forget to pray for the enlightening Spirit to interpret this written Word to ourselves and to others; "for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. iii. 6).—W. F. A.

Vers. 25—27.—*The great hope.* These monumental words are what Job desired to be written, noted in a book, "graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever." Certainly few words are more worthy of permanent publicity.

I. THE ASSURANCE OF THE GREAT HOPE. Job says, "I know." He is not vaguely feeling after truth. He has it, and he holds it firmly. How different is this great passage from ch. iii.! In what way can we account for the new triumphant tone of the sufferer? How does Job *know* that his Redeemer liveth, etc.? 1. *By inspiration.* This passage bears its own evidence to its Divine origin in its tone and spirit and exalted thought. The patriarch is carried out of himself. He is almost like St. Paul in the third heavens (2 Cor. xii. 2). Yet he is in no wild ecstasy; his tone is one of calm, solemn, glad assurance. The greatest truths of redemption and resurrection are from God. 2. *Through the discipline of suffering.* Job did not see all this at first. But sorrow has given him a marvellous power of intuition. It has trained him to see the highest truth. Thus God's revelation comes to the prepared soul. Suddenly the black clouds are rent asunder, and the much-suffering man looks right up to the eternal blue, while the very light of God illumines and transfigures his countenance.

II. THE GROUNDS OF THE GREAT HOPE. The living Redeemer. Job has a *Goël*, an Avenger, who will plead his cause and deliver him from his trouble. 1. *Divine.* Clearly he is thinking of God. He has no idea of another being who shall be his friend while God remains his persecuting Enemy. He flees from God to God. He knows that, though he cannot understand God's present treatment of him, he will be ultimately delivered if he trusts in God. Although it was not given to Job to see further in this direction, we now know that his great hope and prophecy is fulfilled in Christ, who has come to be the sinner's *Goël*, the great Redeemer of man. 2. *Personal.* Job says, "my Redeemer." Each must know Christ for himself. But all may know and own him. Christ not only redeems the innocent by vindicating them—which was what Job expected. We now see that he goes further, and redeems the guilty by saving them even from their sin and doom. 3. *Living.* The Redeemer lives, though for a while we do not see him. We have a living Saviour.

III. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE GREAT HOPE. 1. *A future life.* Though some suppose that Job is only thinking of the cure of his diseased skin and flesh, and a vindication of him in health during his earthly life, it is difficult to see how his words could be satisfied with this simple meaning. Taking them as prophetic of a future life when the worm-eaten body is left behind, we have a grand picture of the triumph of hope in Old Testament times. Here is the answer to ch. xiv. 14. There will be a future life when the tabernacle of this body is laid aside. 2. *A vision of God.* Job had been longing to meet God. His prayer was lost in silence (ver. 7). God's hand was only upon him for chastisement. Now he foresees the great apocalypse. (1) This is for the vindication of righteousness. God will then explain the mysteries and put an end to the wrongs of earth. (2) This is itself a great joy. The beatific vision is an adequate compensation for all the sufferings of earth.

IV. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE GREAT HOPE. 1. *Apart from the earthly body.* This is no trouble to Job. His body has become a loathsome, tormenting encumbrance. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. xv. 50). 2. *With personal identity.* Job would not be content to be dissolved into the universe. The future life is one of personal existence. It must be linked by memory to the present life. Every one who knows Christ as his living Redeemer on earth will enjoy the personal fellowship of God in heaven.—W. F. A.

Ver. 28.—"*The root of the matter.*" Job's friends think that the explanation of the patriarch's singular experience lies in himself. It is not to be explained by the laws of the universe, by the opposition of a foe, etc.; it is to be explained by Job's own character and conduct. The root of this matter, his affliction, is in Job himself. That, says Job, is their idea, and that Job of course repudiates. The prologue shows that Job was right. The root of the matter was not in him; it was in Satan. The great accuser had originated the whole trouble.

I. WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND A MATTER UNTIL WE DISCOVER THE ROOT OF IT. Job's friends were quite wrong; all their conclusions were invalid, all their accusations were unjust, all their admonitions were irrelevant, because they mistook the root and cause of Job's afflictions. Their conduct is a warning against judging with superficial knowledge. In their assurance of infallibility they inferred the existence of the root when they had not been able to see it. In all branches of knowledge we need to bore down to the root of our subject. The greatest task of science is the search for causes. The mere collection and classification of facts is but the first step. Real science aims at accounting for its facts. So in religion we are not content to receive certain impressions; we want to get behind and beneath them and find their roots. We must find the root of poverty and social trouble before we can understand these evils.

II. IT IS DIFFICULT TO DISCOVER THE ROOT OF A MATTER. The root is underground. It hides itself in darkness. Possibly it runs far for its nourishment, like that of the famous Hampton Court vine, which is said to reach to the river Thames. In human affairs it is very hard to find the roots, because men do not generally expose their inmost thoughts. History searches for causes, but it is a very tentative and precarious science. One historian will see, or thinks he sees, the cause of an event in something of which another denies the existence. We cannot even see the roots of the conduct of our daily acquaintances. In particular this difficulty is increased when there is lack of sympathy. A mean and selfish man can never discover the roots of generous action, and a noble-minded man is slow to suspect the roots of the conduct of a person of lower character. We must beware of the attempts of hot-headed philanthropy to cure evils the roots of which have not yet been discovered. Else we may do more harm than good.

III. THERE ARE EVILS WHICH ARE NOT ROOTED IN THE MAN WHO SUFFERS FROM THEM. This was the truth which Job's friends, blinded by prejudice, could not see. They assumed that the root was in Job, but their assumption was an error. Now, the admission of this idea should not only check hasty judgment; it should encourage faith and teach patience. The roots are much deeper than we suspect. We cannot understand providence, for we cannot see its roots.

IV. THE WORST EVIL IS THAT WHICH HAS ITS ROOT IN THE MAN WHO SUFFERS FROM

IT. If Job's friends had been right, his position would have been far more dreadful than it was. Often we must confess to ourselves that we have brought trouble upon our own heads. Our folly or our sin is its primary cause. Then it is wholly our own. It is well to search ourselves and see if the root of the matter be in us. If it is, there is no hope of salvation while it remains there. To cut down the superficial growth will do no good. The deep-seated root will sprout again. Evil must be eradicated from the heart. We want a cure that goes to the root of the matter.

V. THE ROOT OF DIVINE GRACE IS A SURE SOURCE OF DIVINE LIFE. There are good things as well as evil things that have their roots in a man. The root of the better life may be in a man when we do not see it. 1. It is within the individual man. Otherwise the external grace is not his. 2. It may be hidden. 3. The growth above may be checked. 4. Still, if the root of the matter is in the soul, there must be some growth visible in the outer life.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XX.

Vers. 1—29.—Zophar's second speech is even more harsh than his first (ch. xi.). He adds coarseness and rudeness to his former vehement hostility (vers. 7, 15). His whole discourse is a covert denunciation of Job as a wicked man and a hypocrite (vers. 5, 12, 19, 29), deservedly punished by God for a life of crime. He ends by prophesying Job's violent death, the destruction of his house, and the rising up of heaven and earth in witness against him (vers. 24—28).

Vers. 1, 2.—Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer. Zophar "has heard the check of his reproach" (ver. 3), *i.e.* the reproach contained in the last words of Job in the preceding chapter. *Therefore* his thoughts rise up within him, and compel him to make a reply. He cannot allow Job to shift the onus of guilt and the menace of punishment on his friends, when it is he, Job, that is the guilty person, over whom the judgments of God impend. **And for this I make haste**; rather, *and because of my haste that is within me* (see the Revised Version); *i.e.* "because I am of a hasty and impetuous temperament."

Ver. 3.—I have heard the check of my reproach; or, *the reproof which putteth me to shame* (Revised Version). Some suppose an allusion to ch. xix. 2, 3; but it is better to regard Zophar as enraged by vers. 28, 29 of ch. xix. **And the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer.** This claim is not quite consistent with the acknowledgment of hastiness in ver. 2. But it is no unusual thing for an impetuous and hasty man to declare that he speaks from the dictates of pure dispassionate reason.

Ver. 4.—Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth? These words scarcely "imply cognizance of the record (of the creation of man) in Genesis," as Canon Cook suggests; but they do imply belief in a creation of man, not an evolution; and in the existence of a continuous tradition, extending from that time to Job's. The passage is among those which make for the high antiquity of the book.

Ver. 5.—That the triumphing of the wicked is short (comp. Ps. xxxvii. 35, 36; li. 1—5; lxxiii. 17—19, etc.). This is one of the main points of dispute between Job and his opponents. It has been previously maintained by Eliphaz (ch. iv. 8—11; v. 3—5; xv. 21, 29) and by Bildad (ch. viii. 11—19), as it is now by Zophar, and may be regarded as the traditional belief of the time, which scarcely any ventured to question. His own observation, however, has convinced Job that the fact is otherwise. He has seen the wicked "live, become old, and remain mighty in power" (ch. xxi. 7); he has seen them "spend their days in wealth," and die quietly, as "in a moment" (ch. xxi. 13). In ch. xxiv. 2—24 he seems to argue that this is the general, if not universal, lot of such persons. Later on, however, in ch. xxvii. 13—23, he retracts this view, or, at any rate, greatly modifies it, admitting that usually retribution does even in this life overtake the wicked. And this seems to be the general sentiment of mankind.

> "Raro antecedentem scelestum,
> Deseruit pede pœna claudo."
> (Horace, 'Od.,' iii. 2, ll. 31, 32.)

There remains, however, the question whether the triumphing of the wicked can fairly be considered "short," and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment. When we consider the lives of Dionysius the elder, Sylla, Marius, Tiberius, Louis XIV., Napoleon, it is difficult to answer this question in the affirmative.

Ver. 6.—Though his excellency mount up

to the heavens. "Though he reach," *i.e.*, "the highest pitch of prosperity" (comp. Ps. lxxiii. 9). **And his head reach unto the clouds** (comp. Dan. iv. 22, "Thou, O king, art grown and become strong: and thy greatness is grown, and *reacheth unto heaven*").

Ver. 7.—**Yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung.** Some understand "his own dung-heap," regarding the "ashes" of ch. ii. 8 as, in reality, a heap of refuse of all kinds; but it is simpler to suppose a plainer and more vulgar taunt (comp. 2 Kings xviii. 27). **They which have seen him shall say, Where is he?** *i.e.* "Whither hath he gone? What is become of him?" (comp. Ps. xxxvii. 36).

Ver. 8.—**He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found;** *i.e.* "as a dream flies, when one awaketh" (see Ps. lxxiii. 20; Isa. xxix. 7, 8). **Yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.** A "vision of the night" is perhaps something more than a "dream;" but it is equally fugitive, equally unstable—with morning it wholly vanishes away.

Ver. 9.—**The eye also which saw him shall see him no more;** or, *the eye which scanned him.* The verb used (שׁוּר) is a rare one, occurring only here, in ch. xxviii. 7, and in Cant. i. 6. In the former passage it is used of a falcon, in the latter of the sun. **Neither shall his place any more behold him** (comp. Ps. ciii. 16, "The place thereof shall know it no more").

Ver. 10.—**His children shall seek to please the poor.** Another rendering is, "The poor shall oppress his children," since the meaning of the verb רצה is doubtful. But the translation of the Authorized Version seems preferable. His children will curry favour with the poor, either by making restitution to them on account of their father's injuries, or simply because they are friendless, and desire to ingratiate themselves with some one. **And his hands shall restore their goods** (comp. vers. 15 and 18). He himself will be so crushed and broken in spirit that he will give back with his own hands the goods whereof he has deprived the poor. The restitution, *i.e.*, will be made, in many cases, not by the oppressor's children, but by the oppressor himself.

Ver. 11.—**His bones are full** of the sin **of his youth**; literally, *his bones are full of his youth*; i.e. lusty and strong, full of youthful vigour. There is no sign of weakness or decay about them. **Yet they shall lie down with him in the dust.** A little while, and these vigorous bones, this entire body, so full of life and youth, shall be lying with the man himself, with all that constitutes his personality, in the dust of death (comp. vers. 24, 25).

Vers. 12, 13.—**Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth;** *i.e.* though the wicked man delight in his wickedness, and gloat over it, and keep the thought of it in his mind, as a gourmand keeps, so long as he can, a delicious taste in his mouth; though he, as it were, **hide it under his tongue,** in order not to let it escape him; **though he spare it, and forsake it not; but keep it still within his mouth,** yet, notwithstanding all this, disgust and nausea arrive in course of time (see the next two verses). It is, perhaps, the most surprising among the phenomena of wickedness that men can gloat over it, voluntarily recur to it, make a boast of it, recount signal instances of it to their friends, and seem to find a satisfaction in the recollection. One would have expected that shame and self-disapproval and fear of retribution would have led them to dismiss their wicked acts from their thoughts as soon as possible. But certainly the fact is otherwise.

Ver. 14.—**Yet his meat in his bowels is turned.** Still, a time comes when the self-complacency of the wicked man is shaken. He experiences a failure of health or spirits. Then, suddenly, it is as if the meat that he has swallowed had been turned to poison in his bowels, as if the gall of asps were within him. Compare what Bishop Butler says of the sudden waking up of a man's conscience ('Analogy,' pt. i. ch. ii. p. 52). The ancients seem to have known that the poison of serpents was a strong acid, and therefore supposed that it was secreted by the gall-bladder (see Pliny, 'Hist. Nat.,' xi. 37).

Ver. 15.—**He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again.** The wicked man shall be made to disgorge his ill-gotten gains. Either fear, or remorse, or a judicial sentence will force him to make restitution (see ver. 10). **God shall cast them out of his belly.** Whatever is the immediate motive of the restitution, it will really be God's doing. He will cause the fear, or the remorse, or bring about the judicial sentence.

Ver. 16.—**He shall suck the poison of asps.** Probably Zophar does not affix any very distinct meaning to his threats. He is content to utter a series of fierce-sounding but vague menaces, which he knows that Job will regard as launched against himself, and does not care whether they are taken metaphorically or literally. Job will be equally distressed in either case. **The viper's tongue shall slay him.** It is really the viper's *tooth*, and not his *tongue*, that slays; but Zophar is not, any more than Job (ch. xxvii. 18), an accomplished naturalist.

Ver. 17.—**He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the brooks.** The wicked man shall suffer, not only positive pains, but what casuists call the *pœna damni*, or "penalty of loss"—deprivation, in other words, of

blessings which he would naturally have enjoyed but for his wickedness. Zophar here threatens him with the loss of those paradisiacal delights which the Orientals associated with water in all its forms, whether as פלגות, or "rills derived from larger streams," or as כהרי, "rivers," or as נחלי, "brooks" or "torrents," now strong and impetuous, now reduced to a mere thread. These are said poetically to flow with honey and butter, not, of course, in any literal sense, such as Ovid may have meant, when, in describing the golden age, he said—

"Flumina jam lactis, jam flumina nectaris ibant;"

('Metaph.,' i. 111.)

but as fertilizing the land through which they ran, and so causing it to abound with bees and cattle, whence would be derived butter and honey. Compare the terms in which Canaan was described to the Israelites (Exod. iii. 8, 17; xiii. 5; Deut. xxvi. 9, 15, etc.).

Ver. 18.—**That which he laboured for he shall restore.** Even that which he gets by his own honest labour he shall have to part with and give up. **He shall not swallow it down**; *i.e.* "shall not absorb it, and make it his own." **According to his substance shall the restitution be.** So Schultens, Professor Lee, and Dr. Stanley Leathes, who understand Zophar as asserting that, in order to compensate those whom he has robbed, the wicked man will have to make over to them all the wealth that is honestly his. Others translate, "According to the substance that he hath gotten, he shall not rejoice" (see the Revised Version, and the commentaries of Ewald, Delitzsch, and Dillmann).

Ver. 19.—**Because he hath oppressed and hath forsaken the poor.** These charges are now for the first time insinuated against Job; later on, they are openly brought by Eliphaz (ch. xxii. 5—9). Job denies them categorically in ch. xxix. 11—17. They seem to have been pure calumnies, without an atom of foundation. **Because he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not.** Another calumny, doubtless. Something like it was insinuated by Eliphaz in ch. xv. 28.

Ver. 20.—**Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly**; rather, *because he knew no quietness in his belly*, or *within him* (see the Revised Version); *i.e.* because his greed and his rapacity were insatiable—he was never at rest, but continually oppressed and plundered the poor more and more (see the comment on ver. 19). **He shall not save of that which he desired**; or, *he shall not save aught of that wherein he delighteth* (see the Revised Version). **For his oppression, for his violence, for his insatiable greed, he shall be punished by retaining nothing of all those delightful things which he had laid up for himself during the time that he was powerful and prosperous.**

Ver. 21.—**There shall none of his meat be left**; rather, *there was nothing left that he devoured not*, or *nothing remained over from his eating* (Schultens). Scarcely intended literally, as Canon Cook supposes. Rather said in reference to the wicked man's persistent oppression and robbery of the poor, the needy, and the powerless (comp. vers. 19, 20; and note our Lord's words, "Ye *devour* widows' houses," Matt. xxiii. 14). **Therefore shall no man look for his goods.** This is an impossible rendering. Translate, with Rosenmüller, Canon Cook, Stanley Leathes, and our Revisers, *therefore his prosperity shall not endure.* In other words, a Nemesis shall overtake him. For his oppression and cruelty he shall be visited by the Divine anger; a sudden end shall be made of his prosperity, and he shall fall into penury and misfortune. Covert allusion is, no doubt, intended to Job's sudden loss of his extraordinary prosperity by the series of calamities so graphically portrayed in ch. i. 13—19.

Ver. 22.—**In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits.** Even while his wealth and prosperity remain, he shall find himself in difficulties, since **every hand of the wicked** (or rather, *the hand of every one that is wretched*) **shall come upon him**; *i.e.* all those who are poor and miserable, especially such as he has made poor and miserable, shall turn against him, and vex him.

Ver. 23.—**When he is about to fill his belly** (comp. vers. 12—18); *i.e.* "when he is on the point of making some fresh attack upon the weak and defenceless." **God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him** (comp. Ps. lxxviii. 30, 31, where a far less harmful lust is noted as having brought down the Divine vengeance). **And shall rain it upon him while he is eating**; or, *as his food* (comp. Ps. xi. 6, "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest: this shall be *the portion of their cup*").

Ver. 24.—**He shall flee from the iron weapon.** This is no indication of the late authorship of Job. Iron was in use in Egypt at a very early date. A thin plate of it was found by Colonel Howard Vyse embedded in the masonry of the great pyramid; and iron implements and ornaments, iron spear-heads, iron sickles, iron gimlets, iron keys, iron bracelets, iron wire, have been found in the early tombs not infrequently (see the author's 'History of Ancient

Egypt,' vol. i. p. 505). That they are not more common is accounted for by the rapid oxidization of iron by exposure to the air, and its rapid decay in the nitrous soil of Egypt. The inhabitants of South-Western Asia were at no time much behind the Egyptians in their knowledge of the useful arts; and iron appears as a well-known metal in the Jewish Scriptures from the time of the Exodus (see Numb. xxxv. 16; Deut. iii. 11; iv. 20; viii. 9; xxviii. 23; Josh. viii. 31). It is true that the principal weapons of war continued to be made ordinarily of bronze, both in South-Western Asia and in Egypt, till a comparatively late period; but Zophar may mean to assign to the slayer of the wicked man weapons of a superior character. And **the bow of steel shall strike him through.** It is uncertain whether steel was known in the ancient world. But, whether or no, "steel" is not meant here. The word used in the original is *nĕhûshtah*, which undoubtedly means either "copper" or "bronze." As copper would be too soft a material for a bow, we may assume bronze to be intended. The bronze used in Egypt was extremely elastic, and there would have been little difficulty in fashioning bows of it (on the existence of such bows, see 2 Sam. xxvi. 5; Ps. xviii. 34).

Ver. 25.—**It is drawn, and cometh out of the body**; rather, *he draweth it forth, and it cometh out of his body* (see the Revised Version). The stricken man draws the arrow from his flesh, the natural action of every one so wounded. If the arrow was simply tipped with a smooth iron point, it would be easy to withdraw it; but a barbed arrow could only be cut out. **Yea, the glittering sword cometh out of his gall**; rather, *the glittering point*. The arrow is supposed to have pierced the gall-bladder, and to be drawn forth from it. There would be little chance of recovery in such a case. **Hence terrors are upon him.**

Ver. 26.—**All darkness shall be hid in his secret places**; literally, *all darkness is reserved for his treasures*, which some understand of his hidden earthly treasures, which no one shall ever find—some of the retribution laid up for him by God, which will be such darkness as Job describes in ch. x. 21, 22. **A fire not blown shall consume him**; *i.e.* "a fire lighted by no human hands," probably lightning or brimstone from heaven (ch. xviii. 15). **It shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle**; literally, *in his tent*, i.e. in his dwelling. His wife, his children, if he has any, and his domestics, shall be involved in the general ruin.

Ver. 27.—**The heaven shall reveal his iniquity; and the earth shall rise up against him.** This is Zophar's reply to the appeal which Job made (in ch. xvi. 18, 19) to heaven and earth to bear their witness in his favour. Heaven, he says, instead of testifying to his innocence, will one day, when the books are opened (Rev. xx. 12), "reveal his iniquity;" and earth, instead of echoing his cry, will "rise up" in indignation "against him." He will have none either in heaven or earth to take his part, or give any testimony in his favour.

Ver. 28.—**The increase of his house shall depart.** "The increase of his house" may be either his children and descendants; or his substance—that which he has accumulated. In the former case, the departure spoken of may be either death (see ver. 26), or carrying into captivity; in the latter, general rapine and destruction. **And his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath.** It seems to be necessary to supply some such nominative as "his goods," or "his treasure," נוב (see ver. 26). These shall "flow away," *i.e.* melt and disappear, "in the day of his wrath," *i.e.* the day when wrath comes upon him.

Ver. 29.—**This is the portion of a wicked man from God**; *i.e. the lot*, or *possession of a wicked man*—that which God makes over to him as his own in the last resort, and which is all that he has to look for. In other words, it is the heritage appointed unto him by God (comp. ch. xxvii. 13). As to some God, at the last, will assign an inheritance of good, so to others he will appoint an inheritance of evil.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—29.—*Zophar to Job: an orthodox champion to the rescue.* I. AN IMPETUOUS ORATOR PERTURBED. Threatened with Divine vengeance, Zophar advances to the combat in hopes of utterly confounding his antagonist. His appearance, manner, and address are characterized by: 1. *Bold defiance.* "Therefore," *i.e.* in view of what you have just spoken; nay, "nevertheless," *i.e.* in spite of all your grandiloquent talk about a sword. Zophar had been unmoved, equally by Job's pathetic wail depicting his abandonment by God and man, and by Job's sublime utterance respecting his Divine-human Goël. Job's prayer for a drop of human pity had made no impression on his flinty bosom. Job's suggestion that the law of retribution they so vehemently preached might one day receive unexpected illustration in themselves (ch. xix. 29) had

touched him to the quick. Accordingly, to hide the writhings of his lacerated spirit, he assumes an aspect of courage which he does not possess. 2. *Extreme perturbation.* The inward agitation of his spirit he betrays in his language. His cogitations were confused. His "thoughts" shot up in all directions from his heart like the manifold and intricate ramifications of a tree (cf. ch. iv. 16). The word strikingly represents the mind's activity under violent excitement. The soul of Zophar was perplexed. Job's discourse had possessed the merit of enlisting the attention, if not the sympathy, of his hearer. It had moved the feelings, if it had not convinced the judgment. And Zophar, if he did not listen with a loving spirit, at least did not hearken with a vacant mind. Yet, considering the mental disturbance which Job's speech had produced, Zophar would have acted prudently had he maintained a discreet silence. Troubled thoughts seldom fashion wise or weighty words; and, though vehement emotion, especially when under control, is of immense advantage to an orator, yet an intellect deranged by passion is divested of whatever power of conviction it might otherwise possess. 3. *Indecent haste.* Whether or not a pause usually intervened between the different speeches in this controversy, Zophar would appear to have been exceptionally impatient to smite his adversary, and to have rushed into the arena of debate like a war-horse neighing for the battle. If the rush of feeling and the multitudinous array of ideas which Job's words provoked did not "cause him to answer" (ver. 2), they at least furnished him with what seemed a crushing rejoinder to the outspoken insolence to which he had been compelled to listen—a rejoinder made and ready, so that he required not to meditate, but simply to "follow the suggestions of his thoughts as fast as they arose" (Carey), which he did. It had been better infinitely that Zophar had exercised a little self-restraint—better for his own credit, since "he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly" (Prov. xiv. 29), since even good men are prone to err when they speak in haste (Ps. cxvi. 11), since it is the part of a wise man to "refrain his lips" (Prov. x. 19), and the commandment of God to "be not rash with one's mouth" (Eccles. v. 2), but to be "swift to hear, slow to speak" (Jas. i. 19), and since "there is more hope of a fool than of him that is hasty in his words" (Prov. xxix. 20); and it would have been better for Job's comfort, since hasty words are seldom kindly words. 4. *Virtuous resentment.* Zophar, "the very pink and pattern of orthodoxy" (Cox), had been threatened with the sword. He had perfectly understood what Job meant by brandishing (metaphorically, of course) that lethal weapon before his eyes. It was designed as a "check of his reproach" (ver. 3), a reprimand to overwhelm him with disgrace, which he, Zophar, now hurled back upon the speaker with indignant scorn. The wounding of Zophar's self-esteem had been a more serious offence on Job's part than the striking at his faith. Zophar "one of those hot-heads who pretend to fight for religion that is imperilled, while in reality" they are "only zealous for their own wounded vanity" (Delitzsch). Instead of answering Job's arguments, which doubtless he could not, he wipes out, or imagines he wipes out, the gratuitous dishonour done to his reputation as an orthodox believer by vehement reassertion of the current faith. It is usual for those who cannot reply to an opponent's objections to indulge in personal invectives and extravagant assertions. 5. *Wonderful conceit.* Zophar practically informs Job that if he (Zophar) does not confound him (Job) and his heretical doctrines, it is not for want of ability to do so. "The spirit of his understanding," *i.e.* the inner light of his intellectual discernment, the spirit emanating from the keen faculty of perception which he knows to be within him, furnishes him with all the information requisite for such a purpose. Now, doubtless, "there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding" (ch. xxxii. 8); but "this also is a vanity" which may be witnessed beneath the sun, that they who have the least of such understanding not unfrequently suppose themselves to have the most, while they who have the most are the least inclined to praise themselves on its account.

II. THE ORTHODOX FAITH REASSERTED. 1. *With sarcastic surprise.* Zophar professes astonishment that Job required to be instructed on so obvious a point as the Divine law of retribution, considering (1) what a wise man Job was: "Knowest thou not this?" thou who knowest everything—an obvious allusion to ch. xix. 25; and (2) what an old law it was, having been "of old, since man was placed upon the earth," and therefore surely not beyond the cognizance of a man who could look to the world's end. Zophar's irony was clever, but not kind. 2. *With evident relish.* With ill-

concealed gusto Zophar repeats the popular dogma of the day, that "the triumphing of the wicked is near [literally, 'is from near'], and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment," adding that "though his excellency," or exaltation, "mount up into heaven, yet shall he perish for ever;" words suggestive of (1) the superficial character of the irreligious man's happiness, which is commonly derived from things at hand, the creature-comforts by which he is surrounded; (2) the short-lived duration of the wicked man's hope, which is only "from near," *i.e.* of recent origin, and continues but a little space, being doomed to perish at the close of life's brief day at the furthest; (3) the seeming elevation of the hypocrite's piety, which often appears to wear an extraordinary aspect of sanctity, setting its head among the clouds, while common saints have much ado to walk upon the earth without stumbling (Isa. lxv. 5; Matt. xxiii. 14; Luke xviii. 11); (4) the absolute certainty of the ungodly man's overthrow, since he shall yet be cast down from the loftiest position of security to the lowest depths of degradation (Isa. xiv. 13—15; Amos ix. 2; Obad. 4); (5) the terrible completeness of the sinner's destruction—he shall perish, and that for ever. Had Zophar been a man of tender spirit, instead of a fierce and fiery bigot, he would not have exulted with such fiendish delight in a doom so appalling even in imagination. 3. *With varied illustration.* (1) A coarse metaphor. The wicked man shall perish "like his own dung," *i.e.* with abhorrence and contempt (1 Kings xiv. 10; 2 Kings ix. 37; Ps. lxxxiii. 10; Jer. viii. 2)—a sentiment which, although not conveyed in polite language, is sometimes verified in this world in the case of notorious transgressors, and in the next world will certainly prove true of all the ungodly. (2) An impressive image. The prosperous wicked man is likened to an unsubstantial dream, which, with its magical phantasmagoria, highly excites the fancy of the sleeper, but which vanishes, when night is passed, into the limbo of oblivion. What Zophar here affirms of the individual is true of men generally. The sinful life is a tremendous unreality; it may often assume imposing shapes, fascinating to beholders; but, after all, is only a pretentious shadow, which will disappear when, at the dawning of eternal day, the good man awakes. The pious life alone has solidity and continuance. (3) A borrowed text. Zophar plagiarizes a sentiment (ver. 9) from a previous address of Job (ch. vii. 8, 10). When preachers appropriate the thoughts of others, they should carefully acknowledge to whom they are indebted for their wisdom or eloquence. (4) A solemn reflection. That when a wicked man dies he commonly bequeaths a legacy of shame to his descendants, his children being obliged "to please the poor" (ver. 10), *i.e.* to court the favour of the destitute whom his rapacity has impoverished, and, in his name, so that it might actually be held to be by his hands, to "restore the goods" of those whom his covetousness and oppression have reduced to beggary. Nothing is more certain than that a father's ungodliness is often visited upon his family (Ezek. xviii. 2)—an argument for parental piety; that the whirligig of time brings strange revenges upon sinners, punishing them by the very inflictions they entailed on others, *e.g.* reducing their children to beggary as they had reduced the children of others (1 Sam. xv. 33)—a proof of God's overruling providence; that ill-gotten gain seldom proves a blessing to its possessors, mostly bringing misery into a man's house instead of felicity (Gen. xiii. 11)—a caution against covetousness; and that God frequently compels the restitution of wealth unjustly acquired, sometimes by the power of grace (Luke xix. 8), sometimes by the anguish of remorse (Matt. xxvii. 3—5), sometimes by the hand of death (Ps. xxxix. 6), sometimes by the superior craft of others (Gen. xxx. 37)—a reason for honest dealing. (5) A cruel innuendo. That Job had been wicked in his youth, that Job's bones were even then full of the secret lusts of his early manhood, that at least his physical disease was the direct retribution of his previous excesses, and that these, his unrepented crimes, were about to descend with him to his grave (ver. 11). Though not applicable to Job, at whom all commentators are agreed it is pointed (cf. ch. xiii. 26; xvii. 15, 16), the language conveys a solemn warning as to youthful indulgence in sin, (*a*) its proneness to progress and develop into a licentious and profligate old age; (*b*) its tendency to avenge itself in time in a diseased body, an enfeebled mind, a premature death; and (*c*) its certainty, unless repented of, abandoned, and forgiven, to lie down with the transgressor in his grave, ay, to accompany him beyond the grave into the unseen world of eternity.

III. AN APPROVED DOCTRINE ENFORCED. 1. *The picture of a sinful epicure.* (Vers.

12—18.) (1) The wicked man's estimate of sin. He regards it as a dainty which communicates to his soul the same gratification that delicious viands do to the palate. A melancholy proof of the degradation into which man has sunk, that that which God pronounces an abomination he should contemplate with approbation; that a nature which God formed to find its happiness in holy fellowship with himself should experience pleasure in disobedience. Yet to the carnal mind all sin possesses more or less a relish, while some forms of indulgence, such as intemperance in eating and drinking, inordinate ambition and avarice, devotion to the frivolous, and often wicked, amusements of fashionable life, are attended with at least a seeming satisfaction. (2) The wicked man's delight in sin. He deals with it as an epicure does with a dainty—keeping hold of it as long as he is able, seeking to extract from it as much sweetness as possible, "hiding it under his tongue, sparing it and forsaking it not, but keeping it still in the middle of his palate" (vers. 12, 13); as a glutton does with delicious food, eagerly devouring it, gulping it down with avidity, swallowing it with greediness (ver. 15), gormandizing and stuffing himself with the tasty viands with the voracity of a beast —a description applicable to the drunkard (Prov. xxiii. 20, 21), the debauchee (Prov. vii. 22), the covetous man (Isa. v. 8; lvi. 11). (3) The wicked man's recompense from sin. He shall be filled with misery by that in which he formerly delighted, as if the pleasant food of which he had partaken had been changed in his stomach into the gall of asps (ver. 14). "Though wicked men relish sin at the time, roll it as a sweet plum in the mouth, and feel its deliciousness, the issue will be agony; it will turn into wormwood, it will rankle as a hellish virus in every vein of the soul" (Thomas). He shall be taken with a loathing for that which he formerly desired, viz. riches, which shall compel him to disgorge that which he gulped down with greediness (ver. 15); nay, what he toiled so hard to obtain he shall not be permitted to retain, but shall be obliged to restore without having experienced from it any real enjoyment (ver. 18). Though conveying a cruel and malicious insinuation that Job's wealth had been unjustly acquired—which it was not—yet the sentiment is often true, especially of riches, that that which men pursue with avidity and accumulate with eager anticipations of delight, seldom realizes the expectations it excites, often fills its possessors with disgust, and must eventually be given up, if not before, at least at death (Eccles. vi. 2; cf. 'Measure for Measure,' act iii. sc. 1). He shall be slain by the very thing which he supposed should be his life, the sweet morsel of sin which he sucked turning out to be the poison of asps, and as the deadly bite of a viper. So sin ever carries retribution in its own bosom. The fair fruit which was expected to make Adam and Eve wise as gods left them overwhelmed with guilty shame (Gen. iii. 7); Samson's amorous dalliance with Delilah conducted him to Gaza's prison (Judg. xvi. 21); David's sin with Bathsheba proved like molten fire within his veins (Ps. xxxii. 4; li. 8); the wine-cup of the drunkard at last bites like a serpent and stings like an adder (Prov. xxiii. 32). He shall be excluded from any real happiness on earth. "He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter" (ver. 17). Much more, it may be added, he shall not attain to the felicity of the future Paradise of God. "The river of life, the wine of the kingdom, the fruits of Paradise, the joys at God's right hand, the pleasures for evermore," are "all forfeited for the momentary pleasures of sin" (Robinson). 2. *The picture of a powerful tyrant.* (Vers. 19—28.) The portrait intended for Job. (1) The crimes laid to his charge are: (*a*) Merciless oppression, in the threefold form of grinding down, forsaking, and robbing the poor (cf. ch. xxii. 6, 7); conduct common in the era of the Preacher (Eccles. iii. 16) and in the days of primitive Christianity (Jas. ii. 6), though by no means infrequent in these times; conduct offensive in the sight of God and man (Eccles. vi. 8; vii. 7), and wholly unbecoming in a good (Isa. xxxiii. 15), but specially characteristic of a bad (Ps. lv. 3), man; conduct attaining its highest degree of wickedness when the poor oppress the poor (Prov. xxviii. 3), and certain to be fiercely avenged (Ps. xxxv. 10; Prov. xxii. 16; Isa. iii. 15; Jer. xxii. 16) by him who espouses the cause of the oppressed. (*b*) Insatiable greed, being represented as one who felt no quietness in his belly, *i.e.* whose cravings knew no bounds (ver. 20), and from whose covetousness nothing escaped (ver. 21)—a sin against which men are warned in the Decalogue (Exod. xx. 17), and saints in the gospel (Luke xii. 15), and upon which woes are pronounced by the prophets (Isa. v. 8; Jer. li. 13; Micah ii. 2; Hab. ii. 6), and judgments by the apostles (Rom.

i. 29; 1 Cor. v. 11; Eph. v. 3, 5; Heb. xiii. 5; Jas. v. 1—3; 2 Pet. ii. 3). (2) The doom predicted as his portion is exhibited as: (*a*) Deceiving prosperity. He shall not be able to escape with that to which his soul clings as its dearest treasure (ver. 20). Calamity shall overtake his accumulated spoil in spite of his most watchful care. His prosperity shall not continue (ver. 21), but "in the fulness of his sufficiency," when rejoicing in abundance, "he shall be in straits" (ver. 22), either dreading impending destitution, or being deprived of his property, as Job was, by the stroke of swift calamity. As no man's riches can save him from peril (Ps. xlix. 7), so neither can any man save his riches when God commands them to take wings and flee away (Prov. xxiii. 5). God can take a sinner from his wealth (Luke xii. 20) as easily as a sinner's wealth from him (Gen. xix. 29), or, permitting the wealth to remain, he can cause its possessor to feel in straits. (*b*) Thickening adversity. "Every hand of the wicked [literally, 'every hand of the wretched,' *i.e.* every stroke that falls upon the wretched] shall come upon him." He shall be assailed by every form of trouble; as *e.g.* Divine wrath in the midst of his enjoyment (ver. 23)—God, in order to fill his belly, raining down upon him the fiery glow of his indignation as he did upon the cities of the plain (Gen. xix. 24), upon the Israelites in the wilderness (Numb. xi. 33; Ps. lxxviii. 30, 31), and, according to Zophar, upon Job (ch. i. 16). Sudden destruction in the midst of his oppressions (vers. 24, 25). Fleeing from an adversary, he is pierced in the back by an arrow from a bow of steel. Drawing the gleaming weapon from his body, the metal head of the arrow from his gall, terrors of approaching death or of a fearful conscience encompass him. So God sometimes causes the sinner to be struck down in the very act of his wickedness (Numb. xvi. 31; 2 Sam. viii. 5; 2 Kings i. 9, 10; Acts v. 5), and so are bold transgressors commonly transformed into cowards when death comes and conscience wakes. Complete annihilation of himself and his treasures (ver. 26). Though concealed in the earth, these treasures will yet be laid bare by fire from heaven, which shall also burn up him and them (as the fire of God had already, literally, burnt up Job's sheep and oxen, and was on the eve, metaphorically, of devouring himself), consigning both to a gloom darker than that which enshrouds the freebooter's spoil—a doom reserved for the finally impenitent. Certain exposure of his wicked character and life (ver. 27), not only heaven renouncing and abhorring the transgressor, but the earth also conspiring to ensure his detection. As certainly as God and the universe are on the side of saints (Rom. viii. 28), so certainly are they arrayed against the sinner. It was, perhaps, only poetry when Deborah and Barak sang that the heavenly powers fought for Israel, and the stars in their courses contended against Sisera (Judg. v. 20); it was superstition which made the Melitans imagine Paul to be a wicked wretch whom Divine vengeance suffered not to live (Acts xxviii. 4); it is plain prose and solemn truth when God says that heaven and earth are in league against the sinner. Final extinction for his house and its belongings in the day of wrath (ver. 28), as appeared to be the case with Job, though it was not, and as will eventually be the case with the wicked, though they think not.

IV. A POWERFUL SERMON APPLIED. 1. *The elements of truth in this conclusion.* These are: (1) That the wicked man has a portion or heritage, which he shall assuredly receive as the righteous reward of his ungodly life. Equally with the saint will the sinner be recompensed according to his works. (2) That this portion or heritage is decreed for the wicked man by God. As God appoints to all men their earthly lots, so does he determine the lots of all in the life beyond. (3) That this portion or heritage shall be bestowed upon him by the hand of God, so that his evading or eluding it will be wholly impossible. 2. *The ingredients of error in this conclusion.* (1) The wicked man's portion is not always bestowed upon him on earth: the first mistake of Zophar. (2) Even if bestowed on earth, it is not universally a heritage like that described above: Zophar's second blunder. (3) If, again, it was exactly as portrayed, it did not apply to Job: the third mistake of Zophar, and the worst of the three.

Learn: 1. That controversy, especially in religion (and politics), is seldom profitable, and almost always irritating. 2. That controversialists are commonly characterized more by exaggerated language than by convincing argumentation. 3. That no cause is advanced by either vulgarity of speech or personality of allusion. 4. That it is not uncommon for a careless reasoner to mistake a half-truth for a whole, an exceptional truth for a universal, an occasional truth for a perpetual. 5. That it is impossible for

a wicked man to escape retribution, if not in this world, at least in the next. 6. That unpardoned sins are the worst grave that any man can lay his bones in. 7. That though sin may be attended with pleasure, it can never result in happiness. 8. That what prevents ultimate success to a sinner is the fact that God is against him. 9. That God knows when and how to strike his avenging blows so as to cause them to fall hardest on the object of his displeasure. 10. That the greatest calamity which can overtake a human soul is the wrath of God.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—29.—*Godless prosperity short-lived.* Here we have a new variation on the favourite theme of the friends—the inconstancy of godless prosperity. "The jubilation of the wicked is but of short duration, and the joy of the profligate but a moment." The wicked man is specially here described as a rich man, who greedily snatches at others' property, and whose ill-gotten gains become a deadly consuming fire to him and all his. It is related to Eliphaz's speech (ch. xv.) as the superlative to the positive, and to Bildad's (ch. xviii.) as the superlative to the comparative. Similar remarks to those, then, must here apply; and the description is in itself true, apt, and striking, but its evident *animus* against Job is fiercely unjust.

I. CENSURE OF JOB: INTRODUCTION OF THE THEME. (Vers. 1—5.) "Therefore my thoughts reply to me, and hence comes the storm of my bosom. Must I hear correction that insults me? But my spirit out of my understanding gives me an answer"—namely, of warning and chastisement to Job as a godless man (vers. 1—3). Zophar then gives these suggestions of his spirit in the form of a question directed to Job: "Knowest thou this from eternity, since man was placed on the earth, that the triumph of the wicked endures but a short time, and the joy of the reprobate but a moment?" He is astonished that Job, as appears from his speeches, is unacquainted with this well-worn and familiar truth of experience (vers. 4, 5).

II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEME. (Vers. 6—29.) 1. "Though his glory mounts to heaven, and his head reaches to the clouds" (comp. Isa. xiv. 13, 14; Obad. 4), "like his dung he perishes for ever; they that saw him say, Where is he?" The coarsest and most contemptuous comparison seems to be purposely selected (ver. 7). The next is that of the fugitive dream (ver. 8; comp. Isa. xxix. 7; Ps. lxxiii. 20; xc. 5). Dreams and visions of the night! emptiest things! appearing to be something while they last, but leaving no trace behind when the sleeper wakes. The eye that has seen him shall see him no more; and the place where he seemed to move, a solid person of flesh and blood, beholds that figure no longer (ver. 9). The curse descends to his children; they are reduced to court the favour of humble folk, and they have to give up to their father's creditors his ill-gotten wealth (ver. 10). How often, though not without exception, do we see this to be the rule of life—the beggary or the wealth of children is rooted in the wickedness or goodness of the parents (Exod. xx. 5; Ps. xxxvii. 25)! Let him who would see his children happy beware of sin. "His bones were full of youthful strength, and with him it lies in the bed of dust" (ver. 11). 2. *The inconstant prosperity of the wicked under the figure of sweet food, but deadly poison.* (Vers. 12—16.) "Though evil tastes sweet in his mouth, he hides it under his tongue," rolling it as a delicious morsel, he sparingly fosters it, and lets it not go, and keeps it back on his palate" (in five synonymous phrases the idea of the dwelling and gloating over the sweet morsel of sin is set forth, vers. 12, 13); "yet his food is changed in his bowels—vipers' poison is in his interior" (ver. 14). The riches he has swallowed "God expels from his paunch." The drastic language betrays the energy and violence of Zophar's feelings (ver. 15). Then, recurring to the figure of ver. 14, "the tongue of adders slays him" (Ps. cxl. 3), the deadly bite replacing in the description the deadly draught (ver. 16; Prov. xxiii. 32). So God turns men's "pleasant vices" into whips and scourges for their backs ('King Lear'). The sweet Dead Sea fruits that tempt the taste turn to ashes on the lips. Sinful pleasure turns to pain. It begins with sweetness, like sugar, but afterwards bites like a serpent (Prov. xx. 17; Sirach xxi. 2, *et seq.*). 3. (Vers. 17—22.) "He may not see his pleasure in brooks, streams, floods of honey and cream" (ver. 17). These are well-known biblical figures for luxury and fulness of prosperity (Exod. iii. 8, 17). And where the classic

poets describe the golden age these figures occur: "streams of milk, streams of nectar flowed" (Ovid, 'Metam.,' i. 111, *sqq.*; Theocr., 'Id.,' v. 124, *sqq.*; Virg., 'Ecl.,' iv. 30; Hor., 'Epod.,' xvi. 47). "He gives back what he has gained, and enjoys it not; according to the property of his barter he is not merry;" that is, in proportion as he employed unjust means of exchange, to obtain temporal goods and enjoyment, he does not rejoice in them, he must go without the mirth that he promised himself from them (ver. 18). "For he crushed, and caused the lowly to lie down." With what tender regard does biblical morality and law treat the poor and defenceless! what indignation does it testify against the oppressor! "He snatched houses for himself, and built them not." The meaning perhaps is, he built them not anew, did not succeed in rebuilding them according to his taste, because he could not possess them for a permanence (ver. 19). "For he knew no rest in his belly." "The way of peace" (Isa. lix. 8) is not for restless greed and selfish hardness to others' sufferings to tread. "Therefore he will not escape with that which is dearest to him" (ver. 20). "Nothing escaped his greed, therefore his possessions shall not continue" (ver. 21). "In the fulness of his superfluity he comes into straits; every hand of the wretched comes upon him" (ver. 22). The clamours of those whom he has wronged, the cries of the widows, the orphans, the poor, make a din in the ears of the bad man; their hands stretch forth to seize the goods of which he has defrauded them. It is a striking picture of retribution. Perhaps the most salient point in this description is that of the insatiableness of greed. "The dire dropsy increases by self-indulgence, nor expels the thirst, unless the cause of disease flees from the veins, and the watery languor from the pale body," says Horace, in a noble ode on the use and abuse of riches. "You shall more widely rule," he says, "by taming the greedy spirit, than could you join Libya to far-off Gades" ('Od.,' ii. 2). Riches cannot satisfy the soul, nor any earthly good, but only God (Eccles. i. 8). The covetous temper finds as much want in what it has as in what it has not. No possessions, however great, can satisfy us, until we have found the treasury of all good things in God. We are still little Alexanders, not content to rule over one world—grieved to hear there are no more (Brenz). 4. *End of the wicked man in accordance with the Divine judgment.* (Vers. 23—28.) "That it may serve for the filling of his belly, he causes his fiery wrath to fall upon him" (comp. ch. xviii. 15). (On the figure of filling the belly, cf. ver. 20; Luke xv. 16.) "And causes to rain upon him with his food;" that is, his food, the wages of his sin, is the just punishment from God (ver. 23). The description goes on to point out the means by which the wrathful judgment of Heaven is executed (ver. 24, *sqq.*). (1) Warlike examples: pursuit and wounds. "He flees from the iron harness, the brazen bow pierces him" (Judg. v. 26). He draws the arrow from his body (Judg. iii. 22), and the shining steel comes out of his gall; the terrors of death come upon him (ver. 25). Then (2) some further descriptions of the Divine judgment, especially with reference to the property of the wicked. "All darkness is reserved for his treasures." His hoards are exposed to every casualty. He finds that he has been "treasuring up for himself—wrath!" (Rom. ii. 5). A fire that no human hands have kindled devours him, destroying the relics of former judgments (ver. 26). "The heavens disclose his guilt, and earth rises against him" (ver. 27). A striking contrast to ch. xvi. 18, 19, where Job had appealed to heaven and earth as witnesses of his innocence. Thus denied and cast from both, the only place for the wicked is in Sheol, or Hades. The produce of his house must pass away, like wrecks floating down a flood, in the day of God's wrath (ver. 28).

CONCLUSION. "Such is the lot of the wicked man from God, and the heritage allotted to him by God" (ver. 29). The witness of nature against the sinner—this is the most powerful concluding thought in this awe-striking address. Nature *seems* to be unconscious of men's guilt, as of their virtues. The leaves of the forest do not shudder, the bright blue sky is not overcast, the earth does not quake when deeds of crime are done. Yet that majestic order represented by heaven and earth—the order which finds its reflection in the conscience of man—cannot be violated with impunity. It will avenge itself in the end. And we see from time to time striking types and prophecies of this in the way by which crime is detected from the traces left on the face of nature, or by the clues afforded by natural law. The light of day reveals the deed of the night-time, and the earth gives up her dead. If all sins thus leave some record, what rest or peace could there be for the guilty conscience except in the gospel, which assures us that in

Christ the sins of the penitent and believing are "covered," and that his blood cleanseth from all sin?—J.

Vers. 5—20.—*The temporary triumph of the wicked.* Zophar now comes forth with wise words; but they are as arrows, slender, strong, and sharp, which, though drawn upon a strong bow, yet miss their mark. Only too true is his assertion of the brevity of the triumph of the evil-doer, the momentary joy of the hypocrite; only too accurate his forcible setting forth of the state and portion of the ungodly. Job has to hear again cruel words. His patient faith has yet to be further tested; his final triumph is postponed.

I. HIS HONOUR IS TEMPORARY. If he raise himself so that "his head reach unto the clouds, yet he shall perish for ever;" "he shall fly away as a dream," so short is his grasp of any position of honour.

II. HIS FAMILY PROSPERITY IS BUT BRIEF. The goods he has gained by his ungodliness "his hands shall restore," and his children crouch to appease the poor. Ill-gotten gain is held by uncertain hands. For a time the ungodly seems to prosper, but it is that he may be consumed out of his place.

III. HIS LIFE IS WASTED AND PASSETH AWAY. Even his youthful vigour fails him. It shall speedily "lie down with him in the dust." The practice of wickedness brings punishment on him who offends. The tendency of wrong-doing is ever to prey upon the strength of the life.

IV. THE PLEASURES OF SIN TO HIM ARE BUT FOR A SEASON. Though he "hide" wickedness "under his tongue," though it be "sweet in his mouth," yet shall it be turned to "the gall of asps within him."

V. THE POSSESSION OF RICHES IS PERMITTED ONLY FOR A BRIEF PERIOD. Though he swallow them down, "he shall vomit them up again." Nothing has permanence with him. Changes come over him from sources he cannot trace and certainly could not foresee. His toil is fruitless. "That which he laboured for shall he restore . . . he shall not rejoice therein." Wickedness eats into the strength and joy of life. It exposes life to innumerable evils and robs it of its chief good. The wicked man has no pledge of permanent blessing. "He shall not save of that which he desired." Truly "the triumphing of the wicked is short."—R. G.

Vers. 21—26.—*Disappointment to the wicked.* Even when all promises well to the wicked, evil shall lurk under cover of the seeming prosperity. When he is about to satisfy himself, suddenly he shall be in straits. His hopes shall be blasted, his strong confidence disappointed. With a singular cluster of strong figures Zophar depicts the unsatisfying position of the wicked man. He is in the midst of enemies. Every source of help and joy seems to fail him.

I. HE FINDS NO HELP IN MAN. "Every hand of the wicked shall come upon him." Even they of his own way of thinking disappoint him. They turn upon him. An ungodly man can have no true confidence in his ungodly associates. Evil in them enables them to detect evil in him. The spirit which they know within themselves to be wrong and untrustworthy, unkind and evil-plotting, they know to be the same in him.

II. HE FINDS NO HELP IN GOD. "When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him." The wicked, so long as he continues wicked, has nothing to hope for from God. It was the joyful boast of one assailed on every hand, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" So if God be "against" a man, of what avail is it that any are "for" him? God is the best of friends, the most mighty of enemies. Not that in the Divine heart are any sentiments of enmity against the children of men, but men turn blessings into curses by the way they use them. So men make an enemy of their best Friend.

III. HE FINDS NO HELP IN CIRCUMSTANCES. The iron weapon which he might have grasped he shall flee from; and the bow of steel which he might have drawn shall strike him through. "Terrors" seize him, "darkness" hides in his secret places, "a fire not blown" consumes him. He is encompassed by foes. All things are against him. Though he prosper, yet "in the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits." "This is the portion of the wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God."—R. G.

Ver. 27.—*The final testimony against ungodliness.* The wicked may hide himself "in his secret places," but his iniquity will be revealed. He cannot escape. For a time he may prosper and may practise deceit; but ultimately his doings shall be made known and meet with their just retribution. The natural consequence of wrong-doing is to go on from bad to worse until at length it bursts all restraint. Even the dull eye of the neighbour will detect the prevailing wrong, but the keen eye of a Divine justice cannot be escaped. Evil outwits itself. Its fruit appears in due time. Faultiness of life and conduct make themselves apparent. But should it be possible wholly to hide iniquity through life, and to die with the dreadful secret locked in the breast of the wrong-doer, yet there still remains a revelation which cannot be evaded. "The heaven shall reveal his iniquity; and the earth shall rise up against him." This final testimony against ungodliness is—

I. INEVITABLE.
II. IMPARTIAL.
III. DESERVED.
IV. SEVERE.—R. G.

Ver. 5.—*The short triumphing of the wicked.* Zophar's superficial view has truth in it as far as it goes. He is a man of the world, and he has kept his eyes open. What he has seen has been no illusion. It is not enough to explain the deeper mysteries of Job's experience. Yet it has an obvious truth in it.

I. THERE IS A TRIUMPHING OF THE WICKED. 1. *This is seen in experience.* Even Zophar, who finds it not exactly in accordance with his ideas of providence, still cannot but admit that it exists. A swindler fattens on the spoils of the robbery of widows and orphans. A Napoleon dominates Europe. 2. *It is important to recognize the fact.* We must make our theories accord with our experience and observation of the world. It is useless to comfort ourselves in the seclusion of our private meditation with an easy optimism, if this will not fit in with the events of everyday life. If we are not prepared to expect the triumph of the wicked, the sight of it will strike us with a shock of dismay. 3. *The triumphing of the wicked does present a difficulty.* It is contrary to our notion of justice. No doubt the narrow, conventional notion of the three friends was founded on a genuine sense of right and fitness. If there is to be no future judgment, and if this temporal state is typical of the whole course of life, here is an instance of gross injustice. We must therefore face it, and inquire what it means.

II. THIS TRIUMPH IS SHORT. Zophar's explanation is that the triumph will soon pass away, and will give place to overthrow and ruin. 1. *This is seen on earth.* As a rule, the swindler does not die rich. He usually outlives his gains. Great wickedness generally disappoints its owner. Napoleon finishing his career as an exile at St. Helena is typical of the most frequent end of a very bad course. But this is by no means a universal principle. The whole of a bad man's life may be externally prosperous, right on to death. 2. *This will be seen after death.* We must extend our contemplation of the course of the wicked man. He dies, leaving wealth, pleasure, power, triumph, behind him. None of these can accompany him through the dark doors of death. He has laid up no treasures in the unseen world. There he is certainly beggared, and he has good ground for expecting the infliction of well-merited punishment. His short earthly life, but a moment when compared to eternity, is over, and with it all his triumphing has ceased.

III. THE SHORT TRIUMPH OF THE WICKED IS FALLACIOUS. 1. *It is fallacious because its brevity is hidden.* The foolish man who glories in it does not see how swiftly it is slipping away from him. A triumph which must soon give place to shame is not worth much to its owner. 2. *It is fallacious because it gives no solid satisfaction.* The wicked glee of triumphing in sin is quite superficial. Often its very excitement is only a result of restless discordant passions. It wears a bold front, but it covers a weary spirit. If there is a spark of conscience left there must be a haunting fear—like the mummy at the Egyptian feast—that spoils the pleasure.

IV. THE ONLY ENDURING TRIUMPH IS THAT WHICH FOLLOWS A TRULY CHRISTIAN LIFE. 1. *This is solid.* It begins with victory over sin and self, our greatest enemies. 2. *It is assured.* It is brought about by the work of Christ; it is just sharing in his victory; and Christ must triumph. 3. *It is eternal.* On earth there may be shame and

humiliation, but in heaven Christians are called to the joy of victory—to be "more than conquerors" (Rom. viii. 37).—W. F. A.

Vers. 12—17.—*The sweet taste of sin and its bitter after-taste.* I. THE SWEET TASTE OF SIN. How can we account for the fact that if sin is essentially an evil thing it should ever be attractive to us? Surely its natural hatefulness should make it repulsive. If it is hideous in the sight of God, by what witchery can it be made to appear fascinating to our eyes? 1. *It appeals to our lower desires.* It makes its first appeal to nature. There was no evil at first in Adam and Eve, and yet sin was made attractive to them. Christ could not have been tempted unless sin had been made to wear a fair mask in his presence. The bodily appetites and the self-seeking desires are natural and innocent in themselves. But they should be kept under by our higher nature. If, however, the tempter appeals to them directly, he appeals to the prospect of natural pleasure. 2. *It is aided by our selfish nature.* We are all fallen creatures. If the fall has not taken the form of sensuality, it has certainly been accomplished in selfishness. Now sin appeals to our selfish nature, and promises personal gratification at the expense of righteousness. 3. *It is intensified by corrupted desires.* Sin perverts the natural appetites and corrupts the most innocent desires. The wicked thing which is first sought because of some promised result comes to be loved on its own account. As the miser loves his money, so the sinner loves his sin—first for what it can purchase, then on its own account. He is like a hypnotized person, to whom gall tastes like sugar, because he is deluded into believing evil to be his good.

II. THE BITTER AFTER-TASTE OF SIN. Zophar rightly enlarges upon this subject. We do not need any amplification of the delights of sin. The very presentation of them to the imagination is degrading. The soul is soiled by contemplating them. We are quite ready to admit their strength. But it is not so easy to imagine vividly and to keep well in view the dreadful after-results. They are remote, unattractive, uncongenial. Therefore we need to be forced to see the results of sin in detail. Zophar narrates them with graphic vigour. Let us, then, consider the disagreeable details of the bitter after-taste. 1. *It is pain within.* The morsel is sweet in the mouth, and it is hidden under the tongue to keep it safe and to prolong the delicious enjoyment of it; yet when it is swallowed it becomes like the gall of asps. The recollection of past sin is a pain of conscience. Its very delights are turned to bitterness in the after-thought. Just in proportion to their tempting fascination before the deed is their repulsiveness after it has been committed. The foolish victim of temptation looks back on his orgies with disgust. He loathes himself, he grovels in humiliation. How could he have been such a fool as to sink to this shame and degradation? 2. *It results in the loss of future delights.* The sinner is made to give up his riches. He is denied "the brooks, the rivers, the torrents of honey and butter," which he was greedily looking forward to. The justice of God will not permit him to revel for ever in wickedness. By his indulgence in sinful pleasures he has destroyed the faculty of innocent joy. His debauch has turned the garden of innocent delights into a desert. For such a man there is no hope but in complete regeneration. Yet that is possible. Even he can be converted, and made a new creature in Christ Jesus.—W. F. A.

Vers. 19, 20.—*Oppressing the poor.* This is a sin most frequently referred to in the Bible, a common wrong against which the prophets of Israel contiuually protested with vehement indignation. Christ, usually mild and gentle, spoke in great anger of this wickedness (Matt. xxiii. 14). St. James denounced it as not unknown among Christians (Jas. v. 4).

I. THE SIN. 1. *Its various forms.* It is not always seen in the bare and open fashion of primitive times. The sheikh exacts more than is due from his tribe, the Eastern landowner grinds down his fellaheen, the baron enslaves and robs his serfs, and we denounce the manifest wrong. But is not the same evil to be seen in the more decorous injustice of modern Western civilization? The great body of working men is now emancipated from the tyranny of past ages, and is able to assert itself and claim its rights. But below this powerful class is a mass of unskilled workers, the helpless men and women who crowd the lower quarters of great cities—the really poor. When advantage is taken of the poverty of these miserable people to grind

them down, they are being robbed. With us the sweating system takes the place of the old territorial oppression. 2. *Its invariable wickedness.* Is the modern commercial oppression one whit less guilty than the old lordly tyranny? The evil is more disguised with us; it is more difficult to bring it home to its authors; our complicated civilization hushes it up—yet the cruelty and wickedness are as real as ever.

II. THE PUNISHMENT. The writers of the Bible who denounced the sin of oppressing the poor continually threatened punishment to the guilty oppressors. 1. *Direct loss.* Zophar contemplates the actual loss of ill-gotten gains. This may happen in the present life. It will certainly occur at death. The oppressor can take none of the profits of his cruelty out of the world with him. 2. *Disappointment.* In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits. Even without the loss of property difficulties will arise. The rich man may be murdered in his palace. Most oppressors live in fear. Trouble of mind mingles like gall in the sweetest cup of pleasures got by cruelty.

III. THE CURE. Punishment is not cure. The fear of it may act as somewhat of a check. But we must go deeper for "the root of the matter" if we would cure it. Now undoubtedly in this case the root is not hard to find, for it is simply unmitigated selfishness. Therefore until men can be taught to substitute brotherliness for selfishness, oppression of the poor must continue. No social revolution, no legal enactment, no forcible change, can eradicate the evil. We must go for the cure of social evils to Christ. He is concerned with society as well as with the individual, and there is no hope for society until he is recognized as its Saviour and its Lord. Christianity instils brotherliness. No man can be a Christian who is destitute of this grace. Oppression of the poor belies the most sanctimonious profession of religion. We want to get back to the religion of Christ, which made more of brotherliness than even of faith; the religion of St. Paul and St. John, which taught that love is the greatest thing in the world.—W. F. A.

Ver. 22.—*Straitened in the time of fulness.* I. SUDDEN DISASTER. This had come upon Job. It looks as if the pragmatic Zophar was rude enough to insinuate that the picture he was painting would be recognized by the patriarch as a portrait of himself. Now, the external part of the picture was true to the circumstances of Job. Therefore the broad hint that the internal part also applied to him was the more cruel. Job's sufferings were extreme, but they were not contrary to precedent. Sudden disaster is not unknown. The rich man is beggared by an unexpected commercial collapse. An epidemic or a storm at sea suddenly bereaves a father of his whole family. Death snatches the prosperous person away at the height of his success. 1. *This is not expected.* Although it is not uncommon, people are generally unprepared for it; and when it comes they are astounded and dismayed. We are deceived by present appearances. It is difficult to believe in the overthrow of that which gives no sign of being in danger. 2. *This is crushing.* The pain of a fall is determined by the height from which one descends as much as by the depth that is reached. The troubles of those who were once prosperous are far worse to bear than the troubles of people who do not know what earthly happiness means. 3. *This should teach us to look beyond the present.* (1) In preparation for possible disaster. We should not, however, be always brooding over the possibility. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Still, we should be fortified against it. (2) In the possession of better than earthly things. We can endure the shocks that strike our earthly tabernacle, if we have "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. v. 1).

II. INTERNAL POVERTY. The ruin may take another form. There may be no such external and visible calamities as those that came upon Job. The normal course of events may be unbroken, the material prosperity may be unaffected. Yet there may be distress and misery. Then the soul is straitened although the fulness of earthly sufficiency is not touched. 1. *This comes from our spiritual nature.* The body has been fed, but the soul has been starved; therefore the soul is straitened. There are times when we perceive deeper needs than any earthly bread can satisfy; "for man shall not live by bread alone," etc. (Matt. iv. 4). 2. *This is felt in the awakening of conscience.* A voice within calls us to a service for which our earthly sufficiency affords no support. On the contrary, the wealth of external things seems a sort of hindrance, distracting our thoughts and absorbing our care when we should be turning

to more spiritual affairs. The spiritual nature, once aroused, feels cramped and oppressed by the very fulness of earthly sufficiency. 3. *This should drive us to the wells of living water.* We are tempted to neglect those sources of spiritual life when the streams of earthly blessings flow in fulness. Yet nothing but the water of life can nourish the soul. Without this we are thirsty still. We are straitened that we may turn to Christ for the water which he gives, and for his bread of life.—W. F. A.

Ver. 27.—*Iniquity revealed.* I. IT IS HIDDEN. Otherwise, of course, it would not need to be revealed. How is it hidden? 1. *By secrecy.* The sin is not committed in the light of day and before the eyes of a crowd. The wicked deed is done in the dark. 2. *By circumstances.* Events are such that the evil does not come out to the light. Snow falls and conceals the footprints of the thief. 3. *By falsehood.* Charged with his crime, the sinner denies it. For a while his lie is accepted, if there is no proof against him. 4. *By negligence.* It is not the business of everybody to be an amateur detective. The world lets much wickedness pass from sheer indifference.

II. IT WILL BE REVEALED. 1. *Certainly in the future judgment.* Then the secrets of all hearts shall be made known. God knows the wickedness that is hidden from man, for nothing can be concealed from his all-searching gaze. We are not only to expect that God will then punish sin. Further than this, there will be a general unveiling of character. The hypocrite will be unmasked. Everybody will be seen in his true nature. 2. *Possibly on earth.* Even here Heaven may reveal the iniquity. A providential turn of events may bring it all to light. Without any handwriting on the wall or any trumpet-toned annunciation, the slow and awful unrolling of providence may make the ugly story known.

III. ITS REVELATION WILL BE FOLLOWED BY ITS PUNISHMENT. This follows naturally: no avenging angel needs to be sent from heaven. "The earth shall rise up against him." It is as though the earth itself were horror-stricken at the sight of such enormity. She cannot bear the presence of the wicked man. Her silence would be like acquiescence, or even complicity, in his guilt. Nature itself works for the punishment of sin. The laws of nature are on the side of righteousness. They are God's laws, and all the laws of God are in harmony. All that is needed is sufficient time and scope, and the course of nature itself will produce the punishment. We see this already in regard to sins of the flesh, which bring disease, misery, death. It will take longer time, and the free opportunities of another world, to bring about the same result with all other sins.

IV. ITS EARLIER CONFESSION WILL PREVENT ITS LATER REVELATION. All this dark and direful doom is not inevitable. We are warned of it in order that we may avoid it. There is no necessity for us to wait for the Divine unveiling of our sin. Though that is certain to come if we do wait long enough for it; we may yet anticipate it by confession. God does not desire to expose the most guilty man to shame and suffering. His great wish is to conquer sin in the heart of the sinner. If the wickedness is owned and repented of, that is what God most wishes, and greatly prefers to the punishment of the impenitent. Not only does love yearn to save the sinner, but righteousness also desires to cast out the sin, as a more effectual conquest of it than merely punishing it while it is still retained in the heart of a man. Still, the thought of the impending revelation of sin shows how necessary an unreserved and complete confession is, if the sinner is to be forgiven. This is the first condition of pardon. While we hold to our sin, God cannot set us free from it and its consequences.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXI.

Vers. 1—34.—Job answers Zophar, as he had answered Bildad, in a single not very lengthy chapter. After a few caustic introductory remarks (vers. 2—4), he takes up the challenge which Zophar had thrown out, respecting the certain punishment, in this life, of the wicked (ch. xx. 4—29), and maintains, "in language of unparalleled boldness" (Cook), the converse of the proposition. The wicked, he says, live, grow old,

attain to great power, have a numerous and flourishing offspring, prosper, grow rich, spend their time in feasting and jollity—nay, openly renounce God and decline to pray to him—yet suffer no harm, and when they die, go down to the grave without suffering, "in a moment" (vers. 5—15). To the suggestion that from time to time they are cut off suddenly in a signal way, he answers, "How often is this?" or rather, "How seldom!" (vers. 17, 18). To the further suggestion that they are punished in their children he replies, "How much better if they were punished in their own persons!" (vers. 19—21). As it is, he argues, one event happens to all (vers. 23—26). In conclusion, he observes that common opinion supports his view (vers. 29—33), and denounces as futile the attempts of his comforters to convince him, since his views and theirs respecting the facts of God's government are diametrically opposed to each other (ver. 34).

Vers. 1, 2.—**But Job answered and said, Hear diligently my speech, and let this be your consolations.** As ye have no other consolation to offer me, at least attend diligently to what I say. *That* will be some comfort to me, and I will accept it in lieu of the consolations which I might have looked for at your hands.

Ver. 3.—**Suffer me that I may speak**; or, *suffer me, and I also will speak.* There is an emphasis on the "I" (אֲנִי). Job implies that his opponents are not allowing him his fair share of the argument, which is an accusation that can scarcely be justified. Since the dialogue opened, Job's speeches have occupied eleven chapters, those of his "comforters" seven only. But a controversialist who has much to say is apt to think that sufficient time is not allowed him. **And after that I have spoken, mock on.** Job does not hope to convince, or silence, or shame the other interlocutors. When he has said his say, all that he expects is mockery and derision.

Ver. 4.—**As for me, is my complaint to man?** Do I address myself to man, pour out my complaint to him, and expect him to redress my wrongs? No; far otherwise. I address myself to God, from whom alone I can look for effectual assistance. **And if it were so**; rather, *and if so*, if this is the case, if my appeal is to God, and he makes me no answer, then **why should not my spirit be troubled?** or, *Why should I not be impatient?* (Revised Version). Job thinks that he has a right to be impatient, if God does not vouchsafe him an answer.

Vers. 5, 6.—Here we have an abrupt transition. Job is about to controvert Zophar's theory of the certain retribution that overtakes the wicked man in this life, and to maintain that, on the contrary, he usually prospers (vers. 7—18). Knowing that, in thus running counter to the general religious teaching, he will arouse much horror and indignation on the part of those who hear him, he prefaces his remarks with a notice that they will cause astonishment, and an acknowledgment that he himself cannot reflect upon the subject without a feeling of alarm and dismay. He thus hopes partially to disarm his opponents.

Ver. 5.—**Mark me**; literally, *look to me*; i.e. "attend to me," for I am about to say something well worth attention. **And be astonished.** Prepare yourselves, *i.e.*, for something that will astonish you. **And lay your hand upon your mouth.** Harpocrates, the Egyptian god of silence, was often represented with his finger on his lips (see the author's 'History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. p. 362). The symbolism is almost universal. Job begs his auditors to "refrain their lips," and, however much astonished, to keep silence until he has concluded.

Ver. 6.—**Even when I remember**; *i.e.* "when I think upon the subject." **I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh.** A shudder runs through his whole frame. His words will, he knows, seem to verge upon impiety.

Ver. 7.—**Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?** Job asks for an explanation of the facts which his own experience has impressed upon him. He has seen that "the wicked live" quite as long as the righteous, that in many cases they attain to a ripe old age, and become among the powerful of the earth. The great "pyramid kings" of Egypt, whose cruel oppressions were remembered down to the time of Herodotus (Herod., ii. 124—128), reigned respectively, according to Egyptian tradition, sixty-three and sixty-six years (Manetho ap. Euseb., 'Chron. Can.,' pars ii.). Rameses II., the cruel oppressor of the Jews, and the Pharaoh from whom Moses fled, had a reign of sixty-seven years ('Hist. of Ancient Egypt,' vol. ii. p. 301).

Ver. 8.—**Their seed is established in their sight with them** (comp. Ps. xvii. 14; and see below, ch. xxvii. 14). It could scarcely be doubted that the wicked had as many

children as the righteous, and often established them in posts of honour and emolument. **And their offspring before their eyes.** A pleonastic repetition.

Ver. 9.—**Their houses are safe from fear**; literally, *their houses are in peace, without fear.* **Neither is the rod of God upon them.** So Asaph, "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men" (Ps. lxxiii. 5). The chastening rod of God does not seem to smite them.

Ver. 10.—**Their bull gendereth, and faileth not**; rather, *their cow conceiveth.* *Shôr* (שׁוֹר), which is of both genders, must here be taken as feminine. **Their cow** (rather, *their heifer*) **calveth, and casteth not her calf.** Both conception and birth are prosperous; there is neither barrenness nor abortion.

Ver. 11.—**They send forth their little ones like a flock.** Free, *i.e.* joyful and frolicsome, to disport themselves as they please. The picture is charmingly idyllic. **And their children dance.** Frisk, *i.e.*, and skip, and leap, "like the young of cattle full of health, and in the enjoyment of plenty" (Lee).

Ver. 12.—**They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ.** The "timbrel" (תֹּף) is probably the tambourine, an instrument used from a remote antiquity by the Orientals. It consisted of a round hoop of wood, into which were sometimes inserted jingling rings of metal, and upon which was stretched at one end a sheet of parchment. It is represented on the monuments both of Egypt and Phœnicia ('Hist. of Egypt,' vol. i. p. 522; 'Hist. of Phœnicia,' pp. 219, 223). The harp (כִּנּוֹר) was, in the early times, a very simple instrument, consisting of a framework of wood, across which were stretched from four to seven strings, which were of catgut and of different lengths, and were sounded either with the hand or with a plectrum. The "organ" (עוּגָב) was, of course, not an organ in the modern sense of the word. It was either a pan's pipe, which is a very primitive instrument, or more probably a double reed blown from the end, like a flageolet, examples of which are found in the remains both of Egypt and Phœnicia ('Hist. of Egypt,' vol. i. p. 524; 'Hist. of Phœnicia,' *l.s.c.*).

Ver. 13.—**They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave.** They die, *i.e.*, without suffering from any prolonged or severe illness, such as that grievous affliction from which Job himself was suffering. Probably Job does not mean to maintain all this absolutely, or as universally the case, but he wishes to force his friends to acknowledge that there are many exceptions to *their* universal law, that wickedness is always visited in this world with condign punishment, and he wants them to account for these exceptions (see ver. 7).

Ver. 14.—**Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us.** It is this impunity which leads the wicked to renounce God altogether. They think that they get on very well without God, and consequently have no need to serve him. Job puts their thoughts into words (vers. 14, 15), and thus very graphically represents their tone of feeling. **For we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.** The wicked feel no interest in God; they do not trouble themselves about him; his ways are "far above out of their sight," and they do not care to know them.

Ver. 15.—**What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?** "Who is Jehovah," said Pharaoh to Moses, "that I should obey his voice? I know not Jehovah" (Exod. v. 2). So the ungodly in Job's time. They pretend to have no knowledge of God, no sense of his claims upon them, no internal consciousness that they are bound to worship and obey him. They are agnostics of a pronounced type, or at least they profess to be such. **What profit,** they ask, **should we have, if we pray to him?** Expediency is everything with them. Will serving God do them any good? Will it advance their worldly interests? Persuade them of that, and they will be willing to pay him, at any rate, a lip-service. But, having prospered so long and so greatly without making any religious profession, they see no reason to believe that they would prosper more if they made one.

Ver. 16.—**Lo, their good is not in their hand**; *i.e.* their prosperity is not in their own power, not the result of their own efforts. God's providence is, at least, one element in it, since he exalts men and abases them, he casteth down and lifteth up. Hence it would seem to follow that they are his favourites. Shall Job therefore cast in his lot with them? No, he says, a thousand times, No! **The counsel of the wicked is far from me**; or better, *be the counsel of the wicked far from me!* I will have nothing to do with it. I will cling to God. I will maintain my integrity. Satan had charged Job with serving God for the sake of temporal reward. Job had disproved the charge by still clinging to God, notwithstanding all his afflictions. Now he goes further, and declines to throw in his lot with the wicked, even although it should appear that the balance of prosperity is with them.

Ver. 17.—**How oft is the candle of the wicked put out!** This is not an exclamation, but a question, and is well rendered in the Revised Version, "How oft is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out?" Is not the signal downfall of the wicked

prosperous man a comparatively rare occurrence? How oft **cometh their destruction upon them**! When the problem here propounded came before Asaph, he seems to have solved it by the supposition that in *all* cases retribution visited the wicked in this life, and that they were cast down from their prosperity. "I went," he says, "into the sanctuary of God; then understood I the end of these men. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image" (Ps. lxxiii. 17—20). Job maintains that such a catastrophe happens but seldom, and that for the most part the wicked go down to the grave in peace. God **distributeth sorrows in his anger**. This is not an independent clause. The sense runs on: *How oft is it that the candle of the wicked is put out, and that destruction cometh upon them, and God showers sorrows upon them in his anger?* (compare the comment on the next verse).

Ver. 18.—**They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away**; rather, *How oft is it that they are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff*, etc.? The construction begun in the first clause of ver. 17 is carried on to the end of ver. 18. "Stubble" and "chaff" are ordinary figures for foolish and ungodly men, whom the blast of God's anger sweeps away to destruction (comp. Exod. xv. 7; Ps. i. 4; xxxv. 5; lxxxiii. 13; Isa. xxvii. 13; xxix. 5; xli. 2, etc.).

Ver. 19.—**God layeth up his iniquity for his children**. Job supposes his opponents to make this answer to his arguments. "God," they may say, "punishes the wicked man in his children" (comp. Exod. xx. 5). Job does not deny that he may do so, but suggests a better course in the next sentence. **He rewardeth him**; rather, *let him recompense it on himself*—let him make the wicked man himself suffer, and then he **shall know** it. He shall perceive and know that he is receiving the due reward of his wickedness.

Ver. 20.—**His eyes shall see his destruction** (or, *let his own eyes see his destruction*), **and he shall drink** (or, *let him drink*) **of the wrath of the Almighty**. It will impress him far more with a sense of his wickedness, and of his guilt in God's sight, if he receives punishment in his own person, than if he merely suffers vicariously through his children.

Ver. 21.—**For what pleasure hath he in his house after him?** What does he care, ordinarily, about the happiness of his children and descendants? "Après moi le déluge" is the selfish thought of bad men generally, when they cast a glance at the times which are to follow their decease. The fate of those whom they leave behind them troubles them but little. It would scarcely cause them a pang to know that their posterity would soon be "clean put out." **When the number of his months is cut off in the midst**; *i.e.* when his appointed time is come, and he knows that "the number of his months" is accomplished.

Ver. 22.—**Shall any teach God knowledge?** Job has been searching the "deep things of God," speculating upon the method of the Divine government of the world. He has perhaps rashly ventured to "rush in where angels fear to tread." Now, however, he checks himself with the confession that God's ways are inscrutable, his knowledge far beyond any knowledge possessed by man. Men must not presume to judge him; it is for him to judge them. **Seeing he judgeth those that are high**. None so exalted, none so advanced in wisdom and knowledge, none so venturesome in sounding depths that they cannot fathom, but God is above them, judges them, knows their hearts, and, according to his infallible wisdom, condemns or approves them. This is a chastening thought, and its effect on Job is to make him contract his sails, and, leaving the empyrean, content himself with a lower flight. Previously he has maintained, as if he were admitted to the Divine counsels, that the prosperity of the wicked was a rule of God's government. Now he goes no further than to say that there is no rule discoverable. Happiness and misery are dispensed—as far as man can see—on no definite principle, and, at the end, one lot happens to all: all go down into the tomb, and lie in the dust, and the worms devour them (vers. 23—26).

Ver. 23.—**One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet**. Some continue healthy and vigorous in body, peaceful and satisfied in mind, up to the very moment of their departure (comp. ver. 13, "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave").

Ver. 24.—**His breasts are full of milk**; rather, *his milk-pails*, as in the margin. The main wealth of the time being cattle, the man whose milk-pails are always full is the prosperous man. **And his bones are moistened with marrow**. Being thus wealthy and prosperous, his body is fat and well nourished.

Ver. 25.—**And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul**. Others have to suffer terribly before death comes to them. Their whole life is wretched, and their spirit is embittered by their misfortunes. **And never**

eateth with pleasure; rather, *and never tasteth of good* (see the Revised Version).

Ver. 26.—**They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.** However different the circumstances of their life, men are alike in their death. One event happens to all. All die, are laid in the dust, and become the prey of worms.

Ver. 27.—**Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices** (or, *surmisings*) **which ye wrongfully imagine against me.** I know, *i.e.*, what you think of me. I am quite aware that you regard me as having brought my afflictions upon myself by wicked deeds, which I have succeeded in keeping secret. You have not openly stated your surmises, but it has been easy for me to "read between the lines," and understand the true meaning of your insinuations, which are all wrongful and unjust.

Ver. 28.—**For ye say, Where is the house of the prince?** *i.e.* "What has become of the house of the powerful man (Job himself)? How is it fallen and gone to decay!" **And where are the dwelling-places** (literally, *the tent of the habitations*) **of the wicked?** Again Job is intended, although the insult is veiled by the plural form being used. Job supposes that his opponents will meet his statement, that the righteous are afflicted and the wicked prosper, by pointing to his own case as one in which wickedness has been punished.

Ver. 29.—**Have ye not asked them that go by the way?** Job refers his opponents to the first comer (τὸν ἐπιόντα)—the merest passer-by. Let them ask his opinion, and see if he does not consider that, as a general rule, the wicked prosper. **And do ye not know their tokens?** or, *their observations;* i.e. the conclusions to which they have come upon the subject from their own observation and experience.

Ver. 30.—These conclusions are now set forth. They are, **that the wicked is reserved for** (or rather, *spared in*) **the day of destruction, and that they shall be brought forth to** (rather, *removed out of the way in*) **the day of wrath.** This, according to Job, was the popular sentiment of his time; and, no doubt, there is in all ages a large mass of floating opinion to the same effect. Striking examples of wickedness in high places draw attention, and provoke indignation, and are much talked about; whence arises an idea that such cases are common, and ultimately, by an unscientific generalization in the vulgar mind, that they form the rule, and not the exception to the rule. It requires some power of intellect to take a broad and comprehensive view over the whole of human life, and fairly to strike the balance. Such a view seems to have been taken by Bishop Butler (among others); and the conclusion, reached by calm investigation and philosophic thought, is that, on the whole, even in this life, the balance of advantage rests with the virtuous, who really prosper more than the wicked, have greater and higher satisfactions, escape numerous forms of suffering, and approach more nearly to happiness. An exact apportionment of happiness and misery to desert is a thing that certainly in this life does not take place; but the *tendency* of virtue to accumulate to itself other goods is clear; and Job's pessimistic view is certainly an untrue one, which we may suspect that he maintained, rather from a love of paradox, and from a desire to puzzle and confuse his friends, than from any conviction of its absolute truth.

Ver. 31.—**Who shall declare his way to his face?** rather, *Who shall denounce?* i.e. Who will be bold enough to tell the rich and powerful man that he is wicked? that his "way," or course of life, is altogether wrong? **And who shall repay him what he hath done?** Still less will any one be found who will take upon him to attack such a one, to prosecute him in courts, or otherwise bring him to condign punishment. Thus, being castigated neither by God nor man, he enjoys complete impunity.

Ver. 32.—**Yet shall he be brought to the grave;** rather, *he moreover is borne* (in pomp) *to the grave.* Even in death the advantage is still with the wicked man. He is borne in procession to the grave—a mausoleum or a family vault—by a long train of mourners, who weep and lament for him, and pay him funeral honours. The poor virtuous man, on the other hand, is hastily thrust under the soil. **And shall remain in the tomb**; or, *shall keep watch over his tomb.* The allusion is probably to the custom, common certainly in Egypt and Phœnicia, of carving a figure of the deceased on the lid of his sarcophagus, to keep as it were watch over the remains deposited within. The figure was sometimes accompanied by an inscription, denouncing curses on those who should dare to violate the tomb or disturb the remains (see 'Records of the Past,' vol. ix. pp. 112—114; and compare the author's 'History of Phœnicia,' pp. 393—395).

Ver. 33.—**The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him.** In his mausoleum, by the side of the running stream, the very clods of the valley, wherein his tomb is placed, shall be sweet and pleasant to him—death thus losing half its terrors. **And all men shall draw after him.** Some explain this of the lengthy funeral procession which follows his corpse to the grave, and take the next clause of the multitude, not forming

part of the procession, who gather together at the tomb beforehand, waiting to see the obsequies; but, as Rosenmüller remarks, this explanation seems precluded by the previous mention of the funeral procession (ver. 32), besides being otherwise unsatisfactory. The real reference is probably to the common topic of consolation implied in the "Omnes eodem cogimur" of Horace. He is happy in his death, or at any rate not unhappy, seeing that he only suffers the common fate. He will draw after him all future men, who will likewise inevitably perish, just as there are innumerable before him, who have travelled the same road and reached the same resting-place.

Ver. 34.—**How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?** Your position, that the godly always prosper, while the wicked are afflicted and brought low, being an absolutely false one, your attempts to console and comfort me are wholly vain and futile. Why continue them?

Most commentators consider the second colloquy here to end, and a pause to occur, before Eliphaz resumes the argument.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—34.—*Job to Zophar: Audi alteram partem.* I. THE SPIRIT OF JOB'S REPLY. 1. *Intense earnestness.* Indicated by the respectful invitation addressed to his friends to attend to his discourse, the nervous reduplication of the verb "hear," and the assurance that such behaviour on their part would more effectually console him than all their eloquent and laboured harangues. Job's character of eminent sanctity, Job's condition of extreme wretchedness, and Job's condemnation by the three friends, all entitled him to receive from them a generous and patient hearing. Good men and great sufferers are usually in earnest when they do speak, especially when justifying the ways of God to man, and are well worthy of being listened to for both their own sakes and their subject's. It is one of a saint's sweetest consolations to be allowed to vindicate the cause of God and truth. 2. *Absolute confidence.* So satisfied did Job feel that what he was about to advance was in perfect accord with truth and right, that he was completely indifferent to all personal considerations in the declaration of it. It might expose him to further ridicule and calumnious animadversion, might intensify the suspicions already existing against him, and even lead to angrier and more direct accusations. He was prepared to meet these for the sake of liberty to publish what in his inmost conscience he believed to be the truth. Job's example is well worthy of imitation. First, let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind that what he purposes to speak is true, and then let him manifest the courage of his convictions by suffering for them if need be. 3. *Self-justification.* Job vindicates himself against the oft-repeated charge of impatience. (1) Admitting to his friends that their accusation was substantially correct. His spirit had been "shortened" (ver. 4) by the perplexing enigma of Divine providence over which he had been brooding, as afterwards was that of David (Ps. xxxvii. 1), of Asaph (Ps. lxxiii. 3), of Jeremiah (xii. 1); as men's spirits are sometimes shortened, irritated, and rendered impatient, by difficulties (Numb. xxi. 4), temptations (Judg. xvi. 16), afflictions (Exod. vi. 9); and as God, *more humano*, represents his spirit as being shortened, filled with the impatience of compassion, through beholding the misery of man (Judg. x. 16). (2) Denying their right to impute blame to him on that account, seeing that his complaint was directed against, not them, but God (ver. 4). It was not their lack of sympathy with his sufferings that annoyed him, or even their virulent aspersions of his character, but the apparent inequality of God's dealings with himself. A saint's greatest trials always come from God. A good man can live without the commiseration or approbation of his fellows, but not without the communion or favour of his God (Ps. xxx. 5). The hardest problem a sanctified intelligence has to solve is not to account for the oppressions and injustices of man, but to solve seeming inconsistencies in God's dispensations. (3) Maintaining the perfect reasonableness of his behaviour in so manifesting shortness of spirit under the awful mystery of Divine providence. If they, his friends, were in any respect different from him, it was because they were incapable of discerning the mystery. They had simply shut their eyes upon the hard problem before which he (Job) staggered, and then affirmed that the problem did not exist. So, often, good people to-day, through lack of intellectual capacity or spiritual sincerity, either

do not see or do not steadily look at the difficulties by which earnest seekers after truth are perplexed, and accordingly withhold from these all expression of sympathy for their doubt, and unfeelingly condemn them for their unbelief; whereas could good people only see the difficulties which stand in the way of those whom they call sceptics, infidels, heretics, they would at least commiserate, if they did not participate in, the hesitation and uncertainty they condemn. 4. *Profound reverence.* Job could not contemplate the awful problem to which he alluded without trembling and bewilderment. The prosperity of the wicked was a theme that filled him with silent astonishment, that dazed his intellect the more he reflected on it, that seized his spirit with a sort of stupefaction—seeming as it did on the one hand (*i.e.* on the theory of the friends) to suggest blasphemous thoughts of God, and on the other hand (*i.e.* on the hypothesis advanced by him) to foreshadow appalling woes for the wicked. Job, who was not terrified by Eliphaz's spectre, who was not moved by the prospect of Hades, was overpowered with consternation at what appeared to tarnish the Divine glory or to impair the happiness of man. So Abraham was jealous of the Divine honour (Gen. xviii. 25), and David was afraid of the Divine judgments upon the wicked (Ps. cxix. 20). So by all men, and in particular by all saints, should God's Person be held in reverence (Ps. lxxxix. 7), and God's Word be listened to with awe (Isa. lxvi. 2), and God's works and ways in both the Church and the world be studied with silent wonder (Ps. xlvi. 10; Hab. ii. 20; Zeph. i. 7; Zech. ii. 13).

II. THE ARGUMENT OF JOB'S REPLY. The dogma of Zophar and his companions was contradicted by: 1. *The facts of experience.* (Vers. 7—21.) In enlarging upon these, Job draws attention to three points. (1) The prosperity of the wicked (vers. 7—13). This he represents as: (*a*) Long-continued, "the wicked" being permitted "to live and become old" (ver. 7). Eliphaz had affirmed that the ungodly transgressor should die before his time (ch. xv. 20, 32), and Zophar had declared that the joy of the hypocrite was but for a moment (ch. xx. 5). These statements, Job asserts, were notoriously incorrect. (*b*) Greatly augmented, "the wicked" not simply living long and happily, but, as if once more to confute Eliphaz (ch. xv. 29) and Zophar (ch. xx. 15), becoming "mighty in power," attaining to vast wealth, and therefore to what wealth represents—influence, honour, pleasure—the three principal ingredients in the world's cup of felicity. (*c*) Firmly established, the good fortunes of the wicked descending to their families, who, in express contradiction to the teaching of Eliphaz (ch. xv. 34), Bildad (ch. xviii. 19), and Zophar (ch. xx. 10), grow up to manhood and womanhood, and permanently settle beside the patriarchal tents—one of the best and most highly valued blessings a parent can enjoy, as Job formerly knew from personal experience (ch. i. 4, 5). (*d*) Perfectly secured, their houses being safe from fear, or "in peace, without alarm," and having no rod of God upon them (ver. 9), as his had when attacked by Chaldean robbers, and desolated by Divine judgments—again in flagrant antithesis to Eliphaz (ch. xv. 34), Bildad (ch. xviii. 15), and Zophar (ch. xx. 26). (*e*) Richly varied, consisting of material increase (ver. 10), in opposition to Eliphaz (ch. xv. 29) and Zophar (ch. xx. 28); family enlargement (ver. 11), against Bildad (ch. xviii. 19); and social felicity (ver. 12), instead of the lifelong misery awarded to them by Eliphaz (ch. xv. 20), Bildad (ch. xviii. 11—14), and Zophar (ch. xx. 18). (*f*) Absolutely uninterrupted, their affluence and ease never ceasing throughout life, but attending them to the grave's mouth, into which they quietly and quickly drop without experiencing either physical disease or mental misery (ver. 13), thus attaining to the very culmination of mundane felicity—a picture widely different from that sketched by Eliphaz (ch. xv. 24), Bildad (ch. xviii. 18), and Zophar (ch. xx. 11). (*g*) Divinely bestowed, Job adding (ver. 16) that the true source of all the felicity and prosperity enjoyed by the wicked, though not recognized as such by them, was the hand of God, who is the primal Fountain of every benefit conferred on man, whether temporal or eternal, material or spiritual (Jas. i. 17), who makes his sun to shine upon the evil and the good (Matt. v. 45), and who so deals with the ungodly to lead them to repentance (Rom. ii. 4). (2) The impiety of the prosperous (vers. 14—16). This Job depicts in four particulars: (*a*) The strangeness of it. On the theory of the friends, these favourites of fortune ought to have been good; "and yet" (ver. 14) they were the opposite. Though designed to engender piety in the heart, material prosperity, in point of fact, seldom does. Yet God's goodness to the sinner is an aggravation of the sinner's criminality

against God. (*b*) The wickedness of it. The prosperous say to God, "Depart from us," not as Peter said to Christ (Luke v. 8), but rather as the Gadarenes besought him (Luke viii. 37), desiring that God would leave them to the enjoyment of their lusts, as these latter wished to have their swine, not troubling them with either the reproofs of conscience, the checks of Providence, the precepts of his Law, or the prickings of his Spirit. What the sinner most fears the saint most desires—the presence and fellowship of God. What makes the wicked man's hell constitutes the good man's heaven. (*c*) The foolishness of it. The arguments adduced in its support are three: that the ways of God are undesirable—which was not the opinion of Enoch (Gen. v. 21—24), or of Noah (Gen. vi. 9), of David (Ps. cxxxviii. 5), of Solomon (Prov. iii. 17), of Isaiah, (lv. 2), of Jeremiah (xxxi. 12—14), of St. Paul (Phil. iv. 4), of St. Peter (1 Epist. i. 8), or of St. John (1 Epist. v. 3), and certainly not of Christ (Matt. xi. 28—30); that the service of God is unreasonable—which it cannot be, considering who God is, Elohim, Jehovah, Shaddai, the All-powerful, All-sufficient, Self-existent, wonder-working Supreme, and the relations he sustains to man as Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, Judge; that the worship of God is unprofitable—which it is not, since, besides having the promise which belongs to godliness generally (1 Tim. iv. 8), prayer has the special guarantee that its desires shall be fulfilled (Matt. vii. 7; John xv. 7), while it is inconceivable that a creature could commune with his Creator, or a saint hold fellowship with his Saviour, without experiencing therefrom, in continually augmenting measure, peace, joy, illumination, holiness, everything comprehended in what is styled "growth in grace." (*d*) The repulsiveness of it. The counsel of the wicked Job regards with abhorrence (ver. 16); and so do all truly pious souls. 2. *The plan of providence.* (Vers. 22—26.) This Job characterizes as (1) arranged by Divine wisdom,—to maintain a theory out of harmony with which, therefore, was a practical impeachment of the Divine wisdom, an attempt to teach God (ver. 22), who can receive no accession to his knowledge or understanding from any of his creatures, an assumption of ability to prescribe to him the scheme in accordance with which his universe should be governed; (2) all-embracing in its sweep, comprehending in its provisions and enactments all creatures from the lowest to the highest, "those in heaven," *i.e.* angels, authorities, and powers, and "the highest" on earth, lordly potentates, mighty magnates, pretentious sages, as well as common serfs and lowly peasants, being subject to his sway, and therefore again, because of its all-inclusive character, scarcely admitting of criticism on the part of puny man; (3) non-retributive in its character, frequently assigning to the wicked man a life of ease and prosperity (vers. 23, 24), and to the godly man a pilgrimage of poverty ending in a bitter death (ver. 25), all the same as if it were regardless of the difference between virtue and vice, piety and wickedness, holiness and sin; and (4) indiscriminate in its execution, reducing good and bad alike to the same dead level of equality in the grave (ver. 26), and therefore as unlike as possible to the plan of providence which should have prevailed had the theory of the friends been correct. 3. *The testimony of ordinary men.* (Vers. 27—33.) The "tokens" of "them that go by the way," *i.e.* the observations made by them, abundantly declared six things concerning the ungodly, viz. (1) that they were not usually overwhelmed with retribution on earth and in time, as the friends asserted (ver. 28), with special reference to Job (ver. 27), whose homestead and family had been engulfed in ruin by swift calamity; (2) that they were generally exempted from the ills of life, even in a season of widespread adversity (ver. 30), escaping the stroke of evil fortune by which other and better men were prostrated; (3) that they were commonly allowed to pass through the world without either punishment or reproof (ver. 31), amenable to no human law, suffering no sort of check in their wickedness, because no one was bold enough to bear witness to them of their misdeeds, as Nathan did to David (2 Sam. xii. 7), Elijah to Ahab (1 Kings xviii. 17), and John the Baptist to Herod (Matt. xiv. 4), or powerful enough to exact retribution for their offences; (4) that honour and prosperity attended them even to their graves, the wicked tyrant's lifeless body being conducted, as were the corpses of rich men in the days of the Preacher (Eccles. viii. 10), and as probably was that of Dives (Luke xvi. 22), with immense pomp and magnificent ceremony, to "the vaults or chambers in sepulchral caverns or tombs in which the dead were laid" (Carey), where affectionate friends and relatives shall watch over his tomb (Good, Fry), or he himself shall keep guard over his heap, *i.e.* over the mound or pile in which he lies buried,

looking down upon it in monumental effigy; (5) that even in the grave they suffer no disadvantage in comparison with other men, "the clods of the valley" being as "sweet" unto them (ver. 33) as to the pious, which may be true so far as the insensate dust is concerned, though of course it is only an imagination that the tenants of the tomb can feel either pain or pleasure (Eccles. ix. 5, 6), but implies nothing as to the condition of their souls, which we know to be after death in a situation widely different from that of the righteous (Luke xvi. 23); and (6) that, in so far as death itself may be accounted an evil, it is one which they share in common with the rest of the race, every one in his turn coming after, as innumerable multitudes have already gone before, them (ver. 33).

III. THE APPLICATION OF JOB'S REPLY. 1. *The consolation of his friends was vain.* (1) It was inefficacious. It did not soothe him in his sorrow or help him to bear his burden, but very much the opposite. (2) It was insincere. It was not really aimed at the comfort of the patriarch at all, but at his condemnation. It exhorted him to penitence instead of aiding him with friendly sympathy. (3) It was fallacious. It was based on wholly erroneous principles. This Job explicitly asserts. 2. *The answers of his friends were wicked.* (1) They were untrue. They misrepresented God by ascribing to him principles of government which he palpably repudiated; and they calumniated him, Job, by imputing to him sins of which he was innocent. Hence to that extent (2) they were also sinful. They were perfidious attempts to blacken the character of their suffering friend, and to curry favour with the King of heaven.

Learn: 1. That a good man should never weary in contending for the cause of God and truth. 2. That a man who has God and truth upon his side has the best possible allies in debate. 3. That they who have no difficulties in their creeds are not the most likely to be possessed of truth. 4. That the best souls on earth are not necessarily those who have no hard problems to solve. 5. That on the whole continuous prosperity is less desirable as an earthly portion than perpetual adversity. 6. That God confers many of his best gifts upon the worst of men—families and flocks upon tyrants, Christ and salvation upon sinners. 7. That great wealth is prone to separate the soul from God. 8. That God's people should shun the counsel, avoid the company, and abhor the conduct of wicked men. 9. That wicked men's "Depart from us," will yet be answered by Christ's "Depart from me." 10. That it is better to be God's wheat than the devil's chaff, since though the former may be bruised, the latter shall be blown away. 11. That the God who is able to judge angels is not likely to prove incapable of judging men. 12. That the wicked man's glory upon earth is little better than the paraphernalia of a funeral procession. 13. That God's ever-watchful eye is a better guardian of a saint's dust than gilded mausoleums and monumental columns.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—34.—*Diverse interpretations of life.* The friends of Job remain entrenched in the one firm position, as they think it, which they have from the first taken up. No appeals on his part have availed to soften their hearts, or induce a reconsideration of the rigid theory of suffering which they have adopted. But he now, no longer confining himself to the assertion of his personal innocence, makes an attack upon their position. He dwells upon the great enigma of life—the prosperity of the wicked through the whole of life, in contrast to the misery and persecution which often fall to the lot of the righteous. In face of these contradictions, it is wrong and malicious of his friends to desire to fix guilt upon him because he suffers.

I. INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS TO THE FRIENDS. (Vers. 1—6.) He asks for a patient hearing, because he is not about to complain of man, but of a terrible enigma which may well excite the amazement, the dread wonder of men, as being beyond their power to unravel. He speaks as one the very foundations of whose faith are shaken, as he thinks of this painful and perplexing "riddle of the earth." "Because reason cannot comprehend the mystery of the cross, and why God deals often so hardly with his children, bitter thoughts will arise from time to time in devout hearts, and cause them to tremble in great dismay" (Zeyss). (See Ps. xxxvii. 1; lxxiii. 12; Jer. xii. 1.) The solid columns of our reason, so to speak, are shaken by doubts of the justice of God's government of the world.

II. APPEAL TO EXPERIENCE: THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED, CONTRASTED WITH THE AFFLICTIONS OF THE RIGHTEOUS, IN THIS LIFE. (Vers. 7—26.) 1. *Traits of godless prosperity.* (Vers. 7—16.) (1) The wicked are fortunate in their persons (ver. 7). Instead of being cut off by premature death, as Zophar had maintained, they remain in vigour to a good old age. (2) In their families. They see their posterity flourishing before them like young scions from the old root (ver. 8). (3) In their houses. Peace dwells there, free from alarm, and no chastising rod of Providence falls upon them (ver. 9). (4) In their herds and flocks—the great elements of Oriental wealth (vers. 10, 11). (5) In their merry life. Sportive throngs of children play around them, full of joyous pranks and frolic, while the sound of music charms the ear (vers. 11, 12). (6) Their easy death. Their days are spent in comfort to the very last, quite in opposition to the gloomy pictures which the friends have drawn of their fearful and violent ends (ch. xi. 20; xviii. 14; xx. 11). They disappear suddenly, painlessly, into the unseen world—theirs is a euthanasia (ver. 13)! Such a life may be lived, such a death may be met, without a spark of religion to justify or explain it (vers. 14, 15). They are men, these wicked ones, whose language to God has been, "Depart from us!" Their happiness awakens no gratitude towards its Source; they deem worship and prayer to be useless. Job proceeds with his description, and declares further, to support his position, "Lo, not in their hand stands their good." That is, not they are, but God is himself, the Author of their prosperity; and it is this which makes the problem so dark and hard to solve. "The counsel of the wicked be far from me!" (ver. 16). Here flashes out once more the true, deep faith of the patriarch. Despite all the mystery and all the temptation, he will endure to the end; never will he renounce his God (ch. i. 11; ii. 5). 2. *These lessons of experience confirmed, with reference to the positions of the friends.* (Vers. 17—21.) Bildad had spoken (ch. xviii. 5, 12) of the quenching of the light of the wicked man and of his sudden overthrow. Job questions the universal application of this. "How often," etc.? is here equivalent to "How seldom," etc.! How often does God distribute sorrows in his anger? with allusion to ch. xx. 23 (ver. 17). This doubting questioning still continues in ver. 18, "How often do they become as straw before the wind, and like chaff which the tempest carries away?" (see ch. xx. 8, 9). "God lays up for his children his calamity?" referring to Eliphaz's words (ver. 4) and Zophar's (ch. xx. 10). Job proceeds (ver. 20) to refute this theory of satisfaction by substitution. "*Let his* eyes see his destruction; and of the fiery wrath of the Almighty let him drink!" The allusion is to Zophar (ch. xx. 23). And further, against this theory (ver. 21); in his dull insensibility the wicked man cares nought for the fate of his posterity. "For what pleasure is his house after him?"—what interest or concern has the selfish egotist in the sufferings of his descendants after he is dead and gone? And if this be so, how can it be alleged that the wicked man is *punished* in his posterity? "If the number of his moons is allotted to him." The thought is that the selfish, pleasure-seeking bad man is content, if only *he* lives out the full measure of his days. What amidst these perplexities can keep the soul true to God and steadfast in the pursuit of goodness? Experience suggests these doubts; and a larger experience must solve them. The Christian knows that in God's ordering of life the outward prosperity is often unrelated to moral worth. The good things of this world cannot satisfy; without a good conscience earthly happiness is impossible. Often the worldly prosperity enjoyed by the bad man is the means of his destruction. This is not the scene of final recompense and retribution. Doubtless God, whose counsels are inscrutable, will indemnify pious sufferers for these earthly privations. 3. *Restatement of the enigma.* (Vers. 22—26.) The contrast in men's destinies to our expectations involves a Divine counsel which we may not presume to understand. "Shall one teach God knowledge, who judges those that are high?" (ver. 22). The friends had brought this thought forward (ch. iv. 18; xv. 15) with the view of supporting their narrow theory of retribution. Conversely, Job would refute by the same means this short-sighted view, pointing to the unfathomable depth and mystery of the counsels and laws of God for the government of the world. Two examples illustrate this. One man dies in bodily ease and comfort—his troughs full of milk, strong and vigorous to the marrow of his bones (vers. 23, 24). Another dies with bitterness in his soul, and has not enjoyed good (ver. 25). And yet they are united in one common fate, though their

moral worth is so different and so contrasted. "With one another they lie on the dust of the grave, and the worms cover them." "Both, heirs to some six feet of clod, are equal in the earth at last" (ver. 26).

III. CORRECTION OF HIS FRIENDS FOR THEIR PARTIAL JUDGMENT OF THE OUTWARD CONDITION OF MEN. (Vers. 27—34.) He knows their thoughts, and the malice with which they ill-treat him, with the object of proving him by any means, fair or unfair, a hypocrite. "Where," they say, "is the house of the tyrant? and where the tent inhabited by wicked men?" Job alludes still to the repeated descriptions of Eliphaz and Bildad (ch. xv. 34; xviii. 15, 21) of the overthrow of the tent of the wicked man (ver. 28). Have they, then, not asked the wanderers by the way (Lam. i. 12; Ps. lxxi. 12), and will they mistake their tokens? The instances of prosperous bad men and unhappy good men which these persons can produce—they must not misunderstand nor reject them. The "tokens" are the memorable and wonderful events of this kind (ver. 29). Then follow the summary contents of these people's experiences (ver. 30): "That on the day of destruction the wicked is spared, on the day of wrath they are led away" from its devastating fury, so that they suffer nothing. "Who will show him his way to his face? and if he has acted, who will repay it to him?" (ver. 31). This is Job's question. It concerns God, the unfathomably wise and mighty Author of the destinies of men. "And he" (alluding to ver. 30) "is brought to burial" in honour and pomp, "and on a mound he keeps watch," like one immortalized in a statue or tomb. His tumulus remains to record his name and memory, while Bildad had described the memory of the wicked as perishing from the earth, his name being forgotten. Ver. 33, "The clods of the valley lie softly upon him"—the valleys being the favourite burying-places in the East—"and all the world draws after him," treading the same path which multitudes have done before.

CONCLUSION. (Ver. 34.) "How will you now so vainly comfort me?" Falsehood only remains from their replies. There is some truth both in Zophar's and in Job's speeches. But both represent one side only of the truth. The end of the wicked man is that which Zophar depicts. Yet the temporal prosperity of the wicked, lasting to the latest hour of life, is often seen. Job cannot deny the facts of Zophar; but neither can Zophar deny the exceptions pointed out by Job. The friends are blind to these, because the admission of them would overthrow the whole battery of their attack. Job remains nearer to the truth than Zophar (Delitzsch). The godless are often greatly exalted, to fall the more deeply afterwards. "Raised up on high to be hurled down below" (Shakespeare). "Lofty towers have the heavier fall" (Horace, 'Od.,' ii. 10. 10; Juvenal, 'Sat.,' x. 104, *sqq.*, on the fate of Sejanus). But it is the belief in a future judgment and a future life which can alone give patience under the anomalies and contradictions of the present. The God who is "upright, true, and all-disposing" hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and "reward every man according to his works." "This is certain, that God is infinitely just; whether or not we apprehend him, he is so. When we think his ways are imperfect, we should remember that the imperfection is only in our understanding. It is not the ground or the trees that turn round; but the truth is, we are giddy, and think so. . . . Because I cannot see the light, shall I say that the sun does not shine? There may be many reasons that may hinder me. Something may cover the eye, or the clouds may cover the sun, or it may be in another horizon, as in the night; but it is impossible for the sun, so long as it is a sun, not to shine. . . . It was not for Job's sin that God afflicted him, but because he was freely pleased to do so; yet there was a reason for this pleasure, which was to discover that grace of patience given him by God, to the astonishment of the world and the confutation of the devil" (South).—J.

Vers. 7—15.—*The perverse misapplication of the Divine goodness.* Job is ready with his answer. Although Zophar has correctly represented the judgments that come upon the wicked, and the evils to which wickedness not unfrequently lead, yet many cases of departure from this rule are to be observed. Job therefore proposes a counter-question, "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?" He then depicts the prosperity which again and again marks the career of the wicked, to whom the Divine bounty is shown (1) in prolonged life; (2) in the power and influence they are permitted to gain; (3) in their family prosperity; (4) in their freedom from

calamity; (5) in their domestic security; (6) in their abundance and joy. This mystery Job does not instantly unravel. But what is the effect of all this prosperity on the wicked? It does not humble him nor make him thankful. As an uneven glass distorts the fairest image, so their impure and ill-regulated minds turn the goodness of God into an occasion of impious rejection. "*Therefore* they say unto God, Depart from us." The distortions of the evil mind pervert the goodness of God into—

I. AN OCCASION OF IMPIOUS DESPISAL OF THE DIVINE NAME. They refuse to know God. They shut out the knowledge of God from their hearts. With a wicked "Depart!" they resist the Holy One. They have no aspiration after a holy communion, or the vision of the pure. The Lord is abhorrent to them. Their tastes are corrupt; their preferences are for evil. Truly they pervert and reverse all good things. They put darkness for light, and light for darkness. They put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. The very call to adoration and praise they turn into an occasion of despisal and rejection.

II. In their perversions they make the Divine goodness AN OCCASION FOR A DESPISAL OF THE DIVINE WAYS. This is always the danger of them who have abundance and yet lack the fear of God. This is the basis of a teaching long afterwards touchingly taught concerning the rich, to whom it is so "hard" to "enter into the kingdom of heaven." The satisfied man becomes the self-satisfied, even though indebted to another for his possessions. Then the spirit of independence becomes a spirit of revulsion against all authority that might be raised over it. So they who "spend their days in wealth" say, "We desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

III. This same spirit ripens into AN ABSOLUTE REFUSAL TO SUBMIT TO THE DIVINE AUTHORITY. "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?" So far is the goodness of God from leading him to repentance who is evil in spirit. Wickedness is the fruit of an ill-directed judgment, and it tends to impair the judgment more and more. It distorts all the moral sensibilities, and therefore all the moral processes. If the judgment were accurately to decide in favour of the Divine Law and its obligatory character, the perverted preferences of the mind would reject the testimony, and by a rude rebellion within would prevent a right decision from being arrived at. Even the check and restraint of the enlightened judgment becomes a signal for resistance. Its goad is kicked against; its repressions refused; its warning unheeded; its plain path, narrow and difficult to follow, is rejected, and a broad and easy way, in which the foolish heart finds its pleasure, chosen in preference. So the Divine authority is rejected and despised.

The ill effects of rejecting the Divine authority are seen: 1. In the loss of the guidance of the supreme wisdom. 2. In the inevitable injuries resulting from following a false and erroneous judgment. 3. In the demoralization of the life. 4. In the final vindication of the Divine authority.—R. G.

Ver. 30.—*The reservation of the Divine judgment.* The expositions of these verses are various, and all true homiletics must be based on true exposition. Bnt there is no diversity of opinion amongst expositors as to the final judgment of the wicked. Whatever, therefore, may be the aspect in which it is viewed by the argument of this chapter, it cannot be too loudly declared that judgment upon the wicked is reserved. That a final day of adjudication will come has its aspect of warning to the wrong-doer who temporarily escapes punishment, and its aspect of encouragement to the patient doer of that which is good, who is nevertheless called upon to suffer affliction. The reservation of the Divine judgment—

I. A WARNING TO THE WICKED NOT TO PRESUME ON A PRESENT EXEMPTION FROM CALAMITY. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Thus is man perverse, blind, foolish. The declaration of a final, inevitable judgment is the effectual check upon foolish presumption. The wicked man is a weak man, whose own conscience makes a coward of him. The appeal to his fear and dread is the effectual check upon his carelessness.

II. In the reservation of the Divine judgment, THE OPPRESSED RIGHTEOUS ONES MAY FIND A TRUE GROUND OF CONSOLATION. Revenge is not a pious sentiment. To desire punishment upon the wicked from vindictive feelings is far from the pure mind; but

he that is unjustly traduced may abide in hope that one day a Divine judgment will bring hidden things to light, and make the righteousness of the falsely accused shine as the light. The Divine judgments being always wise and good and just—the judgments of the loving God—they will find their echo of approval in the heart of every wise and just man. The final Divine judgments will commend themselves to the utmost tenderness of the human heart; for their absolute rightness will be apparent.

III. The reservation of the Divine judgment against wickedness WILL AFFORD OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FINAL VINDICATION OF THE DIVINE WAYS. In his great condescension it may please God to vindicate his dealings with the sons of men, when each will have evidence of the righteousness of his doings. Clouds and darkness may now hide the Divine purpose and the Divine methods of procedure; but all will be clearly revealed, and hidden iniquity be exposed and oppressed goodness vindicated and the Divine ways justified. The certainty, the strictness, the equity, the unbiassed rectitude of the Divine judgment, are causes for dreading it. A lowly, reverent, obedient spirit is the true preparation for the final award. Judgment, though delayed, will not be forgotten. "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked."—R. G.

Ver. 3.—*The right of reply.* I. THE RIGHT OF REPLY IS JUSTLY CLAIMED. Job has heard enough from his friends. He is impatient to answer them. Surely they should allow him to do so. 1. *This right is conceded in law.* The worst criminal may be defended by counsel, may call witnesses in his favour, may make his own statement. In civil cases both sides are heard before judgment is pronounced. 2. *This right should be allowed in social life.* It is not just to condemn any one unheard. There may come to us a damaging tale concerning a person; it is our duty to suspend our judgment till he has given his explanation. 3. *This right ought to be permitted in theology.* It was a theological as well as a personal discussion that Job was carrying on with his friends. But in theology people are most impatient of hearing anything contrary to their own views. Yet it is not just to condemn those who differ from us until we have heard what they have to say on their side of a question.

II. THE RIGHT OF REPLY IS HELPFUL IN THE INTERESTS OF TRUTH. We are all tempted to take partial, one-sided views of things. It is only by bringing light from all quarters that we can see the rounded totality of truth. Therefore discussion helps truth. At first, indeed, it may not seem to do so, and, indeed, there seems to be a certain irony in it, for the most eager combatants are usually furthest from a just conception of what they are contending for. But after the discussion is over, those who look on are better able to understand the whole subject. Thus the discussion of Job and his friends throws light on the mystery of Providence. The creeds of Christendom were forged in the fires of controversy. Theology is a result of discussion. The right of reply has given breadth, depth, and definiteness to it. Truth is not helped by the persecution of error.

III. THE RIGHT OF REPLY IS A CONSOLATION TO THE MISJUDGED. Job only asks for this. When he has spoken his friends may mock on. There is some humour in his tone, or perhaps a bitter scorn. Truth is strong. Only let it shine out in its native strength, and calumny must wither before it. Any unjust accusations will then only break themselves like waves that are dashed to pieces on the crags. We can afford to be indifferent to falsehood and error if we can speak out and let the truth be fairly seen.

IV. THE RIGHT OF REPLY WILL BE GIVEN ULTIMATELY TO ALL. It will be of little use to those who are in the wrong. To be able to stand up in the searching light of eternity and reply for a bad case is no desirable privilege. Rather than attempt to reply, the self-convicted sinner will call on the mountains and hills to cover him. But those who are honestly endeavouring to make the truth manifest in face of great opposition and gross misapprehension may learn to possess their souls in patience if they will come to understand that the oppression and injustice are but temporary. Though silenced for a season, ultimately truth will speak out with a trumpet-voice.

In conclusion, let us remember that God has a right of reply to all man's foolish sophistry, to all his shuffling excuses. All error and pretence will be pulverized and annihilated when God speaks his great answer to cavillers, unbelievers, and opponents of every kind.—W. F. A.

Ver. 4.—*The complaint that goes beyond man.* I. THE COMPLAINT THAT IS OF MORE THAN MAN'S DOINGS. Job does not only complain of man's injustice. That would be hard to bear; and yet a strong soul should be able to withstand it, trusting in a higher justice that will set all right at last. But the mystery, the horror, the agony, of Job's complaint, spring from the persuasion that his troubles are to be attributed to a more than earthly origin. They are so huge and terrible that he cannot but ascribe them to a superhuman source. This fact intensifies the complaint in many respects. 1. *The mystery of the supernatural.* Man quails before it. The bravest hero who is not afraid of any human strength trembles at the thought of the unseen. 2. *The power of the Divine.* Job can resist man, but he cannot stand out against God. It is not mortal frailty, but immortal Omnipotence, that assails him. The contest is unequal. 3. *The apparent injustice of the Just One.* This is hardest of all. It would be possible to bear the lower injustice if assured of the impartiality and triumph of the higher justice, But when Job looks up for justice to its great central throne, even there he seems to see wrong, misapprehension, and unfair treatment. It is not that Job directly charges God with injustice; but there is in his heart an all-perplexing, baffling thought, discouraging confidence. Though we may not doubt God, it is hard to bear his hand when he seems to go against justice and love. Here is the great test of faith.

II. THE COMPLAINT THAT GOES BEYOND MAN'S EARS. As Job complains of what is done by more than man, so he cries to a power above the human. The sublimity of the drama is seen in its relations with the unseen world. It assumes more than heroic proportions. It is concerned with God as well as man. 1. *The complaining cry.* Job continually lifts up his voice to God. We have to learn to look above the earth. It is foolish to complain of God, but it is natural to complain to God. If we even think hard thoughts of God, it is not necessary for us to bury them in the secrecy of our own breasts. There they will only burn as hidden fires, and consume all faith and hope. It is far better to be courageous, and confess them frankly to God himself. He can understand them, judge them fairly, and see the sorrow and perplexity from which they have sprung. And it is he who can dissipate them. 2. *The merciful Heaven.* God hears every cry of his children, and when faith is mixed with fear he accepts the faith and dispels the fear. Men judge their fellows harshly for their complaining utterances. God is like the patient mother who soothes her fretful child. Though the cry is wrung from the heart in an agony of dismay, so that no hope of relief is visible through the blinding veil of tears, God does not fling it back with angered dignity; he treats it with pitying mercy. If only the soul will give itself utterly up to him, even in its darkness and despair, he will hear and save.—W. F. A.

Vers. 7—21.—*The prosperity of the wicked.* Job here gives his version of the old familiar theme. It is not as the three friends supposed. These neat maxims do not fit in with the facts of life as Job has seen them. The prosperity of the wicked is a real though a mysterious fact, one that cannot be gainsaid.

I. THE FACTS AS WITNESSED IN LIFE. 1. *An established family.* Job's home is desolate. The seed of the wicked is established in their sight. They have their children about them. 2. *Security.* (Ver. 8.) "Their houses are safe from fear." They are not haunted by the alarms of guilt. On the contrary, they are very comfortable and self-satisfied (ver. 9). 3. *Freedom from chastisement.* The rod of God is not upon them. The righteous man is chastised; the godless man is spared (ver. 9). 4. *Good fortune.* Their cattle breed successfully (ver. 10). The mishaps which fall to the lot of others avoid them. A certain good fortune follows them, even into those chances of life which are beyond human control. 5. *Pleasure.* These wicked people are not troubled by their sins. They have no puritanical scruples to sour them. They spend their days in gaiety (vers. 11, 12). 6. *Prosperity lasting till death.* (Ver. 13.) They do not have the reverse of fortune which the three moralizers assumed to be their lot. A long life of wealth and ease is followed by a quick and almost painless death. Here is unmitigated prosperity from the cradle to the grave.

II. THE DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES OF THESE FACTS. Because they are so prosperous the wicked harden themselves against God. 1. *Dispensing with God.* (Ver. 14.) They think they can do very well without God. This world's goods satisfy them, and of this world's goods they have a sufficiency. They have no need to cry to God for help,

for they are not in trouble. They see no reason for prayer, for they have all they want without it. 2. *Rejecting God.* (Ver. 15.) These prosperous wicked people go further than to live without God. They actually rebel against him. Being self-sufficient, they decline to admit that they are under any obligation to serve God. Thus their very prosperity increases their sin.

III. THE GREAT MYSTERY OF THESE FACTS. This is inexplicable from the standpoint of Job's friends. If suffering is only the punishment of sin, the wicked must suffer, or there is no just Judge over all. By pointing to the plain facts of life Job is able to refute the pedantic dogmas of his critics. Theology that will not stand the test of life is worthless. But graver questions are at issue than those that merely concern the correctness of orthodox notions. Where is the justice of facts as Job sets them forth? To him all is a profound mystery. Now, it is something to be brought to this point. There is a mystery in the course of life which we cannot fathom. Then let us not attempt to judge, but confess our ignorance. Still, if there is to be an outlook towards the light, we must seek it in two directions. 1. *In the prospect of a future life.* There God will rectify the inequalities of this life. 2. *In attaching less weight to outward circumstances.* Prosperity is not the greatest good. On both sides, among the disappointed good as well as among the fortunate wicked, too much is made of external things. True prosperity is soul-prosperity. "The life is more than meat," etc.—W. F. A.

Ver. 22.—*Teaching God.* Job has already warned his friends that their advocacy of a cruel creed was speaking wickedly for God (ch. xiii. 7). The presumption of the foolish advocates of an effete orthodoxy now reaches a greater height, and they virtually assume to teach God. Their dogma is above Divine revelation. If the two differ, so much the worse for the revelation. Let us see how this same error may be found in other branches of life and thought.

I. IN AUTHORITATIVE ORTHODOXY. It cannot be said that the mere act of calling in the aid of authority to establish and support what we believe to be the truth implies a disposition to assume to be the teachers of God. But there is a tendency in absolute reliance on authority to move towards that absurdity which reaches its climax in the folly that Job ascribes to his friends. The tendency is to think the settled opinion of our party or section of the Church a certain and infallible truth. Thus people are urged to submit to such settled opinion without inquiry. Though God may have given teaching available to all in nature and in the Scriptures, though he may be speaking in the hearts of his children by the voice of his Spirit, all these Divine communications are set aside in favour of the one human authoritative utterance. Instead of this being subject to the test of nature, Scripture, and conscience, God's voice in those three channels is translated and often distorted into accordance with the dogma of authority.

II. IN PRIVATE JUDGMENT. The same error may be seen in the opposite direction, in a sort of ultra-Protestant employment of the right of freedom of thought. The individual man asserts his opinion as infallible, regardless of the ideas of all other people. He poses as "Athanasius contra mundum," without possessing the title to independence which was earned by the hero of Nicæa. The mischief is not that he is independent—surely everybody should think for himself; it is that he rejects all external aids to knowledge, and sets up his own reason, or often his own prejudice, as the standard of truth. He rejects the Pope of Rome that he may be his own pope. Even the Divine revelation in the Bible must be interpreted so as to agree with his opinions. Instead of going to the Scriptures as a humble learner seeking light, he approaches them as one who has made up his mind, and who must now get the Bible to echo his notions. The same mistake is made by those who presume to judge nature or providence, thinking they would have done better if they had been in God's place.

III. IN PRAYER. Is it not very common for people to pray as though they were instructing God? They inform him of what he already knows far better than they know it themselves. God invites our confidence and confession; but this is that we may put ourselves into right relations with him, not that we may tell him anything of which he would be ignorant but for our prayer. Or people go further, and offer instructions to God as to the way in which he should act. Prayer, instead of being a supplication, becomes a dictating to God. Entreaty is virtually converted into a demand. We

have to learn to submit to the higher knowledge as well as the higher authority of God. Prayer needs to be more simply the trusting of ourselves to God for him to do with us just what he knows to be best.—W. F. A.

Vers. 23—26.—*The common fate.* Job has pointed out that the wicked are not always punished in this life with external trouble; on the contrary, they often flourish to the end in unbroken prosperity (ver. 7, etc.). He next proceeds to show that the end of the happy and the sorrowful is the same. The prosperous bad man does not meet with a reverse of fortune at last, nor does the afflicted righteous man find an earthly reward in his later days. Both go down to death without a sign of the reversal of their condition which justice would seem to demand.

I. DEATH HAPPENS ALIKE TO ALL. As Shakespeare puts it, this may be said of all of us—

> "Nothing can we call our own, but death;
> And that small model of the barren earth,
> That serves as paste and cover to our bones."

The "great leveller" should not only humble pride, but also teach us more human brotherhood. If we are brothers in death, should we not be brothers also in life? The deepest facts of life are common to all men. Our differences of state and rank only affect what is superficial.

II. DEATH IS NOT FELT TO BE THE SAME BY ALL. Our feelings are affected by contrasts and changes, not by our absolute condition at any moment. The candle-light that looks brilliant to the prisoner in a dungeon, is most gloomy to a man who has just come from the sunshine. Death is all loss and darkness to one who is suddenly snatched away from earthly enjoyment, but it is a haven of rest to the storm-tossed soul. The same death has very different meanings according to our spiritual condition. In sin and worldliness and heathenish ignorance, death is a going out into the darkness. To the Christian it is falling asleep in Christ.

III. THERE IS NO EARTHLY ADJUSTMENT OF LOTS. Job is quite right. It is vain to expect it. If it has not come yet, we have no reason to believe that it will come later on, even at the last. There is nothing in experience to warrant us in the hope that it will come at all. In many respects, no doubt, moral causes work out visible effects on earth. But this is by no means universal, nor are the effects always adequate to the requirements of justice.

IV. THERE MUST BE A FUTURE LIFE. The story is not complete on earth. It breaks off suddenly without any kind of finish. This abruptness of the visible ending of life points to a continuance beyond the grave. Justice requires that the unfinished life should have its appropriate conclusion. Not from necessity of nature, but from moral considerations, we conclude that the broken threads must be picked up and drawn together again to make the perfect pattern.

V. THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IS INFINITELY SUPERIOR TO THE MATERIAL. It looks as though the differences of external fortune could be treated with contempt. The good have misfortune, the bad have prosperity. These are slight matters in the eyes of Providence, because real prosperity, is spiritual prosperity, and that is only possible to those who live a right life.—W. F. A.

Ver. 34.—*Vain comfort.* The three bungling comforters are wasting their efforts, because they are not speaking the truth. Their misapprehension and misrepresentation vitiate all their good intentions.

I. WE MUST UNDERSTAND THOSE WHOM WE WOULD HELP. 1. *By mixing with them.* Job's friends took the first step. They travelled from their remote homes across the desert and came to see him. We can only help the miserable if we first go among them and see them with our own eyes. Much philanthropy fails by reason of distance and separation. We cannot know people till we are with them. Christ came down from heaven and lived among men. 2. *By freedom from prejudice.* Job's friends came with fixed notions. They only looked at Job through their coloured spectacles. We can never understand people till we throw aside all our preconceived notions about them and look at them as they are. 3. *By sympathy.* This must be insisted on over and

over again. The lack of it was the chief cause of the failure of Job's friends. The presence of it is the first essential for understanding people.

II. TRUTH IS A PRIMARY CONDITION OF CONSOLATION. 1. *In regard to the sufferer.* It is useless to ignore his sufferings, or to try to reason him into the belief that they do not exist. The attempt to help will be spoilt if we argue that what he knows to be undeserved is really his due. Any view that does not regard him as he is spoils all efforts to console. 2. *In regard to the remedy.* It is worse than useless to offer wrong remedies. The trite commonplaces of consolation are only irritants. Some of them are known to be false in fact. Others have not the ring of sincerity about them when repeated by the comforting friend. However true they have been once, they have ceased to bear any meaning that people believe in.

III. SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION IS CONDITIONED BY SPIRITUAL TRUTH. 1. *In thought.* We cannot console others with dogmas that we do not believe in ourselves. If we have no faith in Christ we cannot use the Name of Christ to heal the wounds of others. Unless we look forward to a future life it is vain for us to talk about the "many mansions" when we are trying to console others. There is a foolish notion that we should *talk* up to the maximum of orthodoxy, even though we do not live and think up to it. But this notion is only an excuse for cant, and nothing is more vexing to the sufferer than to be treated with cant. Let us say only what we believe. 2. *In fact.* Delusions cannot afford permanent consolations. They may soothe pain and alarm for the moment; but they cannot endure, and when the mistake of them is discovered the result will be a deeper despair than ever. If, however, we could succeed in lulling all distress on earth by means of a false hope, the consolation itself would be a most terrible calamity. The soul needs truth more than comfort. It is better to hear the painful truth now than at the great judgment. But there is another truth, one which gives real consolation—the truth of the gospel of Christ.—W. F. A.

SECTION IV. THIRD COLLOQUY OF JOB WITH HIS FRIENDS.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXII.

Vers. 1—30.—Eliphaz returns to the attack, but with observations that are at first strangely pointless and irrelevant, *e.g.* on the unprofitableness of man to God (vers. 1, 2), and on the slight importance of Job's case (ver. 3). After this weak prelude, however, there is more vigour in his assault. In vers. 4—9 he directly charges Job with a number of specified sins, and in vers. 10, 11 declares his sufferings to be the consequence of them. He then proceeds to accuse him of denying God's omniscience (vers. 12—14), and, after some not very successful attempts to retort on him his own words (vers. 15—20), finally recurs to his favourite devices (see ch. v. 17—26) of exhorting Job to submission and repentance, and promising him restoration to God's favour and a return of prosperity (vers. 21—30).

Vers. 1, 2.—Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, Can a man be profitable unto God? Job had *said* nothing upon this point; but perhaps Eliphaz thinks his complaints and expostulations to *imply* a higher value in man, and a greater claim to consideration at God's hands, than can rightly be challenged. Certainly God does not depend on man for profit or advantage of any kind. Neither our wisdom nor our goodness "extendeth to him." **As he that is wise may be profitable unto himself;** rather, *truly he that is wise is profitable unto himself;* i.e. to himself only, and not to God. Man's intelligence and researches can add nothing to God's knowledge.

Ver. 3.—**Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous?** As "our goodness extendeth not to God," and as his all-perfect happiness knows neither increase nor diminution, we cannot be said to advantage him by our goodness. Still "good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, are *pleasing* and acceptable to God in Christ;" and God himself condescends to say that he "takes *pleasure* in his people," "in them that fear him" (Ps. cxlvii. 11; cxlix. 4). **Or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?** Of course, the "gain" is to the man himself, and not to God. He saves his soul alive. God has one more worshipper in the courts of heaven, one more voice added to the choir

which hymns his praise for evermore. But what is one drop added to an ocean?

Ver. 4.—**Will he reprove thee for fear of thee?** rather, *Is it for thy fear of him that he reproveth thee?* Surely not. If he reproves thee, it must be because thou fearest him not. The fact of thy reproof is sure evidence of the fact of thy guilt. **Will he enter with thee into judgment?** rather, *that he entereth with thee into judgment* (see the Revised Version).

Ver. 5.—**Is not thy wickedness great?** Judging from the greatness of Job's punishment, Eliphaz concludes, logically from his premisses, that his wickedness must be commensurate. He must have been guilty of almost every form of ill-doing. **And thine iniquities infinite;** literally, *and is there not no end to thine iniquities?* These general conclusions seem to Eliphaz to justify him in proceeding to the enumeration of details.

Ver. 6.—**For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought;** *i.e.* thou hast lent to thy brother on pledge, without reasonable cause, when thou wert rich enough to need no security (comp. Neh. v. 2—11). **And stripped the naked of their clothing.** When thy brother, on borrowing from thee, pledged his raiment, thou didst retain it, and so didst leave him to shiver all night without covering (see Exod. xxii. 26, 27). We may, perhaps, gather from this that the Mosaic Law on the subject was founded on an anterior custom widely prevalent in South-Western Asia.

Ver. 7.—**Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink.** To give water to the thirsty was regarded in the East as one of the most elementary duties of man to man. The self-justification of the dead in the Egyptian Hades contained the following passage: "I gave my bread to the hungry, *and drink to him that was athirst;* I clothed the naked with garments; I sheltered the wanderer" ('Ritual of the Dead,' ch. cxxv. § 38). The same claim appears continually on Egyptian tombs. "All men respected me," we read on one; "*I gave water to the thirsty;* I set the wanderer in his path; I took away the oppressor, and put a stop to violence" ('Non-Biblical Systems of Religion,' p. 46). In the proverbs assigned to Solomon, "which the men of Hezekiah copied out" (Prov. xxv. 1), the duty was declared to be one owed even to enemies (see Prov. xxv. 21, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, *give him water to drink*"). Isaiah notices it as praiseworthy in the Temanites (Eliphaz's people), that they "*brought water to him that was thirsty,* and prevented with their bread him that fled" (Isa. xxi. 14). Jael is praised for going further than this: "He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish" (Judg. v. 25). **And thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.** Later on Job absolutely denies this, as well as many of the other charges. "If I have withheld," he says, "the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; *or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof,* . . . then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone" (ch. xxxi. 16—22).

Ver. 8.—**But as for the mighty man, he had the earth;** literally, *as for the man of arm;* i.e. the man strong of arm. Job's retainers are probably meant, whom Eliphaz supposes to have been allowed by Job to oppress the poor, and have their own way in the world. This charge was doubtless as baseless as the others (comp. ch. xxix. 16, 17). **And the honourable man dwelt in it;** or, *the accepted man*—"the favoured man," *i.e.* those of whom Job approved and whom he favoured.

Ver. 9.—**Thou hast sent widows away empty.** Job, on the contrary, declares that he "caused the widow's heart to sing for joy" (ch. xxix. 13). The sin of oppressing widows was one of which Job deeply felt the heinousness. He is certainly *à priori* not likely to have committed it (ch. i. 1; iv. 3, 4), and the prejudiced testimony of Eliphaz will scarcely convince any dispassionate person to the contrary. **And the arms of the fatherless have been broken;** *i.e.* the strength of the fatherless has been (by thy fault) taken from them. Job has allowed them to be oppressed and ruined. The reply of Job is, "When the ear heard, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw, it gave witness to me: because *I delivered* the poor that cried, and *the fatherless,* and him that had none to help him" (ch. xxix. 11, 12; see also ch. xxxi. 21, 22).

Ver. 10.—**Therefore snares are round about thee.** As Bildad had threatened (ch. xviii. 8—10), and as Job himself had acknowledged (ch. xix. 6). **And sudden fear troubleth thee** (comp. ch. iii. 25; vii. 14; xiii. 21, etc.).

Ver. 11.—**Or darkness, that thou canst not see.** Job had complained of the "darkness" that was "set in his paths" (ch. xix. 8), meaning probably his inability to discover the cause of his afflictions. **And abundance of waters cover thee.** The comparison of severe affliction to an overwhelming flood is very common in Scripture (see Ps. xlii. 7; lxix. 1—3, 14, 15; cxxiv. 4, 5; Lam. iii. 54, etc.). So Shakespeare speaks of "a *sea* of troubles."

Ver. 12.—**Is not God in the height of heaven?** From taxing Job with definite open sins, Eliphaz proceeds to accuse him of impious thoughts and principles. He

does not acknowledge, Eliphaz says, either the majesty or the omniscience of God. Here he has, at any rate, some tangible ground for his reproaches. Job's words have been over-bold, over-venturesome. He has seemed to forget the distance between God and man (ch. ix. 30—33; x. 2, 3; xiii. 3, etc.), and to call in question either God's omniscience or his regard for moral distinctions (ch. ix. 22, 23; xxi. 7—13, 23—26). Hence Eliphaz is enabled to take a high tone and ask, "Hast thou forgotten that God is in the height of heaven, far up above all us poor wretched mortals? Dost thou need to be reminded of this? He is above the stars, and yet behold the height of the stars, how high they are! Even they are infinitely above men, yet how far below *him!*" (comp. ch. xxxv. 5).

Ver. 13.—**And thou sayest, How doth God know?** Job had not said this in so many words, but, by equalizing the godly and the wicked (ch. ix. 22; xxi. 23—26), he might be supposed to mean that God took no note of men's conduct, and therefore had not a perfect knowledge of all things. The psalmist implies that many men so thought (Ps. x. 11; lxxiii. 11; xciv. 7). **Can he judge through the dark cloud?** rather, *through the thick darkness.* God was supposed to dwell remote from man, in the highest heaven, and, according to many, "clouds and darkness were round about him" (Ps. xcvii. 2)—he "dwelt in the thick darkness" (1 Kings viii. 12)—he "made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him was waters, and thick clouds of the skies" (Ps. xviii. 11). The imagery was, no doubt, at first used in reference to man's inability to see and know God; but when men became familiar with it, they turned the metaphor round, and questioned God's ability to see and know anything about man. Job had not really ever shared in these doubts; but it suits Eliphaz's purpose to malign and misrepresent him.

Ver. 14.—**Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not** (see the comment on the preceding verse); **and he walketh in the circuit of heaven**; or, *on the circumference of the heavens.* The heavens are regarded as a solid vault, *outside* which is the place where God dwells.

Ver. 15.—**Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden?** rather, *Wilt thou keep the old way,* etc.? (see the Revised Version). Eliphaz assumes that it is Job's intention to cast in his lot with those persons whose prosperous wickedness he has described in the preceding chapter (vers. 7—15). And this notwithstanding Job's final protest, "Be the counsel of the wicked far from me" (ver. 16). He calls the mode of life pursued by these wicked persons "the old way," either with allusion to the seed of Cain before the Flood, who "corrupted their way" (Gen. vi. 12), or perhaps with reference to the descendants of Nimrod after it (see Professor Lee's 'Book of Job,' p. 361).

Ver. 16.—**Which were cut down** (rather, *swept* or *snatched away*) **out of time**; *i.e. before their time, prematurely.* **Whose foundation was overflown with a flood.** Some suppose an allusion to the general destruction of mankind by the Noachian Deluge; but perhaps no more is meant than that the supports of the wicked are ordinarily loosened and carried away by a flood of calamity. No *single* event need be referred to.

Ver. 17.—**Who said unto God, Depart from us** (comp. ch. xxi. 14). Eliphaz tries, though with no very great success, to turn Job's words against him. **And, What can the Almighty do for them?** *i.e. and ask what the Almighty can do for them.* A change from the second to the third person, without any change of subject, is not unusual in Hebrew. The wicked renounce God, and bid him depart from them—conduct which they justify by asking what good he could do them if they acted otherwise. The idea is the same as that of ch. xxi. 15, though not expressed so pointedly. What Eliphaz thinks to gain by echoing Job's words is not very apparent.

Ver. 18.—**Yet he filled their houses with good things.** The "he" is emphatic (הוּא). Translate, *Yet it was he that filled their houses with good things;* and comp. ch. xxi. 16, where the prosperity of the wicked is said not to have proceeded from themselves. **But the counsel of the wicked is far from me**; or, *but let the counsel of the wicked be far from me.* Again, Job's words in ch. xxi. 16 are echoed, perhaps that Eliphaz may show himself to be at least as pious as Job.

Ver. 19.—**The righteous see it, and are glad**; *i.e.* "the righteous see both the short-lived prosperity (ver. 18) and the ultimate destruction (ver. 16) of the wicked, and rejoice over them, especially over the latter" (comp. Ps. lviii. 10; cvii. 40—42; Prov. xi. 10). **And the innocent laugh them to scorn** (comp. Ps. ii. 6). Scorn and derision are the just portion of the wicked, and in Old Testament times even saints did not scruple to pour them out on those who deserved them. But the gospel spirit is different.

Ver. 20.—**Whereas our substance is not cut down.** It is best to take these as the words of the righteous in their triumph over the wicked; but they can scarcely bear the interpretation given them in the Authorized Version. The clause is not really negative but affirmative, and the word קִים does not

mean "substance," but "adversary." Translate, *Surely they that rose up against us* (or, *our adversaries*) *are cut off;* and compare the Revised Version. The "adversaries" of the righteous are the "wicked men" who have been "snatched away before their time," and have had their "foundation overflown with a flood" (ver. 16). **But the remnant of them the fire consumeth**; rather, *and the remnant of them hath the fire consumed* (see the Revised Version). The "fire" here, like the "flood" in ver. 16, is a metaphor, and therefore not to be pressed. All that is essential is that the wicked are destroyed. Over this the "righteous" and the "innocent" rejoice.

Vers. 21—30.—At this point a transition occurs. Eliphaz turns away from reproaches, open or covert, designed to exhibit Job as an example of extreme wickedness, and falls back on those topics which were the main subjects of his first exhortation (ch. v. 8—27), viz. an earnest appeal to Job to return to God, to repent and amend (vers. 21—23), and a lavish outpouring of promises, or prophecies, that in that case he should be delivered from all his troubles, should recover his wealth and prosperity, obtain of God all that he should pray for, succeed in all his enterprises, and be able to help and ease others, even those who might be guilty in God's sight (vers. 24—30).

Ver. 21.—**Acquaint now thyself with him** (*i.e.* God), **and be at peace**; or, *make, I beseech thee, a trial of him, and be at peace;* i.e. risk everything, throw thyself upon his mercy, and so make thy peace with him. To do so is well worth thy while, for **thereby good shall come unto thee.** It is a question what sort of "good" is meant. If we are to explain the "good" of this passage by vers. 24, 25 exclusively, Eliphaz will become a mere utilitarian, and he will be rightly characterized as "selfish and sordid" (Cook)—an anticipation of the Mammon of Milton. But there seem to be no sufficient grounds for singling out vers. 24, 25 from the rest of the passage, and regarding them as forming its key-note. The "good" which Eliphaz promises to Job includes, besides "the gold of Ophir" and "plenty of silver," such things as "delight in the Almighty," and confident trust in him (ver. 26), God's hearing of his prayers (ver. 27), the shining of light upon his path (ver. 28), his own payment of his vows (ver. 27), his giving assistance to the poor and needy (ver. 29), and even his deliverance of the guilty by the pureness of his hands (ver. 30); so that other besides material considerations are clearly taken into account, and the worldly prosperity which Eliphaz promises forms a part only of the good result which he anticipates from the patriarch making his peace with the Almighty.

Ver. 22.—**Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth**; or, *receive now instruction from his mouth.* The supposition of some commentators, that the "Law of Moses" is intended, is negatived by the entire absence from the Book of any allusion to the details of the Mosaic legislation, as well as by the primitive character of the life depicted in the book, and the certainty that no one of the interlocutors is an Israelite. The Hebrew תּוֹרָה, without the article prefixed, is properly "instruction," and is only to be assumed as meaning "the Law" when the context shows this meaning to be probable. The "instruction" to which Eliphaz here points, and which he regards as instruction from God's mouth, is probably the teaching of religious men, such as himself, which he considered to have come from God originally, though, perhaps, he could not have explained how. **And lay up his words in thine heart.** This is a mere variant of the preceding clause, and adds no fresh idea.

Ver. 23.—**If thou shalt return to the Almighty.** Eliphaz, like Bildad in ch. viii. 5, and Zophar in ch. xi. 13, taxes Job with having fallen away from God, almost with having apostatized. All his prophecies of future prosperity rest upon the assumption that Job, having fallen away, is now about to turn to God, repent of his misdoings, and be again received with favour. **Thou shalt be built up**; *i.e.* "restored, re-established." **Thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles** (comp. ch. xi. 14, where Zophar implies that Job's tents have ill-gotten gains concealed in them).

Ver. 24.—**Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust**; rather, *then shalt thou lay thy treasure in the dust;* i.e. hold it in slight esteem, because of its abundance. **And the gold of Ophir** (literally, *and Ophir*) **shall be to thee as the stones of the brooks** (comp. 2 Chron. ix. 27, "And the king [*i.e.* Solomon] made silver in Jerusalem as stones"). "Ophir" stands, no doubt, for untold wealth, being the great gold-producing country (see 1 Kings ix. 28; x. 11; xxii. 48; 1 Chron. xxix. 41; Ps. xlv. 9; Isa. xiii. 12). (On its location, see the article on "Ophir," in Smith's 'Dict. of the Bible,' vol. ii. pp. 637—642, and compare the comment on ch. xxviii. 16.)

Ver. 25.—**Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence**; rather, *thy treasure.* The word is the same as that used in the first clause of ver. 24. It properly signifies "ore." The general meaning of the passage seems to

be, "However rich thou mayest be in the precious metals, thy true treasure—that which thou wilt value most—will be the Almighty himself." **And thou shalt have plenty of silver**; or, *and he shall be precious silver unto thee* (see the Revised Version).

Ver. 26.—**For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty.** God shall no longer be a terror and alarm to thee, as he is at present (ch. vii. 17—20; ix. 17, 34; x. 15—17; xiii. 21; xix. 6—13, etc.), but a source of rejoicing and joy. Thou shalt have blessings at his hands instead of sufferings, rewards instead of punishments. Therefore shalt thou delight in him, and **shalt lift up thy face unto God**; *i.e.* "shalt turn towards him, like the sunflower towards the sun, and bask in the light of his countenance."

Ver. 27.—**Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee.** Now Job prays, but is not heard; he asks for death, but it does not come; he begs for a respite from suffering, but it is refused him; he beseeches God to enter into argument with him (ch. ix. 32—34; x. 2), but God vouchsafes no answer. Let him follow Eliphaz's advice, "return to the Almighty" (ver. 23), humble himself in the dust, repent and "put away his iniquity" (ver. 23), and then, Eliphaz promises him, all shall be changed—God will become gracious to him, will listen to him, and grant his requests, will remove his heavy hand, and crown him with mercy and loving-kindness. Then, he adds, **thou shalt pay thy vows.** Thou shalt have wealth enough, and strength enough, to pay any vows that thou hast made, which now in thy afflicted state thou canst not do. Vows are part of natural religion, and were widely prevalent over all the East in ancient times. The performance of vows, which was strictly enjoined in the Mosaic Law (Deut. xxiii. 21), must at all times have been felt as obligatory by the natural conscience.

Ver. 28.—**Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee.** Whatever thou resolvest on, *i.e.*, God shall ratify with his authority, and bring to pass in due time for thy benefit—a promise which has certainly "a touch of audacity" about it (Cook). David is less bold, but intends to give the same sort of encouragement when he says, "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart; commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Ps. xxxvii. 4, 5). **And the light shall shine upon thy ways.** Job had complained of the "darkness" by which his path was shadowed (ch. xix. 8). Eliphaz promises that this cause of complaint shall be removed. Job's way shall be "made plain before his face." A bright light shall illumine it—a light that shall ever "shine more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18).

Ver. 29.—**When men are cast down, then thou shalt say,** There is lifting up; rather, *when men cast down, and thou shalt say, Let there be lifting up;* i.e. when oppressors have cast a man down, and thou appealest to God, and prayest for his lifting up, then **he** (*i.e.* God) **shall save the humble person.** God shall hear thy prayer, and the oppressed person shall be rescued and saved.

Ver. 30.—**He shall deliver the island of the innocent**; rather, *he shall deliver even him that is not innocent* (see the Revised Version). It is now generally admitted that אִי in this place is for לֹא, as in 1 Sam. iv. 21; Prov. xxxi. 4. The meaning seems to be that God will deliver, at Job's prayer, even guilty persons, who will be **delivered by the pureness of Job's hands.** Eliphaz thus prophesies his own deliverance and that of his two friends from God's wrath at the intercession of Job, as actually came to pass afterwards (see ch. xlii. 7—9).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Eliphaz to Job: the third colloquy: the second controversy:* 1. *A fallacious syllogism.* I. A SOUND PREMISS. That God's government of mankind is entirely disinterested, his judicial retributions not being affected by considerations of personal benefit or hurt arising from the conduct of his creatures. 1. *Not by expectation of advantage.* (Vers. 2, 3.) Here is: (1) An admission; that a wise man, rightly exercising his faculties in the sphere of natural life, may effectually promote his own advantage—a proposition incontrovertible by reason, since wisdom in this sense signifies superior discernment and ability, the capacity of employing means to accomplish ends (Eccles. x. 10); and abundantly confirmed by experience, which attests that "by wisdom there is profit to them that see the sun" (Eccles. vii. 11), that "through wisdom is an house builded, and its chambers filled with all precious and pleasant riches" (Prov. xxiv. 3, 4), and that "wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city" (Eccles. vii. 19). (2) An implication; that the same law holds good in the

higher realm of religion; that a man acting wisely, *i.e.* living under the influence of that wisdom which cometh from above (Jas. iii. 17), filling his heart with that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom (ch. xxviii. 28; Ps. cxi. 10; Prov. i. 7; Eccles. xii. 13), and shaping his ways in accordance with its instructions (ch. xxviii. 28; Prov. iii. 7; xvi. 6), shall also advance his highest interests (Prov. iv. 8)—a sentiment likewise endorsed by Scripture (1 Tim. iv. 8; vi. 6) and experience. (3) An admonition; that the above law does not apply to man's relations to his Creator; that a man even in his best estate (Geber), which is wholly vanity (Ps. xxxix. 5), clothing himself in righteousness, and striving, with apparent success, to make his ways perfect, as Job somewhat boldly asserted he had done (ch. ix. 21; xiii. 15), can confer nothing in the shape of increase or profit upon God; that his piety, which may be useful to himself (Prov. xix. 8) and helpful to his neighbours (Eccles. ix. 15), does not reach as far as God in the way of bestowing advantage (ch. xxxv. 7; Ps. xvi. 2), neither augmenting his felicity nor enhancing his sufficiency (Rom. xi. 35), and therefore cannot enter into God's calculations in the distribution of rewards and punishments among his subjects, as certainly it should not mingle with man's cogitations about himself (Luke xvii. 10). (4) A qualification. Nevertheless, God not only expresses himself as if the piety of his people did contribute to his felicity (Numb. xiv. 8; 1 Kings x. 9; Ps. xxxvii. 23; cxlvii. 11) and advantage (Matt. xxi. 41), but pathetically complains that sinful men are "together become unprofitable" (Rom. iii. 12). 2. *Not by fear of damage.* (Ver. 4.) Eliphaz appears to mean that God has as little reason to dread loss from man's wickedness (ch. xxxv. 6) as to expect gain from his godliness, and therefore no need to defend himself against man by either punishing him with undeserved calamities, or weakening him through unmerited rebukes. The sentiment may remind us (1) of man's weakness, which can do nothing against God, who sits enthroned in heaven far beyond the reach of man's puny arm; (2) of sin's folly, which by all its craft and contrivance can succeed in inflicting damage only on itself; (3) of God's greatness, which remains unaffected by all the conspiracies of men and devils against his throne, his Law, his grace, his Person; (4) of affliction's design, which is not to crush but to convert man, not to reduce him to weakness but to bring him to repentance, not to evince the Divine indignation against him but to attest the Divine love and compassion towards him.

II. THE MISTAKEN INFERENCE. That Job was a sinner. 1. *The inference appeared obvious.* (1) It was evident that Job was a great sufferer. (2) It was self-contradictory to suppose that God was chastising him on account of his piety. So some read the words, "Will he reprove thee for fear of thee?" literally, "for, or on account of, thy fear," *i.e.* thy piety? No, verily. (3) It was inconceivable that God could be punishing him from any interested motive. Hence (4) it was a natural inference that Job's calamities were judicial visitations on account of sins. Therefore (5) Job, in spite of appearances to the contrary, must be a great sinner—in fact, a criminal of gigantic proportions, as Eliphaz next proceeds to show (vers. 5—9). Nevertheless: 2. *The inference was wrong.* Since (1) Job was not a sinner in the sense intended by his accuser, but, as his conscience testified and God had declared, a perfect man and an upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil. (2) Besides strict judicial retribution, and infliction of suffering from interested motives, there was a third alternative, of which Eliphaz appeared to be ignorant, viz. chastisement for the individual's good (Heb. xii. 10)—the view of suffering subsequently brought into prominence by Elihu (ch. xxxiii. 14—30), and constantly exhibited in the gospel. And (3) in point of fact, Job was not being treated penally on account of any personal transgression. Hence (4) the inference of Eliphaz, though on his premisses correct, was essentially fallacious.

Learn: 1. That the best saint has no more claim on God's grace and favour than the worst sinner. 2. That God's salvation of sinful men can in the case of none be of work and merit, but in the case of all must be of faith and grace. 3. That, as a special mark of condescension and kindness, God is pleased to accept and reward the services of his people as if they had been profitable unto himself. 4. That if God has no need of man's righteousness, man has infinite need of God's. 5. That, notwithstanding God derives no advantage from the piety of his creatures, he commands all men to make their ways perfect. 6. That, though God never reproves men out of fear, he sometimes does out of love. 7. That good people's piety is sometimes better than their logic.

Vers. 5—20.—*Eliphaz to Job: 2. A false accusation.* I. A CHARGE OF FLAGRANT IMMORALITY. 1. *Generally preferred.* (Ver. 5.) All sin may be justly characterized as great, being committed against a great God, a great Law, great light, great love, great obligations, and great penalties; and every man's iniquities may be styled "without an end," *i.e.* numberless, since David says of his, "They are more than the hairs of mine head" (Ps. xl. 12); but Eliphaz designs to represent Job's wickedness as exceptionally flagrant in comparison with that of ordinary sinners, and *à fortiori* of such good people as Bildad, Zophar, and himself (cf. Luke xviii. 11), and Job's crimes as not only already beyond computation, but, probably, as even then not terminated (Carey). 2. *Specifically detailed.* More abominable wickedness can scarcely be imagined. (1) Merciless extortion (ver. 6). Job had exacted in pledge from his unhappy creditor the large upper garment of Orientals, and had not restored it at sundown, as was afterwards commanded by Moses (Exod. xxii. 26, 27)—a sin in Job's case aggravated by several considerations, as *e.g.* that his creditor was his "brother," *i.e.* either a relative or, at any rate, a fellow-countryman, and not a stranger; that he was poor, and would be rendered comparatively destitute without his upper raiment; and that the pledge had been taken from him "for nought," or without cause, *i.e.* either had been exacted though the debt was small, such as rich Job might have overlooked, or the pledge had in value greatly exceeded the debt, or it had been retained after the debt was paid. (2) Heartless inhospitality (ver. 7). It was regarded in Oriental countries, especially in early times, as both a dictate of nature and a mark of piety, to provide kindly entertainment and comfortable shelter for famished and hungry travellers (Gen. xviii. 4, 5; xix. 2; xxi. 14, 15; xxix. 13; Exod. ii. 20). Nevertheless, according to Elihu, Job had "not given water to the weary to drink," and "had withholden bread from the hungry"—a charge which, though unjustly preferred against Job (ch. xxxi. 17, 32), will yet be righteously advanced against not a few professing Christians (Matt. xxv. 44), who are enjoined by the gospel to "use hospitality without grudging" (Rom. xii. 13; 1 Tim. iii. 2; Titus i. 8; Heb. xiii. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 9). (3) Barefaced robbery (ver. 8). Conceiving that the land was made for the rich and the mighty and the noble—a delusion which has survived in the minds of the earth's "mighties" and "honourables" from Job's day to this (Ps. cxv. 16)—Job, "the man of the arm," had by force or by fraud dispossessed the poor of their possessions and acquired them for himself. The wickedness is the same whether a man robs his neighbour with the help of the law or in defiance of it; and legislation tending to drive the poor from the soil is legalized robbery. (4) Pitiless oppression (ver. 9). Instead of proving a shield and defender of helpless widows and orphans, a duty prompted by humanity and prescribed by religion (Exod. xxii. 22; Jas. i. 27), in imitation of God himself (Ps. lxviii. 5), Job, Elihu says, not only turned a deaf ear to their cries of distress and solicitations for aid, like the unjust judge in the parable (Luke xviii. 2—5), but, like the Pharisees who devoured widows' houses (Matt. xxiii. 14; Mark xii. 40; Luke xx. 47), took advantage of their friendless and helpless condition to defraud them of the last fragment of their possessions, thus "breaking the arms of the fatherless," *i.e.* taking away everything on which they relied. The crime of robbing the poor because he is poor is one that God will avenge (Prov. xxii. 22, 23). Orphans and widows are God's peculiar care. 3. *Plausibly constructed.* The charge preferred by Eliphaz had this mark of truthfulness, that the crimes specified were such as a rich and powerful prince might naturally have been supposed to commit. Men's vices as well as their virtues usually adjust themselves to external surroundings as well as to internal dispositions. All men have their characteristic and besetting sins, while there are other forms of wickedness which they cannot commit. A person may shun burglary and yet perpetrate forgery. He who cannot steal a purse may yet appropriate an inheritance. A man may avoid the vulgar sin of drunkenness and yet fall into the greater wickedness of whoredom. 4. *Ostensibly proved.* Eliphaz could point to Job's calamities as evidence that what he had alleged was true. That calamity had been (1) sudden in its coming, it had caught him like a snare; it was (2) terrifying in its effects, filling the mind of Job with inward fears; (3) unavoidable in its endurance—out of the darkness that encompassed him no way of escape could be detected; (4) overwhelming in its measure, being likened to a multitude of waters; and it would be (5) fatal in its end, there being no hope of other issue, so far as Eliphaz could see, but that Job should be submerged in the sea of trouble that surged around him. It was useless, then, to say that

proof was wanting. Yet was the charge of Eliphaz: 5. *Wholly imagined.* It was purely a creation of the Arabian seer's fancy. Not only did Job declare it untrue, but Eliphaz himself must have known it to be baseless (cf. ch. iv. 3, 4). Either Eliphaz had allowed his excited and wrathful imagination to beguile his judgment, which was not like a seer, or he had taken up a slanderous report against Job, in spite of his better knowledge, which was not like a saint. But passion can disperse piety and confound reason, while malice will constrain even good people to believe lies. Envying and strife are the parents of confusion and every evil work (Jas. iii. 16).

II. A CHARGE OF PRACTICAL ATHEISM. 1. *The import of this form of infidelity.* It denies not the existence, but the overruling providence of God—in this respect differing from theoretical atheism. It places the Supreme at an infinite distance from the universe which he has called into being, setting him "in the height of heaven," banishing him, as it were, beyond the stars, where "he walketh in the circuit of the heavens," wrapped about by "clouds" which "veil him that he seeth not," alike ignorant of, and unconcerned about, anything that transpires in this lower sphere, and, of course, never interfering in any way with "the work of his hands," which, like a perfect piece of mechanism, goes without inspection or repair—in all this contradistinguished from pantheism, which believes in a God at hand, but at the same time confounds the Creator with his works. Practical atheism says, "The Almighty was once here present, but he has withdrawn ages ago; nature reigns, and all physical phenomena are the necessary result of mechanical laws" (Pearson on 'Infidelity,' ch. iii.). 2. *The antiquity of this form of infidelity.* This was the creed of the men of the antediluvian world, "the old way of the wicked, who were cut down out of time" (*i.e.* before their time), "whose foundation was overflown by a flood" (literally, "a river poured out was their firm foundation")—"a strong but suitable expression, referring probably to Noah's flood" (Umbreit). Though not the faith of Job, it was that of some of Job's contemporaries (ch. xxi. 14), as afterwards of some of David's (Ps. x. 11) and Asaph's (Ps. lxxiii. 11), and at a later time of many Hebrews before and during the exile (Isa. xxix. 15; Ezek. viii. 12). Among Greek philosophers it was the teaching of Epicurus and the atomists. The French encyclopædists, the English deists of the last, and the Comtists of the present century, all concur in this opinion. It is the latest finding of modern materialistic science. 3. *The origin of this form of infidelity.* (1) Intellectual pride. The belief that man can, or ought to be able to, explain everything has as its correlative the astounding assumption that nothing can exist which man does not understand. Practically this is the fundamental article in the modern scientific religion of agnosticism, which consigns to the limbo of the unknowable everything outside the domain of the senses and the reason, among other things such a doctrine as that of an overruling providence. The human mind discerns an insuperable difficulty in harmonizing the theory of a continual Divine interposition with the scientific dogma of the reign of law—"How doth God know? can he judge through the dark?"—with the insignificance of this earth, which, in comparison with the boundless universe, is but as a drop to the ocean, and in particular with the majesty of God, whose Divine perfections and glory are thought not to admit of such a condescension to details as is implied in an overruling providence. (2) Heart-depravity. Even more than in intellectual obliquity does practical atheism take its rise in moral perversion. It is the doctrine of "the wicked," of the moral fool, of those whose hearts are alienated from God by wicked works, who are so destitute of spiritual life that they have nothing the Almighty can do for them, and who desire nothing more earnestly than to have no further thought of God, to be left alone to their own infidelity and sin. 4. *The wickedness of this form of infidelity.* Were there no indications of God's overruling providence discernible, such amazing incredulity might in part at least be excusable. But proof in abundance existed which these atheists might have studied had they been willing, for "he had filled their houses with good things." So Paul told the men of Lystra that God had never left himself without a witness (Acts. xiv. 17), and the Athenians that he was not far to seek, or find, from any one who looked upon the world with open eye and honest mind (Acts xvii. 26—28). Hence such infidelity is criminal, and to be held in abhorrence by all good men, as well as by Eliphaz and Job (ch. xxi. 16). 5. *The final doom of this form of infidelity.* In opposition to Job, who maintained that men of atheistical principles flourished and were happy all their lives, Eliphaz

contends that their common fate is rather that of the sinners who were engulfed by the Deluge (ver. 16); which fate, though often (1) invisible to them, coming on them at the moment when they are saying, "Depart from us," as it did on the infidels of Noah's day (Luke xvii. 26, 27), is (2) progressing towards them, the righteous being able to discern its approach, though they, the wicked, cannot, "the secret of the Lord being with them that fear him," and "the Lord showing them what he is about to do," as he did to Abraham (Gen. xviii. 17) and Pharaoh (Gen. xli. 28), and will ultimately prove (3) unavoidable by them, the fire of retribution being as certain to devour their abundance as it did that of the Sodomites (Luke xvii. 29), as well as (4) ignominious for them, the innocent mocking at them and exulting in their destruction, just as the worshippers of the beast shall yet be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb (Rev. xiv. 11).

Learn: 1. That good men may tell lies. 2. That saints should be chary in preferring charges against one another. 3. That no cause can be permanently advanced by an untruth. 4. That atheism is an old sin, and is commonly associated with immorality. 5. That neither distance nor darkness can hide from God. 6. That the Almighty can do more for, or against men, than unbelievers imagine. 7. That God's goodness does not always lead the ungodly to repentance. 8. That they who now scorn the righteous will eventually be scorned by the righteous. 9. That God must reign until all his adversaries are overthrown.

Vers. 21—30.—*Eliphaz to Job:* 3. *An uncalled-for exhortation.* I. THE PATHWAY OF PENITENCE. 1. *Acquaintance with God.* The word points to such an intimate knowledge of God as might be secured by dwelling with him on familiar terms in the same house. The meaning is that Job required, as a first step towards temporal and spiritual recovery, to disabuse his mind of the obviously false impressions of the Divine character which he entertained, and to get to know God as he really was in the excellence and beauty of his Person. Ignorance of God—of his character as a God of love; of his purpose as a purpose of salvation; of his Gift, Christ Jesus, the outcome of his grace; of his gospel, which contains a free invitation to fallen sinners—is the fruitful cause of unbelief and sin (Eph. iv. 18), as, on the other hand, a thorough appreciation of God's Name and character as revealed in Christ invariably leads to repentance and faith (Ps. ix. 10). Such acquaintanceship with God can only be realized in and through Christ, who, as the "Image of the invisible God," "dwelt among us," that men might see his glory; that, so to speak, God might become familiarized to man; that man might be able to get on speaking terms with God, and so come to understand God better than he had ever done before (John xiv. 7, 9). 2. *Reconciliation to God.* The second clause, though sometimes read as consecutive, may be taken as jussive, and as intimating the second step in the sincere penitent's return. There naturally rises out of a better acquaintance with God a laying aside of enmity towards him, or a making friends with him. Already God is reconciled to the sinner (2 Cor. v. 18); or rather, he has objectively and legally set the sinful world in a state of reconciliation towards himself, *i.e.* he has turned away his judicial wrath from the world, so that now nothing prevents the instantaneous establishment of "peace," friendship, at-one-ment, between God and man, except man's own disinclination and enmity. The publication of God's reconciling work is the message of the gospel (2 Cor. v. 19); the invitation addressed to man to discontinue hostility against God, to lay down the arms of rebellion, to live no more in a state of war against God, but of amity and peace with God, constitutes the ministry of reconciliation. 3. *Instruction from God.* Accepting God's gracious offer of forgiveness and salvation, and entering with him into a covenant of friendship, the penitent must next submit his soul to the Divine teaching (ver. 22). God's Law, first written on the tablets of the heart (Rom. ii. 15); afterwards promulgated from Sinai (Exod. xx. 1); at a subsequent period amplified, illustrated, and enforced by the prophets (Heb. i. 1); in the fulness of the times exemplified in the Person, character, and work of Jesus Christ (John iii. 2; Heb. i. 2); now reaches its final stage when engraven on the renewed heart by the Holy Ghost (2 Cor. iii. 3; Heb. viii. 10). To this Law God requires submission as one of the imperative conditions of enjoying his friendship; and this submission must be (1) sincere, proceeding from the heart; (2) implicit, yielding obedience to the utterances of his mouth; (3) complete, not to one or two of the utterances, but to

all; and (4) cheerful, laying up his words in the heart with an earnest desire to bring the life into full accord with their instructions. 4. *Holiness before God.* Equally does the grace of repentance involve a hearty forsaking of sin and a steadfast resolution after new obedience (ver. 23). This sentiment is a repetition from Bildad's second oration (ch. xi. 14; *vide* homiletics), but is nevertheless true. No man really returns to God who continues to adhere to sin (Isa. lv. 7). If a man does return to God, he will "cease to do evil, and learn to do well" (Isa. i. 16). Conversion means death to sin, but life to righteousness (Rom. vi. 6—22). Follow holiness is the all-comprehensive precept of the gospel (Heb. xii. 14). The Christian life is essentially an upward progress towards personal purity. This is assuredly the grand lesson of the grace of God that bringeth salvation (Titus ii. 11, 12). 5. *Renunciation of all besides God.* The genuinely contrite man must complete the evidence of his sincerity by abjuring everything in which he has formerly placed his trust, in particular his riches, even though these should happen to have been justly and honourably acquired, "laying down in the dust his gold, and placing among the pebbles of the brook the gold of Ophir" (ver. 24); *i.e.* he must esteem them as absolutely worthless in comparison with religion—language which seems an anticipation of the sublime utterance of St. Paul (Phil. iii. 7, 8). So Christ exhorted the rich young ruler to sell all that he had (Matt. xix. 21), and called his disciples to leave all (Matt. iv. 20). And so must saints still be willing to part with every treasure that might dispute with Christ the supreme affection and control of the heart (Matt. x. 37, 38; xvi. 24; Luke xiv. 26); in particular, neither trusting in uncertain riches (1 Tim. vi. 11), nor attempting to serve God and mammon (Matt. vi. 24).—

II. THE REWARD OF PENITENCE. 1. *Inward peace.* The first effect of such a penitent return to, and reconciliation with, God would, according to Eliphaz, be deliverance from mental disquietude (ver. 21, Authorized Version). Laying down its weapons of rebellion, and closing with the Divine overtures of pardon, the contrite soul would experience a holy calm, "a peace above all earthly dignities, a still and quiet conscience." True peace of mind is unattainable in sin and under condemnation (Isa. lvii. 21). It is only possible as the result of acceptance with God (ch. xxxiii. 26; Ps. xxix. 11). Hence it is described in the gospel as the first effect of justification (Rom. v. 1), as the great gift bestowed by Christ upon his people (John xiv. 27; xx. 19), and as the certain experience of every believer (Rom. viii. 6; xiv. 17; xv. 13). It is also represented as a peace which the world can neither give nor take away (John xiv. 27), as a peace which passeth all understanding (Phil. iv. 7), whether by a saint or by a sinner. 2. *Outward good.* The subsequent enumeration of blessings attendant on the lowly penitent almost leads to the surmise that Eliphaz was thinking mainly of spiritual good (ver. 21). Yet it is certain that temporal enlargement was not excluded from his contemplation. Probably he intended both; and "good" in the widest acceptation of the term is promised to believing followers of God in both the Old and New Testaments (Ps. xxxiv. 10; lxxxiv. 11; Rom. viii. 28). Even things that in themselves wear an adverse aspect are transformed into benefits for the child of God (Heb. xii. 11). St. Paul gives an inventory of the saint's "good" things (1 Cor. iii. 21). And these good things come to the saint without his labouring for them (Matt. vi. 33), simply as the gift of God. 3. *Domestic prosperity.* The building up alluded to (ver. 23), while capable of wider reference, may here be understood of family enlargement. Children are like olive plants about the table, *i.e.* noble sons and fair daughters; and to have many of them was a special mark of Divine favour under the Law (Ps. cxxviii. 3). Indeed, all right-thinking persons regard a numerous offspring as a blessing rather than a curse. 4. *God for the soul's Portion.* In exchange for the castaway gold and silver, Job is promised that which constitutes the true riches, viz. the Almighty himself, who should be to him "gold from the mine, and silver of the brightest lustre" (ver. 25). So God represents himself as his people's Portion (Jer. x. 16; li. 19), and as such he is claimed by his people (Ps. xvi. 5; Lam. iii. 24). His salvation also is depicted as the soul's true treasure (Luke xvi. 11). At this point the recitation of the penitent's reward may be said to culminate. The undermentioned benefits, though here exhibited as co-ordinate with the foregoing, are really nothing else than the unfolded contents of the last benefit recorded. The man who has God for a Portion will in consequence possess all the privileges that follow. 5. *Delight in God's presence.* Instead of sitting melancholy and dejected, sullen and gloomy, before God, like another Cain, he will be able to lift up a sereuely joyous face to God as a father

reconciled (ver. 26), and will not only exult in his acceptance (Rom. v. 2), but delight in his Portion, *i.e.* take pleasure in studying God's character as unveiled in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. iii. 18), in learning God's will as revealed in the Bible (Isa. lviii. 2), in obeying God's Law as promulgated in the gospel (Rom. v. 22), in enjoying God's society in every situation and phase of life (1 John i. 7). 6. *Acceptance in prayer.* Taking God as his Portion, Job should have (1) free access to the throne of grace in order to present his petitions; (2) freedom of utterance in expressing the desires of his heart; (3) certain assurance that God would listen to his supplications; (4) sooner or later, answers to his petitions; (5) a spirit of thankfulness for mercies received and expected, which should lead him to vow an offering to God; and (6) the needful fidelity to enable him to keep his promise and pay that which he had vowed (ver. 27). Note that all of these are comprehended in the blessings promised to Christ's believing people (Phil. iv. 6; Heb. iv. 16; x. 19—22; 1 John v. 14, 15). Here again the blessings that ensue are illustrations of the power with God which a good man possesses through believing prayer. 7. *Success in his own undertakings.* Job, or the penitent, would only need to "decree a thing" and it should be "established" unto him, so that "the light" of prosperity should shine on his ways (ver. 28). The same promise is given to the Old Testament saint (Ps. xxxvii. 4—6) and the New Testament believer (Mark xi. 22—24); and the promise was verified in the cases of Abraham's servant (Gen. xxiv. 12), Nehemiah (i. 11), Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 1; Jas. v. 16—18), and others. 8. *Helpfulness to others in their troubles.* (1) Encouraging the cast-down by his words, saying unto them, "Arise" (ver. 29), as St. Paul cheered the crew and passengers of the Alexandrian corn-ship in the storm (Acts xxvii. 21—25); (2) saving the humble, literally, the downcast of eyes, by his prayers, as doubtless Epaphroditus was restored to health in answer to St. Paul's entreaties (Phil. ii. 26, 27), as St. Paul himself expected to be liberated from his Roman confinement in response to Philemon's supplications (Philem. 22), and as the elders of the primitive Church knew that the prayer of faith would save the sick (Jas. v. 15); and even (3) delivering the ungodly by his intercessions, "rescuing the not-guiltless by the pureness of his hands" (ver. 30), as Abraham would have saved Sodom had it only contained ten righteous persons (Gen. xviii. 23—32), and actually recovered the household of Abimelech (Gen. xx. 7, 17), and as Job subsequently interceded for his friends (ch. xlii. 7—9). Thus in all the three ways specified God's people have power with God in behalf of others, and are honoured to co-operate with God in the noblest work in which a man can engage on earth, that of saving souls.

Learn: 1. That many a noble sermon is preached to the wrong hearers. The discourse of Eliphaz, though lofty in its conceptions and moving in its strains, was not adapted to the case of Job. 2. That men's creeds are sometimes better than those who hold them. The piety and spirituality of this exhortation stand at a higher elevation than the character of him who uttered it. 3. That more gospel light may be possessed by those outside the Church than those within suspect. Eliphaz's sermon sounds like an anticipation of New Testament teaching. 4. That there is only one way of salvation for all countries and all times. Eliphaz preached to his listener what St. John Baptist, St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. John proclaimed to their hearers, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." 5. That true happiness can be reached by none who do not first return to God. "There is no peace, saith our God, to the wicked." 6. That the pious poor man is richer than the godless millionaire. God is better as a Portion for the human soul than gold of Ophir. 7. That the royal road to all genuine success in life lies in establishing a friendship with Heaven. The man who delights in God shall have his desires granted, his prayers heard, and his plans fulfilled. 8. That the most influential men on earth are the truly pious. God's Israels have power with both God and man. 9. That the wicked world is more indebted to the Church of God than it imagines. God's saints and Christ's followers are the salt of the earth.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—30.—*Censorious and uncharitable reasoning.* Eliphaz again takes up the word. He does not contest Job's position, that life presents many examples of the prosperity of the godless, and of the calamities of the godly, but he still maintains that only grievous sins, such as he proceeds to specify—oppression, hard-heartedness, injustice

to his neighbours—could be the cause of his misfortunes and miseries (vers. 2—10). He then proceeds to give an earnest warning against further indulgence in profane thoughts and words, because the fatal end of the wicked man, whatever his course may have been, can be no other than dreadful, like that of all wicked men from olden time (vers. 11—20). Then comes an invitation to repentance and conversion, and to the enjoyment of the blessings promised to the penitent by God (vers. 21—30).

I. ACCUSATION OF JOB AS A GREAT SINNER. (Vers. 2—10.) 1. These questions taken together (vers. 2—5) form a syllogism (Zöckler). The major premiss (vers 2, 3) expresses the thought: in God, the all-sufficing One, who is not affected by man's good or evil, the cause of Job's unhappiness cannot lie; the minor premiss shows that if Job himself bears the blame, this cannot possibly be because of his reverence for God (ver. 4); and the conclusion is drawn to the prejudice of the moral character of Job (ver. 5). "Does man bring profit to God? No, the man of sense profits himself." God needs nothing, and gains nothing, whether man's conduct be wise or foolish; therefore if he has acted wisely, man is but consulting his own interest. "Is it an advantage to the Almighty, if thou art just? or a gain, if thou makest thy ways sound?" *i.e.* pure and free from blame and punishment. Therefore it cannot be selfish or arbitrary motives which determine God to afflict men. "Will he chastise thee for thy reverence, go with thee to judgment?" If the reason of your doom is to be found in yourself, can it be reverence to him for which he punishes you? It must be the very opposite. Then comes the conclusion, "Is thy wickedness not great, and of thy transgressions no end?" On the rigid principles of Eliphaz and his companions, no other conclusion can be drawn. "The things said are good, but they are carnally understood. For the wisdom of the flesh thinks that blessing outwardly belongs in this world to the godly, and to the ungodly, curses; but the truth teaches that the godly enjoy blessing in this life under the guise of cursing, life in death, salvation in seeming condemnation; but, on the contrary, the ungodly are cursed under the show of blessing, are dead while they live, are condemned though in seeming safety" (Brenz). 2. Enumeration of Job's supposed sins (vers. 6—10). They are the sins of the rich and powerful, such as Job had been. "For thou didst take a pledge of thy brother without cause," thine abundance rendering such measures against a poor neighbour unnecessary. Note the indignation with which the Bible ever treats sins against the poor and needy. "And stripped off the clothes of the naked," *i.e.* the ragged, the scantily clothed. Common humanity would forbid the taking of the last garment of such in pledge; and the Law of Moses strictly prohibited it (Exod. xxii. 25, *sqq.*; Deut. xxiv. 6, 10, *sqq.*). "Thou gavest not the thirsty water to drink, and didst refuse the hungry bread;" comp. Isa. lviii. 10, and the beautiful contrast in the words of Christ concerning giving the cup of cold water to the little one (Matt. x. 42). "And the powerful man [literally, 'the man of arm'], his was the land, and the man of consideration was to dwell in it." A picture, as the speaker supposes, true to the life of what Job had been. "Widows thou didst send empty away, and the arms of the orphans were crushed," *i.e.* their rights and their resources, all that they could rely on (Ps. xxxvii. 17; Ezek. xxx. 22). "Therefore snares are round about thee, and terror comes upon thee suddenly" (comp. ch. xviii. 11; Prov. iii. 25). The truth of God's special care over widows and orphans, over the poor, the prisoners, and the oppressed is thus incidentally brought out with force. Sins against them are amongst the vilest that cry to Heaven (Sirach xxxv. 14, 15, 18, *sqq.*).

II. WARNING OF FURTHER PUNISHMENT. (Vers. 11—20.) 1. "Or darkness that thou canst not see, and a flood of waters covers thee"—the night of woe and the deep misery which have come upon him in consequence of his sins (ver. 1). "Is not Eloah heaven-high?"—infinitely exalted—"and do but behold the head [or, 'highest'] of the stars, how exalted they are!" (ver. 12). Then how idle is every thought of the limitation of his power, and every doubt of the absolute justice of his dealings! In vers. 13, 14 Job's doubts of the justice of God's government are construed by the speaker as denials of God's knowledge of earthly things and his providence over mankind, like the Epicureans in ancient and the deists in modern times. "And thou sayest, What knoweth God? will he judge through the dark clouds? clouds are his covering, that he seeth not; and he walketh on the circumference of the heaven," deigning not to give heed to this little and insignificant earth. Similar expressions of ancient scepticism are found in Ps. lxxiii. 11; xciv. 7; Isa. xxix. 15; Ezek. viii. 12. Its refutation is in the words of

Jeremiah (xxiii. 23, *sqq.*). God is not afar off, but near to every creature—not far from every one of us (vers. 27, 28; Acts xvii.). To think that God is too exalted to attend to our mean affairs, is to set out on the road of unbelief, sin, and ruin. Rather, *because* God is so exalted, nothing is hidden from him. He is as manifest in the microscopic dust as in the planetary worlds. He knows our most secret deeds, our inmost feelings, our sufferings that most retire from the notice of others (Jer. xxiii. 23, 24; Ps. cxxxix. 1, *sqq.*; Matt. vi. 8; 1 John iii. 20). 2. *The overthrow of the godless.* (Vers. 15—20.) "Wilt thou observe the way of the old world, which men of perdition trod?"—alluding, perhaps, to those before the Deluge (2 Pet. ii. 5). Swept away before their time, their foundation was poured away like a stream, so that they could not remain (ver. 16). These ungodly ones had said to God, "Depart from us;" had asked, "What can the Almighty do for us?" (ver. 17). Job had in the previous chapter (vers. 14, 15) put words like these into the mouth of the prosperous bad men; and now Eliphaz ascribes them to the subject of his description, to show Job that he approves up to a certain point of the representation he had made of the relation of external happiness to human guilt (Zöckler). "And yet it was he that had filled their houses with blessing," giving the contrast between the sudden Divine judgments and the previous prosperous condition which suggested their exemption from punishment. "The counsel of the wicked be far from me!" exclaims the speaker (ver. 18), echoing Job (ch. xxi. 16), as if to imply—only one who, like myself, has no doubt of God's retributive justice, may dare thus to speak. The wish of the godly is that God may draw near, ever nearer, to him; that of the ungodly is always, "Remove, depart from us!" "They would willingly leave God his heaven, if he would only leave them their earthly comfort" (Starke). Ver. 19, the overthrow of the wicked is a subject of rejoicing, even of derision, to the righteous and innocent, according to the proverb, "He laughs best who laughs last" (comp. Ps. lviii. 10, 11; lxiv. 9, 20). Ver. 20 contains the words of triumph of the godly, "Verily, our adversaries are destroyed, and their remainder the fire has consumed." Contrast the spirit of Christ (Matt. xxiii. 37; Luke xix. 42, *sqq.*; Jas. v. 19, 20).

III. EXHORTATION TO REPENTANCE AND PROMISE OF SALVATION. (Vers. 21—30.) 1. *Exhortation.* "Make friends with him, and be at peace" (Jas. iv. 8), "thereby blessing will come to thee" (ver. 21); "Take instruction from his mouth" (Prov. ii. 6). "If thou returnest to the Almighty, thou wilt be built again; if thou put wrong far from thy tents, and lay in the dust the precious metal, and under the gravle of the brooks the Ophir gold"—getting rid of it as a worthless thing—"then will the Almighty be thy Treasure, and silver in heaps" (vers. 23, 25; see on this sentiment the New Testament passages, Matt. vi. 20, 33; xix. 21; Luke xii. 33; 1 Tim. vi. 16—19). God's grace builds up what sin destroys. To enjoy that grace is competency, is wealth. *Deus meus et omnia!* (Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26). "Let thy heart rely on God, and thou mayest cast away thy gold, lose it without care; the Almighty remains thine inviolable Treasure; whilst, on the other hand, *without* him the most troubled watching and anxiety are of no avail" (*vide* Gerlach). 2. *Promises continued.* (Vers. 26—30.) "Yea, then thou wilt delight thyself in the Almighty, and lift up thy face to God" (ver. 26), in the freedom of a conscience without guilt (ch. xi. 15; comp. Ps. xxxvii. 4; Isa. lviii. 14). "If thou prayest to him, he will hear thee, and thy vows thou wilt pay" (Ps. xxii. 25; l. 14; lxi. 8; lxv. 2). The vow is looked at in the light of promise rather than of duty; God will always grant so much that thou canst fulfil all thy vows. "If thou resolvest on anything, it will come to pass, and light shall beam on thy way. If they [the ways] go downwards, thou sayest, Up!"—a cry of triumph and thanksgiving. "And to the cast down he gives help. He will deliver the not-innocent, and he is delivered by the cleanness of thy hands" (vers. 28—30). For the sake of thy innocence, which thou shalt have regained, God will be gracious to others who need atonement for their guilt. Little does the Pharisaic speaker dream that it is *he* who will receive the pardon at God's hands for Job's sake (ch. xlii. 8). The "prayer of a righteous man availeth much." At his intercession evil-doers may be spared, and not visited with the merited punishment (Gen. xviii. 23, 24; Ezek. xiv. 14, *sqq.*).—J.

Vers. 2—11.—*The impartiality of the Divine judgment.* Eliphaz knows of no cause for suffering but sin. Doubtless sin—transgression of Divine laws—does lie deeply buried in the causes of human suffering. This is the fruitful seed from which

widespread harvests of suffering grow. But it is not within the power of man to fix on the actual offender. Suffering occurs in a thousand instances where not the sufferer but another is the offender. To charge home, therefore, upon every sufferer the cause of his sufferings is an error. Into this error Job's friends fell. But Eliphaz proclaims a great truth in affirming the judgment of God to be unbiassed. No unworthy motives move him in his decisions. They are true and righteous altogether. The impartiality of the Divine judgments is—

I. ASSURED BY THE INVIOLABILITY OF THE DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS. The character of the Most High is the utmost refuge of the human thought. It is the basis of human confidence. That Name is absolutely unimpeachable. No difficulty in the Divine ways or in our interpretation of them can for a moment check our assurance of the Divine sanctity and justice. On this rock all hope is built. As now we repose on it, so in our thoughts of the future. The final as the present judgments of God are and can be only true and righteous. The sanctity of the Divine Name is the assurance of the unimpeachable rectitude of the Divine ways. The impartiality of the Divine judgments is therefore—

II. A GROUND OF CONFIDENT APPEAL BY THE UNJUSTLY ACCUSED. In calmness he may wait who knows himself to be unrighteously accused, slandered. It is hard to bear the unjust accusations of men, and all the more if we have no means at hand by which to vindicate ourselves. To the final adjudication we may safely appeal. There justice will be done. There the righteousness of the righteous shall shine out as the sun, or as the stars in the black night. The human judgment errs; it is swayed by false words, by base motive, by ignorance, by want of integrity. But high above the imperfectness of the human rises the Divine judgment, calm and profound, pure as a sea of glass. To that judgment Job has again referred himself now in strong confidence, now in fear; though, in moments of weakness, he has seemed to impugn it. The impartiality of the Divine judgment is—

III. A SOURCE OF TRUE COMFORT FOR THE SORROWFUL. Ever there lies deep in the heart of the suffering the hope that some counterbalancing good shall follow. To the full round of scriptural teaching we are indebted for the clear light that we have on this subject. "There is a God that judgeth in the earth." "There is a reward for the righteous." Weeping may endure through life, and turn it into a long night, but a morning of joy breaketh, when tears shall be wiped away. Though men are tried, yet shall they come forth as gold purified in the fire. To the final Divine award, when God will render to every man according to his works, the patient sufferer may commit himself in calmness of hope. The impartiality of the Divine judgment stands in contrast to the error and imperfection of all human judgment. The human knowledge is partial, the human motives liable to be warped; therefore the human decisions are often unjust. Thus was it with Job. His friend accused him in severe terms. "Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?" Then in severe words he names his offences, and adds, "*Therefore* snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee." Such was not the Divine judgment, as the sequel declares. Hence shines forth the lesson to the sufferer and the falsely accused, to abide calmly in hope of the righteous judgment of God.—R. G.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The unseen eye.* God is exalted; he is "in the height of heaven." He is unseen by man, and therefore often forgotten. He is above, beyond; and the frail judgment perverts this great truth into—

I. A SUPPOSITION OF THE DIVINE IGNORANCE OF HUMAN AFFAIRS. "How doth God know?" "Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not." Thus ignorance or folly perverts the right and the good. Either the judgment or the moral character is at fault. Men sin in forgetfulness that the Divine eye is upon them. "Thou God seest me" is a hedge of fire to prevent from evil-doing. How great a departure from right reason is the foolish supposition that, because God is not seen, therefore he seeth not! So the Divine is measured by the human. Only godlessness—the indifference of the soul to God—can lead men to such perversions. The pure, they who, communing with the pure One, are changed into his image, see God. They discern his eye. It is the light and the joy of their life. The evil with darkened eye seeth not. A cloud of ignorance covers him, as a cloud of mystery the Most High.

II. This ignorance is further perverted into A SUPPOSITION OF THE INCOMPETENCY OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENT. "Can he judge through the dark cloud?" Thus the blind falls into the pit of error. One fault follows another in quick succession. The faulty view which shuts God out from his own world, which thinks of him as too far exalted above human affairs to take knowledge of them, must needs complete itself in denying the Divine judgment of human actions. It is the perilous perversion of ignorance and of sin—the blindness of mind which springs from a hardness of heart. The moral sensibilities being blunted, moral truth is not apprehended. Spiritual things are foolishness to the unspiritual; he cannot discern them. The heart loving evil bribes the conscience into doubt as to the judgment upon evil, and finally wins it over to a denial of it. God cannot judge. So does the frail, ignorant, foolish creature judge of the Creator, and thus assumes to itself what it denies to its Maker.

Mark (1) the *error*, (2) the *folly*, (3) the *wickedness*, (4) the *danger*, of this. —R. G.

Vers. 21—30.—*Peace with God.* In clear words reconciliation with God is urged. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace." Ignorance of God casts men off from the highest good—from the fellowship of their truest and best Friend. Deep in the heart of the wicked enmity against God reigns. This is sin's utmost folly. Men are to be judged by their relation to a pure and true standard. The utmost condemnation lies buried in a repudiation of the highest goodness, the supreme righteousness, the purest benevolence. "What have we to do with thee?" was the expression of a purely devilish mind. The reconciliation of the human soul to God is the noblest and best work of philanthropy. Eliphaz points out—

I. THE WAY OF RECONCILIATION. 1. The search for the knowledge of God. "Acquaint now thyself with him." The knowledge of God is the basis of peace and the encouragement to it. It is the knowledge that comes of the heart turning to God. To such a heart God turns and manifests himself. Mere intellectual search is insufficient. God is known, as he is seen, by the heart. 2. Receiving teaching from him. The acceptance of his holy Law as the law of the returning life, hiding his words in the heart, taking them up into a loving recognition of them,—this is the way of all true peace and blessedness. 3. The putting away iniquity. This, the true repentance, is a departure from evil. 4. A return of the soul wholly to God. This is the true conversion. From this issues the utmost good which Eliphaz points out in describing—

II. THE FRUITS OF PEACE. 1. The restoration of prosperity. "Thou shalt be built up." The blessing of God upon the human life is the highest pledge of true prosperity. "Thou shalt lay up gold as dust," may not be a definite promise of riches to every returning one, but it indicates the true effect of righteousness. God will be to him his true gold. 2. Divine protection. "The Almighty shall be thy Defence." 3. A confident and joyous approach to God. "Thou shalt have thy delight in the Almighty." How greatly is the character of life raised by its purer fellowships! The soul brought to find its delight in the highest good is blest indeed. 4. The free access of prayer; and the pledge of a favourable response, "Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee." 5. Prosperity and joy. "Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways." Thus shall it come to pass that he who was "cast down" shall be lifted up, and the lowly shall be saved. Thus the guiltless shall be rescued, and he who has pure hands shall be delivered. The way of the sinner's approach to God is as of old—it is the path of humility, of repentance, of lowly confession, of faith—the heart's whole trust in the Lord and in his word of grace. And the fruits of righteousness are now as always—peace and assurance and blessing.—R. G.

Ver. 2.—*Whether man can be profitable to God.* Here is a question to which Eliphaz only expects a negative answer. Let us look at the grounds of the question, its difficulties, and the possible solution of it.

I. THE GROUNDS OF THE QUESTION. With many persons such a question never occurs. They do not dream of becoming profitable to God, nor do they wish to be of real service to him. Their only desire is that they may be profitable to them. Even in religion their great idea is to save their own souls. When they think of God

at all, it is to consider what they may get from him for their own advantage. Any idea of sacrificing themselves to God and rendering him disinterested service has never dawned upon their consciousness. But when a true Christian spirit is aroused in the heart of a man, he must look beyond himself; he must desire to show his gratitude to God by some act of service; he must wish in some way to be profitable to God. It will be a pain to him to find that he can only receive bounties from God and can never render him any return. Thus there will arise within him an earnest question as to whether indeed he can do anything that will really be useful to God.

II. THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE QUESTION. These come from two main sources—from man's littleness, and from God's greatness. 1. *Man's littleness.* (1) In knowledge. How can we discover what will be profitable to God? Have not men often done for religion what has really neither pleased God nor helped his cause? (2) In power. We are limited, imperfect, feeble creatures. All we have is directly derived from the goodness of God. How, then, can we find means with which to give him back any service? (3) In goodness. Sin mars all we touch. Our sacrifice is defiled, our service is corrupt. We do not approach him with clean hands and pure hearts. How, then, can he accept our service? 2. *God's greatness.* It would seem that our slight service would be simply lost in the vast sea of Divine activities. It would be like a drop of water added to the ocean. Indeed, it would be no real addition; for God is infinite, his resources are boundless. He can do all things without an effort. Therefore he cannot need our service.

III. THE POSSIBLE SOLUTION OF THE QUESTION. Even if we cannot find this we should believe that it exists, because God calls us to serve him, and he would not do so if effective service were impossible. He could not desire us to waste our strength in work which was exhausting to ourselves and yet not useful to him, while we were simply aiming at serving him in obedience to his command. That would be a cruel mockery. Therefore we must believe that God does account our service profitable. Further, there are some ways in which we can see that it is so. 1. *Through the love of God.* The parent is delighted to receive the small ministries of his child, though he does not absolutely need them, and though they may really cost him more in first furnishing the means and then helping the accomplishment, than they are worth when regarded from a commercial standpoint. But love adds a value of its own. God delights to receive the service of his children. He waits for it and makes it valuable by the condescension which gives it a place in his plans. 2. *By helping our fellow-men.* We serve God when we serve our human brothers. Though in the infinity of his resources he does not lack anything, they lack many things. Yet God rejoices in what benefits any of his creatures. Thus we may become profitable to God by being profitable to our neighbours (Matt. xxv. 40).—W. F. A.

Ver. 7.—*Help for the needy.* I. THIS IS NATURAL. God has made us mutually dependent on one another. In social order there is an interchange of service, and the general life of the community is simply maintained by people helping one another. The cases of extreme distress are those in which the reciprocity breaks down because the hungry and helpless can make no return for what they receive. Still they are part of the body, and if "one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. xii. 26). The "solidarity of man" is such that the needy are naturally dependent on others for maintenance.

II. THIS IS SIMPLE. Only water and bread are here referred to. These are the most necessary things; but they are also the most accessible. A poor man who cannot give the smallest coin to a beggar may yet offer a cup of cold water. Of course, true sympathy will lead us to desire to help up to the utmost of our powers. But a very great amount of distress might be alleviated without a proportionate expenditure of money; *e.g.* penny, halfpenny, and even farthing dinners for children give an assistance far beyond what their cost suggests.

III. THIS IS UNCONDITIONAL. At least the one condition is need. We have not to consider merits when we relieve extreme distress. Water to the thirsty and bread to the starving should be given at the mere sight of extreme need, though the recipients are quite undeserving. This we admit by our poor-law. As soon as the immediate and pressing needs are supplied, other and more difficult questions must be considered.

If we go further we may pauperize the objects of our charity. It is necessary, therefore, to consider character and methods of help suited to lift, not to degrade, the recipients. Here most complicated problems arise. But the primary help is simple and unconditional.

IV. THIS IS CHRIST-LIKE. Our Lord took pity on the world's sore need. He did not consider whether he could find "deserving cases." He offered his salvation to the most undeserving. Need, not merit, was the call that brought him from heaven. The most undeserving are really the most needing of help, not indeed with lavish doles of charity that will keep them in idleness, but, after the first necessaries are supplied to maintain life itself, by a kind of assistance that will raise them and better them. How to give this help is a most difficult question. We cannot do better than to follow our Lord's example. He raises where he helps. The grace of Christ never pauperizes the soul.

V. THE NEGLECT OF THIS IS A GREAT SIN. Eliphaz was unjust in accusing Job of such a sin. In the eyes of the Oriental, often dependent on casual hospitality for life itself in the desert, to refuse water and bread to the needy was a gross wrong. You may kill your enemy with the sword, but you must not deny him water to drink and bread to eat when he comes to you as a guest. Christianity widens and deepens the obligation. Though in various forms suited to the various circumstances of the world as we find it, brotherly helpfulness is always expected of Christ's people. It is taken as a service rendered to himself. The neglect of it is a reason for rejection at the great judgment (Matt. xxv. 41—46).—W. F. A.

Ver. 13.—*God's knowledge.* I. THE APPARENT DIFFICULTY OF IT. It may not be asserted that God does not know all, and yet people act as though they could hide from God. In distress and loneliness it sometimes seems as though God could not know what were the troubles of his children, or he would not permit them to be so grievously tried. The vastness of the universe raises the same difficulty. Many things are covered up, and it is not easy for us to believe that he can "judge through the thick cloud."

II. THE REAL TRUTH OF IT. If God is the infinite Being whom we know him to be, all difficulties will vanish before him. We may not be able to conceive of the method by which he comes to know all things; but this is not wonderful, for that method itself must have an infinity about it quite beyond our comprehension. On the other hand, God frequently gives startling evidence that he sees in secret and knows all things. He surprised Hagar by discovering her in the desert (Gen. xvi. 13). Achan's stolen booty could not be hidden (Josh. vii. 16—21). Our own lives must bear witness to the searching knowledge of God. At first, perhaps, his treatment of us may have seemed to go on without any regard to our requirements, but that was only because we were short-sighted and superficial; for when we have been able to look back over a long stretch of life, have we not been surprised again and again at observing how wonderfully God has wrought just the very thing that was needed to bring out what was best in the end?

III. THE CONSEQUENCES DEPENDENT ON IT. 1. *It is vain to try to hide from God.* He sees through the thickest cloud. Thus we only waste our efforts when we try to make a darkness that shall shut off the piercing gaze of God. He knows all now. He does not need to wait for the future revelation of the judgment-day. Already all hypocritical pretences are perfectly open and apparent to him. 2. *It is foolish to distrust God's wisdom.* We see a little corner of life; he has the whole field of it before him. Therefore he must have vastly greater materials for his judgment than we possess for ours. It is not to be wondered at that his decision often differs from ours. But if his ways are not as our ways and his thoughts not as our thoughts, the simple explanation is that his ways and thoughts are higher than ours (Isa. lv. 8, 9). 3. *It is well to seek God's guidance.* When we follow his lead we are conducted by One who knows the end from the beginning. Our difficulties arise from partial lights and intercepted views. We see enough to lead us astray. But the perfect, all-penetrating knowledge of God invites us to renounce our prejudices and look up for the indications of God's guiding hand. These may be given to us (1) in the course of events; (2) in the admonitions of conscience; (3) in the teachings of Scripture; (4) in the life, the teaching, and the example of Jesus Christ. Browning says—

"Our times are in his hand
Who said, 'A whole I planned.'
Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be afraid."

W. F. A.

Ver. 21.—*Peace from the knowledge of God.* Eliphaz has here stumbled on a great truth, which even his wrong-headedness cannot pervert, which is indeed a flash of Divine inspiration. Our unrest springs from our ignorance of God. If we did but know him, we should be at peace.

I. HOW PEACE SPRINGS FROM THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. 1. *From the characteristics of knowledge.* There is a restfulness about all knowledge. Vague apprehensions and surprising alarms dog the footsteps of ignorance. We cannot walk tranquilly in a dark night through regions of unknown dangers. Even the knowledge of painful truths is less disturbing than uncertainty about them. When we know the worst the fever of anxiety is allayed, although the lethargy of despair may have taken its place. The higher knowledge induces patience, calmness, strength. 2. *From the nature of God.* Here is the wonderful truth that comes to the troubled soul like a gospel of peace. Our hard thoughts of God are erroneous. They spring from a complete misconception as to his nature. We have thought him indifferent, or stern, or vindictive. These ideas were born of our own ignorance. If we had but known him we could not have held such views of his nature. The more we do know him the more we see that his true name is Love. His purposes are gracious. Afar off they appear hard; on a near acquaintance the beauty and goodness of them is made evident to us. 3. *From the needs of our soul.* We cannot be at peace till we know God. The severance from God is a great cause of unrest. The knowledge of God is life eternal, and we are cut off from that life while we hold aloof from God.

II. HOW THE PEACE-GIVING KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS ACQUIRED. 1. *By some effort.* We have to acquaint ourselves with God. We do not know God in our condition of sin and sorrow. The world is in ignorance of God. A deep gloom hangs over a large part of heathendom through mistaken beliefs about malignant deities. Christians need to escape from hard thoughts of God. Our despondency, our limited views, our weakness, our consciousness of sin, all make it hard for us to know God in his perfect goodness. 2. *Through revelation.* In acquainting ourselves with God we have not to feel after him if haply we may find him. He has spoken to us. The Scriptures enlighten us and dispel needless fears as they make known the mercy of the Lord that endureth for ever. The greatest distress is sometimes felt by people dwelling too much in the region of subjective religion. Thus they imagine hard things about God that are contrary to his revelation of himself. 3. *In Christ.* He is the supreme Revelation of God, and he has come to bring "peace on earth." To see Christ is to know God as favourable to us. He is "our Peace." 4. *By means of reconciliation.* This further thought is implied in the notion of acquainting ourselves with God. We are estranged by sin, which hides from us the vision of the love of God. We must turn to God submissively, and make practical acquaintance of him by yielding ourselves to his will. Then the intimacy of spiritual communion will be "the peace of God that passeth all understanding."—W. F. A.

Ver. 22.—*Heart-treasures.* God's words are here regarded as heart-treasures, to be received with eagerness and laid up with care. The ignoring of the "Torah," the ancient Law of Israel, by the author of Job is one of the striking features of the poem. It would seem that the poet wished to set the scene of his great drama of providence in the open field of nature, free from the disturbing influences of a special system of religion. But now he does just refer to the word "law," or "instruction." There is a larger law than that of Moses, a wider teaching than that of the Pentateuch. All God's words in nature, Scripture, conscience, and Christ are treasures to be received and guarded in the heart.

I. THE NATURE OF THE TREASURES. "Law," or "instruction," and "words." These treasures are not material things. Gold and jewels are not the most precious things. Good thoughts are worth more than diamonds. God's words are of the greatest value on several accounts. 1. *Their truth.* All truth is precious; Divine

truth—truth about God and spiritual things—is most valuable. 2. *Their bearing on life.* God's words are not concerned with abstract truth. They throw light on duty. They show us the way of salvation.

II. THE SOURCE OF THE TREASURES. The Law is from God's mouth. He originates the commandment; he conveys the instruction; he teaches the truth. God's revelation is the original source of all truth, for we can only know nature in so far as God reveals it to us through its phenomena and by means of the faculties he has given to us. 1. *The original Source.* God made the Law, impressed the truth on nature, inspired the ancient prophet, gave the hearing ear. 2. *The immediate Source.* We can only receive the truth of God when the Spirit of God brings it home to us. Thus it comes from God to each individual.

III. THE RECEPTION OF THE TREASURES. We have to receive the Law and the words of God. 1. *They are not in us by nature.* Or, if it may be said they are with us in our pristine state of nature, we have lost them through sin, and we need to recover them. 2. *They must be received willingly.* We can keep them out; therefore we are urged to open the door and let them in. The best revelation fails before unwilling ears.

IV. THE PRESERVATION OF THE TREASURES. 1. *To be laid up.* God does not favour us with a flash of revelation for the use or the enjoyment of a moment. The truth is given for a permanent good. 2. *In the heart.* (1) The thought. It is useless to hear, if we do not comprehend and consider. (2) The memory. "The hoarded memories of the heart" are stores for use in after-years. (3) The affections. We need to love God's truth and make it part of our very being by embracing it in our deepest affections.

V. THE USE OF THE TREASURES. They are not buried in oblivion, nor are they kept only for show, like the Crown jewels at the Tower. In the heart they are at the source of the life, and they are there to inspire and influence the whole man. God's Law is to be written on the fleshy tablets of the heart, that there it may live and rule. This treasure within purifies the soul and guides the conduct.—W. F. A.

Ver. 23.—*The penitent's return and restoration.* I. THE RETURN. 1. *To God.* All sin is departure from God; and repentance is a return to God. As the fall is from personal relations, so the recovery is a renewal of personal relations. When the sinner comes to himself, he sees that his one hope is to "arise and go unto" his Father. Thus the very Being against whom he has sinned is sought for pardon and restoration. Now, it is not possible to mend our ways without thus coming back to God. His power and presence are the inspiration of the new life. The very thought of God as the Almighty is a help in this return. Although we are first moved by perceiving his goodness and mercy, we are conscious that we are helpless in ourselves and need heavenly aid to regenerate our souls. Thus the invincible power of God, which was our terror while we remained impenitent, becomes our hope as soon as we repent. 2. *From sin*—taking the last clause of the verse as a condition of God's help. We must put away iniquity from our tabernacles if we are to expect God's restoring mercies. (1) Sin must be rejected. We cannot return to God and retain our sin. That must ever remain at a distance from him. Therefore we can only return by cutting ourselves off from it, and leaving it behind. It is necessary to abandon the practice of sin as well as to regret the past sin. (2) Sin must go from the home—from the "tabernacles." Private sin must be abandoned; though now curtained in secret, it may not be harboured any longer. Cherished sin must go. Habitual sin must be cast out. It is easy to renounce the strange sin that only touches us now and again. The difficulty is with the besetting sin—that which dwells in the tabernacles. Yet this too must go.

II. THE RESTORATION. The returning penitent is to be "built up." 1. *On fulfilling the conditions.* He must return to God; he must renounce sin. There is a foolish notion that God's goodness will blot out the consequences of sin without these conditions being fulfilled. To do so would be to outrage justice as well as to fly in the face of nature. We cannot have the rewards of grace without first accepting its inward influences. Forgiveness is not merely the cancelling of penalties; that is but an incident of the transaction; in itself it is a very personal thing, and until the personal reconciliation in which it consists is accomplished, only the lowest views of God's

government could lead us to look for the external advantages. 2. *In personal recovery.* The sinner himself is to be built up. Sin breaks a man down—breaks down character, reputation, faculty, energy. The fallen life is a broken life. Now, the first act of Divine restoration touches the nature of the sinner himself. He is lifted up from the dust and set on his feet. Like a ruined building, shaken down by the earthquake, he is built up again, that he himself—and not merely his belongings—may be strong and beautiful. Thus the restored penitent is made a temple for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, a fortress to keep out future invasions of evil, a palace in which the fairest graces of the kingdom can be nourished, a hospital and asylum for the sick and miserable, a school of new thoughts and enterprises, a home of prayer and love. 3. *In external prosperity.* It is only too likely that poor Eliphaz thought exclusively, or at all events quite disproportionately, of this when he spoke of Job being built up again. The patriarch's ruined fortune could be restored. This is not the chief part of a Divine restoration. Still in some way—though not always in restored wealth—it does follow that the outer as well as the inner life is favoured by a penitent return to God.—W. F. A.

Vers. 24, 25.—*Rich in God.* The idea of these verses seems to be that if a man will give up his earthly riches, his jewels and gold of Ophir, God will be to him a Defence, and as gold ore and silver in bars.

I. RENUNCIATION THE CONDITION OF TRUE WEALTH. We do not get the best riches by grasping, but by giving. Sacrifice, not selfishness, is the source of the highest prosperity. We must renounce in order that we may attain. This principle is exemplified in various ways. 1. *Typified in nature.* The farmer must not store his wealth in his granary if he would increase it. He must commit the seed to the earth, cast it away and bury it, in order that he may receive more in return. 2. *Practised in commerce.* We rarely meet with the old-fashioned miser and his bags of gold. In our day the money-worshipper lays out his wealth so that, like Shylock, he may make it "breed." 3. *Taught by Christ.* Our Lord showed in his parables of the talents and the pounds that the gifts of God were to be used, expended profitably, and that they should have more who had traded with what they first received. He led to deeper truths when he told the young man who desired eternal life to sell all he had and give to the poor, promising that he should then have treasure in heaven (Mark x. 21), and when he promised his disciples that there was no man who had renounced home and family for his sake and the gospel's, but he should receive a hundredfold now in this time, and in the coming age eternal life (Mark x. 29, 30). Here we see that mere renunciation is not enough. It will not do merely to pour the money into the sea, nor to sell all one's goods and give to the poor, unless we also follow Christ. 4. *Proved by experience.* It is found with surprising gladness that to give up all for Christ is to be rich indeed, while to cling greedily to earthly possessions is to be miserably disappointed in the end.

II. GOD THE SOURCE OF TRUE WEALTH. It is not that God will give us new riches in exchange for what we have given up. We shall find our wealth in God himself. He is to us all we need. 1. *A defence.* Riches are valued for what they will purchase. In the last resort they are chiefly prized because they can ward off evils. To keep hunger, pain, and death from their doors, men will give up any amount of wealth. Nations spend vast sums in their defensive arrangements. Europe is now an armed camp, with armies maintained at an enormous cost, simply in order that each country may be safe from invasion by its neighbours. Now, God is the true Defence of his people, better than any armaments that money can maintain. 2. *A store of vast possibilities of good.* Gold ore and silver bars are the precious metals in an elementary state. They thus represent value that may be employed in various ways. God is our most elemental wealth. (1) He is as a treasure to the soul that possesses him, as gold and silver are precious in themselves. It is a great mistake to seek God only for what he gives, forgetting that he is better than all his gifts. (2) Still, he is the Source of all other good, as gold and silver are means for purchasing innumerable things. Through God we may own all things. St. Paul says to Christians, "All things are yours."—W. F. A.

Ver. 26.—*The joy of the Lord.* I. THE INTERIOR EXPERIENCE. "Delight in the

Almighty." 1. *God gives joy.* As we have but to acquaint ourselves with God to be at peace (ver. 21), so we have but to appreciate his intentions to see that he does not wish us to be in distress. 2. *This joy is in himself.* We have to learn by experience how this is the case, for no words can express it. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, . . . the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). But Christian experience shows how real this Divine joy is. (1) The joy of pardon. The soul has been estranged from God, darkened with the gloom of the wrath of Heaven; now the cloud is broken up and God smiles forgiveness. (2) The joy of love. This is mutual—the soul loving God in exchange for his love. (3) The joy of trust. No fear need disturb the soul that is at peace with God. Its confidence is a source of deep gladness, because it dispels the most terrible alarms. (4) The joy of service. It is a happy thing to be working for God, especially when we perceive that we can be "fellow-workers with God." He is the inspiring energy of all our work. (5) The joy of communion. To be walking with God is itself a joy. The blessedness of the pure in heart who enjoy the vision of God is deeper than any earthly delight.

II. THE SPIRITUAL ATTITUDE. "And shalt lift up thy face unto God." 1. *Confidence.* While we fear and distrust God we cannot look up to him. We rather shrink from his gaze and hide ourselves, like Adam and Eve in the garden. We may even cry to God for help without daring to look up, like the publican in Christ's parable (Luke xviii. 13). It is happy for the soul when the shame of sin and the fear of doubt are removed by the forgiving love of God, so that the child can look quite naturally and confidently into the face of his Father. 2. *Contemplation.* To lift up the face to God is to gaze upon him as well as to submit to his gaze. This is no vision of the eye of sense, for God is Spirit, and must therefore be always invisible to the bodily eye. But the spirit of man may contemplate the Divine Spirit. Theology tries to do this, but theology consists of purely intellectual conceptions. There is a deeper contemplation of sympathy which is only possible to the soul that is in living communion with God. 3. *Expectation.* Our contemplation should be an act of pure worship in which we forget ourselves, rejoicing only in the beauty of God's goodness. Yet personal wants will make themselves felt, and when they do, there is no one more ready or able to supply them than our Father in heaven. Therefore it is natural to look to him for help in prayer, patience, and hope. (1) Prayer, because the help should be sought from God; (2) patience, because it may not come immediately; and (3) hope, because it can be anticipated with the assurance that God will not disappoint his children. 4. *Beatification.* The face that is lifted up to God is illumined by the glory of God. His light falls upon it and glorifies it. There is a great blessedness springing directly from communion with heaven. If we looked up more, our countenances would be brighter.

CONCLUSION. Observe that these blessings follow a penitent return to God, and are conditioned by it. "*Then* thou shalt have thy delight," etc., pointing back to ver. 23. —W. F. A.

Ver. 27.—*The prayer that shall be heard.* This verse is one of a series that describe the happy results of the penitent return to God referred to in ver. 23. Thus Eliphaz means that after we have returned in penitence to God our prayer will be heard. His principle is quite in accordance with the teaching of Scripture, though, as usual, his application of it to Job is unjust.

I. PRAYER IS AN ELEMENT OF PROSPERITY. It is not only a condition on which prosperity is given; it is a part of the prosperity itself. Trouble drives us to prayer; but happiness cannot let us dispense with it. It is possible for one to be too miserable, too depressed, too hopeless, to pray. The best praying seems to need an element of joyous confidence. When it springs from this happy condition it enhances the joy of it. It is a very low and selfish notion that leads people to economize their prayers, and reserve them for times of dire necessity. Surely it should be a happy thing for the child to talk with his Father!

II. PRAYER EXPECTS AN ANSWER. We may pray without looking for any reply—pray because we cannot contain ourselves in silence, because the strong feelings of the soul will burst out into utterance. Then there may be a certain relief in the mere opening of the floodgates of emotion. But this is not the chief end of prayer. Further,

we may just confide our case to God, consoled by the thought that he hears, even though we do not believe that any help is possible. Thus comfort is sought in the silent sympathy of a friend to whom the burdened soul can pour out its griefs. Still, the chief end of prayer is not reached in this way. It is difficult to carry on a one-sided conversation with an auditor who makes no reply, who does not even give us a sign that he hears or is at all interested in what one says. Prayer would languish and perish if God did not answer it. This he will not now do in an audible voice, nor always by such evident tokens that we can have no doubt that what he has done is in response to the cry of his children. Yet all who are in the habit of praying can bear witness to the fact that God hears prayer, and replies often in the most surprising and unmistakable way.

III. THE PRAYER THAT IS TO BE ANSWERED MUST BE SINCERE. Cain's sacrifice was rejected. The Pharisee's prayer could not reach heaven. We cannot pray to God effectively until we renounce sin and return to him. Then the prayer must be a real, inward, spiritual act. Such prayer is not valued by the correctness of its phraseology; much less is it estimated quantitatively by the time it occupies and the number of its words. The one essential quality is reality. The simple reason why many so-called prayers are not answered is that they are not really prayers at all. They do not come out of a worshipper's heart. Therefore they cannot reach the ears of God, and incline him to respond to them. If all such pretended prayers were left out of account there would be less scepticism and more glad confidence that God does hear prayer. —W. F. A.

Ver. 29.—*Uplifting the fallen.* Accepting that rendering of the verse which takes the reference to the cast-down as not applying to Job himself or his affairs, but to other people and their troubles, we have here a fine turn given to the description of the happy estate of the returned and restored penitent. He is not only full of gladness, and enjoying many blessings by himself; he turns to others in their need and uplifts them.

I. THE DUTY AND JOY OF UPLIFTING THE FALLEN. 1. *The duty.* We are by nature members of one family, because our descent from a common parentage makes us all brothers and sisters. But Christianity has strengthened the ties of nature. There is no Christian duty so obligatory as that of following our Lord in his greatest work—that of seeking and saving the lost. Whether it be sin or sorrow that has cast one of our brothers down, his very distress, apart from all questions of merit or attraction, calls upon us to aid him. (1) Now this aid must be practical. We must do what we can to lift the cast-down. (2) It must be encouraging. The helper is represented as crying, "Up!" A cheering word may go far to give courage and hope. We have to help people to help themselves. Depressing preaching does little good. There are plenty of things to discourage. People want hopeful encouragement. 2. *The joy.* This action of lifting up those who are cast down appears as part of the blessedness of the restored servant of God. It is not a heavy penance for the sinner; it is a happy occupation for the saint. It cannot but involve toil and pain, and often disappointment. Yet it is really a much happier work than self-indulgent pleasure-seeking. It contains the very joy of God, who is blessed in giving and loving.

II. THE EXPERIENCE WHICH ENABLES US TO LIFT UP THE FALLEN. The glorious and Christ-like work of saving the fallen is promised to a man who is himself restored. 1. *Experience of misery.* He who has been cast down knows what it is to be cast down. The lessons of adversity teach sympathy. Thus we may explain some of the mystery of sorrow. It is a school for the training of sympathy. Even the experience of sin may be turned to good in this way. It must always be best not to have fallen. Still, though original innocence cannot be recovered, God may mitigate the sad consequences of sin in the penitent by making him a helper to the tempted and the fallen, whose condition his own terrible experience enables him to understand. 2. *Experience of recovery.* While suffering with others we may sympathize with them, but we cannot do much to aid them. While ourselves living in sin we can only exert a baleful influence on others. Therefore the first step is to be ourselves restored to God and the life of Christian holiness. Then the joyous consciousness of redemption is an inspiration for seeking to bring to others the same privilege. Thus Christians can preach

the gospel with a force that no unfallen angel can command. The greatest argument for urging man to accept it is that what God has done for one, he can and will do for another. The greatest motive for sacrificing ourselves to save our brother-men is that Christ gave his life to save us.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Vers. 1—ch. xxiv. 25.—Job replies to Eliphaz in a speech of no great length, which, though it occupies two chapters, runs to only forty-two verses. He begins by justifying the vehemence of his complaints, first, on the ground of the severity of his sufferings (ver. 2), and secondly, on the ground of his conviction that, if God would bring him to an open trial before his tribunal, he would acquit him (vers. 3—12). By the way, he complains that God hides himself, and cannot be found (vers. 3, 8, 9). He then further complains that God is not to be bent from his purpose, which is set against Job (vers. 13—17). In ch. xxiv. he goes over ground already trodden, maintaining the general prosperity of the wicked, and their exemption from any special earthly punishment (vers. 2—24). He winds up, finally, with a challenge to his opponents to disprove the truth of what he has said (ver. 25).

Vers. 1, 2.—**Then Job answered and said, Even to-day is my complaint bitter;** *i.e.* even to-day, notwithstanding all that has been said by my opponents against my right to complain, I do complain, and as bitterly as ever. **And I justify my complaint on the following ground—my stroke is heavier than my groaning.** If I complain bitterly, I suffer even more bitterly (comp. ch. vi. 2).

Ver. 3.—**Oh that I knew where I might find him!** This is the cry of the desolate human soul, feeling its need of God, and yet not knowing how to approach him. God *seems* to be very far removed from us. He is in heaven, and we are on earth; nay, he is in the highest heaven, or outside it, walking on its circumference (ch. xxii. 14). How are we to approach near to him, so near as to be sure that he can hear us? How are we to "find" him? So, in all ages, has the human heart gone out to God, aspiring towards him, seeking after him, but, for the most part, baffled and disappointed. Job, like most other men in the olden times, though he has faith in God, though he serves him and prays to him, has yet the feeling that he is remote, distant, well-nigh inaccessible. It needed revelation to let man know that God is not far off, but very near to each one of us; that "in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts xvii. 28). **That I might come even to his seat!** Job's idea of bridging the distance between himself and God is that he should rise to the region where God is, not that God should condescend to come down to him. He wishes to "come to God's seat"—to that awful throne in the heaven of heavens, where God sitteth, surrounded by his hosts of angels, dealing out justice and judgment to mortal men (comp. Ps. ix. 4, 7; xi. 4; xlv. 6; Isa. vi. 1).

Ver. 4.—**I would order my cause before him.** Job has put away the feelings of shame and diffidence, which were predominant with him when he said, "How should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand" (ch. ix. 2, 3); and again, "How much less shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him? Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer; but I would make my supplication to my Judge" (ch. ix. 14, 15). He now wishes to contend and argue and reason. This is quite in accordance with our experience. Many are the moods of man—various and conflicting his desires! His mind never continues long in one stay. **And fill my mouth with arguments** (comp. Ps. xxxviii. 14, where our translators render the same word by "reproofs," but where "arguments" or "pleadings" would be more appropriate). The LXX. has there ἐλεγμοί, and in the present passage ἔλεγχοι. The word is forensic.

Ver. 5.—**I would know the words which he would answer me.** It would be a satisfaction to Job in his present mood to know exactly how God would answer him, what reply he would make to his "arguments." The tone of thought is too bold for a creature, and would certainly not be becoming in Christians. **And understand what he would say unto me.** Here we have another of the redundant second clauses, which merely echo the idea contained in the previous clause.

Ver. 6.—**Will he plead against me with his great power?** rather, *Would he contend against me in the greatness of his power?* (see the Revised Version). That is, "Would he crush me by mere strength and force? Would he use against me that overwhelm-

ing might which he possesses? No, Job answers, certainly not; but he would put strength in me; or, rather, *but he would give heed to me, he would pay attention to my cause* (comp. ch. iv. 20, *ad fin.*, where the same verb is used).

Ver. 7.—**There the righteous might dispute with him.** There, before his high tribunal (ver. 3), the upright man (יָשָׁר) might argue or reason with him, appealing from his justice to his mercy—from God the Judge to God the Saviour (Leathes), vindicating his integrity, acknowledging his transgressions, and pleading that they were sins of infirmity—and at last obtaining from God the acquittal anticipated in the second clause of the verse. In the absence of any revelation of an Advocate who will plead our cause before God for us, Job would seem to have been justified in expecting such a liberty of pleading his own cause as he here sets forth. **So should I be delivered for ever from my Judge.** The "Judge of all the earth" will certainly and necessarily "do right." Job's conscience testifies to his substantial integrity and uprightness (comp. 1 John iii. 21). He is, therefore, confident that, if he can once bring his cause to God's cognizance, he will obtain acquittal and deliverance.

Vers. 8, 9.—Here Job returns to the complaint of ver. 3. He cannot "find" God. God hides himself. It is in vain that he searches on every side. There is no manifestation, no open vision. Nothing, however, leads him to doubt God's existence, or even his presence where he is unperceived. "Job's conviction of God's absolute presence comes out most strongly when he feels that he cannot discern him" (Cook).

Ver. 8.—**Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; that is, "He is not there *to my perceptions.*"** I may believe it, but I have no sensible proof of it, and I cannot demonstrate it. **And backward, but I cannot perceive him.** In describing locality, the Hebrews, Arabs, and Orientals generally always imagined themselves to be looking eastward, facing the rising sun. Hence the same word is used for "in front," "forwards," and "the east;" for "behind," "backwards," and "the west;" for "the left hand" and "the north;" for "the right hand" and "the south."

Ver. 9.—**On the left hand, where he doth work**; literally, *in his workshop*. There is an ellipse after "workshop" of some phrase like "I look for him." **But I cannot behold him**; rather, *but I apprehend him not*—I cannot as it were, lay my hand upon him (LXX., οὐ κατέσχον). **He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him**; literally, *and I do not see him.*

Ver. 10.—**But he knoweth the way that I take**; or, *the way that is with me.* My inability to find God does not in any way interfere with his perfect knowledge of me. God knows both "the way of the righteous" (Ps. i. 6) "and "the way of the wicked," which "he turns upside down" (Ps. cxlvi. 9). He is "about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways" (Ps. cxxxix. 2). **When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold**; *i.e.* as gold from the furnace, I shall come forth purified, when my trial is over (comp. Ps. xii. 6; Isa. i. 25; Jer. vi. 29, 30; ix. 7, etc.). Job seems at last to have woke up to the conception that there is a purifying power in affliction.

Ver. 11.—**My foot hath held his steps**; rather, *hath held close to his steps*, or *his path*; i.e. I have followed in God's way, and kept as close to it as possible. In other words, **I have kept his way, and not declined** from it.

Ver. 12.—**Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips.** Professor Lee rightly observes that this declaration "takes it for granted that, at least, some precepts of God had been revealed before this time" ('Book of Job,' p. 370). There were "commandments" which Job recognized as having proceeded from God, and "words" which he looked upon as being the utterances of his mouth. This is strong evidence of a primeval revelation which, if not reduced to writing, had, at any rate, been handed down by tradition to Job's day. Gen. iii. 14—19 and ix. 1—7 may afford the true explanation of this difficulty. **I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary** food. This is scarcely strong enough. Job says, "*I have treasured up, taken to myself, and preserved* the words of his mouth," either "more than my necessary food" or "more than my own law." If the former rendering be preferred, there is no need of explanation; if the latter, we must regard "my own law" as meaning "the law of my own mind, my own will, the will of the natural man" (Cook).

Ver. 13.—**But he is in one mind, and who can turn him?** Once more we hear the voice of complaint. The happier tone of thought which extends from ver. 6 to ver. 12 grows out of a sanguine hope on Job's part that God will bring him before his tribunal, and judge his cause according to righteousness. Now he bethinks himself that hitherto God, notwithstanding his prayers, has refused to summon him to his judgment-seat, and begins to fear that there is no likelihood of his changing. "He is One," or, "in one." With him is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. i.

17). How is it likely that he will act in the future otherwise than he has acted in the past? What **his soul desireth, even that he doeth.** A somewhat harsh way of saying that God doeth that which seemeth him best—and which, therefore, is best. Job does not really suppose that God is actuated by caprice or favouritism.

Ver. 14.—**For he performeth** the thing that is **appointed for me**; *i.e.* he will assuredly accomplish whatever he has decreed for me. I cannot expect that he will blench or change. **And many such things are with him.** He has many other weapons in his armoury, many other woes with which he might afflict me.

Ver. 15.—**Therefore am I troubled at his presence.** The thought of these further afflictions troubles me, and makes me shrink from his unseen presence. I know not how soon he may lay a fresh burden upon me. **When I consider, I am afraid of him.** When I reflect on the many forms of suffering which I may still have to undergo, my fears increase, I tremble at the future.

Ver. 16.—**For God maketh my heart soft**; or, *faint*, as in Lev. xxvi. 36 and Deut. xx. 3. He takes away my courage, and leaves me a prey to terror. **And the Almighty troubleth me.** The verb used (the hiph. form of בהל) is a very strong one, and means "hath filled me with horror and consternation."

Ver. 17.—**Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.** Job complains of two things: (1) That he was not cut off (*i.e.* removed from earth) before the great darkness fell upon his life (comp. ch. iii. 11—13). (2) That he was not "covered," *i.e.* sheltered and protected, by the love and care of God when the dark days came.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Job to Eliphaz:* **1.** *The experience of a seeker after God.* I. GREAT SORROW. (Ver. 2.) Two wonders. 1. *An afflicted man a seeker after God.* Designed to recall men to God (ch. xxxvi. 8, 9; Isa. xix. 22; Jer. ii. 27; Hos. v. 15), temporal calamity is not always attended by so blessed a result. Unaccompanied by grace, it tends to harden rather than soften the human heart, to repel rather than attract the soul's confidence and love. Happily, however, in Job's case its natural tendencies were corrected. With greater urgency and vehemence than before, it impelled him to inquire after God (cf. 2 Chron. xv. 4; xxxiii. 12; Ps. xxxiv. 6; lxxvii. 2; cxix. 67; Hos vi. 1; Luke xv. 18). 2. *A seeker after God an afflicted man.* Strange that one who sought God so sincerely as Job did should have been subjected to such overwhelming tribulation. Yet the more triumphant waxed Job's faith, the heavier seemed to fall the pressure of his misery. Notwithstanding the lofty declarations of confidence in God which had fallen from his lips (ch. xiii. 15; xix. 25), his complaint still bade defiance, while his hand lay heavy upon his groaning (Delitzsch), refusing to let it go, because, of course, the cause of it was not removed. His physical disease was in no degree abated. The calumniations of his friends were aggravated, not ameliorated. The felt absence of God was become more intolerable than ever. Even the groaning which involuntarily escaped his lips was pronounced rebellion. But saints and seekers after God have no guarantee of exemption from trouble. Rather, trouble is to them as a refining fire. Hence the loftier their piety, the hotter may be made the furnace through which they walk. Nay, their afflictions may so abound, bodily pain, mental distress, spiritual desolation, that they are compelled to "groan, being burdened" (2 Cor. v. 4); but, like true saints and genuine seekers after God, they will neither complain too bitterly nor groan too heavily, but study to keep their complaint in subjection, and to make their groaning less than their suffering.

II. ARDENT LONGING. (Ver. 2.) 1. *A seeker after God at a loss to find him.* Considering that God desires (Acts xvii. 27) and commands men to seek him (Isa. lv. 6), and promises that they who seek shall find (Matt. vii. 7), it would almost seem as if such a thing should be impossible. But Job being witness, and David (Ps. xlii. 2), even a saint, losing his inward consciousness of God's presence and favour, may be unable to recover either. And if a saint, then much more a sinner, who has never yet met with God, may find it hard to reach his seat. It is, of course, certain that true seekers will ultimately find. Only the time of finding, for wise and holy purposes, may be delayed; sometimes to try the faith or increase the earnestness of the seeker, sometimes because of sin or wilful defect in the seeker, sometimes to make known to the seeker the unchallengeable sovereignty of God in discovering himself to men. 2. *A*

seeker after God always possessed of certain characteristics; as: (1) Knowledge. Like Job, he may be ignorant of where God's seat is; but he must know that God is, and has a seat. Like the Greeks who spoke to Andrew and Philip (John xii. 21), he may not understand how to reach the Saviour's presence; but he must be aware that a Saviour exists. The first step in seeking God or Christ is illumination. The minimum of knowledge for a seeker after God is more now than in the days of Job. God must be known as revealed in Christ. (2) Faith. Like Job, he must not simply know that God is and has a seat; he must believe that God is accessible to sinful men (Heb. xi. 6). Besides understanding where to find God, viz. anywhere, in Christ, seated on a throne of grace, we must apprehend the way to that throne to be continually open (2 Cor. v. 19; Heb. iv. 16; x. 22). Faith in this now constitutes an indispensable prerequisite for genuine seeking after God. (3) Desire. Like Job, and like the Greeks who were anxious to see Jesus, the seeker after God must be in earnest. Those whose longings after God are as intense as were David's (Ps. lxiii. 1; xlii. 2) cannot always obtain access to his presence; but it is certain they who have no such warm aspirations will be denied, though they seek.

III. HOLY BOLDNESS. (Vers. 4, 5.) The courage of the patriarch arose from three things. 1. *Well-arranged thoughts.* Coming into God's presence, and commencing to plead before God's throne, he would set forth his words in orderly array. This implied that Job had spent much time in communing with his heart. Thoughts seldom arrange themselves spontaneously or unconsciously, rather their arrangement requires deliberate and sometimes protracted mental effort. Intelligent disposition of the soul's ideas and emotions before pressing forward to heaven's throne is not only demanded by the ineffable majesty of him who sits upon the throne (ch. xxxvii. 19), but is eminently conducive to the spiritual fortitude of him who as a suppliant approaches the throne. Thoroughly prepared and well-arranged words never fail to impart confidence to a speaker, as inward disorder is almost sure to overwhelm him with outward confusion. 2. *Well-constructed arguments.* Job meant that he was able to adduce convincing proofs of his integrity. What these were is not stated, but that he alluded to the witness of his past life may be reasonably conjectured. The best evidence of piety is the testimony of the outer walk and conversation (Matt. vii. 20; John xv. 8; Gal. v. 22; 1 John iii. 10). Nor is any sign so assuring to the heart before God as the consciousness of inward sincerity when supported by the argument of outward propriety. And to this the believer may legitimately appeal in his pleadings before God, like St. Peter when he said to the risen Christ, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee" (John xxi. 17). 3. *Well-assured hope.* So confident is Job of having right upon his side, that he fears not to hear the decision of the Judge. In this Job was perhaps a little guilty of pride. The spirit here evinced is that of self-righteousness, rather than of trust in the mercy of God. Still, a child of God might now evince as great a confidence as Job without being open, like him, to the challenge of self-righteousness; might be able to anticipate the Judge's decision without alarm, not because of his own personal integrity, but because of the all-sufficient merit of Jesus Christ (cf. ch. xiii. 18, homiletics).

IV. SUBLIME CONFIDENCE. Of two things Job declares himself satisfied. 1. *God's mercy towards him.* (Ver. 6.) God would not confound him with the fulness of his strength, or terrify him with his majesty (ch. ix. 34, *q.v.*), but would mercifully strengthen him to plead his cause, or, according to a more literal translation, would set his heart upon him, *i.e.* would regard him with affectionate attention, not only giving him a fair hearing, but dispelling his apprehensions, and enabling him to present his case with lucidity and completeness. What Job anticipated, the believer in God is promised. God will not overawe with his majesty any suppliant who comes to his throne; but will regard him with tender love (Prov. xv. 8; Zech. xiii. 9; John iv. 23); will listen to his cries (2 Chron. vii. 15; Ps. xxxiv. 15; cxlv. 18); will even strengthen him with might by his Spirit in the inner man (Zech. xii. 10; Rom. viii. 26; Eph. ii. 18). 2. *His victory through God.* (Ver. 7.) The sincerely upright man, having an opportunity to plead before God, would be certain of ultimate triumph over all who should seek to condemn him; and so shall the Christian believer come off victorious, when he stands before God's throne, and be made more than a conqueror through him that loved us (Rom. viii. 33—39).

Learn: 1. The first step towards blessedness is taken by man when he becomes a

seeker after God. 2. A man may be getting nearer God, though all outward signs appear to proclaim the reverse. 3. The gospel has for ever rendered Job's prayer unnecessary. 4. If a man fails to find God, he must be seeking for him in the wrong quarter or the wrong way. 5. They who come to God's throne in earnest will find mercy to pardon, and grace to help in every time of need.

Ver. 3.—*A great question answered.* I. THE RECORDED QUESTION. "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" 1. *Necessary;* since man does not naturally understand either where or how to find God (Rom. i. 28; 1 Cor. i. 21; Eph. iv. 18). 2. *Important;* since only in the finding and knowing God lies the secret of true happiness (ch. xxii. 21) and the pathway to eternal life (John xvii. 3). 3. *Personal;* since no man can find God for his neighbour, but every individual for himself alone (Eccles. xi. 9; Rom. ii. 6; Gal. vi. 5). 4. *Urgent;* since the present is the only moment a soul can count upon for putting such a question (Prov. xxvii. 1; 2 Cor. vi. 2).

II. THE UNWRITTEN ANSWER. God is to be found: 1. *In the Person of Jesus Christ* (2 Cor. v. 19), as opposed to the temple of nature, which may speak of God (Ps. xix. 1; Rom. i. 20), but does not unveil his presence like the Incarnation. 2. *In the shrine of the human spirit* (John iv. 23, 24), as opposed to definite localities. For the truly spiritual worshipper every spot of ground on which he stands is consecrated. 3. *In the contrite heart* (Isa. lvii. 15), as opposed to the soul of the unbeliever.

Learn: 1. The necessity of earnestness in seeking God. 2. The certainty of finding God, if sought in faith.

Vers. 8—12.—*Job to Eliphaz:* 2. *A child of light walking in darkness.* I. THE CHILD OF LIGHT. That Job was entitled to be so described will appear from a consideration of: 1. *The creed he professed.* It is obvious that Job believed in: (1) The existence of God. He was not one of those fools who in their hearts say, "No God!" (Ps. xiv. 1). Throughout this, as throughout his previous discourses, the personality of God is assumed, and indeed is frequently referred to without being named. (2) The providence of God. As little was the patriarch one of those practical atheists to whom he himself had alluded (ch. xxi. 14). Eliphaz insinuated such a charge against the suffering saint whom he pretended to comfort. But Job implicitly repelled the imputation by recognizing that God's presence, if unseen, was still around him, and God's hand, though ever veiled, was always working. (3) The authority of God. Job recognized that the supreme Lawgiver for man was this invisible but omnipresent and continually working Deity, the commandment of whose lip and the word of whose mouth was the perpetually and universally binding rule of life and obedience, rather than the inward resolves, purposes, determinations of the individual, as is commonly but mistakenly supposed by the natural heart (ch. xxi. 15; Exod. v. 2; Jer. xviii. 12; Luke xix. 14). (4) The omniscience of God. Job believed not simply that God exercised a general superintendence over mundane affairs, but that his inspection of the world embraced a knowledge of particulars. Like Hagar in the wilderness, he could say, "Thou God seest me!" (Gen. xvi. 13). Like David, he could sing, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me" (Ps. xl. 17). Like Jeremiah, he could pray, "Lord, thou knowest all their counsel against me" (xviii. 23). Like Peter, he could protest, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (John xxi. 17). Job regarded his whole life as lying continually beneath the eye of God: "He knoweth the way that is with me." So God's eyes are always upon the ways of man (ch. xxxiv. 21), and in particular of the righteous (Ps. i. 6). It is the part of a good man to walk before God (Gen. xvii. 1), and to rejoice that he can say, "All my ways are before thee" (Ps. cxix. 168). 2. *The character he maintained.* Besides being an intellectual believer in God, Job was: (1) An earnest seeker after God. Not content with knowing that God's presence filled the universe around him, and that God's hand was constantly working beside him in the mysterious phenomena of nature and providence (ch. ix. 11), Job desired a visible manifestation of and a personal acquaintance with this unseen Deity. Many believe in God's existence, character, and work who never seek to know God himself, or make the slightest effort to secure his favour. Such a visible manifestation of God as Job craved, and afterwards obtained (ch. xxxviii. 1), has been vouchsafed to men in Christ, the Image of the invisible God (2 Cor. iv.

4; Col. i. 15; Heb. i. 3), in whom alone, accordingly, God can now be found. (2) A faithful servant of God. Recognizing his allegiance to God, Job not only used means to acquaint himself with God's will, as all saints should do, but accepted that will as the rule and pattern of his life: (*a*) cheerfully, making God's way his way, like the Messianic Sufferer (Ps. xl. 7, 8), and like Christ (John vi. 38); (*b*) perpetually, adhering to God's commandment always (Ps. cxix. 44), rendering obedience not alone to precepts which accorded with his inclination, but to every word that proceeded from God's mouth (Ps. cxix. 88); (*c*) firmly, holding fast to God's steps by his foot, resisting all attempts to cause him to decline or turn aside (Ps. xliv. 18; cxix. 31); (*d*) appreciatingly, esteeming the words of God's mouth more than his necessary food (Authorized Version), like David (Ps. xix. 10; cxix. 72), Jeremiah (xv. 16), Daniel (vi. 5, 10), Mary (Luke x. 39—42), and New Testament believers generally (1 Pet. ii. 2); according to another translation, (*e*) carefully, treasuring up God's Word in his breast, like the Hebrew psalmist (Ps. cxix. 11); and (*f*) sacrificingly, preferring God's commandments to the inclinations, resolves, and purposes of his own heart, when at any time these came into collision, like St. Paul (Rom. vii. 22);—all which proclaimed Job a genuinely pious man.

II. THE CHILD OF LIGHT IN DARKNESS. The passage exhibits Job in three different situations. 1. *Encompassed by the darkness.* The darkness alluded to not the cloud of outward pain and distress by which Job was overshadowed, but the inward mental and spiritual obscuration which these occasioned—the horrible eclipse which his faith suffered, the terrible revulsion of unrequited love which his soul experienced. A genuine believer and lover of God, who was conscious in his inmost soul of sincerity, who with admirable fortitude had shunned every evil way, and who with unrelaxing tenacity had adhered to the path of truth and right, preferring on every occasion God's will to his own, he had yet lost all sense of the Divine favour as well as all consciousness of the Divine presence. Though he earnestly longed to meet and made frantic efforts to obtain an interview with God, it was always in vain. "Behold, I go eastward, but he is not there; and westward, but I perceive him not. Northwards where he worketh, but I behold him not; he turneth aside southwards, and I see him not." Job meant that he looked in all directions for some visible manifestation of God before which he might come and plead his cause. Job's spiritual desolation and fruitless longing after God are not without their counterparts in the experiences of Old Testament saints and New Testament believers (Isa. l. 10; John xx. 14), who sometimes, like David on account of sin (Ps. xxx. 7), or like Ethan through calamity (Ps. lxxxix. 46), or like Mary through bereavement (John xx. 14), or like the travellers to Emmaus through spiritual dejection (Luke xxiv. 17), are altogether unable to realize the comfortable shining of God's favour and Christ's love upon their souls. Job's inward condition had its highest exemplification in the soul-desertion of Christ upon the cross. 2. *Supported in the darkness.* As God did not leave Christ entirely without consolations in the hour of his great sorrow, so neither does he leave any of his people (Isa. xliii. 2; Heb. xiii. 5). Job was upheld in the gloom by three considerations. (1) The knowledge of God's presence. He could not see God, but he was perfectly aware that God could see him. Though God seemed far removed, Job knew that he was close at hand—if a veiled presence, yet still a presence. So Christ believed his Father to be nigh though his face was hid. And faith should teach saints to believe in the continual encompassing of God's gracious presence, even when all inward sense of that presence has departed from the soul. (2) The consciousness of personal integrity. David could not have enjoyed this when he lost God's favour in consequence of sinning with Bathsheba. It is a terrible aggravation to the soul's distress to know that through personal transgression one has relapsed into the gloom. On the other hand, the calm clear persuasion that one's conduct has been such as not only conscience but God commends, must prove a rock of adamant beneath the fainting spirit. (3) The discernment of God's purpose in affliction. This seemingly a new discovery to the patriarch. Formerly inclined to view his misfortunes as a token of Divine anger, he now regards them as sent for his trial, as designed to test his spiritual character as fire is employed to assay gold. So God did tempt Abraham (Gen. xxii. 1), and so believers are subjected to manifold temptations for "the trial" of their faith (1 Pet. i. 7). That saints are so tried proves them to be saints. This thought, conjoined with the gracious purpose

aimed at in affliction, makes it possible for God's people to glory in tribulations (Rom. v. 3; 1 Pet. i. 6; Jas. i. 12). 3. *Emerging from the darkness.* Indirectly alluded to, but contemplated as certain. (1) At what time? "When he hath tried me," when the process of assaying has been completed, but not till then. Trouble and adversity are not removed from a child of God till they have done their work in him (Rom. v. 3; Heb. xii. 11) as well as for him (2 Cor. iv. 17). But the great Refiner never keeps a soul in the furnace longer than is needful to accomplish its purification and salvation (Mal. iii. 3). (2) In what manner? "As gold;" *i.e.* true as gold and shining like gold. Sincere saints are never injured by affliction, as pure gold is never hurt by the refiner's pot. Heat only evinces the genuine quality of precious metal, and the fires of adversity only manifest the saint's integrity of character. Adulterated metal is always harmed by the process of assaying, and untrue disciples are without fail detected in times of persecution and seasons of affliction (Matt. xxiv. 12). But the sufferings of this present life only serve to refine and purify, to burnish and beautify, the faithful disciple and humble believer. (3) With what result? That he no longer walks in darkness, but in the light of God's countenance, in the enjoyment of his friendship and favour for evermore.

Learn: 1. It is better to be a child of light walking in darkness than a child of darkness walking in light, *i.e.* in the sparks of his own kindling. 2. Though God's way is sometimes hid from a saint, the saint's way is never hid from God. 3. It is a special privilege which the good man enjoys that he is never afflicted but with an eye to his improvement. 4. The severest season of trial through which a follower of God may be called to pass is certain to have an end. 5. The sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us. 6. The only way to happiness for man is the way of God. 7. It is a sure mark of wisdom to prefer God's commandment to the wishes or resolves of self.

Vers. 13—17.—*Job to Eliphaz:* 3. *A meditation on the Divine Being.* I. LOFTY THOUGHTS CONCERNING GOD. 1. *The unity of the Divine nature.* "For he is in one mind;" literally, "for he is in one" (ver. 13). The interpretation which regards this as an allusion to the absolute majesty and undivided essence of the Deity, as in the sublime monotheistic confession of Israel (Deut. vi. 4), though not accepted by all expositors, is yet pronounced by most to be perfectly admissible. How far Job had attained to a perception of the unique personality of the Godhead, as containing more hypostases (persons) than one, may be a subject of controversial discussion. But an utterance like the present seems to mark off Job by a wide gulf from ancient polytheistic idolaters. Job, his three friends, and doubtless many more besides, were monotheists, who held by the grand doctrine of the unity of God, which had descended to them in the line of primitive tradition, and which was subsequently republished to Israel from the summit of Mount Sinai. Nay, such passages as those which speak about a Daysman (ch. x. 33), a heavenly Witness (ch. xvi. 19—21), and a Kinsman Redeemer (ch. xix. 25), seem to intimate that Job at least, in his ecstatic moments, had caught a glimpse of the doctrine of a plurality of Persons in the Godhead, just as throughout the Old Testament generally the same doctrine is found lying in embryo, though not fully or distinctly revealed (cf. Gen. i. 1—3; Ps. ii. 7; xxxiii. 6; cx. 1). 2. *The immutability of the Divine purpose.* "But he is in one," *i.e.* one purpose or determination, *e.g.* towards Job. Hence adds the patriarch, "Who can turn him?" (ver. 13), meaning, nothing could deflect him from his fixed resolution to treat Job as a criminal. Dropping out of view the misconception which gave tone and colour to all Job's representations of the Divine Being, the truth which remains, that the supreme God is unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, and therefore invariable and unalterable in his decrees and purposes, is in accordance not only with the teachings of Scripture (Numb. xxiii. 19; 1 Sam. xv. 29; Ps. cii. 27; Prov. xix. 21; Eccles. iii. 14; Mal. iii. 6; Acts xv. 18), but with the dictates of reason. A Being not absolutely perfect in himself cannot be Divine. But a Being in himself absolutely perfect cannot be affected by anything from without or within so as to render him either less or more perfect than he is. Hence absolutely and in himself he must be "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." If upon any of his dispensations towards the creature changes seem to pass, these changes, having been fixed and deter-

mined from the beginning, are in no degree inconsistent with his immutability. Whatever further alteration appears to surround his decrees is the result of change or variability in the creature. 3. *The irresistibility of the Divine power.* "And *what* his soul desireth, even *that* he doeth;" literally, "And his soul desireth, and he doeth" (ver. 13). Not only does the Supreme Intelligence act in accordance with a plan, but he has power adequate to carry into complete realization every item and detail of that plan. Nay, with such ease does he accomplish his purposes, his resources being unlimited, that he has simply to speak and it is done, to command and it standeth fast (Ps. xxxiii. 9), or, as here represented, to form a wish and proceed to execute it (cf. Ps. cxv. 3; Isa. xlvi. 10, 11; Jer. xxxii. 17, 27; Dan. iv. 25; Eph. i. 11), without apprehension of defeat (ch. ix. 12; xi. 10; xli. 10, 11; 2 Chron. xx. 6; Isa. xliii. 13); or failure (ch. xlii. 2; Gen. xviii. 14; Luke i. 37; Eph. iii. 20). 4. *The particularity of the Divine decrees.* "For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me" (ver. 14). What the Divine mind had preappointed as Job's portion, the Divine hand was engaged in carrying out. The plan of the universe is one that provides for attention to individuals. Nothing is too vast for infinite wisdom and power to comprehend or execute; nothing too mean and insignificant for the Divine mind to notice, or the Divine hand to govern. The falling of a sparrow equally with the dissolution of an empire has a place in the programme of the world which is prearranged by God. The portion of the feeblest saint on earth is as truly prepared for him as is the place that shall be filled by a nation or a race. 5. *The universality of the Divine government.* "And many such things are with him." Possibly Job meant that God had many more applications and calamities of a like description wherewith to torture him; but the interpretation is not wrong which understands Job to say that his case was not exceptional, that his sufferings formed part of a great plan in which others besides himself were embraced; that, in fact, the supreme Ruler was exercising over mankind at large the same sort of irresistible sovereignty as over him, Job. And certainly the thought should in some degree mitigate the stroke of affliction when it falls on us, that no strange thing has happened to us, but only such as is common to men (1 Pet. iv. 12; v. 9).

II. MINGLED FEELINGS TOWARDS GOD. 1. *A sense of awe.* "Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him" (ver. 15). If the thought of an all-powerful, irresistibly and universally decreeing God arrayed against Job possessed him with inward fear and confusion, terror and dismay, much more should such emotions fill the minds of men who are as yet in their natural condition. And though in the case of such as have made peace with God there is no occasion for inward trepidation, slavish terror, or paralyzing fear, yet even they must find it difficult to contemplate the Divine character as above depicted without a consciousness of awe, without a feeling of profound veneration. So David remembered God, and was troubled (Ps. lxxvii. 3). Christ's followers, however, have no need to be troubled by thoughts of either the Divine character or presence (John xiv. 1). "Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John iv. 18). And we have received not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15). 2. *A consciousness of weakness.* "For God maketh my heart soft" (ver. 16), *i.e.* deprives it of strength, makes it faint and feeble (Deut. xx. 3; Isa. vii. 4; Jer. li. 46). The effect produced on Job by a contemplation of the Divine character as an all-wise, irresistibly powerful, moral Governor, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will, is not infrequently experienced by serious minds. Nothing impresses man with a conviction of his feebleness like a vivid realization of the power and wisdom of God as displayed in the material universe (Ps. viii. 5, 6); nothing affords a glimpse into his spiritual worthlessness and insufficiency like a luminous presentation before his soul's eye of the moral majesty of God (Isa. vi. 5; Luke v. 8; Rev. i. 17). Indeed, the human heart never either breaks or becomes dejected, discerns its weakness or realizes its insufficiency, until it comes in contact with God, *e.g.* Moses (Exod. iv. 10); Isaiah (vi. 5); Job (ch. xlii. 6). 3. *A feeling of perplexity.* As understood by our translators, Job (ver. 17) expresses amazement that God had not cut him off "before the darkness" of affliction had come upon him; *i.e.* either that God had kept him alive solely for the purpose of inflicting on him such mysterious suffering as he then endured (cf. ch. iii. 10), or that God had not removed him while at the height

of prosperity, and in visible enjoyment of the Divine favour. So good people are often puzzled to understand why, in the providence of God, they should have been reserved for this or that particular calamity; and why, being what they are, sincere and humble followers of God, they should be treated with as much severity as if they were his foes. But this, of course, results from imperfect knowledge of the special design and gracious benefits of affliction. 4. *A deficiency of faith.* Otherwise interpreted, the language of Job (ver. 17) asserts that what confounds him is not the external darkness covering his face, surrounding him on every side, and threatening to engulf him, but the inward thought that God is against him. And just here Job evinces a lack of genuine trust, or spiritual confidence, in God. Had Job been as honest towards God as he was just towards himself, had he given God as full credit for sincerity as he claimed for himself, he would never have accused God of dealing with him as an enemy, but, rather than impeach God's immutable love towards his faithful followers, would have sought another solution for the mystery of his sufferings.

Learn: 1. The proper study of mankind is God. 2. The immutability of God is as full of comfort to God's people as it is of terror to God's adversaries. 3. When God's purposes have been revealed, whether in providence or in grace, they should not be resisted, but received with meekness and submission. 4. Only one Being in the universe, viz. God, can do what his soul desireth; every other is dependent upon God's will. 5. No man can be truly said to be the architect of his own future, since every man's lot is assigned him by God. 6. When a saint is afraid of God's presence, he has either fallen into sin, like Adam (Gen. iii. 10) and like David (Ps. xxx. 7), or has misconstrued the character of that appearance, like the apostles (John vi. 19). 7. The breaking or the bruising of a sinner's heart is a work for which only God is competent. 8. There are worse calamities than death to a good man; *e.g.* the loss, or supposed loss, of the Divine favour. 9. Whatever befalls a child of God on earth, he should never part with faith in his heavenly Father's love.

Ver. 13.—*The unchanging God.* "He is in one mind" with regard to—

I. THE PLAN OF THE UNIVERSE. 1. There is such a plan. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts xv. 18; Eph. i. 11). 2. This plan is so perfect that it never requires subsequent modification (ch. xxxvi. 4; xxxvii. 16; Ps. civ. 24; Prov. iii. 19; Isa. xl. 13). 3. This plan is efficiently carried out in its minutest detail (Numb. xi. 23; 2 Chron. xx. 6; Job xlii. 2; Ps. xxxiii. 9; Isa. xiv. 24).

II. THE SIN OF MAN. 1. That it is an abomination in his sight (Deut. xxv. 16; Ps. v. 4; Prov. xv. 9; Jer. xliv. 4; Zech. viii. 17; Luke xvi. 15). 2. That it is infinitely dangerous to man (Numb. xvi. 38; Deut. xxix. 18; ch. v. 2; Prov. i. 31; Eph. v. 6).

III. THE SCHEME OF SALVATION. "There is none other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). From the Fall downwards, the gospel of the grace of God has been substantially the same—salvation. 1. In antediluvian times, through faith in the woman's Seed (Gen. iii. 15; iv. 4). 2. In patriarchal times, through faith in Abraham's promised Child (Gen. xii. 3; xv. 6). 3. In Mosaic times, through faith in the sacrificial Lamb, of which the Levitical offerings were the shadows and the types (Heb. ix. 8—10; x. 3). 4. In the times of the monarchy, through faith in David's Son (2 Sam. vii. 15). 5. In the times of Isaiah, through faith in the suffering Servant of Jehovah (Isa. liii. 1). 6. In the fulness of the times, through faith in him who was the woman's Seed, Abraham's Descendant, David's Son, the suffering Servant of Jehovah, and the world's Paschal Lamb, all in one.

IV. THE PURPOSE OF AFFLICTION. Ever since God's mercy came to this fallen world, and that was immediately upon Adam's transgression, the design aimed at in life's discipline has been not to punish man, but to convert and save, to purify and perfect him (Gen. iii. 23; Deut. viii. 5; ch. v. 17; Ps. xciv. 12; Ezek. xx. 37; John xv. 2; Acts xiv. 22; Rom. v. 3; 1 Cor. xi. 32; Heb. xii. 7).

V. THE DESTINY OF HIS PEOPLE. Though not as clearly understood or revealed in pre-Christian times as now under the gospel dispensation, it was still the same "better country, even an heavenly," to which saints in all ages have looked forward. Cf. Abraham (Heb. xi. 10), David (Ps. xvii. 15), Paul (Phil. i. 23; 2 Tim. iv. 8).

CONCLUSION. "Who can turn him?" 1. Consolation to the saint. 2. Condemnation to the wicked.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1—ch. xxiv. 25.—*Struggles of faith with doubt.* To this long and severe accusation of Eliphaz the sufferer returns no reply. He comes back to the wish he has already expressed more than once, that God will appear as Witness and Judge of his innocence, and so put an end to this long embroilment (see ch. ix. and xiii.). He is distressed by the doubt that God has withdrawn himself from him, and left him to drain the cup of suffering to the dregs. And, again, many examples occur to him of wicked men who lived in happiness to a good old age, even to death; and he dwells on these pictures with a kind of pleasure, thinking to establish his position: the incomprehensibility of the Divine government.—J.

Vers. 1—17.—*Longing for the appearance of the delivering and justifying God.* I. EXCLAMATION. (Vers. 2—5.) So bitter is his complaint, "his hand is heavy upon his groaning," *i.e.* he must force groan after groan out of himself. Oh that he knew where to find the judgment-seat of God, and that he might have the opportunity of pleading his cause! (vers. 3—5). He possesses still "faith and a good conscience," those best jewels of a Christian (1 Tim. i. 5), and can think of appearing before God, not with terror, but with confidence. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence with God" (1 John iii. 21).

II. DOUBT (vers. 6—9) of the possibility of this intervention of God on his behalf. He timidly thinks of the overwhelming effect of God's majesty upon him (comp. ch. ix. 34; xiii. 21). But here, relying on the consciousness of innocence, he casts the doubt away. "Would he contend with me in his omnipotence? No; he would only attend to me" (ver. 6). It would be seen that it is a righteous man who enters into judgment with him, and Job would escape his Judge (ver. 7). But then this cheerful expectation is checked by the thought that God is nowhere to be found—neither east nor west, north nor south (vers. 8, 9), although present in all quarters (Ps. cxxxix. 8—10). Without the definite revelation of the gospel, we may readily lose ourselves in a vague and aimless pantheism. God is everywhere, yet nowhere; present in all things for the intellect, found in none by the heart. It is the doctrine of the Mediator, of the Man Christ Jesus, which resolves this contradiction. God must meet us in the form of man, otherwise he is but an abstraction.

III. REASON OF GOD'S WITHDRAWAL. (Vers. 10—13.) According to Job, this is, that although God knows his innocence, he will not depart from his resolve not to be found of him. Vers. 10—12 contain strong assertions of his innocence. God knows Job's wonted way or manner of life; and, if proved, he would come out like gold from the furnace. His foot has kept firmly to God's step, God's way he has observed, and has not turned aside, nor departed from the commandment of his lips. "More than my own law I kept the words of his mouth," *i.e.* more than the dictates of pleasure or self-will (ver. 12). "But he remains one, and who will turn him" from his design (comp. Ps. xxxiii. 9; Numb. xxiii. 19; 1 Sam. xv. 29)?

IV. AWE AND HUMILITY IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. (Vers. 14—17.) God will fulfil Job's destiny, like that of many others (ver. 14). The thought of this unfathomable counsel of God through which Job must suffer fills him with fearfulness and amazement (ver. 15). It is God himself, not the mere sufferings, who has unnerved Job and overthrown him (ver. 16). It is not the darkness of his trouble (ch. xxii. 11) nor his own hideous form (ch. xix. 13—15) which have stupefied him. No, it is God alone who is the cause of this stupor, who is behind these sufferings with his incomprehensible counsels.

Here, again, we see how deep is faith in the heart of Job, how inextinguishable the longing and the need for communion with God, which is life to him, and more than life! He can bear pain, he can dispense, if need be, with human sympathy; but he cannot bear the absence of God! As the plant in the cellar, so the faithful soul ever turns and struggles towards the light; and the only Light of the soul is God!—J.

Vers. 3—13.—*The true support under deferred judgment.* In the bitterness of his complaint and the heaviness of his stroke, Job makes known his desire to appeal directly to God. In the impossibility of this his faith is more and more severely tested; but he reposes in an assurance that the Divine eye is upon him, and he is confident of a just and even merciful sentence. So does conscious integrity uphold the tried and suffering believer, over whom for the present the shadows of suspicion gather, although the sufferer is tried by deferred judgment.

I. THE DEMAND FOR A PATIENT HEARING. Only the consciously upright would desire to plead with his judge. The self-accused tries to hide from the keen eye of detection and exposure; but he who knows himself to be unjustly accused may well desire to appear before a righteous tribunal. It is a high testimony to Job's character that he makes demand to be tried by One who cannot err (vers. 3—7). But his longing is not allayed. A further test is applied to his character. For the present, at least, judgment is denied him.

II. JUDGMENT WITHHELD, A FURTHER TRIAL. To the unjustly condemned no severer testing could be given than the withholding of the desired judgment. Job's hope is in God; but God is hidden. If he attempts to "go forward," behold "he is not there." If "backward," he "cannot perceive him." Turning to the right hand or to the left, it is the same. God, his Friend, is hidden. His only refuge is closed. How severely is faith tried and patience put to the proof by the hiding of God! The struggle is a spiritual one. The soul is cast upon the unseen. It is thrown back upon its integrity and upon its power to wait. It is the supreme test of faith. It precedes the dawn of the day of vindication, of judgment and deliverance. It is a further weight upon the already tried heart of the patriarch. To an afflicted spirit is added a suffering body, and for the present the cruel accusations of would-be friends, who mistake the discipline of God for his judgment against sin.

III. IT IS HERE THAT JOB'S FAITH IN THE DIVINE JUSTICE SHINES OUT WITH CLEARNESS. He knows God would not take advantage of his "great power" to plead that against him or to crush him with it. Nay, rather he would "put strength" in the poor suppliant. He would compassionate the oppressed, and concede to him. So Job comforts himself in the quiet repose upon the justice of the Divine decisions. The fruits of early obedience and faith are now gathered. He who sows in his own heart the seeds of Divine truth in earlier days, prepares for himself a harvest of consolation in the days of trial and adversity. Job is proving the blessedness of the man whose ways please the Lord.

IV. ALL THIS IS BASED UPON JOB'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF PERSONAL INTEGRITY. With confidence he rebuts the accusations of his accusing friends. He rejoices in the assurance of the Divine cognizance of his doings: "He knoweth the way that I take." Happy the man who can appeal with confidence to the searching of the Divine eye! Job may have had cause sufficient to be abased before God, but he is conscious of innocence of the charges preferred by his friends. Thus is falsely accused innocence sustained when its judgment is deferred. And Job appears a bright example of the comfort derived in affliction from faith in God and consciousness of untarnished integrity.—R. G.

Vers. 14—17.—*The humbled and overwhelmed sufferer.* The position of Job is one of confusion and unexplained mystery. He is in the hands of the Almighty. His punishment, as some affirm it to be, is very heavy. It at times seems to be greater than he can bear. Yet he is uncondemned within. He holds fast to his integrity. Like his friends, he interprets sufferings into punishments for sin. Yet he is not conscious of sin, certainly not of sin to such a degree as to merit such heavy judgment. He is confounded. He can but yield. He believes in the Divine justice, although his faith in it is tried by the conflicting convictions of his mind and his inability to interpret the Divine ways. That his own righteousness will shine out ultimately he is persuaded. "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." In the mean while he is overpowered. The struggle is severe; the strain upon his faith is very great. It is the uninterpreted mystery, the apparent confliction of the Divine dealings, that bows Job to the earth. He is troubled at the Divine presence; when he thinks of God he is afraid, and his heart is dejected. This picture of the humbled, overwhelmed servant of God holding fast his faith in the consciousness of integrity, declares the true causes of the support which Job experienced

in his overwhelming afflictions to be (1) *a consciousness of integrity*; (2) *faith in the Divine Name*; (3) *patient anticipation of final vindication.*

I. Without THE ASSURANCE OF PERSONAL INTEGRITY Job could not be free from the sorrows which come of condemnation. The testimony of conscience to the wrongness and disobedience of life is the keenest and most penetrative of afflictions. It reaches to the very core of the spirit. The utmost sensibility of the soul is aroused. No outward calm can allay this inner agitation. But if there is peace within; if the soul is not at war with itself; if there is the inestimable consciousness of personal freedom from condemnation, the soul may writhe in its pain, but it is upheld by the assurance that the affliction comes not weighted with the burden of retribution.

II. It is through this freedom from self-reproach and self-condemnation alone that TRUE FAITH IN GOD can be sustained. Job may be overwhelmed at the thought of God, but he lacks not faith in him; and there is no sense of buried wrong weakening his trust, or impairing the comfort that comes from a belief in the deep, if hidden, Divine approval.

III. And it is this which supports him in THE HOPE OF A FINAL VINDICATION. The unjustly condemned may wait. Trouble may overshadow him, he may be heavily burdened, his heart may quake and fear, but he knows he shall at last rise superior to all aspersions of evil-doing. Herein lies the secret of a sustaining peace in the midst of the severest of earth's trials; this is the true ground of hope, this the encouragement to sustaining faith.—R. G.

Ver. 2.—*The bitter complaint.* Job's comforters have failed. Their many words have not lightened his troubles. On the contrary, they have aggravated them. To external disaster has been added cruel misunderstanding and false accusation. Of all this Job naturally complains most bitterly. Many troubles are softened with time. It is not so with his. The same melancholy despondency, the same cry of agony, the same grievous complaining, are still with him.

I. IT IS NATURAL TO GIVE EXPRESSION TO GRIEF. In the East this is done with great demonstration, and even ostentation. Any extravagance is foolish; self-restraint is certainly more manly than a wild abandonment to sorrow. Yet it is neither necessary nor desirable to suppress all signs of feeling. God, who has made the fountain of tears, cannot require it to be always sealed. There is a relief in the natural expression of sorrow. To hide it in the bosom is to injure the soul. Extreme reserve and self-restraint may lead to insanity. We are more likely to think unjust thoughts of God when we brood over our wrongs in secret than when we venture to give an external expression to them.

II. THE GREATEST GRIEF EXCEEDS EXPRESSION. Job feels that this is the case with his sorrow. Bitter as his complaint is, his stroke is heavier than his groaning. We are tempted to exaggerate the smaller troubles of life; but we cannot find adequate expression for the greater ones. They who have never suffered from those troubles cannot understand how keenly they are felt. It is, therefore, unjust to judge of the complaining spirit of other men, as the three friends did of Job's. On the other hand, inexpressible grief is perfectly understood by God. It is no drawback to his sympathy that men cannot give full expression to their feelings, because he reads the heart.

III. THE BITTER COMPLAINT OF GRIEF SHOULD LEAD TO PRAYER. This is the case with Job; and after one brief utterance of his burdened soul, the suffering man turns at once to God (see ver. 2). Then he must do more than give expression to grief. While God listens patiently to the complaints of his suffering children, it is not a worthy thing on their part only to burden him with those complaints. Submission, obedience, and trust should have a part in the utterance to God.

IV. NO HUMAN GRIEF CAN EQUAL THAT OF CHRIST'S SORROWS. Job's sufferings seemed to be unique. But they were fearfully surpassed by what Christ endured. To know that some one has suffered more is not to lighten the present sufferer's load. On the contrary, this fact only makes the world look the darker and the more miserable. But there are characteristics of Christ's sufferings that should help other sufferers. He shows us how to bear suffering. More than that, his suffering brings healing to others. "With his stripes we are healed" (Isa. liii. 5). Thus the sufferer may look for saving deliverance from his own trouble to the Christ who suffered for him.—W. F. A.

Ver. 3.—*The search for God.* I. ITS SOURCE. Job is prompted to seek God by his terrible troubles. The false accusations make him the more anxious to find the just Judge, who can clear up the dreadful misunderstandings and vindicate his injured cause. Thus the innocent man in trouble needs God. Still more does the guilty man; for no one can deliver from sin but he against whom one has sinned. Although it is most evident that many who thus need God are not actively seeking for him, yet, even if held back by fear or distracted by worldliness, all men have somewhere in the depths of their hearts the instinct of hunger for God. We need God, and we can have no rest till we find him.

II. ITS HOPE. Job believes that, if only he can find God and come to his seat, justice will be done, and right will be apparent; for Job is only thinking of vindication. No doubt that result will follow. But others also enter into the great human hope for God. If he were only to vindicate the righteous, the great multitude of men could hope for little from him. But the great Judge who does this is the compassionate Father, who has pity on his children's needs apart from their deserts. Thus the hope turns to the mercy of God for deliverance and blessing. Still, it is not wise to separate these two forms of the hope. God can only bless by leading us to righteousness; and it is really for our good that he is just. We need God not only that he may judge the righteous cause, but also that he may make the sinner righteous.

III. ITS DIFFICULTY. Job expresses a deep, heartfelt desire with great anxiety. He has not yet found God. Others have been in the same condition—longing for God, yet finding him not. Where is the difficulty? 1. *God is a Spirit.* If we try to find God by earthly means we must fail. He is not hidden among the mountains or above the clouds. He is simply invisible by nature. We must look for him in spiritual ways. 2. *We are sinful.* Nothing so blinds us to God as sin. This first of all banishes us to a great distance from God, and then makes darkness about our way back. 3. *Life is often perplexing and sorrowful.* Job had lost the vision of God in his sorrow, rather than through sin. So had Christ on the cross when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Great grief seems to blot out the heavens and leave us in desolation.

IV. ITS REWARD. Job did find God at last (ch. xlii. 5). God has promised that they who seek him earnestly shall find him (Prov. viii. 17), and Christ that if men seek they shall find (Matt. vii. 7). 1. *God reveals himself to faith.* We believe in order that we may see, trust in order that we may know. This is true of all knowledge of persons. 2. *God is seen in Christ.* Philip expressed the soul's desire for God when he said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us;" and then Christ declared where the revelation of God was to be seen: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 8, 9). 3. *The full vision of God is dependent on purity of heart.* Some knowledge of God can be had without this; but we cannot see him as he is till we are like him (Matt. v. 8).—W. F. A.

Vers. 8, 9.—*The unseen God.* Job enlarges on the idea of his search for God and the efforts that he has vainly made to find him. God is still invisible; searching has not found him.

I. THE PHYSICAL IMPOSSIBILITY OF SEEING GOD. There is more to be said for modern agnosticism than for eighteenth-century deism. Pure rationalism will not find God. Physical science cannot discover him. The animal is dissected, the metal is melted in the crucible, but the analysis reveals not Divinity. We sweep the heavens with the telescope, and can see no Deity enthroned above the stars. But we are very foolish if we expect to find God in any of these ways. He is neither seen by the bodily eye nor discovered by the scientific faculty. Science, indeed, points to causation, and reveals order and thought; but she does not say how these things came to be. Natural theology prepares the way for the revelation of God; or, if it may be said that it is a revelation of God, still this comes only in such a large and confusing idea that we cannot find in it what we need—the revelation of our Father in heaven.

II. THE MORAL DIFFICULTY OF SEEING GOD. Job's search was not in regions of science. He looked abroad on the great world, and he probed into the deep musings of his own heart, but not as a philosopher seeking for a scientific explanation of the universe. It was his deep distress that drove him to God. He missed God in life, in

the providential control of human affairs. It is not always easy to see God in this strangely confused human world, where so many things go wrong, and where so little seems to be done to keep them right. In his perplexity and distress man cries out, "Where is God? If there is indeed a God, why does he not declare himself? why does he not put forth his hand and rectify the world that so greatly needs him?" Whatever may be the theoretical scepticism that gathers round problems of science and philosophy, the moral doubt that springs from the experience of injustice and misery is much more keenly felt.

III. THE SPIRITUAL CAPACITY TO SEE GOD. We cannot find him by means of our philosophy; we miss him in the dark struggles of man's world of action and suffering. But why? Because we are looking for him in wrong directions. The true vision of God is only to be seen by means of spiritual fellowship with him. Meanwhile, although this is hard to obtain, we may console ourselves with the knowledge that if he does indeed exist, his being does not become shadowy and unreal just because we do not see him. It is desirable that we should have a more intimate acquaintance with our Father, but even before we have attained to this, even while we are blundering and stumbling in the darkness, God is truly existing, and is ruling over all. Our ignorance does not limit God's being, our blindness does not cripple his activity. We cannot see him; we find it hard to trace his purposes among the tangled threads of life; all looks dark and aimless. Yet God is God, and therefore he will not desert his creatures.

"God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world."
(Browning.)

W. F. A.

Ver. 10.—*God's knowledge and man's discipline.* I. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE. 1. *The fact.* Job has just been owning his difficulty in finding God. He searches in all directions, forward and backward, on the left hand and on the right, and he cannot discover God (vers. 8, 9). But although it is so hard for him to attain to a knowledge of God, he is quite certain that God knows him. We are known by God before we think of acknowledging him, and when we are bewildered with the mystery of life all is clear and open to God. 2. *Its scope.* God knows the way that his servants take. (1) Past experiences. He knows what we have had to contend with, and why our lives have been vexed and tried. (2) Present circumstances. At the very moment when we have some new difficulty to face, some new height to climb, or some new snare to avoid, God is with us, perfectly understanding the whole situation. (3) Future scenes. One step is enough for us, because God knows all that lies before us. Although our way may seem to be leading to impossible regions, he who sees the end from the beginning can lead us through. 3. *Its consequences.* If God knows our way, we have not to travel, like Columbus, over untried seas. The whole route has been mapped out by God. We cannot be lost if he who knows our way is our Guide. Gordon's favourite passage from Browning shows the right spirit of one who trusts this truth—

"I go to prove my soul.
I see my way as birds their trackless way.
I shall arrive! What time, what circuit first,
I ask not; but unless God send his hail
Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time, his good time, I shall arrive.
He guides me, and the bird. In his good time."

II. MAN'S DISCIPLINE. Job is now confident that when God has tried him he will come forth as gold. 1. *Its source.* The suffering man holds to the idea that his trouble comes from God. All along he has not perceived Satan's share in it. Therefore his faith is the more remarkable. He is right to some extent, because his trouble is only what God permits. God may not be the direct agent of a person's affliction. This may come from the cruelty of men or from other undetected causes. Yet it is all within the restraint of God. 2. *Its process.* Job perceives that he is being tried by God. This is the first time that he has given evidence of holding such an idea. Hitherto he has been simply dismayed and distressed at the problem of suffering. He

has had no theory to oppose to his friends' orthodox notion that it is the merited punishment of sin. That that notion was wrong, experience and observation have made him see quite clearly. But hitherto he has not been able to supply an alternative idea. Now there dawns on him a perception of the disciplinary purpose of suffering. The husbandman purges the vine-branch because it is fruitful (John xv. 2). The father chastises his son because he loves him (Heb. xii. 6). God tries his servant, not to punish him, but because he values him. 3. *Its aim.* That the sufferer may come forth as gold. Job will have his innocence vindicated. A deeper result than vindication, however, is the perfecting of the soul through suffering. The fire not only tests, it refines. 4. *Its success.* The end aimed at will be attained. The assurance of this lies in the previous thought of God's knowledge. He does not need to assay the soul in order to discover for himself whether it is of true gold. He knows the worth of his servants. He adapts their discipline to their requirements. It seems disproportionate, but it is suitable; for God knows the way of his people; therefore he will bring them forth as gold.—W. F. A.

Vers. 11, 12.—*A faithful life.* I. ITS COURSE. 1. *A course of conduct.* Job speaks of his foot holding, etc. He is reviewing his actions. It would have been of little use for him to have vindicated his creed and his sentiments if his conduct had been faithless. The most important question is as to how a man lives, not as to what he thinks or how he feels. 2. *A continuous course.* It is a way, and Job has had to keep to it. A momentary spasm of virtue will not satisfy the requirements of the Divine Law. To achieve a single heroic deed that makes the world ring with one's fame, and then sink into idle apathy, is not the way to earn the commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" 3. *A Divine course.* It is easy to persist in one's own way. The difficulty is to leave that and to accept and follow faithfully in God's way. Yet he has marked out the course of service for every one of his people, and the plain duty is to find it and follow it. 4. *An arduous course.* It is not easy to keep to God's steps. The way is narrow (Matt. vii. 13, 14). Many temptations urge us to forsake it for flowery paths or for the broad road. The Christian life is a course of self-denial. The path leads uphill. Even while we only think of standing still we are really slipping back. It is a mistake to suppose that the Christian life is necessarily a growth and a progress. There is danger of worse than stagnation, of declension and decay. We may have done well in the past, and yet have been hindered later on in life. To be true Christians we must be ever watchful, earnest, active in pressing forward along God's way.

II. ITS INSPIRATION. How is it possible to be faithful, keeping continuously to God's way? 1. *By the guidance of revelation.* Job has been following God's commandments. We cannot follow God's way without the aid of light from heaven. Instinct and conscience are our natural guides; but instinct is blind, and conscience has been in some cases perverted. Therefore God has given us "the more sure word of prophecy." God's Word is a lamp to the feet of his people. This is its chief object. Difficulties are felt as to certain questions about the Bible, *e.g.* how to reconcile Genesis with geology, how to settle the relation of the Law to the prophets, how to harmonize the gospel narratives. But these questions do not touch the main purpose of the Bible, which is to be a guide to conduct. The righteousness of the ten commandments, the blessedness of the sermon on the mount, and, above all, the glory of Christ, still shine from the sacred page as beacon-lights undimmed by the clouds of controversy that gather about quite secondary points. 2. *In the power of affection.* Job has set a supreme value on the words of God's mouth. Their truth and goodness and beauty won the heart of the author of the hundred and nineteenth psalm. We have still greater attractions in the New Testament. Christ, the living Word of God, draws men to himself by his love and by his sacrifice of himself, so that when he is known and loved faithfulness becomes possible for his sake. Christians are called to walk, not only in the steps which God has marked out for them, but in those which Christ has trodden, which he has made sacred by his own presence.—W. F. A.

Ver. 13.—*The inflexibility of God.* I. THE INFLEXIBILITY OF GOD IS ESSENTIAL TO HIS NATURE. He has not the reasons for changing that we have. 1. *He knows all*

things. Men decide from partial knowledge, and then fuller information leads them to change their minds. But God knows everything from the first. 2. *He is strong*. Men are persuaded against their better judgment, or they weakly yield to temptation. But God is perfect in will and character. He cannot be urged to do what he knows is not the absolutely best. 3. *He is good*. It is well that men can and do change, for much of the past course of the world's history is wrong, and the only hope for man is in his mending his ways. But God has been faultless from the first; there is nothing for him to repent of.

II. THE INFLEXIBILITY OF GOD IS A WARNING AGAINST MAN'S PRESUMPTION. The danger is in judging God by man's changeable standards. Thus people come to think that he will not really perform what he threatens. They trust to the influence of time in melting away the Divine purposes against sin; or they rely on their own urgency in attempting to persuade God not to accomplish his will; or they imagine that in some way they shall be able to elude the grasp of his Law. All these courses show a foolish misapprehension of the firmness and strength of God. They are false because he is true.

III. THE INFLEXIBILITY OF GOD IS AN ENCOURAGEMENT FOR FAITH. 1. *In his Law*. He has revealed his will, and we may be sure that he will keep to it. He is not like a fickle despot, whose shifting moods baffle the watchfulness of the most subservient courtier. When we once know his will, we may rely upon it that this is permanent. 2. *In his promises*. God has revealed himself in gracious purposes. These purposes he will never abandon. The ingratitude of man does not destroy the good will of God. A weaker being would be worn out with the constant rebellion and the utter unworthiness of his children. But God is infinitely patient. In spite of the world's folly and sin, he holds inflexibly to his purpose of saving and redeeming it. It cannot be that of all the Divine attributes mercy only is fragile and transitory; that while God's truth and justice remain, this one characteristic may be broken down, and may vanish away. On the contrary, it is explicitly revealed to us over and over again that "the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever."

IV. THE INFLEXIBILITY OF GOD IS NOT INCONSISTENT WITH HIS VARYING TREATMENT OF US. He has no rigid, uniform method of action. He adapts his treatment of us to our conduct and our need. His inflexibility is in his character, not in details of action. The very fact that he is changeless in himself leads to the result that he acts differently under different circumstances. We are governed not by an iron law, but by a faithful God. 1. *In answer to prayer*. God is not changed or bent by our prayer. But he sees fit to do, in response to our confidence in him, what he would not think well to do without it. 2. *In the redemption of the world*. This is a new action. The gospel declares a fresh Divine movement. But all of it springs from the eternal purposes of God; and all of it is in accordance with his changeless character of love and righteousness.—W. F. A.

Vers. 15, 16.—*Troubled at the presence of God*. I. THIS IS NATURAL IN GREAT DISTRESS. The soul is plunged into grief; like Jacob, the desponding sufferer exclaims, "All these things are against me" (Gen. xlii. 36). Then he comes to regard God as the Source of his misfortunes. God seems to be his Enemy, and any approach of God is regarded with apprehension, as bringing fresh trouble. We have to learn not to form our judgment of God in our darker moments. It is difficult to have any well-balanced opinion when we are plunged in deep distress. While the knife is in him it is possible that the patient may think the surgeon rough, cruel, even malignant. But he is not then in a fit state for forming an opinion.

II. THIS IS RIGHT IN THE GUILT OF SIN. The wonder is that people sin with so little reflection as to how God regards them, and that they are often quite ready to meet him without a thought of their great guilt. Thus it is said of a bad man's end, that "he died like a lamb"! As though his dull and senseless departure from this life were any guarantee of his spiritual state. But when conscience is roused, it shrinks from the searching gaze of God. Blind eyes may be turned to the sun, at which seeing eyes cannot glance without pain. It is not only that God can punish sin. There is a sense of shame in the thought that One so good and holy should ever see it. Then it is all a direct offence against him. When the sinner meets God, he encounters One

whom he has grievously wronged. Lastly, as God is our Father, there is an especial ground of trouble in his rebellious children meeting him.

III. THIS MAY BE OVERCOME BY A BETTER ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD. The fear should not be perpetual. Something is wrong, or it would not have arisen, and that which caused the fear can and ought to be removed. It is not well that any man should continue to live in a chill fear of God. In the New Testament God is so revealed that all terror of him may be dissipated. 1. *As our Father.* If we thought him hard and stern, we were unjust. Christ has revealed his true nature in his Fatherhood. Therefore the idea that God's presence is itself terrible comes from ignorance. Following the light of Christ, we discover that God is the home of our souls, and that no place is so safe, or so peaceful and happy, as where his presence is felt. 2. *As our Redeemer.* The just fear that arises from sin cannot be rightly expelled until the cause of it is removed. As God must be angry with sin, it would only be a dangerous deception that covered up and hid the thought of his wrath. But God himself has provided the best, the only right way of dispelling the fear of his presence by giving us a remedy for sin. Now, as it is he who sends the remedy, we have to know his intentions in order that we may no longer live in fear of him. The very fact that Christ was sent from heaven to save the world from sin shows how terrible the evil was; but it also shows how deep and strong the love of God must be—deeper than his wrath, outlasting his chastisements.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The general subject of this chapter is the prosperity of the wicked, whose proceedings and their results are traced out in detail (vers. 2—24). A single note of perplexity (ver. 1) forms a sufficient introduction; and a single note of challenge a sufficient epilogue (ver. 25).

Ver. 1.—**Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty.** By "times" seem to be meant God's special periods of exhibiting himself in action as the moral Governor of the world, vindicating the righteous, and taking vengeance upon sinners. Such "times" are frequently spoken of in the prophetical Scriptures as "days of the Lord" (see Isa. ii. 12; iii. 18; iv. 1; xiii. 6, 9; Joel i. 15; ii. 1, 11; Obad. 15; Zeph. i. 7, 14, etc.). They are, of course, "not hidden" from him, seeing that it is he who determines on them beforehand, and, when their fixed date is come, makes them special "days," or "times," different from all others. **Do they who know him not see his days?** *i.e.* why are even they, who know and serve God, kept in the dark as to these "times," so that they do not foresee them or know when they are coming? This is to Job a great perplexity.

Ver. 2.—Some **remove the landmarks.** (On this form of wickedness, see Deut. xix. 14; xxvii. 17; Prov. xxii. 28; xxiii. 10; Hos. v. 10.) Where neighbouring properties are not divided by fences of any kind, as in the East generally, the only way of distinguishing between one man's land and another's is by termini, or "landmarks," which are generally low stone metes or bourns, placed at intervals on the boundary-line. An easy form of robbery was to displace these bourns, putting them further back on one's neighbour's land. **They violently take away flocks.** Others openly drive off their neighbours' flocks from their pastures, mix them with their own flocks, and say that they are theirs (comp. ch. i. 15—17). **And feed** thereof; rather, *and feed them* (as in the margin); *i.e.* pasture them.

Ver. 3.—**They drive away the ass of the fatherless.** This was another form of oppression. "Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed?" says Samuel, on laying down his judgeship (1 Sam. xii. 3). The "fatherless" were particularly liable to such ill treatment, seeing that they had lost their natural protector. **They take the widow's ox for a pledge.** It may be true that this was nowhere a legal offence, not even among the Hebrews (Lee); but it was a real act of oppression, and forms a fitting counterpart to the injury done to the orphan. (On the natural tendency of selfish men to bear hard on these two classes, see Exod. xxii. 22; Deut. xxiv. 17; xxvii. 19; Ps. xciv. 6; Isa. i. 23; x. 2; Jer. v 28; Zech. vii. 10.)

Ver. 4.—**They turn the needy out of the way.** Either "they force poor men to turn out of the road when they are using it, and wait till they have passed" (compare the recent practice of the Japanese daimios), or "they make the highways so dangerous with their violence that they compel the poor and needy to seek byways for safety"

(Judg. v. 6). The second hemistich favours the latter interpretation. **The poor of the earth** (or, *the meek of the earth*) **hide themselves together.** In the East there have always been superior and subject races, as well as proud nobles and down-trodden men of the same race. It is not clear of which of these two Job speaks. The former were often hunted out of all the desirable lands, and forced to fly to rocks and caves and holes in the ground, whence they were known as "Troglodytes." The latter, less frequently, banded together, and withdrew to remote and sequestered spots, where they might hope to live unmolested by their oppressors (Heb. xi. 38).

Ver. 5.—**Behold, as wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work.** Plundering bands of wicked marauders scour the desert, like troops of wild asses, going forth early to their work, and late taking rest—**rising betimes for a prey, and generally finding it, since the wilderness yieldeth food for them and for their children.** They are sure to find some plunder or other ere the day is over.

Ver. 6.—**They reap every one his corn in the field.** When they have scoured the desert, the marauders approach the cultivated ground bordering on it, and thence carry off, each of them, a quantity of "fodder," or "provender" (Revised Version), for the sustentation of their horses. **And they gather the vintage of the wicked;** rather, as in the margin, *and the wicked gather the vintage.* (So Rosenmüller and Professor Lee.) Sometimes they burst into the vineyards, and rob them, carrying off the ripe grapes.

Ver. 7.—**They cause the naked to lodge without clothing;** rather, *they lie all night naked, without clothing.* The marauders are still the subject of the narrative. When engaged in their raids, they endure to pass the night without clothing, as the Bedouins are said to do to this day, so that they have no covering in the cold. They are so bent upon plunder that they do not mind these inconveniences.

Ver. 8.—**They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter.** Further unpleasant consequences of marauding, but endured without complaint by the wild robber-tribes.

Ver. 9.—**They pluck the fatherless from the breast.** Other oppressors, not of the marauding class, but dwellers in towns (ver. 12), are so cruel that they tear the unweaned child of the debtor from the mother's breast, as satisfaction for a debt, and carry him off into slavery (comp. 2 Kings iv. 1; Neh. v. 5). **And take a pledge of the poor;** literally, *take in pledge that which is on the poor*—in other words, their clothing. They will not lend to them on any other terms, and so force them to part with their garments, and go about naked. Even Hebrew creditors seem to have done this (Exod. xxii. 26; Deut. xxiv. 12, 13); and the Mosaic Law did not forbid the practice, but only required the creditor to let the debtor have his garment at night, that he might sleep in it (Exod. xxii. 27; Deut. xxiv. 13).

Ver. 10.—**They cause him to go naked without clothing;** rather, *they go naked without clothing.* The effects of the oppression on its victims are now traced. First of all, the poor man, whose only wrap or cloak has been taken in pledge, is compelled to go naked, or almost naked, both day and night, exposed alike to extremes of heat and cold. Secondly, he is compelled to reap and bind and carry home the sheaves of his oppressor, while he himself is half famished with hunger. The second clause of the verse is wrongly translated in the Authorized Version, where we read, **and they take away the sheaf from the hungry;** the real meaning being, "and they who are an hungered, carry the sheaves" (compare the Revised Version).

Ver. 11.—Which **make oil within their walls, and tread their wine-presses, and suffer thirst.** In the third place, the same unfortunates are employed in the homesteads of their oppressors to express oil from the olives and wine from the rich clusters of grapes, while they themselves are tormented with unceasing thirst.

Ver. 12.—**Men groan from out of the city.** It is not only in the wild tracts bordering on the desert (vers. 5—8), or on the large farms of rich landholders (vers. 9—11), that oppression takes place. Men's groans are heard also "from the city," and in the midst of the city, where murder, robbery, burglary, adultery, and other crimes of the deepest dye abound. Then **the soul of the wounded crieth out.** In appeals to God for help, or in inarticulate cries, the wounded spirit of the oppressed and injured vents itself. **Yet God layeth not folly to them.** Yet God seems to take no notice. He gives no sign of disapproval, but allows the oppressors to go on in their foolish courses unchecked.

Ver. 13.—**They are of those who rebel against the light.** These city oppressors go beyond the others in entirely rejecting the light of reason, conscience, and law. They throw off every restraint. The "light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" is nothing to them. **They know not the ways thereof.** They will not know, will not have anything to do with, the law of moral restraint—much less will they **abide in the paths thereof;** *i.e.* acknowledge

and be guided by such restraints continually. On the contrary,

Ver. 14.—**The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy.** The murderer rises at the first glimpse of dawn—the time when most men sleep most soundly. He cannot go about his wicked business in complete darkness. He has not the courage to attack the great and powerful, who might be well armed and have retainers to defend them, but enters the houses of a comparatively poor class, in which he is less afraid to risk himself. Here, **in the night he is as a thief.** He has not come into the house simply for murder. Theft is his main object. He will not take life unless he is resisted or discovered, and so, in a certain sense, driven to it.

Ver. 15.—**The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me.** There is an analogy between moral and physical light, and between moral and physical darkness. The class of men here spoken of (vers. 14—16), who have rebelled against moral light (ver. 13), and refused its ways, and rejected its paths, are no great lovers of physical light. Their deeds of darkness are only suited to be done in the dark, and they wait for the evening twilight or the dusk of dawn to engage in them (comp. John iii. 19—21, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." See also John viii. 12; xii. 35; Rom. xiii. 12; Eph. v. 8—14, etc.). **And he disguiseth his face.** As a further precaution against discovery, the adulterer disguiseth, or covereth up, his face. The same is often done by thieves and murderers.

Ver. 16.—**In the dark they dig through houses.** In ancient times, burglary commonly took this form. Windows were few, and high up in the walls; doors were strongly fastened with bolts and bars. But the walls, being of clay, or rubble, or sun-dried brick, were weak and easily penetrable. This was especially the case with party walls; and if burglars entered an unoccupied house, nothing was easier than to break through the slight partition which separated it from the house next door. The Greek word for "burglar" is τοιχώρυχος, "he who digs through a wall." Which **they had marked for themselves in the daytime**; rather, *they shut themselves up in the daytime*; literally, *they seal themselves up*; the meaning being that they carefully keep themselves close. Professor Lee, however, defends the Authorized Version. **They know not the light**; *i.e.* they avoid it, keep away from it, will have nothing to do with it.

Ver. 17.—**For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death.** They hate the morning light. It is associated in their minds with the idea of detection; for when it breaks in upon them unexpectedly in the midst of their ill deeds, detection commonly follows; and detection is a true "shadow of death," for it commonly means the gallows. If one **know** them, they are in **the terrors of the shadow of death**; rather, *for they know the terrors of the shadow of death* (see the Revised Version). It is a familiar experience to them; as, whenever crime is severely punished, it is to the criminal class generally.

Ver. 18.—**He is swift as the waters.** "Locus obscurissimus" (Schultens). Scarcely any two commentators agree even as to the subject on which Job proceeds to speak. Some regard him as giving his own judgment on the ultimate fate of the wicked; others, as anticipating what his opponents will say on the point. One recent expositor takes the passage as referring to the efforts made by the malefactors of vers. 14—16 to escape from justice, and to the discredit and difficulty in which they involve themselves. Another suggests that Job here calls attention to a fresh class of oppressors, viz. water-thieves (see Strabo, xvi. 18), who, starting in light boats from some island in a lake or river, plundered the neighbouring lands, making the portions of the landholders worthless, and causing them to neglect the cultivation, even of their vineyards. If we accept this view, the proper translation of the present verse will be, *Swift is he* (i.e. the water-thief) *upon the face of the waters: then is the portion of them who dwell in the land worthless; no one turneth his face toward his vineyards* (see Professor Lee's 'Book of Job,' pp. 153, 378, 379).

Ver. 19.—**Drought and heat consume the snow waters; so doth the grave those which have sinned.** This rendering is further confirmed by the next verse. Accepting it, we must suppose Job to pass at this point to the consideration of the ultimate end of the wicked, though in ver. 21 he returns to the consideration of their ill doings. The heat and drought of summer, he says, consume and dry up all the water which comes from the melting of the winter's snows. So does Sheol, or the grave, absorb, and as it were consume, the wicked.

Ver. 20.—**The womb shall forget him.** Some regard this as equivalent to "Earth shall forget him;" but most suppose "**the**

womb" to mean "his own mother." **The worm shall feed sweetly on him** (comp. ch. xvii. 14). **He shall be no more remembered.** Oblivion shall fall upon him and his doings. **And wickedness shall be broken as a tree.** As a strong wind suddenly snaps off a tree at the root, so wickedness, in the person of the wicked man—the abstract for the concrete—shall be overtaken by death, and perish in a moment (comp. ver. 24).

Ver. 21.—**He evil entreateth the barren that beareth not.** Oppressors of another class are perhaps here spoken of, or perhaps there is a mere return to the idea with which Job's enumeration opened (ver. 3), which was the oppression of the weaker and more defenceless classes. As barrenness in women was considered the greatest possible misfortune (1 Sam. i. 5—8; iii. 1—10), so oppressing one that was barren indicated extreme cruelty. **And doeth not good to the widow;** *i.e.* neglects to vindicate her cause—an admitted part of man's duty (see ch. xxii. 9; xxix. 13; xxxi. 16).

Ver. 22.—**He draweth also the mighty with his power;** *i.e.* he draws to his side, and makes his helpers, those who are mighty, attracting them or compelling them to join him by the power which he already has. **He riseth up, and no man is sure of life.** This is also the translation of the Revised Version. Some commentators, however, prefer to render, "He riseth up, when he has despaired of life;" *i.e.* the wicked man, when he has been brought into trouble, either sickness or danger of death at the hands of justice, to men's surprise, "riseth up"—is delivered from the danger, and recovers his prosperity.

Ver. 23.—**Though it be given him to be in safety, whereon he resteth;** rather, *he* (i.e. God) *granteth him to be in security, and thereon he resteth;* i.e. God allows the escape of the wicked man from his trouble, and lets him live on, safe and secure, and the man himself rests on the security thus afforded him, quite contented with it. **Yet his eyes are upon their ways.** God's eyes are still upon the ways of the wicked: they are, or seem to be, the objects of a special providential care.

Ver. 24.—**They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low;** rather, *they are exalted: after a little while they are gone, they are brought low.* Job has to admit that death comes upon wicked men at last; but he minimizes the terrors of their death, and exaggerates its alleviations. First, it comes on them when they have risen to eminence, have gained themselves a reputation, and "are exalted." Next, it is sudden and painless, preceded by no long, lingering illness, but just a sinking into non-existence; a tranquil passing away. Thirdly, it is at a ripe age, when they have reached the full term of human life, and are as ears of corn ripe for the harvest. Further, it is the common fate: **They are taken out of the way as all** other (comp. ch. ix. 22; xxi. 13), **and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn.** We may gather from this expression that the reaping in the land of Uz was conducted in Job's time much in the same way as it was in Egypt under the early Pharaohs, viz. by cutting the stalk with a sharp sickle almost immediately below the ear, and collecting the ears in baskets (see the author's 'Hist. of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. p. 162; and his 'Herodotus,' vol. ii. p. 59, 3rd edit.).

Ver. 25.—**And if it be not so now;** *i.e.* "if these things be not as I say." **Who will make me a liar?** Which of you will stand forth and disprove them, and so "make me a liar"? **And make my speech nothing worth?** Show, *i.e.*, my whole discourse to be valueless. This bold challenge no one attempts to take up.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—12.—*Job to Eliphaz:* 4. *An answer wanted to a great question.* I. AN IMPORTANT PROPOSITION STATED. That the Almighty does not call wicked men before his tribunal on earth. "Why are not times," *i.e.* of reckoning or punishment, "reserved," or kept in store, "by the Almighty, and why do they who know him see not his days?" *i.e.* his doomsdays, or days of judicial visitation on the wicked (ver. 1). 1. *A caution.* The language does not imply either that there should not be, or that there do not exist, such times of reckoning with the ungodly, and indeed with all men. On the contrary, it tacitly assumes that God both ought to have, and in point of fact does have, days of retribution which are appropriately described as "his." That men ought to be judged for their characters and lives, the moral instincts of humanity proclaim; that men will be arraigned before Shaddai's impartial tribunal, is explicitly asserted in Scripture (ch. xxi. 30; xxxiv. 11; Eccles. xii. 14; Ps. xcviii. 9; Dan. vii. 10; Matt. xxv. 32; 2 Cor. v. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 1; Heb. ix. 27). 2. *An explanation.* What the language asserts is that such court-days are not kept by the Almighty on earth, or at least that his people do not see them; in other words, that the godlessness of men is permitted to

stalk forth on earth unchallenged and unavenged, without let or hindrance, pretty much as if there were no such tribunal in existence. And this fact, which Job so strenuously affirms, in addition to having been observed by Asaph (Ps. lxxiii. 5), David (Ps. l. 21), the Preacher (Eccles. viii. 11), Jeremiah (xii. 1), Habakkuk (i. 15, 16), and others, is likewise recognized in Scripture generally as correct.

II. A CONVINCING DEMONSTRATION OFFERED. That the Almighty does not hold a regular assize on earth established by two patent facts. 1. *The most execrable wickedness is suffered to rage without either punishment or restraint.* The special form of ungodliness depicted is that of ruthless oppression of the helpless and defenceless, exemplified in such crimes as: (1) Secret fraud. "They," *i.e.* the tyrannical oppressors of the aborigines of the soil, "remove the landmarks," shift the stones or stakes which mark the boundary-line between the poor man's plot and the rich man's farm, so as to diminish the one and increase the other—an act of impiety denounced in the Law of Moses as worthy of, and certain to be punished by, the curse of God (Deut. xix. 14; xxvii. 17), a crime practised in the days of Solomon (Prov. xxii. 28; xxiii. 10) and of Hosea (v. 10), a form of wickedness not unknown to modern society. Every attempt by covert fraudulence to augment one's own estate at the expense of a neighbour's, whether that neighbour be poor or rich, is equivalent to a removing of the landmark between *meum* and *tuum*, and as such incurs the Divine displeasure. If one thing is more saddening than the prevalence of indirect and minute spoliation amongst all ranks and classes, it is that good men should not be able to see that theft is still theft, although practised in infinitesimal proportions and by underhand contrivances, and that even wicked men should not be deterred from such nefarious actions by a recollection of God's anathemas against the thief. (2) Barefaced robbery. "They violently take away flocks and feed them" (ver. 2), not taking the trouble to dispose of the stolen sheep by slaughter or sale, but openly and coolly retaining them amongst their own, as the Sabeans had done with Job's oxen (ch. i. 14)—an aggravation of their crime that they were so shameless and audacious in its commission; but they who could brave God's curse in order to remove a landmark would not likely shrink from enduring man's scorn in order to steal a flock. Sin inevitably tends to sear the conscience and to petrify the feelings. (3) Pitiless exaction. "They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge" (ver. 3). Besides being out of all proportion, and therefore unjust, to carry off an ass or an ox in payment of a trifling loan or debt, it was unspeakably heartless to proceed to such extremity against those whose friendless condition should have drawn forth sympathy and succour. It was also a clear violation of the Divine Law to appropriate what was so indispensable to the subsistence of an orphan as the one ass wherewith he laboured, or so needful for the widow as the ox which ploughed her plot of ground. For similar reasons the Mosaic Law forbade the taking in pledge of a widow's raiment (Deut. xxiv. 17), and much more, it may be argued, of a widow's yoke ox, or of an orphan's ass (Exod. xxii. 22). The nether or the upper millstone also, for a like cause, was an illegal pledge (Deut. xxiv. 6). (4) Violent oppression. "They turn the needy out of the way" (ver. 4), thrusting them out of their accustomed paths and pursuits, compelling them through fear to abandon the highways and travel through trackless regions, ejecting them by force from their wonted habitations and ancient possessions (cf. ch. xxii. 8, homiletics). (5) Merciless subjugation. "They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor" (ver. 9). So pitiless are these inhuman monsters, that they distrain not the widow's ox merely, but her infant child as well, plucking it from her bosom, and carrying it off to be reared in miserable servitude; yea, if the second clause may be added to the first, after robbing the broken-hearted mother of her babe, stripping her of her raiment, and turning her forth naked and trembling to find food and clothing as best she may. It is doubtful if any American Legree or modern slave-driver ever eclipsed these ancient child-stealers in relentless barbarity. 2. *The most extreme misery is allowed to go unnoticed and unrelieved.* In three affecting pictures, according to one view of the poet's meaning, he sketches the calamitous fate of the unhappy victims of those remorseless destroyers. The first (vers. 5—8) depicts the melancholy fortunes of the poor of the land (perhaps the aboriginal inhabitants), who being cast forth from their ancient possessions are obliged to "hide themselves together" (ver. 4), or to slink away out of sight, disappearing, as inferior races have since done,

because unable to stand before the violence of their invaders. (1) Leading a gregarious and wandering life, like wild asses in the desert, like the vagrant gipsies of modern times, rising up early and going forth in search of food with an appetite as keen as if they were hunting prey, with infinite labour extracting a scanty subsistence for themselves and children from the innutritious roots and herbs of the inhospitable steppe. (2) Engaging in the lowest forms of menial service, being obliged to hire themselves out as day labourers, and the only work available for them being the cutting of fodder for the rich man's cattle—not the better sorts of grain, lest they should be tempted to pluck and eat; or the gleaning of the late ripening grapes of the rich man's vineyard—not the earliest and best, for fear they should seek to quench their thirst by devouring the luscious fruit. (3) Reduced to the saddest state of destitution, being without clothes, so that they must pass the night in a stripped and naked condition, exposed to the "frequent and continuous storms that visit the mountains," and without homes, so that "they embrace the rock for want of a shelter." The second picture (vers. 10, 11) is, if possible, more excruciatingly painful in the aspect of wretchedness it presents. It recites the evil hap of those widows' children who have been taken for their mothers' debt, or of the poorer section of the conquering clan themselves who in turn have become victims of the haughty tyrants, and have been reduced to a condition little short of abject slavery. (1) Utter penury. In consequence of the oppressive exactions of their masters, they are compelled to part with the last stitch of clothing, and to slink away in almost entire nudity like a gang of slaves driven to the market or the cotton-field. (2) Unrequited toil. Hungry, they must not pluck a handful of ears from their overseer's cornfield, a privilege not denied to the brute beasts beside them (Deut. xxv. 4). Thirsty, they dare not moisten their parched tongues with the must running from the presses as they squeeze out the oil and tread down the grapes. The abominable wickedness of exacting labour without remuneration (and that also adequate), as is done in slavery, is severely reprehended in Scripture (Lev. xix. 13; Deut. xxiv. 14, 15; Jer. xxii. 13; Jas. v. 4). The third picture (ver. 12) alludes to the miseries of a densely populated city, where (1) oppression reigns as fierce and intolerable as exists in the country, causing men to groan in anguish—a description not exclusively applicable to an ancient Arabian town suddenly invaded by hordes of freebooters, but finding also too faithful realization in the great cities and large centres of population belonging to the nineteenth Christian century, in which the same spectacle is still seen, of the strong trampling on the weak, the rich on the poor, the lordly and tyrannical on the plebeian and servile; and where (2) strife rages, leading not unfrequently to bloodshed and murder, in which the soul of the wounded mourns—a state of things as often seen to-day as it was some five or six thousand years ago, nothing being so characteristic of the present times as just the internecine warfare existing between the various classes of society, and leading as a natural result to a prolific development of crimes against the person and estate. And all this sweltering abomination, this moral putridity, social disorder, and civil corruption which infests both town and country, the Almighty appears to be as indifferent to as he was in the days of Job (Ps. l. 21).

III. AN URGENT QUESTION ASKED. Why does not God call wicked men to account? 1. *Not for want of power.* Otherwise he would not be Shaddai, the Almighty, the all-powerful and all-sufficient Deity, whose ability to perform his counsel Job has just commented on (ch. xxiii. 13). 2. *Not for lack of knowledge.* Job's atheistical contemporaries supposed that mundane affairs were concealed from the gaze of him who walked upon the circuit of the heavens, and whose feet were wrapped about with clouds (ch. xxii. 13); but Job and his friends alike admitted that times, *i.e.* at any rate the main events and circumstances of terrestrial history, were not hidden from Shaddai's omniscient glance (ver. 1, Authorized Version). 3. *Not for want of right.* Both parties in the present controversy recognize that such appalling wickedness should not be suffered to go for ever unchallenged and unpunished, that such detestable criminals as above described ought to be arrested and brought before the tribunal of Heaven. Nay, on the theory of the friends, these workers of iniquity ought at once to be called to account. Yet notoriously, says Job, they are not. Hence it can only be: 4. *For lack of will.* It is not God's intention to hold a circuit court here on earth, and try men for their misdeeds. In other words, the Divine government is not, so far as this world is concerned, as the friends contended, strictly retributive.

Learn: 1. The impunity of sinners on earth is no proof that they shall enjoy like impunity hereafter. 2. That God's people do not now discern his judgment throne is no argument that such a throne does not exist. 3. Little faults are as really sins, and as certain to be punished, as great offences. 4. Criminals who start with stealthy and minute acts of transgression are in danger of proceeding to large as well as open works of wickedness. 5. "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn." 6. Mighty despots may deprive the poor of their estates by either fair means or foul; but God regards the deed as spoliation and robbery. 7. It is a wiser policy to prevent pauperism from being developed in a state than to provide for it after it has been developed. 8. Town and country are much the same in their moral characteristics. 9. It is a mistake to infer from God's silence that he neither sees nor cares for the wickedness and misery of man.

Ver. 8.—*A threefold religious emblem; or, the shelter of the rock.* I. AN EMBLEM OF THE SINNER'S MISERABLE CONDITION. 1. *Exposed to a storm.* Like the unhappy victims of tyrannical oppression, men, in their unconverted state, are liable to be overtaken by the tempest of God's righteous wrath and indignation against sin (Ps. xi. 6; Rom. i. 18; Col. iii. 6; 1 Thess. i. 10; Rev. vi. 16, 17), which will not assail the body merely, but destroy both soul and body in hell (Luke xii. 5), and that for ever. 2. *Destitute of shelter.* Like the houseless and homeless wanderers among the mountains, unpardoned souls are without a refuge to which they can betake themselves in the day of their calamity. Driven forth from the place of safety in which they originally stood, they have now "no covering in the cold," no garment of righteousness in which they can wrap their trembling spirits. Nor can they by any wisdom, wealth, or labour of their own construct or discover for themselves a habitation and defence against the storm.

II. AN EMBLEM OF THE GREAT SALVATION OFFERED IN THE GOSPEL. As the shivering outcasts crept into the rocky caves on the mountain-side, so Christ has been set forth as a Rock and a Hiding-place (Isa. xxxii. 2). 1. *Accessible by all;* the approach to him being hindered by no formidable barriers, and no stupendous effort being required to reach his side (Rom. x. 6), nothing beyond a simple exercise of faith which is within the ability of even a child. 2. *Sufficient for all;* there being room enough in Christ for all who come to him in faith (Luke xiv. 22), yea, for the entire world of mankind (Isa. xlv. 22; John iii. 16), if only they sincerely come to him; and perfect safety and protection for all who gain its shelter, complete defence against the charges of the Law, the accusations of conscience, the penalties of sin, the terrors of death, and of the wrath to come (Rom. v. 1). 3. *Free to all;* every one who seeks his presence and assistance being accorded a welcome, without money and without price.

"All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel our need of him."

III. AN EMBLEM OF THE ACT OF SAVING FAITH. As the miserable victims of the strong man's oppression embraced the rock for a shelter, so must needy sinners embrace Christ the Rock. 1. *With personal application;* Christ being of no more use to a sinner without individual appropriation than the mountain rock would have been to those who did not cling to it. Faith is the hand that lays hold of and embraces Christ as he is exhibited in the gospel. 2. *With fervent gratitude;* giving thanks to God for his abundant mercy in providing such a shelter for the soul, as no doubt the poor creatures whom the mountain-storms drenched were grateful for even the protection of a cave. 3. *With immediate action;* allowing no delay to prevent the soul from fleeing from the storm of impending wrath to the hope set before it in the gospel.

Vers. 13—25.—*Job to Eliphaz:* 5. *Ancient rebels against the light.* I. THEIR BLACK CHARACTER. 1. *They are hostile to the light.* The light alluded to is the light of day. The wicked persons spoken of regard that light with aversion, as being unfavourable to the special forms of ungodliness they delight to practise. Distinguished from the previously mentioned sinners who transact their nefarious deeds openly and unblushingly beneath the clear firmament of heaven, these night-birds may be taken, in their general characteristics at least, as representatives of those evil-doers whom Christ designates

(John iii. 20) haters of the light. Light is a frequent biblical symbol for Divine truth (Prov. vi. 23; Ps. cxix. 105; Isa. ii. 5), and in particular for the gospel (Matt. iv. 16; Luke ii. 32; John xii. 36; Eph. v. 8). Hence the unbelieving and therefore unconverted wicked heart naturally looks upon the light of God's Law and of Christ's gospel with repugnance (Rom. viii. 7), and for the same reason, that the light condemns their works. 2. *They know not the ways of the light.* They have no familiarity with such modes of living as men practise in open day. The ordinary avocations of law-abiding citizens possess for them no interest and yield to them no enjoyment; in which respect again they fitly typify ungodly men in general, who neither know nor care for the ways of holiness and truth. The way of the wicked is a way of darkness (Prov. iv. 19; Rom. xiii. 12), of unbelief (Heb. iii. 12), of disobedience (Rom. viii. 7), of folly (Prov. xii. 15), of sorrow (Prov. xiii. 15), a way that is displeasing to God (Prov. xv. 9), and that leadeth unto death (Matt. vii. 13; Rom. vi. 23). The way of truth (Ps. cxix. 30), of understanding (Isa. xl. 14), of holiness (Isa. xxxv. 8), of peace (Isa. lix. 8; Rom. iii. 17), of life (Matt. vii. 14), they do not keep, love, or know. 3. *They shun the paths of the light.* They remove themselves and their nefarious practices as far as possible from the light, lest they should be seen of men. Even so evil workers come not to the light lest their deeds should be reproved (John iii. 20). Honest men fear not to stand in the sun. Nor do children of the light require to wrap themselves in cloaks of darkness. But because God's light (of the Law and the gospel) has a singular power of discovering men's wickedness to themselves and others (Eph. v. 13), the children of darkness avoid the light.

II. THEIR DARK DEEDS. The poet sketches portraits of three of these ancient rebels against the light. 1. *The murderer;* whose villainies are described by a threefold characteristic. (1) The time of their perpetration—"at the dawn," *i.e.* just before the breaking forth of the morning light, or while it is yet dark, that hour being selected for (*a*) its adaptation to the works about to be performed, works of darkness (Rom. xiii. 12), such as robbery and murder, which cannot bear the light, and (*b*) the facilities it affords for finding subjects on which to operate. (2) The victims of their perpetration—"the poor and needy," who by reason of penury are obliged at that early hour to be afoot, probably on the road to their daily tasks. Murder, in itself an atrocious crime, is immensely aggravated when, for the petty spoil which can thereby be obtained, it is committed against the indigent and feeble. (3) The manner of their perpetration—by sudden ambush. "At dawn the manslayer riseth up," *i.e.* out of his concealment, "and killeth the poor and the needy;" another aggravation of his wickedness. The language may also indicate the alacrity and earnestness with which this son of darkness, this child of the devil, sets about his unhallowed work; in which respect his conduct may administer rebuke to the children of light. 2. *The adulterer;* who also is possessed of the infernal sagacity to select the season most appropriate, and the manner most effective, for accomplishing his diabolic purpose. Not at early dawn, but with the falling of the evening twilight, he sallies forth towards his neighbour's harem, saying, "No eye shall see me;" to render detection impossible, putting a mask upon his face, forgetting that masks hide from men, but not from God, who can see as well in darkness as in light. But most criminals and sinners omit to reckon with the invisible Spectator of their abominations. Notoriously so did Cain (Gen. iv. 10), David (2 Sam. xi. 4), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v. 2). Yet, again, from even a teacher so unworthy as this violator of marriage sanctities, God's people may derive a lesson to transact their deeds of light with wisdom and efficiency. 3. *The burglar;* who, already referred to as the highwayman of the morning dawn (ver. 14), is reintroduced as the midnight housebreaker who, with pick and spade (the modern thief using crowbar and chisel, skeleton keys, etc.), digs beneath the mud walls of rich men's abodes, marked by him during day (vers. 16, 17). The more probable translation, however, sets forth the housebreaker's horror of the light: "In the daytime they shut themselves up," because "they know not," *i.e.* hate, "the light:" and "to them together the morning is as the shadow of death," *i.e.* through fear of discovery; "for they are acquainted with," and therefore are greatly afraid of, "the terrors of the shadow of death."

III. THEIR TERRESTRIAL REWARDS. The treatment of neither of the two classes described in the present chapter is strictly retributive. 1. *The fate of the petty criminals;* i.e. of the murderer, the adulterer, the thief, and all included in the category of rebels

against the light. According to Eliphaz, these creatures of the darkness should be overtaken with calamities proportioned to their crimes; but, according to Job, the contrary is the case—they are (1) prosperous in life, gliding down the stream and current of time like a light skiff (ver. 18), experiencing no curse upon their heritages while they live; and (2) honoured in death, by being vouchsafed (*a*) a quick and easy disappearance from the earth, like the passing away of a light substance upon the face of the waters (cf. ch. ix. 26), instead of struggling towards the grave through protracted and painful suffering, or like the melting of snow before the scorching heats of summer (ver. 19), going down into Sheol suddenly as in a moment (ch. xxi. 13); and (*b*) a complete escape from the just penalties of their crimes, the curse not descending upon their heritages until they themselves have departed from the scene (ver. 18), and though forgotten by the very mothers that bore them because of their wickedness, yet not compelled to eat the bitter fruits of their transgression, since by death their iniquity has been broken off like a tree, *i.e.* before it has had time to yield its appropriate results. 2. *The fate of the rapacious despots;* i.e. of those sketched in the preceding section (vers. 2—12), who are here identified as the oppressors of barren and widowed women (ver. 21). They, too, should be arrested by visible judgments; but altogether different, according to Job, is their lot. (1) They are preserved alive by that very hand which should rather slay them (ver. 22). So were God to deal with any sinners on earth according to their iniquities they would instantly be cut down (Ps. cxxx. 3). But God magnifies his grace and evinces his long-suffering towards sinful men by upholding in existence those who bid defiance to every danger, and even to God himself, who are not only insensible to all Divine impulses, but flagrant violators of all Divine laws. (2) They are raised up from sickness at the moment when they seem to be about to die (ver. 22). The mercy God's singer guarantees to the humble saint that considereth the poor (Ps. xli. 1), and Christ's servant promises to the believing Christian (Jas. v. 15), is extended to the poor man's oppressor, and the supreme God's denier—another marvel of grace! (3) They are kept in security instead of living in constant terror (ver. 23). Were God not to moderate the fears of good men, much more therefore of bad men, their lives would be intolerable. But God's special providence watches over villains as well as over virtuous people, keeping both from danger, fear, and death, hoping thereby to lead the former to repentance, and seeking to induce the latter to confide in his grace. (4) They are exalted for a season in conscious prosperity instead of being humbled and cast down (ver. 24)—an additional proof of God's kindness towards them. And (5) when the end comes they only share in the common lot, being taken out of the way like all other men.

Learn: 1. The unnatural wickedness of those who despise God's mercies—even his common gifts of providence, but much more his grandest gift of grace. 2. It is an unmistakable evidence of depravity when a man loves the darkness rather than the light. 3. The present-day forms of wickedness are of extreme antiquity, some of them, such as murder, being nearly as old as the Fall. 4. The soul that hates the light has the seed-corn in his heart out of which the greatest crimes may be developed. 5. The truest security a man can have that he shall never perpetrate such wickedness as murder, adultery, etc., is to walk in the light. 6. The destruction of the most powerful sinner that walks the earth is a work of perfect ease to God. 7. A man's triumph or superiority over his fellows terminates with the grave. 8. That wickedness must be great which causes a mother to forget her child. 9. That mercy must be great which continues when human love in its highest form is exhausted. 10. Death may seem to remove the curse from the sinner, but in reality it only conducts the sinner to the curse. 11. God's goodness and mercy may follow a sinner to the grave's mouth; there is no evidence that it can pursue him further. 12. It is appointed unto all men once to die.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—*Examples of God's incomprehensible dealings.* I. DEEDS OF VIOLENCE AND FRAUD. (Vers. 1—4.) "Why are not times laid up," *i.e.* reserved, determined by the Almighty, "and why do those who know him (*i.e.* his friends) not see his days?"—the days when he arises to judgment, days of revelation, days of the Son of man (Ezek. xxx. 3; Luke xvii. 22). Then comes a series of acts of violence, oppression,

persecution, permitted by God—the removal of landmarks (Deut. xix. 14; xxvii. 17; Prov. xxii. 28; xxiii. 10); the plunder of herds (ch. xx. 19); the taking of the property of the helpless in pledge (Exod. xxii. 26; Deut. xxiv. 6); the thrusting of the poor from the way into pathless spots, so that the miserable of the land are compelled to hide themselves from the intolerable oppression.

II. THE MISERY OF THE PERSECUTED. (Vers. 5—8.) Ver. 5 is an apt description of the beggarly vagabond way of life of these Troglodytes, the types of the present Hottentots or Bushmen in South Africa: "As wild asses in the desert they go forth in their daily work, looking out for booty; the steppe gives them food for their children. On the field they reap the fodder of the cattle, and glean the vineyard of the wicked," thievishly not labouring in his service. Naked, cold, shelterless, exposed to the rain amidst the mountains, they cower for shelter among the rocks (vers. 7, 8).

III. FURTHER DESCRIPTIONS OF TYRANNY. (Vers. 9—12.) The orphan is torn from the mother's breast by cruel creditors, who intend to repay themselves by bringing up the child as a slave. The property of the poor is seized in pledge (comp. Amos ii. 8; Micah ii. 9). Then follows another picture of the victims of oppression, not now as wanderers of the steppe, but as the wretched denizens of inhabited cities (vers. 10—12). In nakedness and hunger, they carry sheaves for the supply of the rich man's table, while they themselves are starving. And thus the cry of those whose wages have been kept back by fraud goes up to Heaven (Deut. xxv. 4; 1 Tim. v. 18; Jas. v. 4). We have a picture of ancient labour in the olive- and vine-growing East. While they press the olive or tread the wine-press they suffer cruelly from thirst. The groans of dying men fill the air, "and yet God never speaks a word!" "He heeds not the folly" with which these impious tyrants disregard and trample upon the moral order.—J.

Vers. 13—25.—*Pictures of secret and unpunished evil-doers.* I. THE MURDERER AND THE ADULTERER. (Vers. 13—17.) A class of the wicked different from the foregoing is now placed before us; rebels, revolters against the light, who refuse to know anything of the ways of light, and to abide in its paths. These are the "children of darkness," so emphatically contrasted in the New Testament with the "children of light" (Rom. xiii. 12; Eph. v. 8, etc.; 1 Thess. v. 5). Before the morning breaks, the murderer rises, to strike down the poor and needy, and at night he carries on the trade of the thief. The adulterer waits for the dusk, and veils his face (Prov. vii. 9). In the darkness houses are broken into by men who have shut themselves up during the day—men who have no affinity with the light, as the description repeats (ver. 16). To these malefactors the dense darkness is their morning; for then, when others sleep from daily toil, their vile work and trade begin, "because they know the terrors of the gloomy darkness" (ver. 17), being as familiar with them as others are with the bright daytime. The joyous consciousness, the cheerful spirits of the children of the light, are contrasted with the fear, the anxiety, the incessant terrors of the children of darkness. Conscience, that makes cowards of all, will not suffer the most hardened to escape. "Certain dregs of conscience" will remain even in the most imbruted; the murderer will start at the shadow of a falling leaf. When the light that is within a man has become darkness, the very blessed day itself is turned to night. In their revolt from God, the eternal Light, they carry about night in their bosom, and all their terrors are present to them in the brightness of the day (Matt. vi. 23; John xi. 10).

II. JUDGMENT ON THESE EVIL-DOERS; ITS CERTAINTY. (Vers. 18—21.) They pass away swiftly as upon some gliding flood (ch. ix. 26; Hos. x. 7). His portion in the land being cursed—either by men or by God, or by both—the wicked man no more bends his steps to his vineyard and his other beloved possessions. Then—a powerful comparison—as dryness and heat carry away the short snows of winter, so the sinner evaporates as it were into hell (Ps. xlix. 14; xxi. 9). Forgotten by a mother's womb! Deserted even of the most tenacious affections the human heart can know, worms make a dainty repast upon his flesh. He is like a blasted tree upon the heath, or a felled trunk in the forest (ch. xix. 10; Eccles. xi. 3; Dan. iv. 10). For he was rotten at the core; the heart of kindly affections was eaten away; he had plundered the childless and dealt cruelly with the widow.

III. JUDGMENT, THOUGH CERTAIN, IS DELAYED. (Vers. 22—24.) "God maintains the tyrant for a long time by his power," does not execute judgment at once (Isa. xiii.

22; Ps. xxxvi. 11; lxxxv. 6). Although the oppressor is sometimes in despair of life, yet he rises up and flourishes again. God grants him safety, and he is supported, and God's eyes are upon his ways to protect and to bless. But it is for a little while only that this recovery and this security last—then they vanish (Gen. v. 24). Oppressors are bowed down, perish, pass away like ears of corn.

Conclusion of Job's address. "If it should not be so, who will punish me for lies, and make my speech as nought?" It is a triumphant expression of his superiority, maintained in these lessons of experience on the incomparable dealings of God in the destinies of men. Because sin seems unpunished, it is not forgotten. Retribution is certain, though it may be delayed. The "treacherous calm" is more to be dreaded than the "tempests overhead." The greater the forbearance and the long-suffering shown by God towards the wicked, the more severe their punishment in the end.—J.

Vers. 1—22.—*Apparent anomalies in the Divine judgment.* Job again points to the anomalous conditions of human life—goodness, which has its approval in every breast, and on which, by universal consent of belief, a Divine blessing rests, is nevertheless often overcast with the shadow of calamity; and, on the other hand, evil-doing, which merits only judgment, affliction, and correction, is often found to prosper. To it outward events seem to be favourable. Men sin without let or hindrance. Apparently, "God layeth not folly to them." This aspect of human affairs is much dwelt upon in the Book of Job; it seems to be one of the central themes of the book. It finds its exemplification in the case of Job himself. The principal idea of the book is the unravelling of this mysterious confusion. Punishment may follow evil-doing, but it does not always immediately accompany it. Therefore some explanation is needed. It is evident—

I. THAT A TRUE ESTIMATE OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENT MUST NOT BE BASED ON MERE INCIDENTS. Incidents do not always explain themselves. There are hidden springs of events. We know but little of every incident. We cannot trace its rise or its end. Other considerations must be taken into view besides the mere events on which judgment is to be passed.

II. THE ESTIMATE OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENT MUST NOT BE BASED ON A PARTIAL VIEW. All the materials needed to enable one to form a just estimate of God's dealings in any single instance are not always immediately to hand. Much is hidden. Many purposes are to be served as much by the Divine inaction as by the Divine work. Men expect judgment upon an evil work to be presently executed. The Divine hand is withheld for many purposes which are not apparent. All judgment, to be true, must take all things into account. A wide range of vision needed for this. Few have opportunity of making it; therefore judgment must be suspended.

III. THE ESTIMATE OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENT CAN ONLY BE TRULY FORMED WHEN THE WHOLE PURPOSES OF GOD ARE MADE KNOWN. The one purpose most vital to a correct estimate may be withheld. It may be beyond the power of the human mind to grasp all. Certainly it is not possible to see all the bearings of the conduct of men. God alone can see the end from the beginning. In patience then must men wait for the end. A final judgment is needed to clear up the apparent anomalies of the present. Judgment upon the wicked is mercifully suspended that men may repent; chastisement falls upon the righteous for the perfecting of character. In due time the chastened, sorrowful, but good man shall receive an ample reward. These latter truths are especially illustrated in the history of Job.—R. G.

Vers. 23, 24.—*The prosperity of the wicked unsolved.* In the midst of many apparent anomalies in the method of the Divine dealing with evil-doing, there shines out one obvious indication of the Divine judgment against the evil-doer. "They are exalted for a little while," but suddenly they "are gone and brought low." Patiently the good Ruler waits, giving opportunity for repentance and amendment; but if the wicked return not, he will bend his bow and make ready his arrow upon the string. Iniquity shall not go wholly unpunished; nor shall that punishment be merely a hidden one—it shall be made apparent. Such is the general testimony and experience; but there are many striking instances which seem to contradict this view, and Job adduces the frequent prosperity of the evil-doer.

I. THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED IS AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY. Even with the clearer light that now shines on human life it is not possible wholly to divest the mind of the feeling of surprise at the anomalous instances of prospering wickedness and suffering virtue.

II. THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED A FURTHER EXERCISE TO THE PATIENCE AND FAITH OF THE GODLY. It demands that the eye of faith be turned upwards to God. Events do not explain themselves. Nor are men able to find the Divine purposes revealed by events. More and more must the tried and tempted believer look off from the uncertain event, and place his faith in God alone. That faith is strained, but it grows thereby.

III. THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED IS NO GUARANTEE OF DEFENCE FROM JUDGMENT. Judgment lingers. It is even hidden. The good Lord of all would fain altogether restrain it. He rejoices in mercy. Wickedness often takes advantage of the withholding of judgment; but in this is no assurance that the judgment which is held back shall not be revealed.

IV. THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED NEEDS THE SOLUTION OF THE FUTURE. It points to a future judgment when men must give account, and seems to demand it. In that future what is mysterious in history will doubtless be made plain. No work can be fairly estimated until its completion. If it ever please the Lord of all to justify his dealings with men, he will do it in that dread judgment when each shall receive the due reward of his deeds.

V. THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED MAY BE A MERCIFUL FORBEARANCE IN THE HOPE OF REPENTANCE. God is kind, and waiteth long for the returning one, in hope that even the goodness of God may lead him to repentance. How often is this abused! but such is the spirit of wrong that it abuses the best of God's gifts, and is indifferent to the kindest of God's dealings.

The Book of Job represents the entanglement of human affairs, but it throws light upon it and helps to resolve it. We live in clearer light, but the clearest light of all has yet to shine when we shall see light in his light. For this we must prepare and patiently wait.—R. G.

Ver. 1.—*God's special days.* Job thinks that if it may not be always possible to see God, there may at least be certain times when he can be found. If he cannot be always giving an audience to his people, can he not be like a judge on circuit, allowing a day for those who would seek his aid at each part of his dominions?

I. THERE ARE TIMES OF SPECIAL DIVINE MANIFESTATION. God does give, in some manner, what Job is asking for. There is the "day of the Lord," when he breaks through the settled order of the world, and sets his court as the Judge of all men. Such a day was often spoken of by the Hebrew prophets. It came in Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem, and again in the later overthrow of the city by Titus and the Roman legions. It is predicted in the great final judgment of the world. So also there is a "day of the Lord" for individual men, when God breaks up the normal condition of life, and in the upheaval and confusion a Divine coming to judgment may be recognized. But God also has gracious seasons of visitation, "times of refreshing from the Lord." Then the soul perceives his nearness, and enters into the joy and light of his presence.

II. GOD IS PRESENT WHEN HE DOES NOT MANIFEST HIMSELF. Although when thus simply stated this is a truism, it is certainly not commonly recognized in the world. Nobody denies it; yet many ignore it. God's presence being invisible, and not generally evidenced by startling signs, men come to pass it by in their full absorption in secular pursuits. The practical question then arises—How may the constant unseen presence of God come to be more fully recognized? It is absolutely necessary that we should learn to withdraw ourselves more from the things that are seen and temporal. If the pressure of worldly pursuits is allowed to crowd the thought of God out of the soul, the result must be a perfect deadness in regard to his presence—a practical atheism, a living as though there were no God. When the desolation and dreariness of this life is perceived, we may well start back in horror from such a condition of spiritual decay.

III. IT IS FOOLISH TO WAIT FOR A NEW MANIFESTATION OF GOD. Job seemed to need this because his position was peculiar, and he was set to work out new problems

of providence. But we have, what he had not, the fuller revelation of God in Christ. What we now need is not a fresh revelation, but eyes to read and hearts to perceive the Christian revelation. External, visible manifestations of God are not to be looked for now. Miracles were useful in the childhood of the race and in the infancy of the Church, but we have no right to expect miracles to make God better known to us. With us the need is of an interior illumination. So long as our spiritual sympathies are blind to God, no external manifestation will satisfy our needs. At the same time, we may well pray for God's hand to be stretched forth in action. There are huge wrongs in the world and sorrowful miseries. The Church cries out for the fuller coming of Christ in his kingdom.—W. F. A.

Ver. 2.—*Removing the landmarks.* This was an old offence under the Jewish Law (Deut. xix. 14). Here it appears first in a list of unjust actions. It introduces us to questions concerning the ethics of property.

I. PRIVATE PROPERTY IS RECOGNIZED BY SCRIPTURE. We cannot say that this indubitable fact is a complete answer to the proposals of the socialist, because it is not the function of revelation to determine social systems. It comes in to regulate our conduct under existing arrangements. Still, the recognition of private property shows that it is not in itself an evil thing. It may be urged that similar arguments would apply to polygamy and slavery, both of which are recognized and regulated in the Bible. There is this difference, however, that an enlightened Christian conscience perceives that the last-named practices are evil, and could only have been tolerated for a time to prevent greater evils; but the Christian conscience does not repudiate the idea of private property. Socialism may be fairly presented and argued about on grounds of expediency; but it cannot claim Christian teaching as favouring it rather than a wise and brotherly exercise of the rights of property. The short, temporary experiment at Jerusalem, when the disciples held all things in common, whatever this was (and it was far short of socialism), soon broke down. It was never urged on apostolic authority; it cannot be quoted as the model for all Church life.

II. PRIVATE PROPERTY NEEDS CLEAR DEFINITION. There must be landmarks, or there will be trespassing, springing from misunderstanding, leading to quarrelling. Wars between nations arise often out of disputes about boundaries, and private differences most frequently originate in a want of common agreement in the definition of rights. This is true of abstract as well as concrete rights. Nothing is more necessary for the maintenance of social order than that each individual in the state should know the limits that the just claims of others put upon his liberty. Absolute freedom is only possible on the prairie, or for a Robinson Crusoe on his solitary island. Directly we come to live in society we have to study mutual harmony, and to adjust the claims of neighbours. The perfect state becomes a sort of mosaic in which each individual has his place without overlapping that of his neighbour.

III. ONLY CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE WILL PREVENT THE ABUSE OF PRIVATE PROPERTY. Each man is tempted to enlarge upon his rights. Without considering himself a thief, he is urged to remove the landmarks to his own advantage. State justice and the strong arm of the law prevent this wrong as far as possible. But real justice between man and man can never be perfectly established by government. There are innumerable ways in which the strong can oppress the weak, and the cunning impose upon the unwary, without any interference by the law. We must have a spirit of justice in the people to prevent these evils. Now, it is the glory of the Old Testament that it constantly impresses on us the duty of justice and the sin of injustice. This grand lesson is not the less imperative because we live in New Testament times. The grace of Christ is the inspiration of all goodness. No one can be a true Christian who is not upright in business, and straightforward in his dealings with his neighbours. Christian charity does not dispense with the primitive duty of justice.—W. F. A.

Ver. 4.—*Oppressing the poor.* I. A COMMON PRACTICE. The Old Testament rings with denunciations of this evil, showing that it was rife in the days of ancient Israel. The New Testament repeats the denunciations of the Old. John the Baptist and Christ himself had to speak against unjust exactions. St. James suggests that the practice was even found in Christian Churches (Jas. v. 4). It has not disappeared in our own

day, though it often assumes subtle and deceptive forms. Many things contribute to an unfair treatment of the poor. 1. *Their ignorance.* They do not always know their rights, nor perceive where cunning men have an advantage over them. Thus they are not able to protect themselves fairly. 2. *Their obscurity.* It is difficult for a poor person who has been wronged to attract attention. Nobody knows him. He has no influential friends. 3. *Their inability to obtain legal redress.* Theoretically the law is equal in its treatment of rich and poor. Practically it is nothing of the kind. For the law is proverbially costly, and a poor man cannot afford to put its machinery in motion. 4. *Their prejudiced position.* People look askance at shabby clothes. If a man is low in the social scale, a certain stigma attaches to him in the eyes of money-worshippers. His poverty is a reproach. Our own day has seen the emancipation of labour. The organized working classes can exact their rights. But the very poor are beneath the help of the new trades union machinery. The tendency of the sweating system and of other forms of selfishness is to grind down and oppress the most helpless and needy.

II. A GREAT SIN. The commonness of the practice does not lessen its guilt. Because many of the well-to-do people who manage affairs combine to get as much as they can for themselves out of the less fortunate people beneath them, they are not individually innocent. The law regards combination to do a wrong as conspiracy, and therefore as an aggravated offence; and conspiracy to oppress the poor is an aggravated offence in the sight of God. 1. *Against justice.* Poor men have their rights, even if the law cannot help them to exact them. A right is not the less morally inviolable because means cannot be found to put it in force. This may not be recognized now. But the righteous government of God cannot ignore the sin of trampling on the just claims of the helpless. 2. *Against Christian brotherhood.* Christ has taught us to rise above the plea of Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" He has shown that we are not to regard ourselves as self-contained, or as having no interest in our neighbours. The parable of "the good Samaritan" has set before us for all time the pattern of the conduct that he approves of. All who need have claims upon us—claims springing directly out of their need and our neighbourhood in regard to them. Christ's own life and work teach us that the helpless are our brothers. To oppress them is to commit an outrage against members of our own family. It is the mission of Christianity to spread the spirit of brotherhood among men, and so to substitute brotherly kindness for heartless oppression.—W. F. A.

VER. 12.—*The bitter cry of the city.* An ominous characteristic of the social condition of modern England is the continuous draining of the population out of the rural districts into the cities. No greater scandal exists than the condition of the crowded multitudes in these great centres. From time to time we are roused by some prophet-voice that draws our attention to the misery and degradation of the city poor, and warns us of the danger that lurks therein. But it is not enough to be periodically startled, and to make occasional spasmodic efforts to remedy the evil. Continuous study and patient, unremitting toil are called for to cope with the dark problem. The bitter cry is shrill and penetrating, and of many voices.

I. POVERTY. This is the first visible cause of the misery. The poor regard London as an Eldorado. It seems as though they must get some employment in the vast, busy city. So they pour into it in shoals. There individually they are lost sight of. The very multitude of them drowns their separate claims and appeals. A huge mass of poverty does not touch personal sympathies. It is a horror of misery, but it does not call for the aid that the distress of one person whose exact circumstances and history are known elicits.

II. OVERCROWDING. This evil means more than wretchedness. It is a distinct cause of moral deterioration, a direct source of dark vices. Herded like beasts, is it wonderful that men live like beasts? The decencies of life are impossible. All the finer feelings are crushed by coarse surroundings. The gracious influences of silence and privacy are unknown. People are forced to live and move and have their being in the midst of a noisy mob. The certain result is a break-down of civilization, and a corrupt civilization is worse than barbarism. The savagery of city slums is of a more degraded type than that of African forests.

III. DRINK. All who have looked carefully into the condition of the miserably poor of great cities are driven to the one conclusion that the most prolific source of evil is intemperance. No doubt the overcrowding, the misery, the absence of all other resources drive people to this one desperate consolation. We must remove the causes of intemperance if we would sweep away the vice. Still, it is a vice. Indulgence in it is morally degrading. So huge a vice demands exceptional treatment. It is the duty of Christian people not merely to enjoy their æsthetic worship, but also to follow Christ in saving the lost. Temperance work must take a prominent place in the activities of the Church.

IV. NARROWNESS OF LIFE. The town life is dingy and compressed. The influences of nature are not felt. The School Board has not yet brought the spirit of culture within the horizon of the crowded people in the lower parts of great cities. Religion is little more than a name to too many of these unhappy people. Such a cramped and crushed life cannot grow and bear fruit in the graces of human experience. Here, then, is a bitter cry that all Christians should hearken to for Christ's sake. It is humiliating to a Christian nation that such a cry should be heard in our land; it will be a sign that our religion is but hypocritical Pharisaism if the cry is unheeded.—W. F. A.

Ver. 19.—*The death-penalty of sin.* Job admits this as freely as his friends. Sin must lead to the grave. It may not do this so swiftly as the friends assume; nor may the course thither be what they anticipate. But, in the long run, a man's sin must be his death.

I. THE SPECIFIC PENALTY OF SIN IS DEATH. Sin may fulfil, and more than fulfil, some of its promises first; but the end is death. This dreadful fact, which is made clear to us from the story of Adam and Eve, throughout the whole of the Old and New Testaments, is obscured by popular conceptions of the future. The Church has regarded pain as the main consequence of sin. The gruesome mediæval hell has been presented to the trembling sinner as the goal of his evil course. Now suffering, bitter and grievous, is in store for the impenitent, for Christ speaks of "wailing and gnashing of teeth." But suffering is not the only end of sin. Much more frequent than any references to the suffering of the wicked are the Scripture warnings of death and destruction. Whatever interpretation we put upon these warnings—whether we take them as denoting absolute extinction of being, pure annihilation, or whether we regard them as pointing to some corrupting, dissolving influence—they mean something else than keen, wakeful pain.

II. THE DEATH-PENALTY IS A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE OF SIN. Job tells us that the effect is like that of drought and heat consuming the snow-waters. No destroying angel need be sent forth with flaming sword to cut down the army of sinners. They are their own destroyers. The sword is in their own conduct. This is often seen in the physical effects of vice, which sows seeds of disease, and hastens premature decay. It is always present in the moral consequences of evil. The spiritual nature is diseased, corrupted, lowered. Powers and faculties fade and wither away. The true self shrinks and shrivels. Existence in the body on earth becomes a living death. When the life of the body is gone it is difficult to see what life is left, for this life seemed to be all that was possessed.

III. THE DEATH-PENALTY CAN ONLY BE AVOIDED BY THE GENERATION OF A NEW LIFE. Sentence has gone out against us; the sentence is in our own constitution. Here is the difficulty. If it were external, an external process might abolish it; but seeing that it is internal, it must be dealt with internally. No mere decree of pardon will be sufficient, for the poison is in the blood, the death is already at work there. A simple order of forgiveness can do nothing. The pressing need is for an antidote within. Nay, the old self has been so injured and corrupted by sin, that a new life is needed. We are beyond cure; we are like lepers who have lost limbs in their disease. Healing is not enough; a new creation is necessary. Now, this is just what Christ effects. He does not only give external pardon, he is not satisfied to manipulate legal points; he regenerates. He says, "Ye must be born again" (John iii. 3); and St. Paul tells us that "he that is in Christ Jesus is a new creature" (2 Cor. v. 17).—W. F. A.

Ver. 24.—"*A little while.*" Job is here taking a step towards the solution of the

problem that his misfortunes have raised. Rejecting the hackneyed doctrine of his friends that trouble comes as the temporal punishment of sin, and seeing that bad men often escape trouble, he concludes that all the injustice is but temporary. The prosperity of the wicked is but for "a little while." Before long there will be a fair treatment of all.

I. WICKEDNESS MAY BE ACCOMPANIED BY TEMPORARY PROSPERITY. 1. *This is an obvious fact.* Only the extraordinary blindness of bigotry could have allowed the three friends to deny it. Job has only to point to events which are open to the eyes of all, to show that there are bad prosperous men. This is always admitted when it is approached from another point of view, *i.e.* when the sins of the rich are denounced. 2. *This should not dismay us.* All faith has grown up in face of the obvious fact of the prosperity of the wicked. If we have not considered it, others have in bygone ages. Yet faith has flourished and triumphed, although she could not explain the mystery. Therefore faith may still find ground to stand on, even when one more person discovers to his surprise what has always been patent to all who would take the trouble to observe it. 3. *This cannot justify wickedness.* Earthly prosperity is not the seal of heavenly approval. The assumption that it is so only originated in a mistake. Here ancient orthodoxy has proved to be in error. If the notion is erroneous when used against a man in misfortune, it is equally erroneous when claimed by one who is temporarily prosperous.

II. THE PROSPERITY THAT ACCOMPANIES WICKEDNESS CAN ONLY ENDURE FOR A LITTLE WHILE. 1. *It does not outlast death.* By the nature of things it cannot do so, because it simply springs from accidental circumstances and earthly influences, which are confined to this life. It has not its source in a deep and enduring spiritual experience. The very triumph of it rests on the score of the spiritual. But though the spiritual may be trampled on now, it cannot be pretended that the material will continue after death. Riches, pleasures, pomp, and prowess are all left behind on this side of the grave. 2. *Its earthly existence is brief.* The careless man may postpone all consideration of his end. He may be satisfied that he has enough and to spare for the present. Nevertheless, the present is rushing away from him. As he looks back, all past years seem to be but a brief period, and *coming* years will accelerate their speed. What, then, is this short tenure of prosperity for which he is selling himself? A passing shadow! 3. *It is of no worth even while possessed.* The temporary character of this prosperity of the wicked is a sign that it is a hollow deception. Its charms are proved to be meretricious by the fact that it will not remain with us. So ephemeral a good cannot be substantial. The seeds of decay are in it from the first. And what is its joy but a deceitful mockery? There is a dreadful doom in the very quietness of this hopeless life. All that is worth living for is gone out of it. Rich, gay, outwardly prosperous, the soul is

"Left in God's contempt apart,
With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart."

W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXV.

Vers. 1—6.—Far from accepting Job's challenge, and grappling with the difficulty involved in the frequent, if not universal, prosperity of the wicked, Bildad, in his weak reply, entirely avoids the subject, and limits himself to briefly touching two old and well-worn topics—the might of God (vers. 2, 3) and the universal sinfulness of men. On neither of these two points does he throw any fresh light. He avoids, however, the reckless charges of Eliphaz (ch. xxii. 5—9) as well as the coarse menaces of Zophar (ch. xx. 5—29).

Vers. 1, 2.—**Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, Dominion and fear are with him** (*i.e.* with God). God is the absolute Sovereign of the universe, to whom, therefore, all created beings must perforce submit themselves. He is also terrible in his might, so that for their own sakes men should submit to his decrees. Through his active sovereignty, and the fear which he inspires, **he maketh peace in his high places.** The meaning may be that, through these high attributes, God *maintains* peace among the dwellers in the supernal regions; but beyond this there is a possible allusion to a time in which peace was disturbed, and the Almighty had to "make" it, or re-establish it. (On the subject of the "war in heaven,"

and the defeat and subjection of the rebels, see the comment on ch. ix. 13.)

Ver. 3.—**Is there any number of his armies?** (comp. Ps. lxviii. 17, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels;" and Dan. vii. 10, "Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him;" see also 2 Kings vi. 16, 17; Matt. xxvi. 53; Heb. xii. 22; Rev. ix. 16). The number of the angels at any given time must be a definite one. But as there is nothing to limit the further exercise of creative power in this direction, the possible number is indefinite. **And upon whom doth not his light arise?** Upon what being among all the countless thousands whom he hath created, or will create, does not the brightness of his effulgence shine in such sort that they are illumined by him, and themselves shine with a mere reflected splendour?

Ver. 4.—**How then can man be justified with God?** If God's creatures have no brightness of their own, and, when they shine, shine only with a reflected radiance, then certainly can no man be justified by his own merits. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23). **Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?** (comp. ch. xiv. 4, "Who shall bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one;" and the comment *ad loc.*).

Ver. 5.—**Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not.** Observe, *i.e.*, all that is purely bright in creation, "even to the moon," the most purely bright object of all, and consider that in God's sight, compared to his radiance, it has no brightness—"it shineth not." Or turn your attention from the moon to the stars, rivals of the moon in purity and brilliance, and reflect that **the stars are not pure in his sight.** A sort of dusky veil overspreads them.

Ver. 6.—**How much less man,** that is **a worm? and the son of man,** which is **a worm?** (comp. Ps. xxii. 6). How much less can man be pure in God's sight! An undoubted truth, or rather, perhaps, a truism, but not to the point, for Job has never really maintained that he is without sin (see ch. vii. 20, 21; ix. 2, 20, etc.). He has only maintained that his sins have not been of such a character as to account for his sufferings.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Bildad to Job: The greatness of God and the littleness of man: an old sermon reproduced.* I. THE GREATNESS OF GOD. To impress Job with suitable conceptions of the ineffable majesty of that Divine Being before whom he desired so confidently and, as it appeared to the speaker, so irreverently to come (ch. xxiii. 3—5), Bildad depicts God's dominion as: 1. *Absolute in its character.* "Dominion is with him" (ver. 2); *i.e.* as it is with no other. Earthly potentates derive their sovereignty from him (Prov. viii. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 14). He also is the Fountain of authority for whatever principalities and powers exist in the heavenly places (Col. i. 16). But dominion exists in God essentially, absolutely, permanently. The uncreated, underived, and governmental supremacy of God is exhibited in Scripture with singular lucidity and fulness (Gen. xiv. 19; Deut. x. 14; 2 Kings xix. 15; 1 Chron. xxix. 11; Ps. xcv. 3; Matt. xi. 25; Rev. xix. 6). 2. *Awe-inspiring in its influence.* "Dominion and *fear* are with him" (ver. 2), the term "fear" defining the effect produced upon the creaturely imagination by the sublime majesty of the unnamed Deity, Bildad's omission of that Deity's name being a striking illustration of the precise import of his words. Reverential awe is the proper attitude for a creature to assume in presence of God (Deut. v. 29; x. 12; Josh. xxiv. 14; 2 Kings xvii. 36; Ps. ii. 11); who should be feared by the inhabitants of earth generally (Ps. xxxiii. 8), by his redeemed ones especially (Exod. xv. 11; Ps. lxxxix. 17), by such as would serve him acceptably (Heb. xii. 28), by those who would dwell with him continually (Rev. xi. 18), by angelic hosts (Isa. vi. 2) and glorified saints (Rev. xv. 4). This fear should be based on the majestical government of God, as Lord of heaven and earth. 3. *Peaceful in its efficiency.* "He maketh peace in his high places" (ver. 2), *i.e.* "among the celestial beings immediately surrounding him" (Delitzsch); producing (1) harmony instead of discord, quenching all symptoms of internal dissension, and, where internecine warfare may have broken out, restoring the contending combatants to a state of tranquil amity; (2) reconciliation instead of estrangement, pointing probably to some sublime act of mediation by which the holy angels were confirmed in obedience (*e.g.* the enthronement of Christ as Mediator: Candlish, 'The Fatherhood of God,' p. 279); and (3) subjugation instead of revolt, exhibiting his power so effectively against the rebel angels that

they are completely prevented from working harm against his throne or empire, but are kept in chains against the judgment of the great day. As God rules in heaven, so also does he reign on earth in and through Christ, who is our Peacemaker (Eph. ii. 14), having by his incarnation made peace (unity instead of division) between Jew and Gentile, by his cross produced at-one-ment (the reconciliation of both in one body unto God), and by his power will ultimately effect the complete subjugation of his foes (1 Cor. xv. 24—28). 4. *Illimitable in its sway.* "Is there any number of his armies?" (ver. 3). The armies alluded to are (1) the angels (Ps. ciii. 21), who are represented in Scripture as an innumerable (Ps. lxviii. 17; Heb. xii. 22; Rev. v. 11) host, arrayed in military order (Dan. iv. 35), whose shining legions are led on by the power of the supreme Creator (Ps. civ. 4; Matt. xxv. 31), every individual member thereof being promptly obedient to that Creator's will (Zech. vi. 5; Matt. xxiv. 21; Heb. i. 14). (2) The stars, which also are in Scripture depicted as an army (Isa. xl. 26), are discovered by modern science to be immensely more numerous than ever entered into the mind of Bildad to conceive. Though not intended by Bildad, God's armies may be said also to include (3) the creatures generally, which are all in his hand and under his control. 5. *Beneficent in its administration.* "And upon whom doth not his light arise?" (ver. 3). (1) The light of his material sun, whose cheering beams, created (Gen. i. 16) and directed by him, diffuse themselves abroad upon the face of earth (Ps. xix. 6), awaking life, imparting health, producing beauty, inspiring joy, blessing all creatures animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, good and bad alike (Matt. v. 45). A sunless earth would be an arctic region of perpetual ice, a dismal chamber of horrors, a prison-house of misery, a cheerless sepulchre of death. Besides being signal demonstrations of God's creative wisdom and power, the making of light and the disposition of it in a central orb are striking tokens of his goodness. (2) The light of his providential favour, in respect of which he is styled "the Father of lights" (Jas. i. 17). The goodness of God, like the light of the sun, is freely flowing (Jas. i. 5), far-extending (Ps. xxxiii. 5), all-enriching (Ps. cxlv. 9), never-failing (Ps. c. 5). As the Divine beneficence blesses all God's terrestrial creatures, we may rest assured it does not forget his celestial armies of saints and angels. (3) The light of his gracious truth, which is also set forth in Scripture under the emblem of light (Isa. ii. 5; ix. 2; John xii. 35; 2 Cor. iv. 4). Christ, in whom that light is embodied (John i. 4; ix. 5), is characterized as the true Light (John i. 8, 9), being designed for the saving illumination of the spiritually benighted, collectively and individually. The light of his gospel is destined to circle round the earth like the sun (Ps. xix. 4; Rom. x. 18). 6. *All-transcending in its splendour.* "Whom doth not his light surpass?" (Delitzsch). The resplendent Ruler of the numberless legions of heaven is One whose glory, *i.e.* as a personal Sovereign, outshines in radiance that of each and all of those beings of light over whom he reigns. These latter have no light they derive not from him, as the moon and planets have none they receive not from the sun, and Christians none that does not come to them from Christ, round whom they revolve like attendant satellites; and so the glory which the angels or other creatures have is as no glory by reason of "the glory that excelleth."

II. THE LITTLENESS OF MAN. With a painful lack of originality, Bildad, the master of ancient laws and popular traditions, quietly appropriates a sentiment which already Eliphaz had uttered (ch. iv. 17—21; xv. 14—16), and to which even Job had assented (ch. ix. 2; xiv. 4), that in comparison with so transcendently glorious a Being man must for ever be immeasurably insignificant and mean. 1. *Guilty.* "How then can man be justified with God?" (ver. 4). The argument is *à fortiori:* If these radiant beings constituting God's celestial armies would never think of contending with him in order to establish the faultless purity of their characters, it is simply monstrous to suppose that a frail man, whose feebleness is the result of a depraved moral constitution, would ever succeed in securing acquittal before the bar of a holy God. The language implies (1) that no man can be justified by works—a doctrine pervading both the Old and New Testaments (ch. ix. 2; Ps. cxliii. 2; Isa. lvii. 12; Rom. iii. 20; Eph. ii. 9; Titus iii. 5); (2) that if a man is to be justified, it must be by grace (Gen. xv. 6; Ps. xxxii. 2; Rom. iii. 24; v. 21; Titus iii. 7), *i.e.* without works and by faith; while it seems also to teach (3) that the legal standing of the angels before the throne is not of works any more than man's—a doctrine of which

obscure hints are believed to be found in Scripture (cf. Candlish's 'Fatherhood of God,' lect. vi. p. 250). 2. *Impure.* "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" (ver. 4). In Bildad's estimation the moral defilement of man is (1) involved in his origin, as being the child of woman—a sentiment in which Job (cf. ch. xiv. 1, 4) and Eliphaz (ch. xv. 14) alike concur (cf. homiletics, *in loc.*); (2) proved by his station: "Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight: how much less, then, man?" (vers. 5, 6). Bildad, soaring at a lower altitude than Eliphaz (ch. iv. 18), contrasts the glory of God with the purity of his highest creatures. The incomparable brilliance of an Oriental evening sky is attested by travellers; yet the pale, clear, silver whiteness of the moon's light, and the sparkling lustre of the starry orbs, become dimmed beside the insufferable radiance of the Divine glory (1 Tim. vi. 16). The imperfection of the highest creatures being thus established, it follows that man, one of the lowest (physically considered), cannot be pure. 3. *Feeble.* "Man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm" (ver. 6). Man is compared by Eliphaz to a dweller in a mud hut (ch. iv. 19), and by Job to a flower springing up from the soil (ch. xiv. 2). He is here likened to a worm bred by putrefaction, *i.e.* a mean, despicable, and insignificant creature (Ps. xxii. 6), which he is (1) in comparison with the rest of creation (Ps. viii. 3, 4; Isa. xli. 24), but much more (2) in comparison with the God of creation (Isa. xl. 22).

Learn: 1. The claim God has on the reverential homage of his creatures. 2. The antiquity of the gospel doctrine of justification by faith. 3. The humility man should cultivate in thinking of himself. 4. The infinite condescension of him who is the Lord of all the armies of light in becoming a worm and no man. 5. The transcendent glory of Divine grace which contemplates the elevation of "man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm," to a position higher than the stars or the angels; yea, to a partnership in that very dominion (Rev. iii. 21) which belongs to God.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The majesty of God and the weakness of man.* Leaving untouched the perplexing question of the prosperity of bad men, Bildad makes the point of his attack upon Job his assertions of innocence (ch. xxiii. 10—12). His object is to insist that, the distance between man and God being infinite, man cannot enter into controversy with God, nor can he be pure in his eyes. The address of Bildad consists mainly of repetitions from the previous discourses of Eliphaz (ch. iv. 17, *sqq.*; xv. 14, *sqq.*)—descriptions of the majesty and sublimity of God. In reply, Job seizes the opportunity offered by his antagonist, and, after a few bitter words of self-vindication, proceeds to outvie and far surpass Bildad in his description of the greatness of God.

I. GOD'S MAJESTY; AND APPLICATION. (Vers. 2—4.) 1. *Absolute power*, carrying with it overwhelming awe into the minds of his subjects—a power which has quelled the earlier discord of heaven and made peace in those heights—is associated with God (ver. 2). He is "Lord of hosts," and those hosts are innumerable—the stars of heaven, the angels who inhabit and guide them (ch. xv. 15); and all the marvellous forces of nature—winds, lightnings, waves (ch. xxxviii. 19—21; Ps. civ. 4), which do his bidding (ver. 3). 2. He is the *absolute Light*, from which all others are but reflected and derived. It is his garment and his glory (Ps. civ. 2; Ezek. i. 27, 28; 1 Tim. vi. 16). It blesses and cheers all that lives (Matt. v. 45). No living creature is exempt from its all-pervading beams. Then how can a mortal be just with God? How can man, in his feebleness, enter into court and contend with absolute Power (comp. ch. ix. 2)? Thus the speaker would convict Job of *folly*. And then comes the second member of ver. 4 leading to the second great thought of the speech: "How can he be pure that is born of a woman?"

II. GOD'S PURITY; AND APPLICATION. (Vers. 5, 6.) The bright silver lustre of the moon seems pale, the stars are dimmed, when compared with the essential and eternal splendour of the Highest—to say nothing of man, the maggot, the worm! The stars are but the outer adornments of the palace and abode of God; and how, then, shall man, living on this dim spot that men call earth, think to meet God on equal terms and dispute with him? If he, like moon and stars, keeps to his rank and order, he

may enjoy the benefit of God; if he attempts to travel beyond it, he will be crushed by the weight of the Divine majesty (Cocceius). The view of yonder glory reminds man of his sin and corruption. The celestial lustre is the sign of celestial purity in the inhabitants of heaven; his frailty and mortality are the evidence of his sin. The time has not yet come when, life and immortality being brought to light, man is conscious of the grandeur of his inward faith and of his spiritual destiny, when he refuses to be crushed by the dazzling might and splendour of the material universe because conscious of affinity to the creative thought.—J.

Ver. 4.—*Condemnation.* If, in the course of Job's replies to his friends, he has sought to exculpate himself from all blame, and to aver his righteousness in the sight of God, he is now answered by a brief speech of his friend, "How can man be justified in the sight of God?" True, Job holdeth fast his integrity; true, he may be free from the accusations brought against him by his friends, who are unable in any other way to explain his suffering lot; yet, although he is so far clear, he shares the deep humiliation which attaches to all, of standing before the Divine throne a condemned criminal. He is unjust. Alas! the very "stars are not pure in his sight; how much less man, that is a worm?" This condemnation and inability of man to justify himself—

I. PUTS AN END TO ALL BOASTFUL SELF-CONFIDENCE BEFORE GOD. How shall the condemned and sinful even enter into controversy with the Most High? How shall the frail child of earth—earth-born and earthly—contend with God. Not Job only, but every one, must be silenced in presence of this truth, which has its witness in each man's breast.

II. IS A CAUSE FOR PENITENT HUMILIATION BEFORE GOD. Truly the place of man—sinful man—is the dust. How shall the unclean dare to draw nigh unto the Holy One? Human feebleness and imperfectness should be sufficient to put men as in the dust; but if sinfulness, if a sense of condemnation before God, be added to this, how much greater cause for self-abasement is there? In penitence man has ground of hope, for the Lord lifteth up the meek; but in presumed self-justification he can only meet with confusion.

III. IS A REASON FOR THE EAGER EMBRACE OF THE MERCY OF GOD IN CHRIST. Whither shall a sinner fly? Where is true safety for him? In the revelation of the mercy of God to the penitent sinner there is an assured hope. This graciousness on the part of the Most High holds out the utmost encouragement to the self-condemned to return; while the inability to justify himself is in itself the highest reason why the gracious overture of God should receive from man an eager response.

IV. IS A HIGH MOTIVE TO STRICTNESS OF LIFE. With how much carefulness and lowliness and effort ought not he to live who by his very nature is so prone to err! "The son of man, which is a worm," ought to seek to order his course before God with the utmost lowliness and care. A pensioner upon the Divine bounty, a criminal at the Divine bar, he has no warrant for rude self-assumption, but has need to seek, in patient, humble effort, to avoid deeper condemnation.—R. G.

Ver. 2.—"*Peace in high places.*" Bildad tries to overawe Job by presenting what is indeed a true idea of God, although, if he had known the patriarch, he would have seen that there was nothing in it that was likely to be accepted as a specific rebuke. Job had maintained his innocence, and had cried out for God to vindicate it: "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" Bildad replies that God is a great Ruler in the heavenly heights, maintaining peace among his angelic armies; how can man be justified with One so great? It is meant to be a rebuke to Job's presumption in appealing to so awful a Judge. Yet, if Job is innocent, why should he not dare to do so? Bildad is right in saying that God is so holy that none can stand before him without being abashed by shame. The unfairness is in making this truth a ground for accusing Job, not of the general evil of fallen creatures, but of exceptional enormities of guilt.

I. GOD RULES OVER ALL. 1. *He is above all.* We rise through the hierarchy of being from one stage to another, and at the head of all we find God. None can equal him, none can reach up to his might and holiness. Supreme in solitary perfection, he crowns the temple of being. 2. *He includes all in his sway.* His exaltation does not involve his separation from his creatures. On the contrary, it gives him a wide scope;

from his exalted position he surveys the whole panorama of existence, and administers the affairs of the universe. 3. *He exerts active influence over all.* God is not an ornamental figure-head. He not only reigns, he rules. His government is absolute; not despotic, only because it is paternal.

II. GOD'S RULE IS A NECESSITY OF THE UNIVERSE. The worlds could not go on without it. Confusion and chaos would follow if he withdrew his hand. 1. *It is needed in heaven.* Even there it is God who keeps the peace. The best-tempered society needs order and government to save it from falling into confusion. Heaven would become a babel of disorder if no regulating power were supreme there. The highest intelligences and the purest spirits require a regulative influence to keep them all in harmony. However well its harps are tuned, and however perfect is its music, the celestial orchestra needs one great leader. 2. *Much more is it needed on earth.* If heavenly beings cannot live aright without Divine guidance and rule, much more is this the case with earthly creatures, who are weak, ignorant, and sinful. If God makes his rule felt in maintaining the perfect order of heaven, assuredly he must make it felt in rectifying the wild disorder of earth.

III. GOD'S RULE SECURES PEACE. 1. *It maintains "peace in high places."* There is peace above, though at present there may be confusion below. The heavens are calm, though the earth is storm-tossed. The changeless blue sky is above the shifting rack of clouds. Stars keep to their spheres. Angels perform their functions. The blessed dead are at rest. If we do but look high enough we shall see peace. 2. *It will bring "peace on earth."* When heaven touches earth the peace of heaven comes down among men. If God can keep peace among the greatest beings, surely he can establish it among puny mortals. He can reconcile all enmity or crush all opposition. Christ has come from the peace of heaven to be "our Peace" (Eph. ii. 14).—W. F. A.

Ver. 3.—*The innumerable armies of God.* I. THEIR VAST NUMBERS. We can see no limit to the physical universe. The starry hemisphere dazzles us with its multitudinous splendour, but the telescope greatly increases our idea of its vastness, resolving fleecy mist into galaxies of worlds, and discovering distant suns invisible to the naked eye; and photography carries the process much further, and peoples the interstellar spaces of the telescope with hosts of still more remote stars. It is not reasonable to suppose that all these worlds are destitute of life, that our little planet is the solitary home of living creatures in a terrific desert of dead worlds. But if the material world be peopled, this may be but a small part of the universe. There may be other realms of existence unseen by the eye of sense; there may be material worlds that do not contain properties that can be detected by any of our five senses, although they are perceptible to the different senses of different orders of beings; and there may be creatures of God existing in regions that are not material, spirits that do not require what we understand by bodies. The revelation of Scripture gives us glimpses of inhabitants of other worlds than ours. It is reasonable to think that the great God rules over hosts of such beings.

II. THEIR ORDERLY ARRAY. They are armies, not mobs. As the physical universe is regulated by law and maintained in order, it is most probable that the same is true of the unseen universe. All that is revealed about God's heavenly hosts shows them to us in obedience to God's will. It is a human figure of speech that represents them as constituting armies. Milton's poetry, added to the visions of the Apocalypse, have impressed our imaginations with military conceptions of the angelic hosts. But we do not know what tasks may be laid upon those armies of God in subduing the evil of the universe. We may be sure that the vulgar thirst for glory, the pride of brute strength, and the cruel rage of bloodshed that characterize our hideous wars, cannot be found among the hosts of heaven. Therefore the military idea of the angels needs to be received with caution. We are directed rather to the higher warlike qualities, *e.g.* discipline and obedience joined to courage and strength.

III. THEIR DIVINE LIGHT. They all have their light from God. On what earthly multitudes does the sun rise every day! Yet there is light for all. But an infinitesimal proportion of the sunlight and heat is received by our world; by far the greater quantity of it is scattered through realms of space. God's light of love reaches all his creatures. There are no remote and dark regions of the universe that lie

beyond his care. As there seems to be no end to the radiation of light when this is not hindered by obstructing objects, so no limit can be discovered to the radiation of God's love. Though the hosts of beings are innumerable, there is a share of God's goodness for each.

"Its streams the whole creation reach,
So plenteous is the store;
Enough for all, enough for each,
Enough for evermore."

W. F. A.

Vers. 5, 6.—*The awe of God's holiness.* I. THE INCOMPARABLE HOLINESS OF GOD. This is a thought that cannot be described in human language. When conscience is aroused, some thrill of the awe of it may open our minds to its sublime meaning. We start from the conception of the absolute sinlessness of God. Not a spot of evil can be found on all he is or does. But holiness is more than negative freedom from sin. It is a real excellence, and on its positive side it expands into infinity. We do not know how far goodness may go. It is like light. No one can conceive how intense this may be; after a short time it becomes too brilliant for our eyes, and we are only blinded when we look at it; but it is conceivable that its intensity may be increased a thousandfold beyond the highest degree that we are capable of perceiving. There may be a brilliancy of light compared with which the glare of a tropical noon is as dull and gloomy as an English November. So there may be a holiness which in its positive character rises above all we can conceive or imagine of goodness into infinite regions of perfection. We can see no limit to the strength and depth of love. Human love may be strong as death. Yet compared to God's love it is but as a feeble, flickering flame lost in the full sunlight. No one can conceive how full and rich God's love is. All the attributes of the Divine holiness expand into infinity. Their greatness is immeasurable and inconceivable.

II. ITS OVERAWING INFLUENCE. It is as though the moon cannot shine before such a Divine light. Even that silver shield seems to be tarnished when set by the side of the brightness of God's holiness. The stars, which are far above the filth and corruption of earth, and move in heavenly spheres, do not seem to be pure in the light of God. This impression is natural, though of course it is thrown into the form of poetic imagery. It leads to the humiliation of all human pride. If what is brightest looks dark in comparison with the splendour of God's holiness, what must man be in his sight? Now, it is possible to abuse these conceptions, as Bildad was doing. God does not make men out to be worse than they are. He does not blame his creatures for not being equal to himself. He does not judge them by his own perfection, but only by their capacities. There is also a foolish way of depreciating humanity. There may be much pride in the heart of a man who calls himself "a worm." Such language is only natural and right when it is wrung out of the soul by a deep consciousness of sin, and by an overwhelming perception of God's holiness. On the other hand, when this is the case, there is no ground for despair. The last stronghold of pride being abandoned, there is room for the mercy of God to come in. God's holiness is just the perfection of his love. The error has been in the separation of the two attributes. In the present day a shallow conception of holiness is tempting men to think lightly of sin, for it is the awe of God's holiness that impresses on us the feeling of our own guilt. Out of the humiliation thus produced springs our only hope—the hope of free pardon and gracious renewal. Then the holiness of God becomes our inspiration; we are called to be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The long discourse of Job now begins, which forms the central and most solid mass of the book. It continues through six chapters (ch. xxvi.—xxxi.). In it Job, after hastily brushing aside Bildad's last speech as superfluous and out of place (vers. 1—4), proceeds to deliver his real sentiments apart from controversial issues. He

sets forth, first of all, the might and majesty of God (vers. 5—14), after which he proceeds to deal with the questions which concern his own integrity, and God's dealings with mankind. The former he still maintains; with respect to the latter, he recants his earlier argumentative contention (ch. xxiv. 2—24), and admits that retribution always or almost always comes upon the wicked at last (ch. xxvii.). In ch. xxviii., after paying a deserved tribute of admiration to man's intelligence and ingenuity in regard to earthly things and physical phenomena, he pronounces the spiritual world and the principles of the Divine government to be inscrutable by him, and his only true wisdom to be right conduct. Finally, he returns to himself, and having given a pathetic description of his old life, with its prosperity and honour (ch. xxix.), and contrasted it with his actual life of degradation, contempt, and suffering (ch. xxx.), he concludes with a solemn protestation of his integrity in all the various duties and obligations imposed upon man by natural law and natural religion (ch. xxxi.). In this way he brings to its termination the colloquy begun with his three friends in ch. iii., and, emphatically to mark that here he closes his own part in the debate, he winds up with the statement, "The words of Job are ended" (ch. xxxi. 40).

Vers. 1, 2.—But Job answered and said, How hast thou helped him that is **without power?** Assuming Bildad's benevolent intentions towards himself, Job asks, how he can suppose that what he has said will in any way be helpful to a person in so helpless a condition? He had told Job nothing that Job had not repeatedly allowed. **How savest thou the arm** that hath **no strength?** It could not invigorate Job's arm, any more than it could cheer his heart, to be told that man was a worm, or that he was wholly unclean in God's sight (ch. xxv. 4, 6).

Ver. 3.—How hast thou counselled him **that hath no wisdom?** What counsel or advice is there in anything that thou hast said, by following which I might be benefited? Admitting my own want of wisdom, how hast thou bettered my case? **And** how **hast thou plenteously declared the thing as it is?** rather, *How hast thou plenteously declared sound knowledge?* What can there be said to have been in the way of sound knowledge, or good practical common sense (תּוּשִׁיָּה), in the discourse which thou hast addressed to me?—a discourse made up of truisms.

Ver. 4.—To whom hast thou uttered words? Whom didst thou intend to address? Surely not me, since thy words touch none of my arguments. **And whose spirit came from thee?** Who prompted thy speech? Was it Eliphaz (comp. ch. iv. 17—19)?

Vers. 5—14.—Job now turns from controversy to the realities of the case, and begins with a full acknowledgment of God's greatness, might, and inscrutableness. As Bildad seemed to have supposed that he needed enlightenment on these points (ch. xxvi. 2—4), Job may have thought it right to make once more a plain profession of his belief (comp. ch. ix. 4—13; xii. 9—25, etc.).

Ver. 5.—Dead things **are formed from under the waters;** rather, *the dead from under the waters tremble.* Hebraists generally are agreed that one of the meanings of Rephaim (רְפָאִים) is "the dead" or the departed, considered especially as inhabitants of Hades (comp. Ps. lxxxviii. 11; Prov. ii. 18; Isa. xiv. 9; xxvi. 14). And if so, this meaning is certainly appropriate here. Bildad had illustrated God's dominion from his power in heaven. Job shows that it exists alike in heaven and earth (vers. 7—13), and in the region under the earth (vers. 5, 6). There, in Sheol, under the waters of the ocean, the dead tremble at the thought of the Most High; they tremble together with other **inhabitants thereof,** as evil spirits, rebel intelligences, cast down to Hades, and there held in durance (Jude 6).

Ver. 6.—Hell is naked before him; *i.e.* "can hide nothing from his eyes"—shows all its inmost recesses. **And destruction hath no covering;** rather, *Abaddon hath no covering* (see the Revised Version). Abaddon is sometimes "destruction," sometimes "the angel of the bottomless pit" (Rev. ix. 11), sometimes "the bottomless pit itself" (Prov. xv. 11). Here the last of these three senses seems to suit best—"the deepest depth of the bottomless pit is no secret to God," but "naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 13).

Ver. 7.—He stretcheth out the north over the empty place. Over what was "empty space" or "chaos" (תֹּהוּ) God stretches out "the north"—a portion of his orderly creation—perhaps the northern portion of the heavens, where are the grandest constellations visible to the inhabitants of the world's northern half. **And hangeth the**

earth upon nothing. "Takes," *i.e.*, "the huge ball of the earth, and suspends it in vacancy, with nothing to support it but his own fixed will, his own firm laws." This is an idea scarcely reached by astronomers in general, at any rate till the time of Hipparchus; and it has, not without reason, been regarded as "a very remarkable instance of anticipation of the discoveries of science" (Stanley Leathes).

Ver. 8.—**He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds**; *i.e.* he makes the clouds, that we see floating in the atmosphere, contain and hold the waters on which the productiveness of the earth depends, and which he restrains, or allows to fall in fertilizing rain, at his pleasure (comp. 1 Kings xvii. 1). **And the cloud is not rent under them.** The metaphor is, no doubt, drawn from those water-skins, so well known in the East, and especially in Arabia, in which men stored the water for their journeys and other needs, which were liable to be "rent" by the weight of the liquid within them.

Ver. 9.—**He holdeth back the face of his throne**; rather, *he covereth up*. He makes the clouds to gather in the vault of heaven, above which is his throne, and in this way conceals it and covers it up. **And spreadeth his cloud upon it**; or, *over it*, so blotting it out from sight. Behind the more obvious meaning lies one which is deeper and more spiritual. God withdraws himself from sight, gathers clouds and darkness around him to be the habitation of his seat, hides from men the principles of his government and administration, makes himself unapproachable and inscrutable, is a mystery and an enigma which man cannot hope to understand or solve (comp. 1 Kings viii. 12; Ps. xviii. 11; xcvii. 2).

Ver. 10.—**He hath compassed the waters with bounds.** God restrains within limits alike the "waters that are above the firmament" and those that are beneath it (ch. xxxviii. 11). The boundary is placed, somewhat vaguely, "at the confines of light and darkness." **Until the day and night come to an end** is a mistranslation.

Ver. 11.—**The pillars of heaven tremble.** The "pillars of heaven" are the mountains, on which the sky seems to rest. These "tremble," or seem to tremble, at the presence of God (Ps. xviii. 7; cxiv. 4; Isa. v. 25) when he visits the earth in storm and tempest, either because the whole atmosphere is full of disturbance, and the outline of the mountains shifts and changes as rain and storm sweep over them, or because the reverberations of the thunder, which shake the air, seem to shake the earth also. **And are astonished at his reproof.** To the mind of the poet this "trembling" is expressive of astonishment and consternation. He regards the mountains as hearing the voice of God in the storm, recognizing it as raised in anger, and so trembling and cowering before him.

Ver. 12.—**He divideth the sea with his power.** "Divideth" is certainly a wrong translation. The verb used (רָגַע) means either "stirreth up" or "stilleth." In favour of the former rendering are Rosenmüller, Schultens, Delitzsch, Merx, and Canon Cook; in favour of the latter, the LXX., Dillmann, and Dr. Stanley Leathes. In either case the general sentiment is that God has full mastery over the sea, and can regulate its movements at his pleasure. **And by his understanding he smiteth through the proud**; literally, *he smiteth through Rahab*. (On Rahab, as the great power of evil, see the comment on ch. ix. 13.) God is said to have "smitten him through *by his understanding*," since in the contest between good and evil it is rather intelligence than mere force that carries the day. Power alone is sufficient to control the sea.

Ver. 13.—**By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens**; or, *by his spirit the heavens are brightness*; i.e. at a breath from his mouth the heavens, lately all cloud and storm (vers. 8—11), recover their serenity, are calm and clear and bright. Our experience says, "After a storm comes a calm." Job notes that both alike are from God. **His hand hath formed the crooked serpent**; rather, *his hand hath pierced the swift serpent* (see the Revised Version). The reference is probably to "the war in heaven," already suggested by the mention of "Rahab" (ver. 12). In that war, according to the tradition that had reached Job, a great serpent, like the Egyptian Apepi (Apophis), had borne a part.

Ver. 14.—**Lo, these are parts of his ways**; literally, *ends of his ways*; i.e. the mere outskirts and fringe of his doings. **But how small a portion is heard of him!** rather, *how small a whisper?* **But the thunder of his power who can understand!** or, *the thunder of his mighty deeds*. Job implies that he has not enumerated one-half of God's great works—he has just hinted at them, just whispered of them. If they were all thundered out in the ears of mortal man, who could receive them or comprehend them?

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—14.—*Job to Bildad. another sermon on the foregoing text.* I. THE PREFACE TO THE SERMON; OR, THE DISCOURSE OF BILDAD CRITICIZED. In Job's estimation it was: 1. *Wholly unserviceable.* With stinging irony Job, according to our view, represents it as having been extremely helpful to him in his feebleness, as having imparted strength to his powerless arm and wisdom to his ignorant mind (vers. 2, 3); meaning, of course, the opposite—that in these respects the brief but pompous harangue to which he had listened had been of no use whatever to him in the way of assisting him either to bear his own misfortunes or to understand the mysterious enigma of Divine providence. Not only should a good man by his words, and a Christian minister by his sermons, always aim at the edification of his hearers (1 Cor. xiv. 3), but the same duty is incumbent upon all (Eph. iv. 29). The world and the Church are full of sorrowful hearts requiring comfort, and ignorant minds in need of counsel. It is sad when neither the disconsolate can find a word of cheer nor the uninstructed hear a note of direction, to help them on in life's battle. The lips of the wise should disperse knowledge (Prov. xv. 7), and the tongue of the wise should prove health to the feeble and diseased (Prov. xii. 18). 2. *Extremely superficial.* Bildad had plentifully declared the thing as it was (ver. 3); *i.e.* while imagining he had dived into the heart of a great subject, he had merely skimmed along its surface. Yet superficial and shallow views of men and things are not to be despised. To the mass of mankind, who are themselves commonplace in their capacities, only commonplace ideas are of use. What is called profound or original thinking belongs to another sphere from that which they usually inhabit. Hence to the extent to which it is unfamiliar to their minds it fails to make an adequate impression on their hearts. Still, superficial views of truth cannot satisfy souls of nobler faculty than the uneducated crowd possess; neither can they fully represent the deep things of God on the subject either of religion or of providence. It is, however, doubtful whether all men's thoughts, those of a Job no less than of a Bildad, are not, in comparison with the unfathomable profundity of Divine truth, at the best superficial. 3. *Utterly irrelevant.* Correct enough in themselves so far as they went, Bildad's views were inappropriate to the theme under discussion, were in truth so little pertinent to the great subject by which the thoughts of Job were engrossed, that Job felt constrained to ask to whom they had been addressed (ver. 4). Bildad is not the only person against whom the charge of irrelevant talking can be advanced. Modern controversialists, lecturers, preachers, orators, writers, are as prone to commit this fault as were their brethren of antiquity. Discoursing wide of the mark, whether in the pulpit, at the bar, or on the bench, in Parliament, or in common life, usually results from ignorance, want of capacity, lack of preparation, too great fluency in speech or composition, or from deliberate design. Fitness is a higher excellence in speech or writing than eloquence or elegance (1 Cor. xiv. 19). "The heart of the righteous studieth to answer" (Prov. xv. 28); and "a word spoken in due season, how good it is!" (Prov. xv. 23). "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. xxv. 11). 4. *Entirely second-hand.* Whatever Job was, he was always original; whereas Bildad could only cite proverbs and quote traditionary maxims. Here Job rather wickedly asks him from whom he had borrowed his last brief oration (ver. 4). Since it could not be from God—Bildad always swore by the fathers—it must have been either from him (Job) or from Eliphaz, both of whom had already twice descanted on the subject of man's insignificance as contrasted with the majesty of God. It is not wrong to borrow good thoughts or to repeat them to others, provided their authorship be carefully acknowledged. Good thoughts at second hand are distinctly better than poor thoughts at first hand. Still, ministers and preachers should aim to set forth their own views of Divine truth rather than those of other men. A clergyman who has no ideas of his own to set forth has mistaken his calling. Much can be done by earnest study and prayer to improve the feeblest capacity, and to enable it to look at truth for itself.

II. THE BODY OF THE SERMON; OR, THE MAJESTY OF GOD EXTOLLED. Catching up the anthem which Bildad had commenced (ch. xxv. 2), Job continues in a strain of lofty adoration to dilate upon the transcendent greatness of God as absolute and universal

Ruler, tracing his governmental power and authority through every department of creation. 1. *In the realm of shades.* (Vers. 5, 6.) Bildad had said that God's dominion pervaded "the heights," or heavenly places (ch. xxv. 2). Job adds that it also extends to the dark underworld of departed spirits; concerning which may be noted: (1) The names given to this mysterious region—Sheol and Abaddon; the first a subterranean abode, full of Tartarean darkness (ch. x. 21, 22), to which are attributed gates (Isa. xxxviii. 10) and abysmal depths (Prov. ix. 18); and the second a trackless waste, in which wanderers having lost their way stumble forward to destruction (Rev. ix. 11). On the exact import of the two terms which are here used as synonyms for the disembodied state, the Exposition may be consulted. (2) The situation assigned to this invisible region—under the waters, *i.e.* beneath the ocean (cf. Luke viii. 31), or in the lowest parts of the earth (Eph. iv. 9), at the remotest distance from heaven (Ps. cxxxix. 8); and therefore, as such, a fitting receptacle for the dead (Rom. x. 7), and a proper place of confinement for the wicked (Ps. lv. 15). (3) The persons who inhabit this sunless region. While departed spirits generally are commonly represented as descending into Sheol (ch. xiv. 13—15; xvii. 15, 16), it is here the shades of the wicked that are spoken of as tenanting its chambers. The Rephaim alluded to by Job were not the people of that name, but the pale, flaccid, bloodless ghosts of dead persons (Isa. xiv. 10), in particular, it is supposed, of the giants, or mighty ones (Gen. vi. 4), who perished in the Deluge, since the word "Rephaim" may also signify heroes of colossal stature. (4) The misery experienced in this doleful region. Besides being a place of darkness (ch. x. 21, 22; Ps. lxxxviii. 12) and of pain (ch. xiv. 22) generally, it is here exhibited as being specially a place of anguish for the wicked, whose marrowless and bloodless phantoms shiver and writhe, as if they were undergoing the pains of parturition every time the majesty of God is felt by them, "as perhaps by the raging of the sea, or the quaking of the earth" (Delitzsch). And certainly in other Scriptures the Hadean or disembodied state is set forth as a place of woe for the ungodly (Matt. v. 29; xviii. 8, 9; Mark ix. 43; Luke xvi. 25). So the ancient Egyptians celebrated Ra as "the supreme power who cuts off the head of those who are in the infernal regions" (*vide* 'Records of the Past,' vol. viii. p. 111). (5) The supreme Lord of this subterranean region; he is not the Abaddon of the Apocalypse (Rev. ix. 11), but Shaddai, whose majesty Job depicts, since his eyes penetrate to its darkest depths, and his arm reaches to its remotest corners. As David testifies to God's presence in Sheol (Ps. cxxxix. 8), so Job affirms that presence to be the true cause of the misery of the lost, as John afterwards declares it to be the secret source of happiness to the saved (Rev. vii. 15). 2. *In the realm of creation.* (Vers. 7—13.) Rising from the dark underworld, Job expatiates on the great power of God as displayed in the world of light. (1) In spreading out the northern firmament above the self-poised earth (ver. 7). That Job here alludes to the northern hemisphere of the sky which he, in common with the ancients generally, believed to be a vast arch, vault, or canopy extended above the earth, and folding it in like a tent, is more certain than it is that he anticipated the discoveries of modern astronomy concerning the sphericity and revolutions of the earth, although there is some reason for believing that these were understood by the ancient Egyptians. But whether or not Job had attained to a dim guess of the earth's form, he distinctly understood that it rested with its aerial canopy on no material prop, but was supported solely by the power of God. The continual upholding, not of this globe merely, but of innumerable worlds, of suns and systems past reckoning, by the word of his power, is a signal demonstration of God's almightiness. (2) In appointing the meteorological laws of the atmosphere (vers. 8, 9), by which first rain is collected in the clouds, then the clouds are preserved from bursting before the proper moment beneath the weight of the watery particles they contain, and thirdly, the dark masses are spread around God's throne, *i.e.* distributed over the face of the sky previously to bursting forth upon the thirsty soil. The clouds are pre-eminently his clouds, *i.e.* God's; since he hath ordained the wonderful mechanism by which they are formed, preserved, dispersed, distributed, and emptied; since he employs them in accordance with his own sovereign will, *e.g.* to shut off the face of his throne from the gaze of man whensoever it may please him; and since when they descend upon the earth they seem to proceed from his throne. (3) In establishing a bound between light and darkness (ver. 10). Job perhaps imagined that the globe was encompassed by an ocean, out of which the sun rose in Oriental splendour, and into which again it

descended with Occidental glory, passing at the end of day into a dark world, which its golden beams could not illumine, and emerging at the call of morn into the clear bright realm of light. Passing by the misconception as to the sun's movements and function, which science better enables us to understand, the truth remains that the boundaries of old ocean have been as firmly fixed (Prov. viii. 29), and the alternations of day and night as securely determined (Gen i. 14), by the power of the omnipotent Creator, as have been the habitations and the times of man (Acts xvii. 26). (4) In producing the phenomena connected with storms upon land, sea, and sky (vers. 11—13). Such a storm depicted by the poet in three different stages. At its commencement, "the pillars of the heavens," *i.e.* the mountains towering to the sky, appear to tremble, to sway backwards and forwards as if struck by some sudden impact, by the violent agitations of the wind, or by the crashing blow of a fiery thunderbolt. Personified, they are pictured as filled with consternation at the token of Jehovah's anger displayed in the commotion of the elements (Ps. xxix. 3—8; civ. 32; Nah. i. 5; Hab. iii. 10). During its continuance, "he divideth the sea with his power." The fierce hurricane let loose among the mountains sweeping down upon the calm, still ocean, cleaves it to its inmost depths.

> "The fire, and cracks
> "Of sulphurous roaring, the most mighty Neptune
> Seem to besiege, and make his bold waves tremble,
> Yea, his dread trident shake."
>
> ('Tempest,' act i. sc. 2.)

The spirit of evil (Rahab), awakened by the hurly-burly, bellows forth its indignant rage, "lifting up its voice on high, and thundering back to the thundering mountains," but is again wounded to the quick by the stroke of the tempest; for "by his understanding he breaketh Rahab in pieces"—words which are understood by many to point rather to the power of God in calming the troubled waters of the sea. At the close of the storm, he once more brightens up the sky with his breath (ver. 13), dispersing the storm-clouds with his wind, and fixing the fugitive Dragon. This may perhaps be understood of the constellation of that name which seems to wind itself in like a sinuous serpent between the Greater and Lesser Bears, as if endeavouring to make its escape from its appointed orbit, where, however, God fixes it, wounding it or slaying it, so that its flight is arrested—a poetical representation of the sublime truth that it is God's hand that hath beautified the evening sky with stars, and that keeps all the stellar world moving on in harmony and order. Or the idea may be, in accordance with ancient mythology, that this gliding serpent, winding itself round the sun, seeks to eclipse its light; but that God wounds it, and so liberates the sun to renew his shining on the earth. So viewed, the poet's language suggests the thought which reappears in other parts of Scripture (Matt. xiii. 39; Rom. viii. 19—23; Rev. xii. 4)—that, in the great conflict which is continually going on between the powers of light and darkness, victory will eventually, through God's help, incline to the side of the former.

III. THE LESSON FROM THE SERMON; OR, THE TRUTH IT CONTAINS APPLIED. Job concludes his lofty anthem in celebration of the majesty of God by two remarks. 1. *That man's knowledge of the power of God is infinitesimally small.* The magnificent pictures which had been given of the mysterious operation of the Almighty's hand were only as the edges, fringes, or extremest end-points of the glorious garment in which the incomparable Worker was arrayed, as the faintest whisper of a voice which in the fulness of its tones is as the roaring of the thunder or the grand diapason of the sea. What Job asserts about his own representations of the transcendent greatness of God is equally correct about the richest and most impressive that have ever yet been given. Man's understanding of God's power in nature is at best fragmentary and imperfect (1 Cor. xiii. 9). 2. *That the wonder-working power of God is infinitely great.* So great, in fact, that it passes human comprehension. If these stupendous phenomena be only the whispers of his almighty voice, what must be the thunder-roar of its fully uttered tones? If these be occasioned, as it were, by the mere flutterings of the extreme end of his garment, what must be power residing in his Almighty arm? If the phenomena of nature, as witnessed in this lower sphere, are sufficient to impress the human mind with exalted conceptions of the greatness of God, how much more sublime should our ideas be of the incomparable glory of him who presides over, and works in,

a universe, in which this globe on which man dwells is but as the small dust of the balance to the huge forms of the mountains, as a drop of water to the ocean, as a spark of fire to the blazing sun!

Learn: 1. It is the duty of all men to seek, entertain, and, as opportunity offers, set forth, lofty conceptions of the supreme God. 2. If God's power extends to the underworld of spirits, it cannot be withdrawn from the upper world of men. 3. If the eye of the Omniscient can explore the caverns of hell and the caves of the sea, it must also be able to search the chambers of the heart. 4. The Almighty's hand that can hold up a world, yea, a universe, will not surely fail in sustaining one who is at best but a worm. 5. He who prepares and distributes the clouds of rain for the earth can also provide and dispense clouds of spiritual blessing for the souls of men. 6. When God draws a cloud before his throne, it is partly for his glory and partly for man's good. 7. He who hath set a bound to the sea is able also to restrain the wrath of man. 8. If God has divided light from darkness in the physical world, much more will he do so in the intellectual and spiritual. 9. If things inanimate, as well as bloodless spirits, tremble at God's reproof, men possessed of reason should not be callous or indifferent to the same. 10. Those who are proud God is able to abase. 11. The power of God in nature is only an emblem and shadow of a higher power which God wields in the realm of grace. 12. The fullest knowledge of God which a saint attains to on earth is small and insignificant when compared with that which awaits him in heaven.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—14.—*Praises of the Eternal.* I. REPARTEE AND REPROOF. (Vers. 2—4.) The tone seems to be ironical: "How well hast thou helped feebleness, supported the arm of him that has no strength, counselled unwisdom, and in fulness given utterance to good sense! To whom hast thou offered words, and whose breath went forth from thee? By whose inspiration?" possibly pointing to the borrowed character of Bildad's speech. Words may be good in themselves, yet not pleasant or profitable if not spoken in good season. It would have been more to the purpose had Bildad spoken to the wounded spirit of his friend of the tenderness and the compassion rather than the majesty and greatness of God. The minister of God should know how to speak a word in season to the weary (Isa. l. 4). "We are often disappointed in our expectations of our friends who should comfort us; but the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, never mistakes in his operations, nor misses his ends." Job takes a noble revenge by painting in far more glowing and noble language the sublime greatness of God, thus showing how true in faith was his heart at bottom. His petulance and outcries are the involuntary irritation of pain; they are superficial; at the core of his being piety lives in all its intensity.

II. JOB'S SURPASSING DESCRIPTION OF THE MAJESTY OF GOD. (Vers. 5—14.) "Truth, like a torch, the more it's shook, it shines." "It were well if all disputes about religion might end thus, in glorifying God as Lord of all, and our Lord, with one mind and one mouth (Rom. xv. 6), for in that we are all agreed." 1. *Hell and heaven.* (Vers. 5—7.) Job begins at the opposite end of the great scale of creation from that with which Bildad began; with *the lower world, the region of shadows*, thence to rise to the heavenly world. "The shadows are made to tremble below the water and its inhabitants" (ver. 5). By the shadows are meant the ghostly, bloodless forms as Homer has described them in the eleventh book of the 'Odyssey,' leading a joyless, melancholy existence, deprived of the light of the sun (Ps. lxxxviii. 11; Prov. ii. 18; ix. 18; Isa. xxvi. 14, 19; comp. ch. xiv. 9, 10). Even in Hades the vast power of the Almighty is felt, and its inhabitants own it and tremble (Ps. cxxxix. 8; Prov. xv. 11; Jas. ii. 19). This lower world is naked to the eyes of God (Heb. iv. 13), and the chasm of Hades has no covering (Prov. xv. 11; ver. 6). The Northern heaven—taken here by a figure, as the part for the whole—is stretched over the void, and the earth hangs upon nothing (ver. 7). The expression "nothing" here denotes the same as the "void"—the vast emptiness of space in which the earth with its heavenly canopy is placed. Compare the classical parallels in Lucret., ii. 600, *sqq.*; Ovid, 'Fast.,' vi. 269, *sqq.* A Persian poet says—

"He stretches out the heaven without pillars as the tent of the earth, . . .
What doth the air bear? it beareth nothing, and nothing on nothing, and absolutely nothing."

And an Arab poet, "He has made the heaven out of smoke." And in the Koran, "It is Allah who has built high the heaven, without supporting it on visible pillars." The poets say that Atlas bore the heaven on his shoulders; but we confess the true Atlas, the Lord our God, who by his word upholds both heaven and earth (Brenz). As the work witnesses of the master, so does the universe testify of its Creator, Sustainer, and Governor (Ps. xix. 1—6); and no faint-hearted one has contemplated the eternal order which here confronts him and its secret but ever-blessed sway, and no sinner longing for salvation has tarried in the halls of this great temple of God, without being richly blessed with heavenly blessings (Wohlfarth). 2. *The clouds and the heavenly region.* (Vers. 8—10.) Waters are firmly bound up in the clouds as in vast water-skins, according to the conception of the poet, without their bursting with the weight, if God wills to retain the rain (ver. 8; Gen. vii. 11; viii. 2). God veils the "outer side" of his heavenly throne, the side turned towards earth, by drawing the clouds between (ver. 9). He has drawn a circling boundary over the water's surface to the crossing of the light with the darkness (ver. 10; Prov. viii. 27). In both passages the idea is that the earth is surrounded by water (in Homer, by the flowing stream of ocean). Above is the circle of the hemisphere, where sun and stars run their course. Within this circle is the region of the heavenly bodies and of light, and outside it begins the realm of darkness. 3. *Mountains; the sea; constellations.* (Vers. 11—13.) The heaven's pillars—that is, the great mountains, conceived as bearing up the firmament—fall into trembling, and the earthquake is represented as caused by their affright at his reproof (ver. 11; comp. Ps. xxix.; civ. 7; Isa. l. 2; Nah. i. 4; Rev. vi. 12—14; xx. 11). He terrifies the sea by his power, and by his understanding breaks in pieces Rahab (ver. 12). Rahab being here not Egypt, as in other places, but some huge monster of legendary fame. His breath makes the heaven bright and clear; and his hand has pierced through the flying serpent (ver. 13). This may, perhaps, allude to the mythical representation of eclipses of sun or moon as the attempt of a monstrous dragon to swallow up the heavenly bodies. The ceremony is practised, among the Turks and others, of beating off this dragon at the time of eclipses by cries and noises. These descriptions of the Creation are founded on astronomical myths belonging to the childhood of the world; but our better knowledge of the mechanism of the heavens need not destroy our sense of the reverence and awe which pervade these descriptions. The wonder of ignorance is replaced by the nobler wonder of intelligence, of reason.

CONCLUSION. (Ver. 14.) "Lo, these are ends of his ways"—but the outlines or sketches—the nearest and most familiar evidences of his government of the world; "and what a gently whispering word it is that we hear!—but the thunder of his omnipotence who can understand?" The full unfolding of his power, the thundering course of the heavenly spheres, what mortal ear could bear?

"If nature thundered in our opening ears,
And stunned us with the music of the spheres,
How should we wish that Heaven had left us still
The gentle zephyr and the purling rill!"

The whole contemplation is fitted to teach us our ignorance, and to lead to humility, to wonder, to adoration. We see but a small part of the immeasurable kingdom of God. We play with a few pebbles on the verge of the infinite ocean of existence. The knowledge of the greatest philosopher is but the short-sighted glance of a tiny insect! Our earth is but a grain of sand in the vast whole, a drop in the bucket. Thus the discoveries made of God lead us to the depth and height of the undiscovered and unknown. A modern philosopher says that religion and science find their point of union and reconciliation here—in the recognition of the unknown, unknowable Power in the universe. This recognition stills vain rivalries and idle controversies. "When we have said all we can concerning God, we must, even as St. Paul (Rom. xi. 33), despair to find the bottom; we must sit down at the brink and adore the depth: 'Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!'" (comp.

1 Cor. xiii. 9—12). But, again, the sense of what is unknown should lead us to hold the more firmly to that which is known, especially through the gospel of his grace and love. There he speaks to us from out the vastness and splendour of the creation with a voice that we can understand, that touches the heart—"My child!" This everlasting God is ours—our Father and our Love. Without the knowledge of his grace and mercy in Christ, the knowledge of his majesty and purity must drive us to despair.—J.

Vers. 2—4.—*Cruel reproof helps not the sufferer.* Job has endured the reproaches of his would-be friends. Their words, instead of calming and comforting his wounded spirit, have only irritated and tried him. He has sought in vain for the refreshment of sympathy. One prolonged attempt to prove his guiltiness, and to establish the justice of his affliction on that ground, he has had to meet by protestations of innocence. But the ill-judged and imperfectly instructed comforters, mistaking the ground of Job's affliction, had poured gall into his troubled spirit. The testimony of the book is to the insufficiency of human consolation, and to the great truth that there are afflictions which come upon men for other reasons than as punishments of offence. The picture of Job suffering bodily pain is sad enough, but it is heightened by the cruel manner in which the professed words of comfort are turned into keen reproofs. Such reproofs are powerless to help the sufferer, for—

I. THERE IS NO ELEMENT OF REAL CONSOLATION IN THEM. The wise consoler may take opportunity to lead the sufferer to a just penitence for his sin; but merely to dwell upon wrong, and to point to it as the sole cause of suffering, is to leave the sufferer devoid of all true consolation. There is no word of hope, no promise of relief, no bracing of the spirit, by the whisper of lofty principles.

II. THEY BUT SERVE TO IRRITATE THE ALREADY TRIED SPIRIT. Bowed down by manifold sufferings, the afflicted one is sensitive to every word, even every look, of those around him. Their tender patience, even their very silence, gives them some assurance of kindly feeling; but to speak words of reproof when the spirit is weak and oppressed with anguish is to add weight to weight, and to subject the sufferer to greater pain. He needs the balmy word of friendship, the touch of the tender hand; not to be rudely taunted with keen thrusts of accusation which are as the bite of an adder, nor to be scourged by the severities of an antagonist.

III. THEY AFFORD NO EVIDENCE OF THAT SYMPATHY WHICH IS THE BASIS OF ALL TRUE CONSOLATION. With the words of inspiriting brotherly love the truly afflicted one has borne the heaviest calamity and remained calm under the severest trials. Pain has lost its power in presence of sympathy. To lay the aching head upon the shoulder of a strong friend gives might to the weak. The truest succour for the wounded is tender sympathy, whether the wounds pierce the flesh or the spirit. But sympathy knows nothing of severity or harsh accusation. It hides offence and soothes the self-accused spirit until it has gained strength to bear the weight of condemnation. But no sign of this is present in the words of Job's friends; no sympathy is expressed by cruel reproof: "How hast thou helped him that is without power?"

IV. To all they add THE PAINFUL RECALL OF THE FRAILTIES OF THE SOUL AT THE TIME WHEN IT IS OVERBURDENED AND UNABLE TO MAKE ANSWER. This is not the appropriate time to speak accusingly. When the soul is in its strength it is hard to reply to either just or unjust accusation, but in its weakness and sorrow it is utterly incapable of reply. It is adding weight to weight, and taking unfair advantage of feebleness. This is neither neighbourly, nor brotherly, nor even kind. It shows a faulty judgment and an unsympathetic spirit.—R. G.

Vers. 6—14.—*The Divine ways but partially revealed.* Bildad had given Job no comfort. And Job at first (vers. 1—3) retorts upon him a reproof for his unhelpful words. He then bursts into an impressive representation of the wonderful works of God to whom Bildad had referred. The works of God in the heavens, the earth, and the deep sea are great and manifold; so are his works amongst the creatures of his power, of whom the serpent alone is mentioned. But the hidden hand of God Job confesses, and the greatness of the Divine works and ways, of which only a part is revealed. We may take a wider sweep than even Job does, and say—

I. Parts of the Divine ways are revealed IN THE VISIBLE CREATION. His wonderful works.

II. IN HIS WAYS TO THE CHILDREN OF MEN. In the working of that providence that ever guards the interests of the human life.

III. IN THE REVELATIONS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE. Here light falls especially (1) on the Divine Name; (2) on the mysteries of the Divine providence; (3) on the spiritual future—on God, on human life and duty, on immortality. Yet with all the teachings it must still be said, "How little a portion is heard of him?" We have heard the whisper; "but the thunder of his power who can understand?" A plain duty is to judge of that which is hidden by that which is made known. And the question instantly arises to our lips—Are the revelations which God has made of himself and of his ways in nature, in human life, in the Holy Scriptures, such as encourage us to trust in those ways, and in him, where all is covered with clouds and thick darkness? If the revealed things are good and trustworthy, it is most reasonable to demand faith in the hidden and unseen. Faith in the unseen is warranted by (1) the beauty, (2) utility, (3) perfectness, (4) beneficence of the Divine ways, as they are traceable in the works of the Divine hand; but faith's highest warrant is in the Divine Name—the absolutely good, pure, just, and beneficent One.—R. G.

Ver. 2.—*Helping the weak.* Job returns to the old complaint, more than ever justified by the obstinacy of his friends. They came to sympathize and help in the time of trouble; how have they carried out their self-appointed task?

I. IT IS A CHRISTIAN DUTY TO HELP THE WEAK. The worldly maxim is "each for himself." This seems to be natural; but it is not true to our better nature. The higher self is required to rectify the cruel impulses of the lower regions of nature. 1. *Because of the solidarity of the race.* We are members one of another, and when one member suffers all the members suffer. It is not good for us that any of our fellow-men should fail. 2. *Because of the brotherhood of Christians.* We are called to more than a care for the whole body; individual needs appeal to our sympathy, and the special cases of those who are known to us come before us with peculiar claims. We have to remember our family relationship as children of our Father. 3. *Because of the work of Christ.* He came to help the weak, and our standing is only on the ground that he has done so for us. If all had come to us by self-seeking and personal exclusiveness, we should not have had the power to help others, for that power was given to us in our weakness by the grace of God in Christ.

II. HELP TO THE WEAK SHOULD BE BY AIDING THEM TO BECOME STRONG. There is an excessive helplessness that can only be relieved by direct aid. But in the main it is not wise to make people simply dependent on us. While we help them materially we may hurt them morally. It is a more difficult task to lift men than to dole out charity while they grovel in destitution; but it is a much more truly helpful thing. When we deal with men in spiritual work the same principle applies. It is not enough to bring consolation and peace and other spiritual blessings. The more important work is to lead feeble, broken-down creatures to the Source of new life and strength, that they may be renewed and converted. It is well to help the weak in their weakness, but it is better to help them out of it.

III. IT IS POSSIBLE TO FAIL MISERABLY IN ATTEMPTING TO HELP THE WEAK. This is one of the most obvious lessons of the Book of Job, and it is constantly recurring to us from different points of view. Few tasks are more difficult, and therefore it is not surprising that failure is frequent, but the surprising thing is that it is not anticipated. We are astounded at the confidence of Job's comforters. Their self-assurance is perfectly amazing. They persevere in their conventional assertions without perceiving how utterly useless, how vexatiously mischievous, their whole method of procedure is. Not understanding Job, they cannot help him. Too often blundering attempts at doing good only aggravate the evil they would alleviate. We must study social problems; we must understand the people; we must come to know the individual persons we desire to help. A large part of the duty of Christian angels of mercy is to visit the afflicted, to enter into their condition, see their homes, hear their troubles, know their circumstances and the cause of their misery. The story of Christian charity is full of most disheartening failures which arise simply from neglecting these first conditions of success.—W. F. A.

Ver. 6.—*God's vision of death.* Bildad has just spoken of the exalted dominion of God that reaches to heavenly heights, overawing the very moon and stars. Job now replies, turning his eyes downward, and noticing how the dim underworld is all open to the inspection of God.

I. THE DEAD ARE NOT BEYOND THE VISION OF GOD. He lives in light, and they lie in darkness; yet he sees them. There is no escaping from his presence. "If I make my bed in Hades, behold, thou art there" (Ps. cxxxix. 8). 1. *There is no eluding his observation.* A man cannot flee from God by dying. Indeed, is not suicide rightly regarded as rushing into the presence of God? No darkness hides from God, for day and night are alike with him, and no change of sphere removes from the reach of him who rules through all the spheres. 2. *There is no loss of his notice.* No one can be beneath the attention of God—too low, too degraded, in too dark and desolate a region to be seen by him. Perhaps this was Job's thought. He was longing for God to come and vindicate his cause; but he could not but admit that death might come first, for his disease was making fearful inroads on his constitution. Still, he would not lose the chance of meeting God. If not on earth, then it should be after death. God will follow his children wherever they go in the next world, as he follows them in this world.

II. GOD'S VISION OF THE DEAD IS OF GREAT CONSEQUENCE TO THEM. If Hades and destruction have no covering before God, this means very much to Hades and destruction. It cannot be the same thing whether we are looked upon by God or not. Surely it means much to know that the abode of death is not deserted by God. God cannot look down into this dark region as a mere spectator. He is everywhere a Life, a Power, an Authority. Therefore we must conclude that the rule of God extends over the unseen world. Certain important consequences flow from this truth. 1. *Justice will be done there.* God will not allow injustice to go on for ever. The process of rectification is slow; but God is infinitely patient, and he has eternity before him. The unpunished sinner will meet his dreadful deserts in the next world, and the ill-used and misunderstood good man will be vindicated there. 2. *Life will be given there.* God cannot look on the dead and leave them in their natural darkness. His gaze quickens. If he visits the realm of the dead he will bring about a resurrection. The dead are not cast out, forgotten, left to fade and melt out of all being. God touches them, and they awake, like the frost-bound earth at the touch of spring. 3. *Mercy will extend to them.* How and to what extent this may be received by the dead is a mystery concerning which we have little or no light. But we know that "the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever." We know that God is changeless. His love is unfailing. He must ever desire the recovery of his children. Yet dogmatic universalism is as false to human nature as it is to the warnings of Scripture. For men may harden themselves against the mercy of God; if they do so on earth, how can we say that they will not do so after death?—W. F. A.

Ver. 8.—*Clouds.* As we proceed through the poem we cannot but be struck with the wonderful wealth of its nature-imagery, which continues to open out with ever-increasing luxuriance till it reaches its fulness in the burst of splendour that accompanies the final theophany. Each aspect of nature touched by the poet has its special lessons. Now he calls us to look at the gorgeous pageantry of the clouds. Here truths of Divine order and government are displayed before our eyes.

I. CLOUDS ARE OF DIVINE ORIGIN. God bindeth up the waters; the thick clouds are his. Whenever we touch nature we should move with reverence, for we are in the temple of God. Whether we understand the clouds, whether we can see the wisdom by which they are shaped and led out over the heavens or not, at least we must discuss them with the humility that becomes a consideration of the works of the infinitely Wise and the perfectly Good.

II. CLOUDS ARE BENEFICIAL TO THE WORLD. In Southern countries they are greatly valued both for their shade and for the much-needed showers they bring to the parched land. The arrangement by which they float overhead, and then descend on broad areas in finely distributed drops of water, makes man's most advanced system of irrigation look childish and clumsy. Great masses of water are stored aloft and driven through the air, and made to descend so that every minute plant is watered, and not a blade of grass is crushed. Here is the perfection of the art of distribution.

III. CLOUDS ILLUSTRATE THE MUTUAL MINISTRIES OF NATURE. Drawn up from the sea in invisible vapour, driven over the land by strong winds, condensed against the mountains or in cool currents of the upper air, descending in gentle rain over fields and gardens, over woods and hills and plains, trickling through the soil, breaking out in little springs, streaming down the slopes in minute rills, gathering supplies from all directions in the valleys, and flowing back to the sea in full-fed rivers, the water of the clouds moves through a circuit, every stage of which is of use in the economy of nature, while the whole is completed by the help of many forces and circumstances.

IV. CLOUDS COME AS MERCIES IN DISGUISE. Thick clouds are black and ugly, hiding the blue sky, and casting gloom on the earth. They do not always have a silver lining. They may be heavy and lowering, sombre and threatening. Yet they burst in refreshing showers. When shall we believe that it is the same with those apprehensions of trouble which are really the chariots in which God's love rides?

V. CLOUDS ARE BEAUTIFUL IN THE SUNLIGHT. It is only a difference of light, and their gloom is turned into splendour. When the sun touches the clouds it sets them on fire. Morning and evening unroll leagues of rose and gold curtains on the distant horizon. When God's love touches our clouds, by a magic alchemy they pass into heavenly beauty.

VI. CLOUDS ARE FLEETING AND TRANSIENT. Moulded out of invisible vapours, they melt while we gaze at them. Their high bastions and clustered domes, their silvery lakes and purple mountains, are in rapid dissolution. For they must serve their purpose. They must vanish to fulfil their mission. Earthly joys like palaces of cloudland, earthly terrors like its gloomy shadows, both melt away, and must do so to serve their purpose of blessing and discipline. But beyond the clouds is the blue sky. We are thankful for the clouds. But we must neither cling to them, nor shrink from them. Standing on the solid earth, our lasting hope is in the eternal heavens.—W. F. A.

Ver. 14.—"*The thunder of his power.*" We only see the edges of God's ways; we hear but a slight whisper of him; the thunder of his power is beyond our comprehension.

I. IN NATURE. We can see but a small part of God's works. Astronomy hints at vast regions of unexplored space. Even in limited regions the variety of teeming life goes beyond our comprehension. We cannot see the infinitely small. Further, we only use our five senses. Who can tell but that a sixth sense would reveal much more of the wonderful works of God? We can conceive of an indefinite multiplication of senses. Suppose there were ten senses, or fifty, or any number more; who can say but that they would discover corresponding objects that are quite unknown to us because we have not the faculty of perceiving them? Next consider how small a period of time our observation extends over. Geology stretches back a long way, but with how meagre a record of immense ages! Then note that all these observations deal with the material universe. But what of the spiritual? How far may this extend? What are its contents?

II. IN PROVIDENCE. The mistake of Job's friends was that they were both short-sighted and narrow in their vision. They could see but a very small part of God's work and purpose; yet they drew universal conclusions, and dogmatized. Their mistake is only too common. We have to recollect that we have not the materials with which to form a judgment of God's actions. In our own lives we see a very small part of the Divine plan. All may look dark and dreadful. But we are only at the early seed-sowing. We have to see the harvest before we can judge of the crop. And the harvest is not yet.

III. IN REVELATION. This was true of the Old Testament in comparison with the New. But a fringe of the grace afterwards revealed in Christ was made known to the ancient Jews. Now it is impossible to say how much more of the nature and thought of God still lies beyond the region of revelation. We have enough to guide us, sufficient for salvation and for duty. But we dare not limit God to his revelations of himself. All attempts to define God, to draw a circle about the Divine, refute themselves, for they would make out that the Infinite is finite.

IV. IN JUDGMENT. Whispers of God's judgment make us tremble; and we have only heard whispers as yet. What, then, must the thunder of his power be? At a

mere touch from "the Traveller unknown" the sinew of Jacob's thigh shrank (Gen. xxxii. 25). What would have been the result if the mysterious Wrestler had put forth his full power? Earthly troubles are hard to bear; these are but whispers compared to the thunder of doom!

V. IN REDEMPTION. There is a bright side to this picture. "God is love," and the half has not been told us of God's nature. Future ages have yet to explore its marvellous wealth of grace. Throughout eternity it will still stretch beyond all human experience. With the grace is a corresponding blessing. The future blessedness that God offers to his children is also beyond all present estimates. "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be" (1 John iii. 2).—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Vers. 1—23.—This chapter divides itself into three distinct portions. In the first, which extends to the end of ver. 6, Job is engaged in maintaining, with the utmost possible solemnity (ver. 2), both his actual integrity (ver. 6) and his determination to hold fast his integrity as long as he lives (vers. 4—6). In the second (vers. 7—10) he imprecates a curse upon his enemies. In the third (vers. 11—23) he returns to the consideration of God's treatment of the wicked, and retracts the view which he had maintained controversially in ch. xxiv. 2—24, with respect to their prosperity, impunity, and equalization with the righteous in death. The retractation is so complete, the concessions are so large, that some have been induced to question whether they can possibly have been made by Job, and have been led on to suggest that we have here a third speech of Zophar's, such as "the symmetry of the general form" requires, which by accident or design has been transferred from him to Job. But the improbability of such a transfer, considering how in the Book of Job the speech of each separate interlocutor is introduced, is palpable; the dissimilarity between the speech and the other utterances of Zophar is striking; and the judgment of two such liberal critics as Ewald and Renan, that the passage is rightly placed, and rightly assigned to Job, should set all doubt at rest, and make an end of controversy (see Mr. Froude's 'Short Studies on Great Subjects,' vol. i. pp. 315, 316; and Canon Cook's "Introduction to the Book of Job," in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 7).

Ver. 1.—Moreover Job continued his parable, and said. The word translated "parable" (מָשָׁל) is only used previously in Numb. xxiii. and xxiv. It is thought to "comprehend all discourses in which the results of discursive thought are concisely or figuratively expressed" (Cook). The introduction of a new term seems to imply that the present discourse occupies a position different from that of all the preceding ones. It is not tentative, controversial, or emotional, but expresses the deliberate judgment of the patriarch on the subjects discussed in it. Note the repetition of the term in ch. xxix. 1.

Ver. 2.—**As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment.** Job has not previously introduced any form of adjuration. His "yea has been yea, and his nay nay." Now, however, under the solemn circumstances of the occasion, when he is making his last appeal to his friends for a favourable judgment, he thinks it not inappropriate to preface what he is about to say by an appeal to God as his Witness. "As God liveth," or "As the Lord liveth," was the customary oath of pious Israelites and of God-fearing men generally in the ancient world (see Judg. viii. 19; Ruth iii. 13; 1 Sam. xiv. 39; xx. 3; 2 Sam. iv. 9; xii. 5; 1 Kings ii. 24; xvii. 21; 2 Kings v. 20; 2 Chron. xviii. 13; Jer. xxxviii. 16). Job adds that the God to whom he appeals is he who has "taken away," or "withheld," his judgment, *i.e.* who has declined to enter with him into a controversy as to the justice of his doings (ch. ix. 32—35; xiii. 31; xxiii. 3—7). **And the Almighty,** who **hath vexed my soul;** or, *made my soul bitter.* Though he slays him, yet does Job trust in God (ch. xiii. 15). He is his Witness, his Helper, his Redeemer (ch. xix. 25).

Ver. 3.—**All the while my breath is in me.** This verse is parenthetic. Job claims in it to be in possession of all his faculties, notwithstanding his sufferings. The right translation would seem to be, "For my life is yet whole within me" (see the Revised Version). **And the spirit of God is in my nostrils.** The spirit of God, originally

breathed into man's nostrils, whereby he became a living soul (Gen. ii. 7), is still, Job says, within him, and makes him capable of judging and declaring what is right.

Ver. 4.—**My lips shall not speak wickedness.** Nothing shall induce him, Job says, to speak knowingly wicked words. **Nor my tongue utter deceit.** Neither will he be induced, whatever happens, to utter untruth. A confession of guilt, such as his friends have endeavoured to extort from him, would be both wicked and false.

Ver. 5.—**God forbid that I should justify you**; *i.e.* allow that you have been right all along, and that I have drawn these judgments down upon me by secret sins. **Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.** So long as he continues to live, Job will not cease to maintain his innocence. It has been repeatedly pointed out that he does not mean to declare himself absolutely without sin, but only to deny such heinous guilt as his friends imputed to him (see ch. xxii. 5—9).

Ver. 6.—**My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go.** Not only will Job never cease to maintain his integrity in the past, but he will hold fast to the same course of blameless life in the future. He will not "curse God, and die." Resolutely he will maintain his faith in God, and his dependence on him. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." **My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.** This is probably the true meaning, though some suggest "My heart doth not reproach me for any of my days." Job determines to "have always a conscience void of offence, both toward God and toward man" (Acts xxiv. 16; comp. Acts xxiii. 1; 1 Cor. iv. 4; 2 Tim. i. 3; 1 John iii. 21).

Ver. 7.—**Let mine enemy be as the wicked.** The *nexus* of this passage with what goes before is uncertain. Some suppose Job's full thought to have been, "Ye try to persuade me to act wickedly by making a false representation of my feelings and convictions; but I absolutely refuse to do so. Let that rather be the act of my enemy." Others regard him as simply so vexed by his pretended friends, who are his real enemies, that he is driven to utter an imprecation against them. **And he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous.** This is another instance of a mere pleonastic hemistich—a repetition of the preceding clause in different words.

Ver. 8.—**For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained.** The hypocrite and liar may get advantage in this life by his lies and his hypocrisy. He may deceive men; he may raise himself in their opinion; he may derive worldly advantage from having secured their approval. But what will he have to look forward to in the end, **when God taketh away** (*i.e.* removeth from earth) **his soul?** Job evidently regards the soul that is "taken away" or removed from earth as still existing, still conscious, still capable of hope or of despair, and asks what hope of a happy future could the man who had lived a hypocrite entertain, when God required his soul, and he fell under God's judgment. The question reminds us of those words of our blessed Lord, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark viii. 36, 37).

Ver. 9.—**Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?** Can he expect that in the day of trouble, "when distress and anguish come upon him" (Prov. i. 27), God will hear his cry, and respond to it, and give him relief? No; conscious hypocrisy—living a lie—cuts off from God, severs between a man and his Maker, makes all prayers for help vain, until it is repented of and put away from us. The man who dies in it is in a desperate case.

Ver. 10.—**Will he delight himself in the Almighty?** A further ill result of hypocrisy is noted. Not only does it alienate God from us, but it alienates us from God. The hypocrite cannot "delight in the Almighty." He must shrink from him, fear him, dislike to dwell on the thought of his presence and realize it. His natural inclination must be to withdraw his thoughts from God, and give himself up to the worldliness which has been his attraction to assume the hypocrite's part. **Will he always call upon God?** Can he even be depended on not to renounce the service of God altogether? The mutual alienation above spoken of must tend to check communion, to disincline to prayer and calling upon God, to erect a barrier between the hypocrite and the Almighty, which, though for a while it may be insufficient to withstand the force of use and wont, will yet, in the long run, be sure to tell, and will either put an end to prayer altogether, or reduce it to a formality

Vers. 11—23.—It is impossible to deny that this passage directly contradicts Job's former utterances, especially ch. xxiv. 2—24. But the hypotheses which would make Job irresponsible for the present utterance and fix on him, as his steadfast conviction, the opposite theory, are unsatisfactory and have no solid basis. To suppose that Zophar is the real speaker is to imagine the absolute loss and suppression of two entire verses—one between vers. 10 and 11, assigning the speech to him, and another at the beginning

of ch. xxviii., reintroducing Job and making him once more the interlocutor. That this should have happened by accident is inconceivable. Τὰ κατὰ τύχην οὐ πάνυ συνδεύζεται. To ascribe it to intentional corruption by a Hebrew redactor, bent on maintaining the old orthodox view, and on falsely and wickedly giving the authority of Job to it (Froude, 'Short Studies on Great Subjects,' vol. i. p. 316), is to take away all authority from the existing text of the Hebrew Scriptures, and to open a door to any amount of wild suggestion and conjectural emendation. The other hypothesis—that of Eichhorn—that Job is here simply anticipating what his adversaries will say, though a less dangerous view, is untenable, since Job never does this without following up his statement of the adversaries' case with a reply, and here is no reply whatever, but a simple turning away, after ver. 23, to another subject. The explanation of the contradiction by supposing that Job's former statement was tentative and controversial, or else hasty and ill-considered, and that now, to prevent misconception, he determines to set himself right, is, on the other hand, thoroughly defensible, and receives a strong support from the remarkable introduction in ver. 11, which "prepares us, if not for a recantation, yet (at any rate) for a modification of statements wrung from the speaker when his words flowed over from a spirit drunk with the poison of God's arrows" (see the remarks of Canon Cook, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 90, which are in substantial agreement with those of Ewald and Dillmann).

Ver. 11.—**I will teach you by** (or, *concerning*) **the hand of God.** Job is now at last about to deliver his real sentiments respecting God's dealings with men in the world, and prefaces his remarks with this solemn introduction, to draw special attention to them. He is aware that his previous statements on the subject, especially in ch. xxiv. 2—24, have been overstrained and exaggerated, and wishes, now that he is uttering his last words (ch. xxxi. 40), to correct his previous hasty utterances, and put on record his true views. That **which is with the Almighty will I not conceal.** By "that which is with the Almighty" Job means the Divine principles of action.

Ver. 12.—**Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it.** The true Divine scheme of action has been so long and so frequently made manifest—openly set forth in the sight of men—that Job cannot believe that those whom he addresses are ignorant of it. They must themselves have seen the scheme at work. **Why then are ye thus altogether vain?** Why, then, do they not draw true inferences from the facts that come under their notice?

Ver. 13.—**This is the portion of a wicked man with God.** In "this" Job includes all that follows from ver. 14 to ver. 23—"this, which I am going to lay down." He pointedly takes up the words of Zophar in ch. xx. 29, admitting their general truth. **And the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty.** Retribution is "their *portion*," "their *heritage*," i.e. the natural result and consequence of their precedent sin.

Ver. 14.—**If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword.** Among the items of prosperity which Job had assigned to the wicked man in one of his previous discourses (ch. xxi. 8, 11) was a numerous and flourishing offspring. Now he feels forced to admit that, frequently at any rate, this flourishing offspring is overtaken by calamity (ch. xxi. 19)—it falls by the sword, either in predatory warfare, to which it was bred up, or as the consequence of a blood-feud inherited from its progenitor. They who "take the sword," either in their own persons or in their posterity, "perish with the sword." **And his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread.** If they escape this fate, then, mostly, they fall into poverty, and suffer want, no one caring to relieve them, since they have an ill reputation, the memory of their parent's wickedness clinging to them long after his decease.

Ver. 15.—**Those that remain of him shall be buried in death.** Not simply "shall die," but shall "be buried," *i.e.* lost sight of, and forgotten, "in death." **And his widows shall not weep** (comp. Ps. lxxviii. 64). The deaths of his offspring shall not be lamented by their widows—a very grievous omission in the eyes of Orientals.

Ver. 16.—**Though he heap up silver as the dust.** The city of Tyre, we are told by Zechariah, "heaped up silver *as the dust*" (Zech. ix. 3), *i.e.* in vast quantities, beyond count. So might the wicked man do. **He might also prepare raiment as the clay;** *i.e.* fill his house with rich dresses, partly for his own wear, partly to be given as robes of honour to his friends and boon companions (comp. Gen. xlv. 22; 2 Kings v. 22; x. 22; Matt. vi. 19; Jas. v. 2). Robes of honour are still kept in store by Eastern monarchs, and presented as marks of favour to visitors of importance.

Ver. 17.—**He may prepare it, but the just**

shall put it on. The raiment thus accumulated shall pass from the wicked into the hands of the just, who at his death shall enter upon his inheritance (ch. xx. 18, 20, 28). **And the innocent shall divide the silver** (see the first clause of ver. 16).

Ver. 18.—**He buildeth his house as a moth.** The moth is the symbol of fragility, decay, and weakness. The wicked man's attempt to build himself up a house, and establish a powerful family, is no better than a moth's attempt to make itself a permanent habitation. As moths do not construct dwellings for themselves, it has been proposed (Merx) to read כעכביש, "as a spider," for כעש, "as a moth;" but the change is too great to be at all probable. May not the cocoon, from which the moth issues as from a house, have been in Job's mind? The hawk-moth buries itself in a neat cave for the pupa stage; and there may have been even better examples in Uz. But we ourselves have not known these facts long, and therefore we need not be surprised to find Job making a mistake in natural history. **And as a booth that the keeper maketh.** Huts or lodges of boughs were set up in vineyards and orchards by those who had to watch them (see Isa. i. 8; Lam. ii. 6). They were habitations of the weakest and frailest kind.

Ver. 19.—**The rich man lieth down;** rather, *he lieth down rich* (see the Revised Version). **But he shall not be gathered.** If we accept the present text, we may translate, *But it* (*i.e.* his wealth) *shall not be gathered*, and suppose his wealth to have consisted in agricultural produce. Or we may alter יאסף into יסף, and translate, *He lieth down rich, but he shall do so no more*—a correction to which the οὐ προσθήσει of the Septuagint points. **He openeth his eyes, and he is not.** Some translate, "It is not;" *i.e.* the harvest, in which his wealth consisted, is not—it has been all destroyed by blight or robbers. Those who render, "He is not," generally suppose that he opens his eyes only to find himself in the hands of murderers.

Ver. 20.—**Terrors take hold on him as waters** (comp. ch. xviii. 11). Terrors sweep over the wicked man like a flood of waters—vague terrors with respect to the past, the present, and the future. He fears the vengeance of those whom he has oppressed and injured, the loss of his prosperity at any moment by a reverse of fortune, and a final retribution at the hand of God commensurate with his ill desert. He is at all times uneasy; sometimes he experiences a sudden rush upon him of such gloomy thoughts, which overwhelms him, and sweeps him away like a mighty stream. **A tempest stealeth him away in the night.** While he is off his guard, as it were, in the night, a sudden storm bursts on him, and removes him from his place.

Ver. 21.—**The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth.** The *khamsin* wind, coming with all its violence and burning heat, drives him before it, and is irresistible (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 482). **And as a storm hurleth him out of his place.** This is little more than a repetition of the previous hemistich. The man is swept from the earth by a storm of calamity.

Ver. 22.—**For God shall cast upon him, and not spare.** Some commentators regard the storm as still the subject, and translate, "For it shall cast itself upon him [or, 'rush upon him'], and not spare" (Schultens, Merx). The difference is not great, since the storm represents God's judgment. **He would fain flee out of his hand;** or, if the storm is meant, *out of its hand.*

Ver. 23.—**Men shall clap their hands at him.** Applauding, *i.e.*, the just judgment of God upon him. **And shall hiss him out of his place.** Accompany with hisses his final ruin and downfall—hissing him, while they applaud the action of God in respect to him.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Job's first parable:* 1. *The transgressions of a godly man.* I. A DARING ACCUSATION. 1. *Against whom directed?* Against Eloah, the All-sufficient One; Shaddai, the All-powerful One, the Self-existent, Living One, whose universal dominion, resistless might, and ineffable majesty Bildad (ch. xxv. 1—3) and Job himself (ch. xxvi. 5—14) had eloquently pictured. With exalted conceptions of the transcendent greatness of the invisible Supreme, whose continual presence also he vividly realized (ch. xxiii. 8, 9, 15), Job should have feared to speak rashly, much more accusingly, before him (Deut. xxviii. 58; Ps. lxxvi. 7, 11; Jer. v. 22). But clear and accurate notions of Divine truth do not always possess that moral force, even over good men, that they should. Job a little while ago was afraid of God and troubled at his presence (ch. xxiii. 15); now, having lost, perhaps, his former luminous sense of the Divine presence, he hesitates not to bring against him a serious accusation.

2. *By whom uttered?* Job, a man who had not only been fashioned by the hands of Shaddai (ch. x. 8, 9), but depended for life every moment on the breath of Eloah in his nostrils (ver. 3), and therefore should have paused ere he called into question the conduct of a Being who could any instant cause him to return to the dust; a feeble man, wasted into a skeleton, shivering on the edge of the tomb, expecting every second to pass into God's presence in the world of spirits—hence one who should have feared to affront the Eternal; a guilty man, *i.e.* a man who, however conscious of integrity, was yet sinful in God's sight, and whom accordingly it ill became to question the proceedings of God; and likewise a pardoned man, whom God had accepted as righteous, in proof thereof sending answers to his prayers (ver. 9), which only added to the rashness of Job in impeaching Eloah as he did. 3. *Of what composed?* The charge preferred against God was twofold in appearance, vexing Job's soul, and taking away Job's judgment, though in reality the two things were connected as cause and effect. What irritated and inflamed the patriarch's spirit was the thought which he here, indirectly indeed but none the less really on that account, utters, viz. that God, the righteous Judge of all the earth, had denied him justice. Already had he complained that God seemed to treat him as an enemy (ch. ix. 28; xiii. 24; xiv. 16, 17); never until now does he in terms so explicit accuse God of withholding from him justice. For this sin Job was afterwards reproved by Elihu (ch. xxxiv. 5) and by God (ch. xl. 8).

II. AN OVERWEENING ASSUMPTION. 1. *To declare the truth about himself.* There was nothing wrong or extravagantly self-asserting in the declaration that "his lips should not speak wickedness, nor his tongue utter deceit" (ver. 4; cf. 2 Cor. xi. 31; Gal. i. 20). Not only should good men tell no lies (Exod. xx. 16; Lev. xix. 11; Ps. xxxiv. 13), though, alas! they sometimes do (Gen. xii. 13; xxvi. 7), but they should so hate untruthfulness (Prov. xiii. 5) as to render the utterance of falsehoods impossible (Isa. lxiii. 8; Col. iii. 9). Job, however, claimed that he would state the exact truth about his own inward integrity, forgetting that "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. xvii. 9), that God alone is competent to pronounce an accurate verdict on its character (Jer. xvii. 10; ch. xxxvi. 4; Ps. vii. 9; Prov. xv. 11), and that not even a saint can be trusted to deliver a perfectly unbiassed judgment about himself.

> "If self the wavering balance shake,
> It's rarely right adjusted."
>
> (Burns.)

2. *To reveal the mind of God concerning others.* With an air of authority Job avows his ability to give what he had often stormed at his friends for professing to deliver—an oracular exposition of the Divine mode of action in dealing with ungodly men (ver. 11). Though "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him" (Ps. xxv. 14; Prov. iii. 32), it is not absolutely certain that good men do not sometimes mistake their own cogitations for Heaven's inspirations. Under any circumstances good men, in setting forth what they believe to be Divine truth, should avoid the appearance and tone of dogmatical assertion. Least of all should they speak dictatorially to those whom they have already charged with the same offence (Rom. ii. 21).

III. AN OVERBOLD PROTESTATION. 1. *With solemn adjuration.* That Job should have maintained his integrity against the calumniations of his friends was both legitimate and reasonable. That he should even have exhibited a degree of warmth in repelling their accusations was perhaps excusable. But that he should have deemed it fitting to preface his self-vindication by an oath betrayed a degree of confidence, if not of self-righteousness, which was unbecoming in a humble-hearted and truly pious man. The matter was one that did not require more than calm, quiet, modest affirmation. Yet Job, in at least two different forms, adds an oath for confirmation (vers. 2, 5), as if the vindication of his (*i.e.* the creature's) righteousness were, and ought to be, the supreme end of his existence, and not rather the maintenance of the unchallengable righteousness of God. Nevertheless, Job's conduct in thus asserting with an oath that he faithfully followed God compares favourably with that of Peter, who with curses affirmed that he knew not the Man (Mark xiv. 71). 2. *With vehement repetition.* Not content with one affirmation of his integrity, Job insists upon it with a fourfold

asseveration (vers. 5, 6), declaring (1) that he could not justify his friends, *i.e.* admit the truth of their contention with regard to himself without profanity; (2) that he would continue to assert his innocence while he lived; (3) that his righteousness he would on no account let go; and (4) that his heart should not reproach him even one of his days. So Paul protested to the Sanhedrin that he had lived in all good conscience before God up till then (Acts xxiii. 1), and, writing to the Corinthians (2 Cor. i. 12), rejoiced in the testimony of his conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity he had had his conversation in the world. The words, "not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God," exhibit the difference between St. Paul's assertion of his personal integrity and Job's.

IV. A WICKED IMPRECATION. 1. *The persons upon whom it is pronounced.* Job's "enemy;" not the ungodly in general, but the men who rose up against him to impeach his integrity (ver. 7). While it is well-nigh certain that a good man will have enemies (Matt. x. 22; John xv. 19), who hate him because they first dislike his principles (1 Pet. iii. 16; iv. 4), it is a splendid testimony to a good man's character when he has no enemies except the ungodly. The mere fact, however, that his integrity is challenged by another is no proof that that other is either wicked in himself or hostilely disposed toward him. Though keenly resenting, therefore, the unjust imputations of his friends, it was wrong in Job to denounce them, as they had denounced him, as inherently ungodly. 2. *The malediction of which it consists.* Nothing is really gained by endeavouring to soften down Job's language into a prediction. Supposing him to merely signify that the man who spoke against him was a wicked person who would eventually meet the wicked person's recompense, he asserts it with a degree of confidence which was not warranted by the facts of the case, and which painfully suggests that the wish was father to the thought. The language of Job towards Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar finds an echo in the terrific outburst of David against his adversaries in the imprecatory psalms (lxix. 22—28; cix. 6—15; cxl. 8—11), which, in so far as it was directed against individuals, we are not required to regard as entirely free from blame.

V. A SELF-EXALTING COMPARISON. In order further to set forth his integrity, Job tacitly contrasts his own case with that of the hypocrite, indirectly exhibiting himself as possessed of: 1. *A better hope.* However prosperous the wicked man may be in life, however successful in heaping up wealth, when he comes to die he has no hope whatever to sustain him (cf. ch. viii. 13; xx. 5, homiletics), no expectation of acceptance with God; while he, Job, though standing on the verge of the grave, has. Worldly success cannot provide, and will not suffice as a substitute for, hope in death. Accumulated wealth prevents not death's approach. If God does not cut off a man's gains before death, he will certanly cut off a wicked man's soul at death. It is a poor bargain to gain the world which one must soon leave, and lose the soul which one cannot regain throughout eternity (Matt. xvi. 26). 2. *A better privilege.* When trouble comes upon the wicked man so severely as to make him cry unto the Lord, the Lord turns a deaf ear to his entreaty (Prov. i. 28). But the good man, *i.e.* Job, can reckon that his prayer will find an entrance into God's ear (Ps. xxxiv. 17; l. 15; cvii. 13; cxlv. 18, 19); the good man's supplication being breathed forth in penitence, humility, and faith, the outcry of the hypocrite being merely an exclamation of alarm. 3. *A better spirit.* The imperilled hypocrite may cry to God when the fear of death is on him, or when trouble crushes him; but he has no true delight in fellowship with God. The good man derives his principal felicity from such communion with Heaven (Isa. lviii. 14; 1 John i. 3), as Eliphaz had already admitted (ch. xxii. 15); and such a good man Job distinctly claims to be. Delight in God expresses itself in happy meditation on and cheerful obedience to God's Law (Ps. cxix. 16, 35, 47, 70); it is an indispensable condition of receiving answers to prayers (Ps. xxxvii. 4). 4. *A better practice.* The devotion of the hypocrite is only exceptional, whereas Job's was habitual (ver. 10). An occasional prayer is no true mark of piety. The child of God should be instant in prayer (Rom. xii. 12), and should pray without ceasing (Eph. vi. 18; Phil. iv. 6; 1 Thess. v. 17). Christ's disciples should pray always, and not faint (Luke xviii. 1).

Learn: 1. That the most eminent saints are not beyond the danger of falling into grievous sins. 2. That good men, while conscious of their integrity, should guard against self-exaltation on that account. 3. That piety as little as impiety stands in

need of oaths to support it. 4. That good men should never renounce their integrity while they live, however they may sometimes forbear from asserting it. 5. That however much a wicked man may gain on earth, he loses all at death. 6. That that hope only is good which extends beyond the grave. 7. That God delights in them who delight in him. 8. That a man's piety can be pretty accurately gauged by the intensity and frequency of his prayers.

Vers. 11—23.—*Job's first parable: 2. The portion of a wicked man with God.* I. JOB'S LANGUAGE EXPLAINED. The lot, or earthly inheritance, of the ungodly Job exhibits in three particulars. 1. *The wicked man's family.* However numerous the children that gather round a sinner's hearth, they will all be overwhelmed in eventual destruction. (1) Designed. If his sons and daughters multiply, it is not because or any special favour with which they are regarded by Heaven, but only to meet their appointed portion. If the wicked send forth their little ones like a flock (ch. xxi. 11), it is purely that, like oxen, they may be fattened for the slaughter. (2) Violent. Instead of dying peacefully in the course of nature after long, prosperous, and happy lives, they shall perish by the sword, by famine, or by pestilence—the three most usual forms of calamity in the East, and the three customary modes of inflicting Divine punishment (2 Sam. xxiv. 13; Jer. xiv. 12). Job's children were not removed in either of these ways. (3) Humiliating. Such indignity will fall upon his offspring, when they in turn follow him to the grave, that they shall be "buried in death," meaning either left unburied, or, as is more probable, totally forgotten the instant they are dead. Contrast the picture of the wicked man's funeral in a previous oration (ch. xxi. 9, 32). (4) Appalling. Either so complete will the ruin of this ungodly person's family be that no widows shall remain to mourn for himself and children; or so sudden will be the shock of bereavement, that, paralyzed with grief, they will be unable to weep; or so attended with indications of Divine displeasure that they will fear to indulge in outward tokens of sorrow. 2. *The wicked man's wealth.* This also shall be dissipated. (1) His money. Should it be plentiful as the dust (Zech. ix. 3; cf. 1 Kings x. 27), he must leave it behind him, but not to his children, for "his silver the innocent shall divide" (ver. 17). The dying millionaire cannot calculate, or secure, that his accumulated treasures will be enjoyed by his family (Ps. xxxix. 6; Luke xii. 20). God can scatter a man's wealth as easily as destroy a man's life or extinguish a man's house. (2) His raiment. This is another form of Oriental wealth (*vide* Exposition), which, though abundant as the mire, must share the same fate, and become the property of the righteous. (3) His palace. Strongly built and gorgeously decorated, it yet is frail and brittle, as easily destroyed and as quickly removed as a moth-web (ch. viii. 15) or a watchman's hut (Isa. i. 8). 3. *The wicked man's person.* Equally with his family and possessions, the wicked man himself is engulfed in an awful doom. (1) Surprised by sudden death. At night retiring to bed rich, he knows not that before morning he shall be removed from life and riches at a stroke; or, if permitted to see the dawn, he is quite unconscious that he does so for the last time, and that, ere the night falls, he shall be no more (ver. 19). Death, which comes to all men suddenly (Matt. xxiv. 44), is no surprise to them who habitually look for its approach (2 Tim. iv. 6), but a fearful awakening to them who live in careless unconcern about their latter end (1 Thess. v. 3). (2) Terrified by impending judgment. While the violent surprise with which death seizes on the sinner is represented by three more metaphors—of a flood from which it is impossible to run (Ps. xviii. 4), a tempest or whirlwind which stealeth one away by night (ch. xxi. 18; Prov. x. 25), and an east wind accompanied by destructive storms (Isa. xli. 16), sometimes "so severe as to smite down whole villages and uproot the largest trees" (Cox)—the effect produced upon the sinner's mind is depicted as one of paralyzing, overwhelming, devouring consternation (Ps. lxxiii. 19). This fear is probably the apprehension of something after death (cf. 'Macbeth,' act i. sc. 7). (3) Overtaken by merited punishment. Upon the head of this unhappy wretch God shall rain down calamities so fast and furious that every attempt to escape his doom will be in vain. Such also David thought would be the portion of the wicked (Ps. xi. 6); and such St. Paul asserts will be the ultimate reward of the unbelieving and impenitent (Rom. ii. 9). (4) Pursued by universal execration. Even if we read (Carey) it, *i.e.* the wind,

shall clap its hands at him, and whistle at him in derision, the image must be interpreted to mean that the storm-chased sinner will be beheld with malignant joy and withering scorn; that, in fact, men will clap their hands with infinite delight over his tragic fate, and hunt his guilty spirit from the world with expressions of bitter hatred and contempt.

II. JOB'S MEANING CLEARED. 1. *The difficulty.* The above exposition of the wicked man's portion bears so close a resemblance to the pictures already sketched by the friends, that much perplexity has been occasioned by Job's seeming inconsistency, in at this stage admitting the very dogma he had so powerfully assailed in his previous contendings. If this were true, it would only prove that great men sometimes change their minds and modify their opinions. But the contradiction is more apparent than real. 2. *The solution.* For a detailed statement of the different schemes proposed with a view to either bridge over or remove this difficulty, the Exposition may be consulted. Here it may suffice to say that either we may understand Job as recapitulating the theory of the friends, which he has just characterized as "foolish notions" (ver. 12); or, holding that the sentiments he delivers are his own, we may affirm that in previously painting the prosperous fortunes of the ungodly (*e.g.* ch. xii. 6; xxi. 7) he was merely placing exceptional cases against the exclusive theory of the friends, that ungodly men have always evil fortunes, which was all that strict logic required as its refutation, but that here he desires to intimate his acquiescence in the main element of their dogma, viz. that as a rule "the retributive justice of God is manifest in the case of the evil-doer" (Delitzsch).

Learn: 1. That every man's portion from God is twofold, relating to the life that is to come as well as to that which now is. 2. That the higher a wicked man rises in worldly prosperity, the more ignominious will be his final overthrow. 3. That God can effect sudden and surprising transfers of property on earth. 4. That sudden death may overtake the person who appears best secured against it. 5. That sudden death is not the same thing to a wicked man that it is to a good one. 6. That the wicked man cannot face the future without a fear. 7. That if a wicked man's death is a cause of joy to the world, the departure of a saint should be a source of lamentation.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—23.—*Job a victor in the controversy.* After the last speech of Job the friends appear to be completely overcome and silenced, and the third of them does not venture to renew the attack. The sufferer therefore continues, in a speech of high poetic beauty, to instruct the friends, while once more insisting on his own innocence.

I. INNOCENCE MAINTAINED. (Vers. 2—10.) 1. *Conscious rectitude of resolve.* (Vers. 2—4.) In the profoundest sense that his thoughts are open to the eye of the all-seeing God, and that he need not fear to have his words overheard, Job speaks. He declares that he has still strength and sanity enough to know what he is saying, and to speak as a responsible witness on this question of his innocence. And although it has pleased God, as he thinks, to withhold justice from him, and to distress his soul, the light of duty and of conscience shines as brightly as ever. He will be true in word and deed to the last. Truth is the supreme duty we owe to ourselves, to our fellows, to our God, to eternity. The resolve to be true should be inseparable from the resolve to live; and we should part with life sooner than with truth. And no suffering should be allowed to disturb our genuine convictions about ourselves. The discouragement of others' harsh opinion may well lead us to cast more searching glances into the state of our heart, but ought not to extort confessions of guilt which are exaggerated and unreal. It is only superstition which can suppose such to be acceptable to God. But this is the language of a man who has found, deep below all his doubts, an immovable ground of confidence in God. This makes him bold in the presence of his fellow-men. Happy those whose hearts condemn them not, and who have confidence with God. A false humility is an affectation of being worse than we really are. A genuine humility teaches us to see ourselves as we are; and every recognition of facts as facts, truths as truths, gives confidence. 2. *The steadfastness of a good conscience.* (Vers. 5—7.) Job will never give way to his friends, nor own them in the right. The language

of dogged egotism and stupid obstinacy imitates that of conscious right: "I will never give in!" But the one is the mark of folly and weakness, the other is the evidence of vitality and strength. He will not part with the sense of his integrity; it is as the jewel for which he has sold everything, which represents, amidst poverty and suffering and shame, all the property he has in the world. "Conscience is the great magazine and repository of all those pleasures that can afford any solid refreshment to the soul. When this is calm and serene and absolving, then properly a man enjoys all things, and what is more, himself; for that he must do before he can enjoy anything else. But it is only a pious life, led exactly by the rules of a severe religion, that can authorize a man's conscience to speak comfortably to him; it is this that must word the sentence before the conscience can pronounce it, and then it will do it with majesty and authority; it will not whisper, but proclaim a *jubilee* to the mind; it will not drop, but pour in oil upon the wounded heart" (South). 3. *Inward peace and joy denied to the wicked.* (Vers. 8—10.) This is a further argument of innocence. How can Job be numbered amongst the wicked? No hypocrite can possibly enjoy this serenity and unshaken hope in God which have been the portion of his soul amidst all calamities, and in the approach of death (ch. xvii. and xix.). When the cords of his life-tent are cut (comp. ch. iv. 21), the wicked man has *nothing* more to hope for. His prayers will receive no answer, and joyous and trustful intimacy with God is denied him. Whatever disturbs innocence, in the same degree makes inroad upon the comfort of the soul. To be in the dark; to find that the gate of prayer is closed; to carry about a sick, ulcerated mind; to be harassed by the returning paroxysms of diffidence and despair; to be haunted with the dismal apparitions of a reviving guilt—the old black sores of past forgotten sins; to have the merciless handwriting against him, presented in new and flowing characters to his apprehension—is the case and condition of the sinner. But "why should a man choose to go to heaven through sloughs and ditches, briars and thorns, diffidence and desertion, trembling and misgiving, and by the very borders of hell, with death staring him in the face, when he might pass from comfort to comfort, and have all his way paved with assurance, and made easy and pleasant to him by the inward invaluable satisfaction of a well-grounded peace"? (South).

II. INSTRUCTION ON THE FATE OF THE WICKED. (Vers. 11—23.) 1. *Introduction.* (Vers. 11—13; comp. ch. xx. 29; xvi. 20.) The *theme of discourse* is to be the "hand of God"—his power and his mode of moral government as seen by daily examples in the lives of men; and the "sense" or mind of the Almighty—the contents of his thoughts and counsels (ch. x. 13; xxiii. 10). And *experience* is to furnish the evidence and the illustrations (ver. 12). The facts are open to the view of all, but what was wanting in the friends of Job, as in many others, is a correct understanding and appreciation of them. Wisdom to mark the signs of the times, the hints of God's will, his meanings, his judgments, not only in the course of nations, the great crises of history, but in the smaller sphere of every day, is what we need. Then the theme is announced (ver. 13): "the lot of the wicked man—the heritage of the tyrant." Compare the words of Zophar (ch. xx. 29). 2. *The instability of the wicked man's condition.* (Vers. 14—18.) His *household and family* are first mentioned. The corruption working outward is first felt in the nearest circle and surrounding of his life. The sins of the father are visited upon the children. The sword, or famine, or pestilence makes them a prey. All modern as well as ancient experience confirms this law. The doctrine of "heredity" throws light upon many diseases, many vices, many woes. The children's teeth are set on edge because the fathers have eaten sour grapes. And this law of eternal retribution would seem intolerably stern and harsh did we not perceive that it is thus God constantly warns the world. The connection of causes and effects, constant, unbroken, alike in the physical, the moral, and the spiritual sphere, is the natural revelation of the will of God. But there are compensations, redeeming agencies at work for the individual. He suffers often as the scapegoat of others' sins externally; he is the victim of a solemn necessity; but in the large realm of inward freedom he may be emancipated, redeemed, and blessed. "His widows weep not" (ver. 15) behind his bier, perhaps because in the fearful ravages of the pestilence the funeral rites are suspended. The plural is used to indicate the wives of the heads of other families and relatives of the deceased generally. Then, not only is the wicked cursed in his family, but in his property. A picture of

immense wealth and profuse display follows (ver. 16)—his silver being heaped up like dust, and fine raiment being as common as dirt. Yet there is no more real substantiality in all this than in the frail cocoon of the moth, or the hut which the watchman puts up in the vineyard or orchard (Isa. i. 8). The striking story is told by Herodotus (vi. 86) of one Glaucus, the son of Epicydes, who was requested by a man of Miletus to take charge of the half of his fortune. When the sons of the Milesian claimed the money, Glaucus denied all knowledge of it, and consulted the oracle as to the results of perjury, and whether he could safely retain the money. The oracle replied, "Glaucus, son of Epicydes, for the present moment, indeed, it is more profitable to prevail by an oath, and to make the money thy booty. Swear; for death in truth awaits the man who is true to his oath. But, on the other hand, the child of the oath is nameless, and hath neither hands nor feet; yet he swiftly comes on, until he has ruined and destroyed thy whole race, yea, all thy house. With the race of the faithful man it shall fare better hereafter." He restored the money, but was told it was too late; and Leotychides, who related the story to the Athenians, says, "There is now no descendant of Glaucus living, no hearth that owns his name; he has been utterly rooted out, and has passed away from Sparta." 3. *Insecurity of life.* (Vers. 19—23.) "He lies down rich, and—doth it not again," according to the best reading. This is a picture of the evening. The next is a picture of the morning. "Opens his eyes, and—is gone!" Both depict the suddenness of the wicked man's end (ver. 19). A multitude of terrors rush in upon him, like the waters of an inundation (ver. 20; comp. ch. xx. 28; Ps. xviii. 5; Jer. xlvii. 2), and fill his death-bed with horror (comp. ch. xviii. 14; xx. 25), and the east wind carries him away (ver. 21)—the east wind being often mentioned as one of great violence (ch. i. 19; xv. 2; xxxviii. 24; Isa. xxvii. 8; Ezek. xxvii. 26). God slings without sparing the bolts of his wrath against him, and he must flee before his hand (ver. 22). The fearful scene closes amidst the scornful laughter and clapping of hands of those who exult in the tyrant's doom (ver. 23; comp. ch. xxxiv. 37; Lam. ii. 15; Nah. iii. 19), and he departs from his place amidst the hisses of execration. The powerful picture of the great moralist, Juvenal, may be compared with this passage ('Sat.,' xiii. 210, *sqq.*). After depicting the sufferings of a guilty conscience, he proceeds, "What, then, if the sinner has achieved his purpose? A respiteless anxiety is his, that ceases not, even at the hours of meals; his jaws are parched as though with fever, and the food he loathes swells between his teeth. All wines the miserable wretch spits out; old Alban wine, of highly prized antiquity, disgusts him. At night, if anxious care has granted him perchance some brief slumber, and his limbs, that have been tossing over the whole bed, at length are at rest, immediately he sees in dreams the temple and altar of the deity he has insulted; and, what weighs upon his soul with especial terror, he sees thee [the wronged one]! Thy awful form, of more than human bulk, confounds the trembling wretch, and wrings confession from him!" These pictures of the doom of the godless are fitted to teach patience to all the ill-used and the suffering in this world. God forgets nothing; neither the work of faith and labour of love of his children, nor the rank offences of the rebels against his laws. In due time he will both reward and punish, commonly even in this life (Exod. xxxii. 34; Rom. ii.). Calamity is not a mere accident, as the worldly and the infidel think. It follows sin, according to a fixed connection, by the will of God (Amos iii. 6).—J.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Determined integrity.* Job is resolved to retain his integrity in spite of every rude assault. He will not suffer himself to be withdrawn from his fixed resolve. By firm resolution integrity may be preserved, though a boastful spirit exposes itself to temptation. Between the perils of presumptuous boasting on the one hand and timid irresolution on the other, lies the path of safety in a lowly, humble determination.

I. RESOLUTION FORTIFIES THE MIND AGAINST THE ATTACKS OF TEMPTATION. Evil finds its easiest prey in the irresolute and undetermined. Subtle and sudden suggestions of wrong are instantly rejected by the determined mind. They are cast off. There is a spirit of antagonism—a cherished antipathy to wrong; and before temptation has power to draw away the feet of the unwary, the determined one casts back the offending presence. He waits not to parley. There is a law established to cleave to

the right; and the presence of the wrong becomes the watchword for an uprising of the whole strength against the usurper.

II. RESOLUTION, BY ITS DECISIONS, PREVENTS THE MIND FROM THE INJURIOUS EFFECTS OF VACILLATION. The mind is kept braced up to its duty. Its judgments are formed beforehand. It has not to wait for any mental process. The instant wrong is suggested, that instant its reply is at hand. While the wavering and uncertain are being overcome, the resolute man walks on his plain path fearlessly and safe.

III. RESOLUTION TO MAINTAIN INTEGRITY ARISING OUT OF A JUST ESTIMATE OF ITS WORTH PRESERVES FROM DECEPTION BY FALSE VIEWS. Low estimates of the worth of personal integrity make a man the sport of the trafficker in evil. Personal rectitude being held cheaply would be bartered away for any gilded bait.

IV. THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF RESOLUTENESS OF SPIRIT BECOMES AN OBVIOUS AND PRESSING DUTY. No one can be neglectful of this without doing great wrong to himself. To stand firm, entrenched by a strong will, guards the soul from the delusions that are rife enough; but that the will may be well supported, it is needful to encourage the spirit of resolute, unyielding determination. Then, with a high sense of the preciousness of conscious integrity, and with a mind adjusted to an attitude of purposed resistance against whatever would threaten to impair that integrity, the faithful one holds fast to his possession, and gains, in addition to his own quiet approval, that of all observers, and, above all, that of the great Judge of human conduct. In this Job succeeds, and becomes a pattern to all tempted ones. From the depth of his acute and prolonged suffering arises the cry of holy resolve, "Till I die will I not remove mine integrity from me." So that from his inmost heart cometh no reproach upon his days.

He that thus acts secures (1) peace of mind; (2) consciousness of the Divine approval; (3) the benefit of daily growth in goodness; (4) the final reward of fidelity.—R. G.

Vers. 8—12.—*The hope of the hypocrite.* Job, the man of integrity, who was determined to hold fast his integrity until death, saw plainly that the hypocrite had no ground of confidence, and he boldly makes the demand, "*What is the hope of the hypocrite?*" It is an appeal that can receive no satisfying answer. There is no hope for him, indeed; whatever he may imagine it to be, it is as a bubble that floats on the water for a short time, then bursts, and no trace is left of it. His confidence is placed on an unsafe foundation; he may build his expectations upon it, but the inevitable flood of time will wash it away. It is a vain, groundless, lost, disappointed hope. Job directs his inquiry into one channel—What is the hypocrite's hope as towards God? The earthly hopes of the hypocrite are not safe, though for a time he may prosper. But his hopes towards God are vain indeed. The hypocrite is estranged from God.

I. HE HAS NO HOPE IN GOD IN DEATH. When the righteous man filleth his bosom with sheaves, the hope of the wicked is found to be cut off. Beyond the grave all is darkness.

II. HE CANNOT TURN TO GOD IN TIME OF TROUBLE. When affliction falls upon the humble and righteous one, he whom he has sought to know and obey proves to be a reality to him. But the hypocrite has made God to be a sham. He has not known or obeyed him, or acted towards him as though he were a reality. To him, indeed, there is no God. How can he call on him in trouble whom he has denied in health?

III. HE CANNOT FIND IN GOD A SPRING OF JOY. He cannot delight himself in him whom he has represented to himself as an unreality. God has not been really God in the estimate of the hypocrite. The man who is himself conscious of being false makes all false around him. He does not live in a real but a deceitful world. He has deceived himself in respect of it.

IV. HE CANNOT CALL UPON GOD IN PRAYER. Thus the hope of the hypocrite perishes. It is vain. In the exigencies of life, when he most needs help, the false foundation which he has laid for himself fails him. The man who acts falsely towards God really acts falsely towards himself, and turns the most substantial grounds of hope into airy nothingness.—R. G.

Vers. 13—23.—*The reward of iniquity.* Job's eye had been open to behold the ways of God with men. He had seen the effects of righteous living and of wickedness. His own suffering, coupled with his consciousness of integrity, would quicken his inquiries and his observations on the relative results of these two methods of living. He now pronounces his judgment on the fruits of ungodly living: "This is the portion of a wicked man." Whatever may be the temporary prosperity of the wicked (and of such prosperity Job had already spoken), yet it lacks permanence, and it is associated with much sorrow. He traces the sorrow in the following particulars.

I. AFFLICTION UPON HIS FAMILY. A curse is upon his home. The sword, the famine, the pestilence, carry off his children, even if they be multiplied.

II. INSECURITY OF HIS WEALTH. Yea, "though he heap up silver as the dust." The Divine retributions are everywhere acknowledged to extend to ill-gotten gain. Job is speaking of "the wicked man" and of "oppressors." They have an earthly "heritage," but there is a God that judgeth in the earth, and there is a "heritage" also which they shall receive of the Almighty.

III. THE INSTABILITY OF HIS HOUSE. That in which man takes so great a pride. To establish a name in the earth, to be distinguished as a family, a house, is a marked aim on the part of most men. The effort and hope of the wicked are cut off. The very "name of the wicked shall rot."

IV. HE IS THE VICTIM OF SORROW, UNHAPPINESS, AND FEAR. That which sustains the righteous in his afflictions, viz. his conscious integrity, is wanting in the wicked, and he becomes filled with fear.

V. HE IS FINALLY UPROOTED AND CAST AWAY. He leaves no permanent memorial. His name, his works, his memory, are not cherished by any. "The east wind carrieth him away," and he is hurled "out of his place." He is judged of God; he is despised of man (vers. 22, 23). This, in Job's view, is the lot of the ungodly; and though he himself has suffered many things at the hands of the Lord, he is conscious of his righteousness, and has confident hope of final vindication.—R. G.

Vers. 1—4.—*Moral honesty.* Job now almost loses sight of his vexatious friends as he breaks out into a long discourse. His first thought is to assert his integrity, without flinching before the charges that have been so recklessly flung at him. He will not confess sins of which he is not guilty. It required some courage for him to take this stand, for he was sorely pressed to yield to insincerity.

I. THE TEMPTATION TO INSINCERITY. This is many-sided, springing from various sources. 1. *The desire to conciliate God.* Job is persuaded that it is the Almighty who has vexed his soul. If he will abase himself and confess his utter unworthiness, it would seem that perhaps God would be propitiated. 2. *The persuasive urgency of others.* Each of the three friends had set before Job the same picture, and had suggested that the only security, the only hope, lay in abject penitence. It is difficult to hold to our course when it is resisted and reprobated by our friends. 3. *The true humility of a good man.* Job knew that he was a frail creature, and that he was as nothing before the might and holiness of God (ch. vii. 1—8). Good men are more or less conscious of their own littleness. It seems a mark of modesty to depreciate one's self. Job must have been deeply pained at the unfairness that drove him to take the opposite course and vindicate his own uprightness. We are all tempted to insincere confession of guilt which we do not feel in order to please God or men, or as a sign of humility.

II. THE WEAKNESS OF YIELDING TO THIS TEMPTATION. All the inducements that may be brought to urge a person to insincerity are just temptations to sin. They are attacks upon the conscience. To yield to them is a sign of weakness. The important point is that insincerity is always wrong, even when it is in the direction of self-humiliation. There may be a hypocritical penitence as well as a hypocritical pride. We cannot be too deeply humble; when the thought of our sin dawns upon us we cannot grieve over the guilt and shame of it too intensely. But if we do not feel this profound penitence it is nothing but falsehood and empty pretence to make a confession of it with our lips. For the language of penitence to exceed the feeling of it is not a mark of real humility. Any insincerity is injurious to the conscience and wrong in the sight of God, and the fact that it tends to self-depreciation rather than to self-exaltation does not alter its essential character.

III. THE MORAL HONESTY OF RESISTING THE TEMPTATION TO INSINCERITY. We cannot but admire the manliness of Job. It was difficult for him not to be cowed before the array of adverse influences brought to bear upon him. His sickness of body, his mental distress and perplexity, and the unanimous opinion of his friends, might well have deprived him of all courage. Yet he holds up his head and asserts the right. On what is such moral honesty based? 1. *Reverence for truth.* Truth is imperious and must be respected at any cost. 2. *Belief in justice.* In the end right must prevail. It cannot be well to renounce it in favour of temporary appearances. 3. *Trust in God.* Job still clings to his faith, although he believes that all his troubles come from God. Now, no insincerity can please God or deceive him. If we think of our standing in his sight, rather than our position in the eyes of men, we must be true and honest.—W. F. A.

Vers. 8—10.—*An empty hope.* The wicked man may have gained much of earthly goods. But all he has is temporal and external. Therefore it is useless to him at death, and in regard to all his spiritual needs. We can see the dark features of his miserable prospect in the picture that Job has drawn.

I. HE HAS EARTHLY POSSESSIONS. The foolish man has made gain; but it is useless to him. He is like the rich man in the parable, who was about to build new barns for his goods when his life was taken and all his wealth lost at a stroke. If a person trusts to his earthly prosperity he is not prepared to confess his true needs. He thinks he is rich when he is miserable and blind and naked (Rev. iii. 17). If he has acquired his wealth for himself, if it is his *gain*, he is in the greater danger of over-estimating it. Self-made men are tempted to think too much of what they have won by their own hard toil.

II. HE HAS NO CLAIM ON THE HEAVENLY INHERITANCE. There is nothing for the future. Yet life is brief and uncertain. It must end soon; it may end at any moment. Riches may have been got by a man's own energy; but life is dependent on the will of God. Thus a man gains earthly things; but God disposes of his life. The greater concerns are altogether outside his powers, as they are beyond the region of his calculations.

III. HE HAS NO ACCESS TO GOD IN PRAYER. The wicked man has no right to expect God to hear him in trouble. 1. *He will have trouble.* All his prosperity cannot exclude the possibility, nay, the certainty, of adversity. 2. *He will need God.* In trouble he may shriek to Heaven for help, though he never dreams of acknowledging God in times of prosperity. Prayer is so natural to man that it is forced out of the most unaccustomed lips by the pressure of great distress. 3. *He will not be heard.* Job is right. There are men whose prayers God will not hear. The reason is simply that they do not fulfil the necessary conditions of successful prayer. No man can fall so low, but that if he humble himself and turn and repent, God will hear him. But God will not hear the prayer of the impenitent. When the wicked man falls into trouble, very naturally he will desire to be saved from it. But possibly he may not repent of his sin nor desire to be saved from that; then all his prayer comes from a low, selfish desire to escape what hurts him. Such a prayer cannot be heard.

IV. HE HAS NO DELIGHT IN GOD. 1. *He misses the one Source of perfect good.* Though he gains much, his possessions are external; they do not help or feed his soul. They are but temporal; when he dies he will leave them all behind. But God, as the Portion of his people, is a satisfying and permanent possession. He, and he alone, both fills all their real need now and endures for ever. To miss God in pursuit of any other aim is to light on an empty hope. 2. *He will not continue to seek God.* In the agony of the moment a miserable, selfish cry to Heaven is wrung from his heart. But when the trouble is past he forgets his prayer. He will not "always call upon God." So-called death-bed repentances are justly viewed with suspicion. Too often the dying man is only afraid of the dread unknown, naturally desirous of being delivered from its terrors. Too often, if he recovers, his penitence is forgotten with his fears of death, and he lives his old evil life again.—W. F. A.

Ver. 11.—*Teachings concerning God.* I. THE HIGHEST TEACHINGS. Our thoughts are too much chained to the earth, and too much centred in self. Even in religion we

tend to subjective feelings rather than to worship—the contemplation and the service of God. Now, the chief end of revelation is to make God known to us, and the highest occupation for our minds is to rise to the thought of God. The character of God should make this clear to us. 1. *His greatness.* Knowledge should seek a worthy object. We should desire to know what is greatest, rather than petty details. 2. *His holiness.* Teachings about God are teachings about goodness. Here we come to the source of true ethics. We cannot study "the good" till we know God. 3. *His love.* That is supreme in God, and it is supreme in the universe. To know the love of God is to know what is highest and best of all things.

II. PRACTICAL TEACHINGS. It may be urged that we cannot afford to spend our time in contemplation, that we want to know how to live our present life, and that therefore earthly and human knowledge is the most important knowledge. But this is a mistake. For God is not separated from this world and the affairs of daily life. The knowledge of God is not abstract theology. God is our Father, our Master, our Guide. To know God is to know how to live; it is to know what character and conduct are in harmony with the mind of our supreme King. We cannot live aright without knowing him. Moreover, it is a matter of profound interest to know how God is disposed towards us. Is he gracious and forgiving? how may we best please him? These are practical questions. But apart from the *ends* of knowledge, the knowledge of God is itself a source of blessedness. To know God is eternal life (John xvii. 3).

III. DIFFICULT TEACHINGS. Experience shows how grievously men have erred in their teachings about God. Not only has heathenism gone astray in its manifold and monstrous perversions of Divinity, but Christians have set forth the most erroneous conceptions of God. With some he has been regarded as a stern despot, an arbitrary autocrat; with others he has been represented as a mere personification of amiable and compliant good will, without regard to moral considerations. It is not wonderful that the teachings are difficult, considering: 1. *The greatness of God.* One can know but a very little of so awful a Being. We see but "parts of his ways;" "but the thunder of his power who can understand?" 2. *The blindness of men.* Sin blinds us; prejudice perverts our notions of God instead of allowing us to see the truth about him.

IV. POSSIBLE TEACHINGS. 1. *From revelation.* God has not hidden himself in the thick darkness. He has made himself known in his works, by the inspiration of prophecy, and above all in the Person of Christ. Agnosticism is only defensible if all revelation is discarded, and agnosticism cannot account for Christ. 2. *By spiritual grace.* The knowledge of God is an inward revelation. We can only read nature, the Bible, and Christ aright when the Spirit of God is in our hearts. By the gift of his Spirit God opens our eyes to the knowledge of himself.—W. F. A.

Vers. 13—23.—*The portion of a wicked man.* Job seems to be echoing the teaching of his friends which he has previously repudiated. Now he urges that the wicked man does meet with trouble as the wages of his misdeeds. But Job looks further than his friends. He does not associate particular and immediate troubles with guilt as they do; he takes a large view of life; he embraces the whole career; and from that he draws his conclusions. The striking thing about this picture is that success is converted into disappointment. The wicked man prospers. He is not poor and miserable, as the old, conventional, orthodox creed assumed. But his very wealth and success are turned to failure and wretchedness.

I. FAMILY DISAPPOINTMENTS. (Vers. 13—15.) The wicked man is not childless. He has children who are to be regarded as "a heritage from the Lord." His family grows up about him. But wait for the end. Clouds gather and break over the home. Brave sons are slain by the sword. Famine visits the land, or business failure impoverishes the store, and then many children only mean many mouths to feed. If the calamity does not always come in this visible way, in some way or other the bad man must miss the true blessings of family life, for he has not the pure and generous spirit out of which they are produced.

II. USELESS WEALTH. (Vers. 16, 17.) He may heap up silver as the dust, but he will not be able to enjoy it. Mere money is not happiness. Money may be married to misery, while peace may dwell with poverty. The wealth may not be forfeited; yet the life of its owner is but brief. After he has gone another will enjoy the product

of his labours. Thus, while he has it, it will not satisfy his deepest wants, and at best his tenure of it is temporary and hazardous.

III. DANGER IN THE MIDST OF SECURITY. (Vers. 18, 19.) He has built him a house. But in the day of trial this will prove flimsy as a silken cocoon spun by a moth, frail as a booth of green boughs. Thus he deceives himself. If he had not been prosperous he would have been more ready to confess his helplessness. But his very success has blinded him, and lulled him to sleep in a false sense of ease and safety. Yet his ruin is preparing for him, and it will burst over him when he least expects it. Such a sudden and startling surprise must be overwhelming. The miserable man will be crushed by it.

IV. TERRORS AND IRRESISTIBLE DESTRUCTION. (Vers. 20, 21.) When the day of reckoning comes there will be no possibility of mistaking it. All signs of prosperity now disappear. There is only an awakening to terror and tempest. The fierce east wind sweeps the wicked man away. No one can resist the judgment of God. It is sudden, swift, complete, like the desolating hurricane.

V. REPROBATION INSTEAD OF POPULARITY. (Vers. 22, 23.) In his prosperity the wicked man was fawned upon by flatterers. Then he had society and admirers. Now he has lost all, and is desolate. God is against him. Men mock at him. A miserable, hunted creature, he has no hope and no refuge. Around and before him are only foes and dangers. He can but despair.

This awful fate is set forth as a warning. It is possible for the wicked man to repent and find deliverance in the grace of Christ.—W. F. A.

Ver. 17.—*The wicked working for the good.* This is not intentional. But it is a fact of observation and experience. Let us consider first the fact, and then how it is brought about.

I. THAT THE WORK OF THE WICKED IS FOR THE ADVANTAGE OF THE GOOD. First there is the negative side of the truth. Bad people do not enjoy the fruits of their own misdeeds. They may heap up riches, but they are not able to keep possession of them; for even if they meet with no reverse of fortune, they must forsake all when they die. But now we are carried a step further. What becomes of the forsaken wealth? Job says that it falls into the hands of the just, who put on the raiment which the wicked have prepared. This does not always happen in the direct manner that Job's words indicate, though sometimes his statement is literally verified. But in indirect ways it has a much wider application. "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. viii. 28). The earth helps the woman (Rev. xii. 16). The meek shall inherit the earth (Matt. v. 5). Nebuchadnezzar fought for his own advantage only. Yet he was used as God's servant (Jer. xxv. 9), and his achievements were turned to the real advantage of the devout remnant of Israel. Persecution has spread the gospel, as when the Church was scattered at the death of Stephen, and so became missionary. Thus "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." Modern wars have opened up countries to the gospel of Christ—not wars of the cross in the interests of Christianity, but selfish, wicked wars, the leaders of which had no good end in view. So it may be that all sin and Satanic evil will be utilized, like offensive manure out of which spring beautiful and fragrant flowers.

II. HOW THE WORK OF THE WICKED COMES TO BE FOR THE ADVANTAGE OF THE GOOD. This thing is not aimed at by the wicked, nor do they imagine that it will come about. How, then, is it produced? 1. *By the overruling providence of God.* God governs even through the wicked deeds of bad men. He "shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will." "Man proposes, and God disposes." We are not like pawns on the chess-board, because we have free-will. But God is infinitely greater than a skilful chess-player. He does more than manipulate inert things. He works among the wild and wayward wills of men, and so acts that they result in accomplishing his great purposes. Thus God employs unconscious agents and brings good out of evil. 2. *Through human fitness.* The good must be fit to profit by God's providential use of the work of the wicked. That work tends to their advantage just in proportion as they are capable of being benefited. (1) Moral fitness. This is a condition of the special favour that is indicated by the providential action. God will give as a favour what, indeed, is not earned, but what is in a measure the reward of fidelity. (2) Personal

fitness. We can only receive real good in proportion to our capacity for it. There are men who cannot take God's blessings, simply because they have no susceptibility for them. Now, the real good even of property is not in the thing itself, but in the right use of it. God will make things a blessing to those who are in the condition to use them well.—W. F. A.

Ver. 21.—*The east wind.* Kingsley wrote an ode to the east wind. But few men have a good word for it. We in England, however, have quite our share of the presence of this unwelcome visitor. Has the east wind any religious significance to us?

I. THERE ARE DESTRUCTIVE FORCES IN NATURE. The east wind is destructive. It brings blight to plants and illness to men. We might have expected that a perfect world would have only fresh, healthy west winds. Yet we must recognize the fact that, like the east wind, lightning, tempest, earthquakes, drought, and deluge are naturally hurtful influences. We need not resort to a Manichæan explanation, and suppose that a malignant being is at the root of these things. For scientific research teaches us that the destroying agencies of nature minister to its progress. The biting east wind that cuts off the more tender plants leaves the hardier ones to flourish with greater freedom, and so tends to promote their growth and propagation. The buffeting of the world helps to develop robustness of character.

II. INFLUENCE PARTAKES OF THE CHARACTER OF ITS ORIGIN. The east wind is gendered on the dreary steppes of Russia. Arid plains suck out of it all its exhilarating properties. Cold regions lend it cruel barbs of ice. Even in beautiful, smiling England, the east wind comes as a blast from Siberia, and the desolation of the land of exile accompanies it. Spiritual influence is like its origin. Cruel natures can only spread an atmosphere of cruelty and distress about them. No man can influence others excepting through what he possesses. We cannot permanently disguise our characters. As we are in our hearts and homes, so shall we be ultimately in our work and in the outcome of our lives.

III. CHILDHOOD DETERMINES MANHOOD. Leagues away beyond whole empires the east wind is born in the far-off Russian solitude. Yet when it flies over our fields and rushes in at our doors it is true to the character it received in the land of its birth. Not only is its influence true to its origin, but the wind itself continues of the same harsh character, although it is now surrounded by very genial circumstances. The tone and set of life are determined in youth. Some asperity may be softened and mellowed by the discipline of later years; but in the main most men are of the character of their youth. Hence the great importance of a right life at the start.

IV. EAST WINDS ARE CONFINED TO EARTH. There are none in heaven. The storms and terrors of life that beset God's children are peculiar to this brief time of discipline. The fruits of the heavenly Eden are not touched by frost or blighting blast. Those people who have no portion in the better land may well dread the destructive agencies of nature, which tear away all that they have to live for. But true Christians should learn to face the east wind of cutting calamity, knowing that they have but to cross the moor, and a cheerful home will welcome them on the other side.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Vers. 1—28.—The connection of this chapter with the preceding is somewhat obscure. Probably we are to regard Job as led to see, even while he is justifying God's ways with sinners (ch. xxvii. 8—23), how many and how great are the difficulties in the way of forming a single consistent theory of the Divine action, which shall be applicable to all cases. Hence he comes to the conclusion that God is incomprehensible by man and inscrutable; and that it is only given to man to know him sufficiently for his practical guidance. To impress this on his hearers is his main object (vers. 12—28); and, to impress it the more, he introduces it by a sharp contrast. Wonderful as is man's cleverness and ingenuity in respect of earthly things and physical phenomena (vers. 1—11), with respect to heavenly things and the spiritual world—wherewith

true wisdom is concerned—he knows next to nothing. All that he knows is just enough to guide his conduct aright (ver. 28).

Ver. 1.—**Surely there is a vein for the silver**; literally, *an issue for silver*; i.e. a place or places whence it is drawn forth from the earth. The silver-mines of Spain were very early worked by the Phœnicians, and produced the metal in great abundance (see the author's 'History of Phœnicia,' p. 314). But Asia itself was probably the source whence silver was obtained in primitive times. **And a place for gold where they fine it**; or, *fuse it*. Gold is very widely spread over the earth's surface, and in ancient times was especially abundant in Arabia (Diod. Sic., ii. 1; iii. 42; Strabo, xvi. 4. § 18; Pliny, 'Hist. Nat.,' vi. 32, etc.); so that Job might easily have been acquainted with the processes of fusing and refining it. Two processes of refining are mentioned by Diodorus as practised by the Egyptians (iii. 11).

Ver. 2.—**Iron is taken out of the earth** (see the comment on ch. xx. 24). Iron was found in the hills of Palestine (Deut. viii. 9), in the trans-Jordanic region (Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' iv. 8. § 2), in the sandstone of the Lebanon ('Hist. of Phœnicia,' p. 47), and in Egypt ('Hist. of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. p. 93), probably also in many other places. It is scarcely ever found except in the shape of iron ore, and so has to be "taken out of the earth." **And brass is molten out of the stone.** By "brass" we must understand copper, since the amalgam brass is never found in a natural state. Copper was yielded abundantly in very early times by the mines which the Egyptians worked in the Sinaitic peninsula ('Hist. of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. pp. 93, 94). It was also obtainable from Palestine (Deut. viii. 9), Cyprus ('Hist. of Phœnicia,' p. 311), and Armenia (Ezek. xxvii. 13). Sometimes it is found pure, but generally in the shape of copper ore, which has to be "molten" for the pure metal to run off.

Ver. 3.—**He setteth an end to darkness.** Man, in his desire to obtain these metals, "setteth an end to darkness," *i.e.* letteth in the light of day, or the artificial light which he carries with him, upon the natural abode of darkness, the inner parts of the earth. The miner's first operation is to pierce the ground with a shaft, perpendicular, horizontal, or oblique, as suits his purpose. Through this the light enters into what was previously pitch darkness. **And searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death**; rather, *and searcheth out to the furthest bound the stones of thick darkness and of the shadow of death*; explores, *i.e.*, the entire murky region within the earth, notwithstanding its fearful gloom and obscurity.

Ver. 4.—**The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant.** This passage is very obscure; but recent critics suggest, as its probable meaning, "He (*i.e.* the miner) breaketh open a shaft, away from where men inhabit" (see the Revised Version). The miner does not wish to be interfered with, and therefore sinks his shaft in some wild spot, far from the habitations of men. **Even the waters forgotten of the foot**; rather, *they are forgotten of the foot*; i.e. no one visits them; they are left alone; they are "forgotten of the foot" of the passer-by. **They are dried up, they are gone away from men**; rather, *they hang swinging to and fro, far from men.* The descent of the shaft is made by a rope, to which they "hang swinging" all the time that they descend. As they have sought secrecy, all this takes place far from the haunts of men.

Ver. 5.—**As for the earth, out of it cometh bread.** Man's cleverness is such that he turns the earth to various uses. By tillage of its surface he causes it to produce the staff of life, bread; and by his mining operations the under part of it is turned up as fire, or rather, *as by fire.* Fire was used in some of the processes whereby masses of material were detached and forced to yield their treasures (see Pliny, 'Hist. Nat.,' xxxiii. 4. § 73).

Ver. 6.—**The stones of it are the place of sapphires.** Among the rocks and stones whereof the interior of the earth is mainly composed are found gems of inestimable value, for instance, sapphires. It is doubtful whether the Hebrew sapphire (סַפִּיר) was the gem which bears that name among ourselves, or the *lapis lazuli.* In either case it was highly esteemed, and appeared in kings' crowns (Ezek. xxviii. 13), and in the high priest's breastplate (Exod. xxviii. 18). Job notes its high value in ver. 16. **And it** (*i.e.* the earth) **hath dust of gold**; literally, *dusts*; i.e. a multitude of small specks or atoms. In the auriferous rocks gold is commonly scattered in such specks.

Ver. 7.—**There is a path which no fowl knoweth**; or, *his is a path which no bird of prey knoweth* (see the Revised Version). The miner's path through the bowels of the earth is intended. **And which the vulture's eye hath not seen.** The vulture is probably the most keen-sighted of birds, but it cannot even get a glimpse of the subterraneous path which the miner treads.

Ver. 8.—**The lion's whelps have not trodden it**; literally, *the sons of the fierce*—the whelps of lions, tigers, or leopards may be intended. These beasts would haunt the mountains and penetrate into natural caverns, but would never adventure them-

selves in the shafts and adits of miners. **Nor the fierce lion passed by it**; rather, *passed thereby* (see the Revised Version).

Ver. 9.—**He putteth forth his hand upon the rock.** Our Revisers translate, *upon the flinty rock;* while Canon Cook maintains that "the word used means either granite or quartz." Probably Job meant no more than that man does not shrink from attacking any—oven the hardest—rock; but will subdue it, and cut his way through it, if he has occasion so to do. **He overturneth the mountains by the roots.** Herodotus, in describing what he had seen of the Phœnician mining operations in the island of Thasos, observes, "a huge mountain has been turned upside down in the search for ores" (Herod., vi. 47). Pliny says of the process employed for detaching huge masses from the metalliferous hills in Spain, "They attack the rock with iron wedges and hammers. When this work is complete, they destroy the supports, and notify by signal that the fall is about to take place. A watchman, stationed on the mountain-top, alone understands the signal; and he proceeds at once to have all the workmen called in, and himself makes a hurried retreat. Then the mountain falls in upon itself with a crash that cannot be imagined, and an incredible concussion of the air. The successful engineers contemplate the ruin which they have achieved" ('Hist. Nat.,' xxxiii. 4. § 73).

Ver. 10.—**He cutteth out rivers among the rocks.** Some understand this of man's general ability to cut canals and tunnels, and change the course of rivers. But the allusion is more probably to the works undertaken in mines for the carrying off of the water from them. Diodorus says that when subterranean springs were tapped in mines, which threatened to flood them, it was usual to construct ducts, or tunnels, by which the inconvenient liquid might be carried off to a lower level (Diod. Siculus, v. 37. § 3). **And his eye seeth every precious thing.** Nothing escapes his notice. Even as he constructs these ducts he has his eye open to note any signs of mineral wealth, of metals or of precious stones, that occur along the line of his excavation.

Ver. 11.—**He bindeth the floods from overflowing.** This, again, may be either taken generally of man's ability to create dams, dykes, and embankments, whereby the overflow of waters is prevented; or specially of such works when connected with mines, from which it is possible, in some instances, to dam out water that would otherwise interfere with their working. The word translated "overflowing" means probably "weeping," and seems to point to that leakage from the roofs and sides of galleries and adits which is more difficult to control and stop than even subterranean springs or rivers. **And the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light.** This is the final result of mining operations. Things useful or beautiful that are hiddden deep down in the heart of the earth, and that might have seemed wholly inaccessible, are brought out of the pit's mouth into the light of day for the service and delectation of mankind.

Vers. 12—28.—Here we come on an abrupt change. From human ingenuity and contrivance Job turns to the consideration of "wisdom" — that wisdom which has been defined as "the reason which deals with principles" (Canon Cook). "Where," he asks, "is this to be found?" It is a wholly different thing from cleverness and ingenuity. It inquires into causes and origins, into the ends and purposes of things; it seeks to solve the riddle of the universe. Perfect wisdom can, of course, only dwell with God (ver. 23). Man must be content with something much below this. With him "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding" (ver. 28).

Ver. 12.—**But where shall wisdom be found?** "Wisdom is the principal thing," says Solomon (Prov. iv. 7); and again, "It is better to get wisdom than gold" (Prov. xvi. 16). But where is it to be found? Job's three friends thought that it dwelt with them (ch. xii. 2); but this was a mistake, since God reproaches them with their "folly" (ch. xlii. 8). Job does not claim to possess it (ch. xxvi. 3); he only desires it. It is his deep conviction that it is only possessed, in the true sense of the word, by God. **And where is the place of understanding?** It is not quite clear whether Job intends to make any distinction between "wisdom" (חכמה) and "understanding" (בינה). Canon Cook suggests that "wisdom" is "the reason which deals with principles," and "understanding" "the faculty which discerns and appreciates their application." But refined distinctions of this kind are scarcely suitable to the age of Job. Dean Plumptre, in his comment on Proverbs ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 529), accepts the distinction implied in the Septuagint translation of that book, which renders חכמה by *σοφία*, and בינה by *φρόνησις*. This is a much simpler and more easily understood distinction, being that which separates between scientific knowledge and the practical intelligence which directs conduct. But it may be doubted

whether Job does not use the two words as synonyms.

Ver. 18.—**Man knoweth not the price thereof.** The real value of wisdom cannot be estimated in terms of ordinary human calculation. It transcends figures. **Neither is it found in the land of the living.** True wisdom, such as Job is speaking of (see the comment on vers. 12—28), does not exist among men. It transcends human faculties, and is among the peculiar possessions of the Most High (ver. 23). Hence the Most High is altogether inscrutable by man—"his ways are past finding out."

Ver. 14.—**The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me.** The deep abysses of the ocean declare that it is not with them; and the wide reaches of the far-extending sea proclaim that it is not with them either.

Ver. 15.—**It cannot be gotten for gold.** No amount of gold can purchase it; no, not of the purest and most refined quality (1 Kings vi. 20, 21), for it is not a thing that can be bought or sold. God must grant it, and find a way of imparting it; which he certainly will not do for a sum of money. **Neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.** If gold cannot purchase it, much less can silver—the less valuable medium of exchange. (On the *weighing* of silver, in sales, see Gen. xxiii. 16; Jer. xxxii. 9; Ezra viii. 26.)

Ver. 16.—**It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir.** The locality of Ophir has been much contested, but, on the whole, the weight of evidence would seem to be in favour of Arabia, on the south-east coast (see the article on "Ophir" in Smith's 'Dict. of the Bible,' which exhausts all that can be said on the subject). The high estimation in which "gold of Ophir" was held appears not only in this passage, but also in ch. xxii. 24; Ps. xlv. 9; and Isa. xiii. 12. It is to be accounted for by the imperfection of all the anciently known processes of refining, which left the best refined gold inferior to the natural product of the Ophir mines or washings. **With the precious onyx, or the sapphire.** (On the latter of these two stones, see the comment upon ver. 6.) The "onyx" is probably the stone now known as the "sardonyx," which was highly prized by the ancients. It had a place in the breastplate of the high priest (Exod. xxviii. 20), and is mentioned among the treasures of the King of Tyre (Ezek. xxviii. 13). The sardonyx presents layers variously coloured, as blue, black, white, and vermilion.

Ver. 17.—**The gold and the crystal cannot equal it;** rather, *gold and crystal.* This second mention of gold (see ver. 15) seems superfluous, but perhaps the patriarch is thinking of some goblet or ornament in which crystal and gold were combined together. Ornaments of this kind have been found in Phœnicia ('Hist. of Phœnicia,' pp. 362, 370). **And the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold;** or, *vessels of fine gold.* Both in Egypt and Phœnicia vessels of gold were common.

Ver. 18.—**No mention shall be made of coral.** The word translated "coral" (רְאמוֹת) means properly "things that are high." It occurs only here and in Ezek. xxvii. 16. The rabbinical interpretation of the word as "coral" is doubtful, since it was unknown to the LXX. **Or of pearls.** The word *gâbîsh* (גָּבִישׁ) occurs only in this place. Some identify it with rock-crystal. **For the price of wisdom is above rubies.** Here we have another obscure word (פְּנִינִים), which is variously rendered by "rubies," "pearls," "carbuncles," and "red coral." The balance of authority is in favour of pearls.

Ver. 19.—**The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it.** It is generally allowed that the *pithdath* (פִּטְדָה) is either the "topaz" or the "chrysolite." In favour of its being the chrysolite is the passage of Pliny which mentions its being esteemed for its *green* tints ('Hist. Nat.,' xxxvii. 8). Otherwise "topaz" might have appeared to be the best rendering. By "Cush," here translated "Ethiopia," is probably meant Cushite Arabia, or the southern and south-eastern regions (see the author's 'Origin of Nations,' pp. 206—209). **Neither shall it be valued with pure gold.** Of the four words used for "gold" in this passage (vers. 15—17), one (זָהָב) seems to be the common name, and to designate the metal by its colour, "yellow," since זָהַב means "to be yellow." Another (סְגוֹר) means properly "what is treasured," or "shut up," from סָגַר, "to shut." The third (פָּז) seems to be the name for "native gold," or that found in river-washings and nuggets, which was regarded as the purest. The fourth (כֶּתֶם) is a poetical name only, and designates gold of extreme purity (Cant. v. 11), whether highly refined or native. Job uses them all, to show that there was no gold of any kind wherewith it was possible to purchase wisdom.

Ver. 20.—**Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?** This is a repetition of ver. 12, with a mere variant of the verb in the first line. Job's elaborate inquiry of vers. 14—19 having thrown no light on the subject, the original question recurs—Where does wisdom come from?

Ver. 21.—**Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living.** Man cannot see it, because it is immaterial, but he cannot even con-

conceive of it, because its nature transcends him. **And kept close from the fowls of the air** (comp. ver. 7). The sight of birds is far keener than that of man; but even birds cannot detect where wisdom is.

Ver. 22.—**Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.** "Death and destruction" seem to represent the inhabitants of Sheol—the world of the departed. Job personifies them, and represents them as saying, that in their gloomy and remote abode (ch. x. 21, 22) they have heard some dim rumour, some vague report, of the "place" of wisdom and understanding, the nature of which, however, they do not communicate to him. His idea seems to be that their knowledge on the subject does not much transcend the knowledge of living men, whom he regards as profoundly ignorant with respect to it. He thus prepares the way for his assertion in the next verse. Man, neither living nor dead, can make any answer to the great question raised; but—

Ver. 23.—**God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.** God only understands what true wisdom is. It is a part of his being, an essential element of his nature. He knows "the way" of it, *i.e.* how it works and manifests itself; and he knows "the place" of it, *i.e.* where it dwells, what limits it has, if any, and how far it is communicable to any beside himself. The highest knowledge is all hid in God (Col. ii. 3); and, except so far as God imparts it to him, man can know nothing of it.

Ver. 24.—**For he looketh to the ends of the earth.** Man is conditioned. God is unconditioned. Man's knowledge has strict and narrow limits. God "looketh unto the *ends of the earth.*" It is the universality of God's knowledge that makes each item of it perfect. Where knowledge is circumscribed, it is impossible to be sure that some truth outside the circle of the person's cognizance has not a bearing on that which is within his cognizance—a bearing, which, if he were aware of it, would give the truth a different aspect. With God alone there are no such limits, everything being within his cognizance. **And seeth under the whole heaven.** As his knowledge of earthly things is unlimited, so is his knowledge of heavenly things also; and not only of heavenly things in a material sense, as of sun, moon, stars, comets, planets, nebulæ, etc., but also of causes, principles, ends, laws, and the like, whereby both material and immaterial things are governed, ordered, and maintained in being. Of matters of this kind and character man can only say, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; I cannot attain unto it" (Ps. cxxxix. 6).

Ver. 25.—**To make the weight for the winds.** God by his wisdom gives to winds their exactly fitting degree of force and violence, so that they perform the work in the world which they were intended to perform, and which would not be performed, were they either of a less or of a greater intensity. **And he weigheth the waters by measure** (comp. Isa. xl. 12, "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?"). Everything in creation is duly proportioned to every other thing. All is ordered "by weight and with care."

Ver. 26.—**When he made a decree for the rain.** God "made a decree for the rain" when he placed the fall of rain under fixed and unalterable laws. In some countries rainy seasons begin almost regularly on a fixed day in the calendar, while for several months in the year it is almost certain that rain will not fall. Even where there is no such exact regularity as this, the rainfall has its laws, since there are maxima and minima which are never exceeded. **And a way for the lightning of the thunder.** God gave laws to the electric current, and prescribed the "way" that it should take in its passage from heaven to earth, or from cloud to cloud, or from earth to heaven. Everything was ruled beforehand by Infinite Wisdom.

Ver. 27.—**Then did he see it, and declare it.** From the creation of the world, and before it, God foresaw all that was necessary to maintain his universe in the perfect order and the perfect beauty that he designed for it. At the Creation he, in a certain sense, "declared it," or set it forth, before such intelligences as then existed. Subsequently, in part to Adam, in part to Noah, in part to Moses, he further declared, by revelation, at any rate a portion of the design of his creation, and of the laws by which it was regulated. **He prepared it, yea, and searched it out.** This is an inversion of what seems to us the natural order, whereof there are many examples. God must first have investigated and searched out, in his own secret counsels, the entire scheme of creation, and afterwards have proceeded to the "preparation" or "establishment" of it.

Ver. 28.—**And unto man he said.** Not in so many words, not by any written or spoken revelation; but by the nature which he implanted in man, and especially by the conscience wherewith he endowed him. Man feels in his heart of hearts that whatever wisdom may be in the abstract, *his* true wisdom is "the fear of God," *his* true understanding "to depart from evil." No amount of intelligence, no amount of clever-

ness, or of information, or of knowledge, or of worldly or scientific wisdom, will be of any avail to him, unless he starts with this "beginning" (Ps. cxi. 10; Prov. i. 7), and builds on this foundation. This foundation, at any rate, Job had, since God bore him witness that he had it (ch. ii. 3).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—28.—*Job's first parable*: 3. *A discourse upon true wisdom.* I. THAT WISDOM UNDISCOVERABLE BY HUMAN GENIUS. Among the stupendous efforts of human industry and skill with which Job was acquainted, nothing was better fitted to impress the mind with a sense of man's illimitable daring, resistless might, and wonderful success in searching out all perfection (ver. 3), and bringing hidden things to light (ver. 11), than the operations of the miner. These, a knowledge of which may have been derived from mines then being worked in Egypt, the Sinaitic peninsula, and Arabia (*vide* Exposition; and cf. Delitzsch, *in loco*), are with much accuracy and vividness portrayed. 1. *The treasures the miner seeks.* These are set forth by their names and the places where they commonly are found. (1) Silver from the issuing place, *i.e.* from the mine; and gold, which men refine, from its place, *i.e.* also from the mine. Expositors generally remark upon the accuracy of these statements, which speak of silver as being found in a vein or "issue" at some depth below the ground, and gold as obtained near the surface; of the silver as requiring to be dug from the earth, and of gold as needing to be washed out from the pulverized rock. The first mention in Scripture of "gold and silver" is in connection with Abraham's return out of Egypt (Gen. xiii. 2), though gold afterwards abounded in Arabia and Judæa in the time of Solomon (1 Kings x. 2, 21, 27). If "the use of gold and silver commonly precedes the discovery of iron" (Barnes), then it is probable that those precious metals were not unknown to Tubal-Cain and his contemporaries (Gen. iv. 22). It is impossible to say to what extent the art of metal-working had advanced in Job's time, but the mention of ear-rings and bracelets in the days of Abraham (Gen. xxiv. 30), and of silver cups, gold rings, and gold chains in the age of Joseph (Gen. xli. 42; xliv. 2), makes it obvious that considerable proficiency had been attained prior to the era of Moses. In the estimation of Job the procuring and preparing of these precious metals were signal illustrations of the power and skill of man. (2) Iron from the dust, *i.e.* from the bowels of the earth, and copper from the stone, *i.e.* from the ore by smelting. Tubal-Cain is the first known worker in brass (copper) and iron (Gen. iv. 22). Iron is afterwards mentioned in the time of Og King of Bashan, B.C. 1350. The working of iron and copper mines is more difficult than those of gold or silver; hence the use of the former metals indicates a more advanced state of civilization. (3) Stones of darkness and of the shadow of death. These may be the copper and iron ores which are fetched up from the lowest depths of the earth; the miner in pursuit of them penetrating into the remotest regions, making an end of darkness, lighting up the lightless interior of the earth, and carrying his search into every extremity, *i.e.* into every nook and corner (ver. 3). Or they may include all kinds of precious stones, such as the sapphire (ver. 6), lying buried in the dark recesses of the earth, which, in order to appease man's insatiable thirst of acquisition, are turned up as it were by fire, although out of it, *i.e.* from the surface of the earth, there cometh forth bread (ver. 5). 2. *The path the miner follows.* A solitary path. (1) Remote from human ken (ver. 4). Out amid the solitudes of the Sinaitic peninsula the miner sinks his shaft down beneath the surface of the ground, leaving behind him the homes and habitations of men. There, forgotten by travellers overhead, he swings himself down the pit-shaft by a rope, descending to his lonely toil; or, perhaps, sitting suspended at his work, he swings to and fro, far removed from human-kind. (2) Withdrawn from creature-observation (vers. 7, 8). Sweeping far and wide in search of prey, the eagle's or the vulture's eye cannot gaze on the hidden path by which the miner presses towards his spoils; nay, in quest of earth's treasures he travels by a road inaccessible to, and even imperceptible by, the lion and other proud beasts of prey. That man can penetrate to secret retreats in pursuit of wealth, where neither quick-sighted bird nor keen-scented beast can follow, is a striking testimony to man's superiority over the brute creation. 3. *The works the miner executes.* Some of these have been men-

tioned already, but for the sake of continuity may be here repeated. (1) Sinking a shaft (ver. 4), down which he descends by a rope. (2) Exploring the interior of the earth's crust (ver. 5), turning it up as it were by fire. (3) Blasting and clearing away the rock that contains no ore (ver. 9), laying his hand upon the quartz and turning up the mountains by the roots. That blasting was practised in ancient times is stated by Pliny (*vide* Exposition; and cf. Delitzsch). (4) Cutting channels, or galleries, in the rock to drain off the water (ver. 10), or, according to another view, to bring in water to wash the gold ore. (5) Guarding against the flooding of the mine (ver. 11), by binding up the watercourses that they weep not (a technical term still used among colliers), *i.e.* damming up the water that percolates through the roof and sides of the pit, which would otherwise interfere with the operations of the miner, but which, being restrained, enables him to bring to light whatever precious things the bowels of the earth conceal. And now, having finished this vivid and instructive sketch of the enterprise, skill, and power with which the miner explores the deep places of the earth in search of wealth, the poet turns to ask in triumph—Where are man's corresponding successes in the pursuit of wisdom? Man can dig and cut and blast his way through rocks and mountains till he reaches the place of sapphires; but the haunt of wisdom, *i.e.* of the true principles of the Divine administration, and the place of understanding, *i.e.* the faculty of applying these to particular cases, are and must remain for ever beyond his ken.

II. TRUE WISDOM INCOMPARABLE IN ITS VALUE. Picturing a pearl-merchant anxious to purchase this heavenly treasure (cf. Matt. xiii. 45, 46), Job remarks: 1. *That it cannot be discovered in order to be valued.* Should one roam through the land of the living, *i.e.* traverse the face of earth in every direction in pursuit of it, it would still elude his observation. Should he "take the wings of the morning, and flee to the uttermost parts of the sea" (Ps. cxxxix. 9), inquiring after it, the sea with every rippling billow would reply, "It is not with me." Nay, should he dive into the subterranean abyss of waters (Ps. cxxxix. 8), still prosecuting his research after wisdom, up from those dark depths would sound the answer, "Not in me." 2. *That, even if it could be discovered, man cannot estimate its worth.* "A mortal knoweth not its price" (ver. 13). So transcendent in its excellence is this heavenly wisdom, so far surpassing man's ordinary conceptions, that the task of appreciating its essential value is beyond the capacities of his finite understanding. "Man is the measure of the universe," said Pythagoras. "Be it so," is Job's thought; "here is something outside of the universe of which the vastest human intelligence is not the measure"—the Divine wisdom, in accordance with which it has been framed, and by which it is continually governed, including the Divine intelligence that devised the ideal plan of the world, the ideal plan or pattern itself, and the combined wisdom and power by which that plan is carried forward into minute and complete realization. 3. *That, even if its price could be told, its equivalent could not be found by man.* "The poet lays everything under contribution to illustrate the thought that the worth of wisdom exceeds the worth of the most valuable earthly thing" (Delitzsch). Nothing that the miner can bring up from the bowels of the earth, nor aught that the merchant can import from foreign climes; nay, not all of these together can be set in comparison with heaven's jewel of eternal wisdom (Prov. iii. 14, 15). Gold and silver of the rarest, purest, brightest quality; costly pearls of most delicate hue and of fabulous worth; the entire wealth of a world, cannot purchase it (Prov. viii. 10, 11). What Job asserts of the wisdom which enables one to understand and appreciate the principles of Divine government on earth is more true of that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation. It also is in itself undiscoverable by man (1 Cor. i. 21). Its true worth cannot properly be appreciated by man (Rom. xi. 33). Its mercantile equivalent cannot be offered or even found by man (Matt. xvi. 26). The price of him who is the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. i. 24) is above rubies.

III. TRUE WISDOM POSSESSED BY GOD ALONE. Since wisdom can neither be discovered by man's intelligence nor purchased by man's gold, the question naturally recurs, "Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?" in response to which Job affirms: 1. *That true wisdom is the secret of God alone.* God's exclusive knowledge of wisdom is impressively represented by a renewed declaration of the utter ignorance of all created beings concerning this transcendent theme. (1)

Man is absolutely powerless to speak a profitable word upon the subject, "seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living" (ver. 21). So the Divine plan of redemption is one which it never would have entered into the mind of man to conceive (1 Cor. ii. 8, 9). And hence human schemes of salvation have ever proved insufficient and worthless. (2) The creatures generally are unable to afford information on this lofty question. Even the far-seeing birds, to which ancient diviners were wont to turn in their perplexities, have no oracle to utter, seeing it is "kept close from the fowls of the air" (ver. 21). (3) The inhabitants of the underworld are equally at a loss on this high matter. "Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears" (ver. 22). That is to say, the dwellers in the realms of the dead are aware of its existence, but can communicate no knowledge of its nature and worth. And, having thus shut off all created beings from participation in this wisdom, the poet ends by solemnly declaring: 2. *That true wisdom is the property of God alone.* "God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof" (ver. 23). Besides stating that God knows whence true wisdom is to be obtained, Job designs to convey the thought that God alone is in possession of this wisdom. Looking to the ends of the earth and searching under the whole heaven, he not only comprehends with his omniscient glance "where wisdom dwelleth;" but, in virtue of that knowledge, he is himself the infinitely wise and understanding One (ch. xii. 13). 3. *That true wisdom has been exemplified by God alone.* The creation of the world was a sublime manifestation of this wisdom (Prov. viii. 27—31). In particular the establishment of those laws which regulate the force of the wind, the distribution of land and water, the collecting and emptying of the rain-clouds, and the origin and course of the lightning, was a signal display of celestial intelligence (vers. 25, 26). Nay, when the almighty Artificer fashioned the universe, then did he search out this wisdom, assign to it a place and function in his grand creative work, and commit to it the production, preservation, and providential government of all finite things (ver. 27). With this unbeginning Wisdom St. John (i. 1—4) identifies the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. TRUE WISDOM DIVINELY REVEALED TO MAN. Though undiscoverable by human genius, and unpurchaseable by human gold, true wisdom has not been withheld from man. He has received it by revelation. 1. *The Divinity of this revelation.* It has not been imparted by nature. The material fabric of creation is a product and a display of celestial wisdom; but it is not sufficient for man as a law by conforming to which he too may attain unto wisdom. Nor has man himself discovered it, either by physical or scientific research, or by philosophical or religious speculation, or by heathen and superstitious divination. The law which should constitute man a participator in eternal wisdom was and is something distinct from the laws which regulate matter. It was a something communicated to man over and above all that God said to him indirectly through the medium of nature. 2. *The antiquity of this revelation.* At various subsequent periods, as *e.g.* at Sinai, and again at the Advent, repeated and enlarged, it was yet first delivered in the day of man's creation, when God, having made man an intelligent and responsible creature, placed him under the law of right, engraven on the fleshy tablets of his heart. 3. *The import of this revelation.* That heavenly wisdom has for man an inward essential principle, and an outward permanent expression. (1) The inward essential principle: "the fear of the Lord (*Adonai*)." This fear is not a slavish dread, but a filial and reverential awe, based upon a just conception of God's greatness (ch. xxv. 2), and of man's relation to him as moral Governor (Ps. xxxiii. 8). Such fear is the root and mainspring of all piety in souls (Deut. v. 29; x. 12; 2 Kings xvii. 36; Ps. xcvi. 4, 9; cxlvii. 11; Eccles. xii. 13; Matt. x. 28; 1 Pet. i. 17). It is also the true source and commencement of all genuine wisdom (Ps. cxi. 5; Prov. i. 7; ix. 10). Hence "wisdom" and "piety" "or religion" are synonymous terms. Nor can it be doubted that for a human soul to fear God, in the comprehensive and exalted sense above referred to, is supremely reasonable in itself, and incontestably wise as a principle for the regulation of life. The term briefly defines the attitude intelligent beings should maintain towards God, the all-glorious moral Governor of the universe. Originally implanted in man at creation, and afterwards obliterated by the Fall, it is now being reimplanted or reawakened in man by the gospel. (2) The outward permanent expression: "to depart from evil." To fear God and yet continue

in sin is a moral contradiction. The soul that reveres God's majesty and trembles at God's power, much more that admires God's character and loves God's Person, will of necessity find its highest happiness in respecting God's Word and doing God's will. Hence a prompt, earnest, decisive, complete, and final separation from evil (*i.e.* from errors both in doctrine and practice) of every kind is largely insisted on as the only satisfactory evidence of genuine religion (ch. xi. 14; xxii. 23; Ps. iv. 4; Isa. i. 16; Prov. iii. 7; viii. 13; xvi. 6), while the truly pious, whose hearts are really possessed by holy fear, are ever characterized by a more or less resolute determination to keep the Divine Law (Ps. cxii. 1; cxix. 63; Prov. xiv. 2, 16; 2 Cor. vii. 1; Eph. v. 21; 1 Pet. i. 17). Cf. the language of an ancient religious hymn to Amen: "I cry, The beginning of wisdom is the way of Amen" (*vide* 'Records of the Past,' vol. vi. p. 99).

Learn: 1. To admire God's wisdom and goodness in the construction and arrangement of this material globe. Besides being fashioned by Divine wisdom, the earth is also full of the Divine riches. 2. To see in the monuments of man's engineering skill, mechanical industry, commercial enterprise, and scientific research at once a striking testimony to man's dominion over the creatures, and an admirable confirmation of the truth of Scripture. 3. To rate material wealth at its true value, observing both its weakness and its power. While contributing largely to man's physical comfort and social influence, it cannot impart either wisdom or happiness, and still less can it serve as a substitute for religion and salvation. 4. To reason that the same Divine wisdom which placed the material creation under law would not forget to institute a rule of life for man. Hence morality and religion are not accidental and relative, but absolute and eternal, being inseparably bound up with man's constitution as an intelligent and responsible creature. 5. To recognize the inborn foolishness of those who neither fear God nor depart from evil. "The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." 6. To gratefully acknowledge the Divine loving-kindness in making known to man the manifold wisdom of God in Christ and his salvation. The secret of the Divine administration which Job could not fathom has been clearly discovered in the gospel. 7. To perceive that ever since the Fall the world has been governed on substantially the same principles. Christ conducts mundane affairs to-day as he did in Job's time by the law of grace and in the interests of holiness.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—28.—*Praises of Divine wisdom.* Amidst the darkness of suffering, and the deep sense of the mysteries of life, inexplicable by human wisdom, Job rises to the contemplation of that Divine wisdom which has founded all things, which knows all things, and in the reverent acknowledgment of which man may find for himself the true path both of wisdom and of power. Already the spirit of Job, purified by long suffering and experience, is rising into that presence where there is light and no darkness at all; and from this height of calm contemplation is fitted to become the teacher of his teachers, the "instructor of many."

I. TRUE WISDOM TO BE FOUND NOWHERE ON EARTH. (Vers. 1—11.) To illustrate this, we are pointed, in a fine description, to the art of mining, by which man lays open the costly treasures of the earth (Deut. viii. 9), but cannot gain possession of this highest and best treasure of all. Gold, silver, iron, and copper are dug out of the bowels of the earth, and melted from their ores; the miner's lamp dispels the darkness, as in every direction he searches for the "ore of darkness and deadly night." It is a picture of the eager, industrious, untiring toil with which men in all ages in the mines of Egypt, of Palestine, of the old and the new worlds, have sought to gather and to lay up treasures on earth for themselves. There is often even a frenzy, a reckless disregard of health and of life, in this passionate pursuit. With what eagerness should we rather pursue the quest of the heavenly treasures, the inward blessings which make men truly rich and happy (Matt. xvi. 26)! The description proceeds. The shaft (ver. 4) is broken away from those who dwell above; the miners plunge deeply into the earth, further and further from the habitations of men, so that they are forgotten by the step of every one who walks above. They are depicted as hanging far from mortals by ropes, on the perilous descent of the shaft in their way to obtain the ore (Pliny, 'Hist. Nat.,'

xxxiii. 4. 21). Above, upon the bright earth, the bread-corn is growing, while below men are stirring, and rummaging in its bowels, using sometimes the disturbing and destructive force of fire (ver. 5). Precious stones as well as metals, sapphires as well as golden ore, fall a prize to the diligent miner (ver. 6). Then, to heighten the description, the inaccessibility of these subterranean ways is depicted. The all-roaming birds and beasts of prey have not discovered them (ver. 8). But undaunted man lays his hand on the flint, uproots the mountains, and bursts open paths through the rocks, and the fire of eager desire glitters in his eye as it falls on each precious thing. He toils to keep the water out of his shafts, by which they are so readily overflowed and spoiled; and thus he brings the hidden treasures to light (ver. 11). Such are the splendid capabilities of man—the courage, the energy, the defiance of danger—called out by his desires. His reward comes; but does it correspond to his exertions? Having passed the best of his days in these severe toils and anxieties and dangers, he thinks to sit down and solace his age with the acquisitions of his younger and more daring years; but does the enjoyment of the poor remainder of life balance these struggles which perhaps brought age upon him before his time, and cut him off from pleasure in the proper days of pleasure, and from the youthful satisfactions that were then denied? "I am this day fourscore years old, and can I yet taste what I eat and what I drink?" (2 Sam. xix. 35). "Whoever lives to Barzillai's years shall not be able, with all Barzillai's wealth and greatness, to procure himself a quicker and better relish of what shall be set before him than Barzillai had" (South).

II. WISDOM NO OUTWARD GOOD, AND BY NO OUTWARD MEANS TO BE FOUND. (Vers. 12—22.) *Practical* wisdom, the principle of right conduct, and *theoretical* wisdom, or insight,—where in all the wide world shall they be found (ver. 12)? None knows the purchase-price, nor the market for wisdom in all the wide land of the living. "Put money in thy purse" is the one maxim which applies in everything but this. "Money answereth all things;" but there are exceptions, and this is one. Gold and silver have no more power than stones and clods in this spiritual commerce. Cross the seas; visit the great cities; enter the churches; study at the schools; see and hear all; yet still the aching heart will cry, "Where is wisdom to be found? and what is its price?" All the gold and jewels of the Indies cannot buy it. Its worth is incomparable. Weight nor measure can be applied to it; it has no place in the business and exchange of the world (vers. 13—19). Again, then, and again the question recurs, "Whence comes wisdom? where is the place of understanding?" Science cannot answer, with all her keenness of vision and wealth of knowledge; no brightest eagle-eye has searched out its *locale*. Neither the living nor the kingdom of the dead can bring us news of its site (vers. 20—22). It must, then, be immaterial. And being real, it must be sought for and found by that which is real and spiritual in ourselves. The things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor imagination conceived, God reveals to the spirit. We must be conscious of a spiritual life and of spiritual needs; of a destiny for heavenly as well as earthly things; we must yield to the spiritual impulse, and labour for the satisfaction of the spiritual hunger as well as for the bread that perisheth, if this great question is ever for us to be answered.

III. WISDOM IS IN THE FEAR OF GOD. (Vers. 23—28.) 1. *The question answered.* God knows the *way* to wisdom, for he knows its *seat and place.* (Ver. 23.) He is himself the All-wise One. His wisdom is seen in the marvellous construction and arrangement of the natural world. He regulates the winds and the waters (Isa. xl. 12), the rain, the lightning, and the thunder (vers. 24—26). And his absolute wisdom is the rule for the inward life of man, the still more wonderful world of the spiritual life. In the creation as a whole he announces typically his eternal will to all rational creatures (ver. 27). 2. *The Divine declaration.* (Ver. 28, "The fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.") God would not keep his wisdom altogether secret. He reveals, as well as is, wisdom. This is the original eternal command, the law that "is not of yesterday," and which has never been unknown in any generation of mankind.

LESSONS. 1. The eternal wealth of God's nature. He needed no model or copy from which to frame his world. "He spake, and it was done; commanded, and it stood fast" (ver. 27). 2. There is a wisdom which is an example and end, and a wisdom which is a shadow and means. The former is in God, the latter from God in us. So are we

"partakers of the Divine nature" in reflection from him, union with him, and enjoyment of him (2 Pet. i. 4). 3. Wisdom is the nature of God (Prov. viii. 25, *sqq.*), uncreated, essential; with us it is an acquisition, a derivation. 4. True wisdom for us depends on the living, moral communion of the heart with God. Without this it is vain to seek to know him. An Eastern proverb says, "He who would learn the secrets of the mighty, must diligently keep watch at his doors." Blessed they who thus wait continually at God's doors! 5. True wisdom is not to be obtained without its price. It must be wrought for by the endeavour of a holy and pious life. The departing from evil, the mortification of sin, the weeding out of vices, lays out work enough for us in this life, and makes the toils of man for perishable good seem small in comparison. "But the end is noble, and the reward is great." 6. The energy of man in the pursuit of earthly good should be a constant reminder to us of the need for like zeal in the pursuit of the eternal good (Matt. vi. 19, *sqq.*; 1 Tim. vi.; Jas. v.).—J.

Vers. 1—12.—*The path of true wisdom.* With singular fulness Job describes the early methods of mining, and the knowledge man had already gained of the hidden treasures of the earth, and the power he could wield over them. In this recognition of the power of man, and of his deep insight into the nature and constitution of the earth, and its many treasures and processes, he prepares the way for a setting forth of the limits beyond which man cannot go. With all his searching he finds not out the path of "wisdom," and with all his getting he fails to get "understanding." And this further prepares for a setting forth of *the true sources of wisdom* and the place of understanding. The path of true wisdom does not lie in those dark recesses of the earth where the vein of the silver lies hidden. It is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's keen eye hath not seen, and over which the beasts of prey have not trodden; nor hath the fierce lion passed by it. God alone understandeth the way thereof, and he alone knoweth its path. The plain inference, then, is—Man must ask wisdom of God.

I. THE ERROR OF SUPPOSING THAT A KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROCESSES OF NATURE GIVES A TRUE AND PERFECT WISDOM. In all these man may be deeply learned, and yet there be a path hidden from him. The danger of this day is a supposing that science truly so called is a sufficient knowledge for man. An accurate acquaintance with "the laws of nature" still leaves man ignorant of many necessary truths. For the right use of material substances, a knowledge of those substances and the laws of their combination is necessary; and for the safety of the animal life, a knowledge of its structure and processes—the laws of animal life—is equally needful. But the total idea of the human life is not reached by these. He who is capable of moral and spiritual acts has a moral and spiritual nature; and he has need of the knowledge of the laws of the moral government under which he is placed, and of the spiritual nature with which he is endowed.

II. THE LOWLY SEARCHING FOR THIS HIDDEN WISDOM WILL LEAD MEN TO A CONVICTION OF THEIR INABILITY TO ARRIVE AT A PERFECT ACQUAINTANCE WITH IT. It is hid from the eyes of all living. Very humbling is this to the proud heart of him who has obviously a supreme position amidst the works of God—who is above all creatures, subduing them to his authority; and above "nature," compelling it to be subservient to his wish. To know that he knows not, and to know that by searching he cannot find out the knowledge he desires, brings down his high looks. Here he must sit in the seat of the scholar; here, confessing his ignorance, ask.

III. THE TRUE SEARCHER, BAFFLED IN HIS MANY EFFORTS, TURNS AT LAST TO GOD, AND FINDS THE SOURCE OF WISDOM IN HIM; and learns that the fear of the Lord is the possession of the true wisdom, and the careful keeping of the path of righteousness the true understanding. That is to say, the highest wisdom is a moral state, and the truest understanding a religious obedience.

From how many is this "hidden," and how unwilling are the ignorant to ask, and the proud to acknowledge their need! While he who consciously lacks this highest wisdom, and asks of God, proves that he giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not any for asking.—R. G.

Vers. 20—27.—*Wisdom hidden from man.* Skilful is the hand of man. His

researches are profound. He has digged deep into the earth. He tracks the vein of the silver and the place for the gold. He taketh iron out of the earth, and brass he melteth from the stone. He searcheth amidst the stones of darkness and the very shadow of death. His eye seeth what escapes the eye of the vulture, and he knoweth the path which no fowl knoweth. His power is over the hills, for he putteth his hand upon the rock, and overturneth the mountains by the roots. Rocks and rivers and flood are under his power, and the hidden things he bringeth to light. But with all his powers of research he is baffled in the pursuit of wisdom, and he knows neither the place nor the price of understanding. The perfect knowledge of the nature of things, and the high wisdom to guide in the proper use of things, is not within the human grasp. Such knowledge is too high for him. It belongs unto God. It cannot be gotten for gold, nor purchased with the price of silver. This reflection may—

I. PROFITABLY TURN AWAY OUR HOPES OF GAINING WISDOM FROM MAN. We cannot gain it there; for "it is hid from the eyes of all living."

II. IT IS A BECOMING OCCASION FOR HUMILITY ON THE PART OF MAN. Vain man, who can do so much, is baffled here.

III. IT IS A MOTIVE FOR THANKFULLY RECEIVING THE TEACHINGS OF THE WISE. There are men to whom God has discovered the hidden springs of wisdom. Happy they, and happy all who learn of them.

IV. BUT ITS SUPREME LESSON IS TO DRIVE US IN OUR SEARCH FOR WISDOM TO GOD, to whom alone it appertains. "God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof"—even the wisdom that is "hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air."—R. G.

Ver. 28.—*The true wisdom.* Wisdom—the "principal thing"—wisdom that "cannot be gotten for gold," or valued with "the precious onyx, or the sapphire," which "the topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal"—wisdom "belongeth unto God," and must be taught us by him, for we are ignorant. Wisdom consists in "the fear of the Lord," and in departing from evil. This wisdom man findeth not in the rocks nor in the depth of the sea. This is to man his truest, his highest, wisdom. This is the wisdom for the price of which "silver cannot be weighed." The fear of the Lord is the very beginning and end of wisdom to man—

I. BECAUSE IT IS FOUNDED IN A JUST RECOGNITION OF THE DIVINE SUPREMACY, AUTHORITY, AND POWER. The most foolish thing a man can do is to deny, either by word or by conduct, the authority of God. He who truly acknowledges the Divine supremacy will humble himself, and take his rightful place, free from presumption and self-asserting independence, which is the basis of all disobedience.

II. BECAUSE IT AFFORDS HIM THE TRUEST BASIS FOR FAITH AND HOPE. He who fears, and therefore reverences God, will learn how to commit himself into the Divine hands for all needful blessing. As far from presumption as from fear, he will be able calmly to trust in God and do good. He can have no real hope towards God who in irreverence and self-conceit cherishes not "the fear of the Lord" in his heart.

III. BECAUSE WITHOUT THE FEAR OF THE LORD THERE CAN BE NO TRUE LOVE FOR THE DIVINE NAME. That cannot be loved which is not respected and honoured. The true respect towards God is holy fear—the sacred reverence for the majesty, sanctity, and authority of the Divine Name.

IV. BECAUSE IT IS THE MOST EFFECTUAL BARRIER AGAINST EVIL-DOING.

V. BECAUSE OF THE SPECIAL PROMISES OF BLESSING MADE TO THEM THAT FEAR HIS NAME. From all this springs the duty of cherishing due regard for all things sacred, that the heart may be suitably and profitably impressed by them. "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."—R. G.

Vers. 1—11.—*The miner.* This passage is justly famous for its graphic description of ancient mining. It gives us a picture of the miner's toil and peril, his industry, his skill, and his adventure. Let us see what lessons may be learnt from the miner and his craft.

I. GOD HAS LAID UP GREAT RICHES FOR MAN. People talk foolishly about exhausting the mines. Particular mines may come to an end, and certain lodes may be worked out. But the earth is not one mine or one English county. No one can calculate

what vast stores of metal lie under the surface of the ground. The great treasury has scarcely been touched; ages upon ages will not suffice to ransack its stores. When we learn about Australia, Asia Minor, South America, etc., we discover that there is still boundless wealth under the soil. Thus God has made ample provision for the wants of his children.

II. THESE RICHES ARE HIDDEN BENEATH THE EARTH. Men must sink shafts and blast rocks. God gives us great possessions, but we must put forth energy in acquiring them. Thus Israel had to fight for Canaan. Wisdom is got through toil and effort. Spiritual wealth is won at the cost of spiritual conflict. Though the chief conflict was Christ's, and though the best treasures are freely given, we must seek if we would find (Matt. vii. 7).

III. THE MINER'S WORK IS TOILSOME. Few men have so disagreeable or hard a task. In dark subterranean regions, often breathing a close, unwholesome atmosphere, suffering from tremendous heat, labouring with axe and shovel, the miner has no idle lot. He may be forgotten by those who tread the greensward over his head. But we all profit by his industry. It is only right that his brave and arduous work should be generously recognized. In our happy homes and beautiful churches we should do well to think of the miner, and pray for him just as we pray for "those in peril on the sea."

IV. INGENUITY AND ENTERPRISE CHARACTERIZE THE WORK OF THE MINER. What thought and effort and daring are put into mining! Surely this is nobler work than the killing which all the world honours in the soldier? We can understand why God has hidden the precious metals in the bowels of the earth, when we see what manly traits are evolved in the work of obtaining them. But if so, should not the same high qualities be brought forth in the search for the hidden treasure of the kingdom of heaven? If gold, and silver, and iron, and copper are worth so much trouble, are not wisdom and goodness and eternal life deserving of the most strenuous efforts?

V. THERE IS PERIL IN THE MINER'S LIFE. Mining disasters are more fatal than shipwrecks. The miner needs to know a refuge more secure than any that art or science can contrive. He, indeed, should have his trust in God. But for others his peril is an occasion to rouse interest and deepen sympathy. We all profit by his labours; at least, then, let us all do what we can to protect him from the dangers which carelessness and selfishness create.—W. F. A.

Vers. 7, 8.—*The miner's path.* The vulture's eye is keen, the lion's whelps are daring; yet a path which these wild creatures never saw is known to the miner, and climbed by him in his search for precious metals. He penetrates into fearful ravines, climbs dizzy cliffs, follows dark passages far into the mountain-side, descends deep shafts down to the hidden regions of the earth.

I. THE SUPERIORITY OF MIND TO INSTINCT. The senses of animals are keener than those of men; the sight of the bird and the scent of the wild beast greatly exceed our seeing and smell. Animals are stronger than men; we cannot emulate the vulture's flight or the stroke of the lion's paw. Yet, with duller senses and weaker muscles, we can rule over the animals; we can even beat them on their own ground. The superiority of man is the superiority of mind. Therefore, if he would retain and perfect this superiority, he must not sink down to the level of the beasts that perish. Sottish sensuality robs man of his supremacy. If it is by the mind that man conquers, it is disgraceful to live for the sake of the body. Only mental power gives so weak a creature as man any chance in the struggle for existence. Then it is most incongruous that bodily appetite should be permitted to enslave this power for its own low pleasures. Moreover, if the inner man is the higher man, that which is highest within is our truest and best self. The highest powers scale the highest peaks.

II. THE TRIUMPH OF ENERGY. The miner knows his secret path and climbs it, because he is determined to search out the precious metals, no matter where he may have to go in pursuit of them. Here is manly vigour. Now, it is just this vigour joined to intelligence that gives man success in the battle of life. No one deserves to be prosperous without it. It is only an artificial state of society that allows the idle to be pampered in luxury. The healthy rule is that of St. Paul, "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. iii. 10). In the miner's path we have an evidence of what effort can do. This same effort is needed in every branch of life. Industry is

healthy and fruitful, and the old-fashioned duty can never be lessened by any change of circumstances. If men shrink from work they proclaim that their better nature is conquered in them. It will be a bad day for England when her old spirit of enterprise is given up. In the Christian life there is a call for the miner's daring and energy. Here, too, heroic enterprises are undertaken by the nobler spirits. There are paths in spiritual experience that no one with a merely animal nature can ever see; but the brave sons of God walk thereon and find rare treasures by the way. Browning tells us—

> "Life is—to wake, not sleep;
> Rise, and not rest; but press
> From earth's level, where blindly creep
> Things perfected, more or less,
> To heaven's height, far and steep."

W. F. A.

Vers. 12—15.—*The search for wisdom.* I. WISDOM IS SUPREMELY DESIRABLE. Men sink shafts and traverse hazardous paths in search of the precious metals simply because of their value. The costly and difficult processes of mining would not be carried on unless an adequate reward were expected. Unless men appreciate wisdom they will not take much trouble in attempting to acquire it. The first thing is to see that "the price of wisdom is above rubies" (ver. 18). Knowledge is good, as the food of the intellect. The knowledge of God is most precious as the food of the soul. Practical knowledge is essential for guidance in life. Wisdom is more than the satisfaction of curiosity; it is the light of life.

II. WISDOM DOES NOT LIE ON THE SURFACE OF THE WORLD. It is like the treasures of deep mines, and therefore it is not seen by the superficial. God does not cast his pearls before swine. There are blessings that all men—even the most heedless—have a share in. But the greatest blessings are not stumbled on unawares. These are for all who will seek them; but they must be sought. Hidden treasures are sometimes dug up from beneath ancient ruins—vessels of gold and silver that have lain for ages buried under heaps of rubbish. So Divine treasures have been hidden beneath piles of earthly and comparatively worthless things. Sin and worldliness have buried them. They need to be rediscovered. Thus man has both to recover lost spiritual riches and to mine in virgin soil for new wisdom.

III. WISDOM IS NOT EASILY FOUND. It is not enough to sink a mine, for perhaps we may not strike a lode; we must discover where the precious metal lies. The mining engineer must bring his science and experience to bear on the great problem as to where the shaft is to be made, and if he makes a mistake all the costly work of preparing the mine will be thrown away. Now, we want some divining-rod to show us where to seek for the Divine wisdom. Philosophers have dug their mines in various regions of life and thought. No doubt they have brought much precious ore to the surface. But the great treasure of Divine knowledge has not been struck by any human inquiry without the guiding of a special heavenly revelation. Seas may be dredged and strange wonders of the deep brought to light, but these additions to natural history do not help us much in coming to know spiritual truth.

IV. WISDOM CANNOT BE BOUGHT. Precious stones may be purchased for money. Knowledge may be obtained in classes for which fees are charged; and yet the fees cannot purchase real education, and unless the scholar uses his mind he cannot profit by his lessons. No subscriptions to churches and missions and charities can buy Divine wisdom.

V. WISDOM IS A DIVINE GIFT FOR SEEKING SOULS. It is like the precious metals in the earth which God has given to man freely. The treasures of God are for all, without money and without price. Moreover, God shows us where to find these treasures. Christ "is made unto us wisdom" (1 Cor. i. 30). When we receive Christ, we have the Treasure for which philosophers and saints toiled and mined. He brings the Divine wisdom to the surface, to our very doors. If we would acquire wisdom, we have but to open our hearts to welcome Christ.—W. F. A.

Ver. 18.—*The high price of wisdom.* In the main, prices are determined by two

causes—by the value set on things on account of their utility and attractiveness, and by the difficulty of acquiring them. Both these elements enter into the high price of wisdom.

I. WISDOM IS VALUABLE ON ACCOUNT OF ITS UTILITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS. People will not give a high price for what is not valued highly. Appreciation implies the perception of some equivalence in value. If wisdom is sought at a great price, wisdom is highly prized. Otherwise it would be left alone as not worth purchasing. Let us, then, observe the elements of value in wisdom. 1. *Guidance.* We need knowledge to save us from blundering. Right principles are charts by which to steer. Moral folly plunges men headlong down to ruin; moral wisdom is the safe guide to life. We must know the heavenly way, we must see how to climb the steep hill, we must have skill to navigate the vessel of life. 2. *Sustenance.* Divine wisdom feeds the soul like heavenly manna, and refreshes it like water from the rock. It is reviving and nourishing as wine and milk (Isa. lv. 1). The soul is starved without the truth of God. That truth is its meat and drink. 3. *Satisfaction.* Much that men feed on spiritually is like chaff and sawdust; it does not really satisfy, though it seems to fill. But the knowledge of God is restful; it meets the deep needs and answers to the true desires of the inner life. 4. *Culture.* The effect of this heavenly possession is to elevate and transform the soul itself. It is more than a guide, a food, a satisfaction; it is a moulding influence. By a subtle alchemy it brings the soul round to its own character. He who has wisdom is wise. The possession of Divine grace makes us sons of God.

II. WISDOM IS COSTLY BECAUSE OF THE DIFFICULTY OF ACQUIRING IT. People will not give a high price unnecessarily even for what they value highly. What is both plentiful and easily accessible is necessarily cheap, however useful and attractive it may be. When the supply is fully equal to the demand, the price is low. But wisdom is not only inherently valuable; it is also only got at a great cost. Note the reasons for its dearness. 1. *A difficult search.* There may be an abundance of precious metals far under the soil, but if mines have to be constructed some expenditure must be incurred before the treasures can be acquired. Hence their costliness. Now, men have been seeking wisdom with great toil and weariness through all the ages. 2. *Rarity.* Prices mount high in times of scarcity. Famine may make corn more precious than rubies. When the world had fallen far from God down into the night of sin and ignorance, true wisdom became scarce. 3. *The sacrifice of Christ.* Christ has become wisdom to us, but at what a cost? First there was the condescension of his incarnation, when he emptied himself and became of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant. Then his arduous life was spent in bringing the knowledge and grace of God to men. His midnight watches, and his days full of work and conflict, were spent for this object. Lastly, his cross marks the supreme gift of himself in death to purchase for us the Divine wisdom. That wisdom is more costly than rubies; it is acquired by us at the cost of the blood of our Lord.—W. F. A.

Ver. 23.—*God's access to wisdom.* Wisdom is rare, precious, and costly. Men are skilful and enterprising in mining for the precious metals; but the search for wisdom, though carried on with the utmost assiduity, seems to be more difficult. Nevertheless, what is inaccessible to man is quite within the reach of God. We may fail in attempting to find wisdom, but God possesses it. He knows where it lies hidden from us; he can tread the labyrinth of the mine that leads to it.

I. THIS IS A GROUND OF FAITH. If God has true wisdom, we can be content to leave with him those issues of life which we cannot understand ourselves. 1. *In nature.* To us many of the processes of nature are unintelligible. Not only cannot we understand the "how," but we are also perplexed about the "why." Apparently aimless and seemingly hurtful processes fill nature with dark mysteries. But these mysteries are all open to God. Of his works we can say, "In wisdom hast thou made them all." The world was not created by a blundering Demiurge, but by an all-wise God. 2. *In providence.* Our own lives are enigmas to us. We cannot understand why our plans are broken, our hopes scattered, our joys turned to bitterness. It all looks wild, chaotic, aimless, sometimes even cruel. We can but rest in the thought that God is higher and wiser than we are.

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will."

Therefore—

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense."

3. *In redemption.* It may not be possible for us to understand the atonement. Theories are all inadequate. There is a mystery at the root of Christianity. But when God devised his great idea of salvation he had access to all wisdom. It must be wise. Our part is to follow it as far as we can see it, and to trust God for the rest.

II. THIS IS A KEY TO WISDOM. God knows where the treasure is hidden; he is familiar with the path that leads to it. Then he must be the Guide to wisdom. If we would attain to it we must seek it from God. 1. *By prayer.* St. James has said, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (Jas. i. 5). It is not only that wisdom is a boon bestowed in answer to prayer; prayer itself is the road to wisdom. St. Paul could see things in a new light when it could be said of him, "Behold, he prayeth." The spirit of prayer opens the windows of heaven and reveals the wisdom of God. 2. *By godliness.* We must be like God if we would share in God's wisdom. Sympathy with God will give us eyes to see as God sees. Nearness to him will introduce us to the path that he treads. When we walk with God we shall be led to those deep mines of wisdom to which he penetrates. Thus true wisdom is closely allied to true religion. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom" (ver. 28).—W. F. A.

Ver. 28.—*The revelation of wisdom.* Man has searched for wisdom, but in vain. Then God, who has access to it, has revealed it to him, and has shown that it consists in the fear of the Lord and in departure from evil. The existence of a Divine revelation is here distinctly affirmed. God speaks through nature, Scripture, and conscience, and especially in Christ. Now, the Divine revelation of wisdom is here presented to us in two aspects—a positive and a negative. The first of these consists in religion; the second is of a moral character.

I. THE POSITIVELY RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF REVEALED WISDOM. When God reveals wisdom to man it first appears as "the fear of the Lord." Job says, like Solomon, that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. i. 7); it is wisdom; the two are identified. Now, the expression, "fear of the Lord," is the Old Testament name for religion. Therefore wisdom is religion. When we have found true religion we have discovered true wisdom. 1. *The highest knowledge is obtained through spiritual experience.* Science comes through the study of nature, and history is learnt by reading of past deeds; certainly religion will not dispense with the laboratory and the library. Still, even in these matters the truth-loving spirit—which is the spirit of science—is nourished and strengthened by communion with the eternal Truth. The highest knowledge, however, is of a different order; it is the knowledge that reaches to the meaning and purpose of life, and is not satisfied with the phenomena and processes that are the materials of science. This can only be had by the experience of the truth of God in religion. 2. *The best course of life is that which is pursued in obedience to the will of God.* It is the function of practical wisdom not so much to reveal mysteries as to show us the path in which we should walk. God has made known that path; he has shown us that the perfect way is one of Christ-like obedience. We live wisely when we acknowledge our Creator, obey our Father, loyally serve our King. Any other way must be foolish, because it will involve ingratitude and rebellion, and must therefore end in ruin. No wise man would choose to ruin himself.

II. THE NEGATIVELY MORAL ASPECT OF REVEALED WISDOM. "To depart from evil is understanding." 1. *Sin must be abandoned before truth can be received.* Sin blinds the spiritual vision. It is a moral lie, and the enemy to all truth. Bad passions and corrupt desires cloud the judgment and distort the understanding. They are the pure in heart who see God, and all the truth of God is open to the eye of goodness, but shut up and hidden from the prying curiosity of wickedness. A bad man cannot be a true philosopher. He may know many things; he cannot know real truth. The details and the worldly ideas may be acquired by him; but the deeper meaning of

everything is lost to such a person. 2. *A right understanding of life prompts to repentance.* When the light of God begins to fall on the soul, sin is seen for the first time in its hideous natural character. Then we wonder how we could have fondled so loathsome an object. Its disgusting features drive us from it with horror. 3. *The life of sin is ruinously foolish.* It offers great delights, but its promises are lies. Even its pleasures do not satisfy, and they soon give place to bitter regrets. The wise way of living is the path of purity and integrity—the path which can only be followed in godly fear and Christian faith.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Vers. 1—25.—From these deep musings upon the nature of true wisdom, and the contrast between the ingenuity and cleverness of man and the infinite knowledge of God, Job turns to another contrast, which he pursues through two chapters (ch. xxix. and xxx.)—the contrast between what he was and what he is—between his condition in the period of his prosperity and that to which he has been reduced by his afflictions. The present chapter is concerned only with the former period; and gives a graphic description of the life led, in Job's time and country, by a great chieftain, the head of a tribe, not of mere nomads, but of persons who had attained to a considerable amount of civilization. The picture is one primitive in its features, but not rude or coarse. It is entirely un-Jewish, and has its nearest parallel in some of the early Egyptian records, as the Stelé of Beka, and the Instructions of Amen-em-hat ('Records of the Past,' vol. ii. pp. 11—16; vol. x. pp. 7—10).

Ver. 1.—**Moreover Job continued his parable, and said** (see the comment on ch. xxvii. 1).

Ver. 2.—**Oh that I were as in months past!** or, *in the months of old.* To Job the period of his prosperity seems long, long ago—something far away in the mist of time, which he recalls with difficulty. **As in the days when God preserved me.** Job never forgets to refer his prosperity to God, or to be grateful to him for it (see ch. i. 21; ii. 10; x. 8—12, etc.).

Ver. 3.—**When his candle shined upon my head** (comp. Ps. xviii. 28, "For thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness"). A "candle," or "lamp," is a general symbol in Scripture for life and prosperity. God is said to light men's candles when he blesses them and makes his countenance to shine upon them; conversely, when he withdraws his favour he is said to put their candles out (ch. xviii. 6; xxi. 17). And when **by his light I walked through darkness.** The light of God's countenance shining about a man's path enables him to walk securely even through thick darkness, *i.e.* through trouble and perplexity.

Ver. 4.—**As I was in the days of my youth**; literally, *in the days of my autumn*—by which Job probably means the days of his "ripeness" or "full manhood"—which he had reached when his calamities fell upon him. **When the secret of God was upon my tabernacle**; or, *the counsel of God*; when, *i.e.*, in my tent I held sweet counsel with God, and communed with him as friend with friend (comp. Ps. xxv. 14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him: and he will show them his covenant;" and Prov. iii. 32, "For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but his secret is with the righteous").

Ver. 5.—**When the Almighty was yet with me.** These are terribly sad words. Job, in his afflictions, has come to look on the Almighty as no longer "with him"—no longer on his side; but rather against him, an enemy (see ch. vi. 4; vii. 19; ix. 17; x. 16, etc.). When **my children were about me** (comp. ch. i. 2, 4, 5).

Ver. 6.—**When I washed my steps with butter.** Trod, as it were, upon fatness, moved amid all that was gladsome, joyful, and delicious. **And the rock poured me out rivers of oil.** "The rock" is probably the ground, rugged and stony, on which his olives grew. "Olives," says Dr. Cunningham Geikie, "flourish best on sandy or *stony* soil" ('The Holy Land and the Bible,' vol. i. p. 138). They brought him in so great a quantity of oil that the rock seemed to him to flow with rivers of it.

Ver. 7.—**When I went out to the gate through the city**; rather, *by the city*, or *over against the city.* The "gate" was the place where justice was administered, and public business generally despatched. It would be "over against" the city, separated from it by a large square or place (רְחוֹב), in which a multitude might assemble (see Neh. viii. 1). Hither Job was accustomed to proceed

from time to time, to act as judge and administrator. **When I prepared my seat in the street.** On such occasions a seat would be brought out and "prepared," where the judge would sit to hear causes and deliver sentences (comp. Neh. iii. 7).

Ver. 8.—**The young men saw me, and hid themselves;** retired, *i.e.* withdrew to corners, that they might not obtrude themselves on one so much their superior. Compare the respect paid to age by the Spartans. **And the aged arose, and stood up.** Here the respect paid was not to age so much as to dignity. Men as old as himself, or older, paid Job the compliment of standing up until he was seated, in consideration of his rank and high office. So, in many assemblies, as in our own courts of justice, in Convocation, and elsewhere, when the president enters, all rise.

Ver. 9.—**The princes refrained talking.** The other head-men of the tribe, recognizing Job's superior rank and dignity, refrained from words as soon as he made his appearance, and in silence awaited what he would say. Perhaps we are scarcely to understand literally the further statement that they **laid their hand on their mouth,** which is probably as much an idiom as our phrase, "they held their tongues" (comp. ch. xxi. 5).

Ver. 10.—**The nobles held their peace.** The other leading men followed the example of the "princes," and equally kept silence till Job had spoken. **And their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth.** A pleonastic repetition. The meaning is simply they said nothing, they stood in rapt attention.

Ver. 11.—**When the ear heard me, then it blessed me.** Job, having described his reception by the nobles and chief men of the city, proceeds to speak of the behaviour of the common people. The former were respectful and attent, the latter rejoiced and made acclamation. Being of the class most exposed to oppression and wrong, they hailed in the patriarch a champion and a protector. They were sure of redress and justice where he was the judge. **And when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me.** The eye of the poor man lighted up with joy and rejoicing as Job sat down upon the seat of judgment, thus bearing witness to his fairness, candour, and integrity.

Ver. 12.—**Because I delivered the poor that cried** (compare the Instructions of Amen-em-hat: "Because I have made the afflicted ones free from their afflictions, so that their cries are heard no more" ('Records of the Past,' vol. ii. p. 12). And again the Inscription of Ameni-Amenemha: "No little child have I injured; no widow have I oppressed; no fisherman have I hindered; no shepherd have I detained; no foreman have I taken from his gang to employ him in forced labour" (ibid., vol. xii. 63). **And the fatherless, and him that had none to help him** (compare what is said of the ideal king in Ps. lxxii. 12—14, "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and *him that hath no helper.* He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight"). Championship of the poor was anciently regarded as characteristic of the wise, good, strong ruler.

Ver. 13.—**The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me** (comp. ver. 11). Oppression in the East sometimes drives its victims to actual starvation or to suicide. Isaiah calls the oppressors against whom he inveighs "murderers" (Isa. i. 21). These "perishing" ones Job often saved, and they "blessed" him. **And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.** How cold are the words of Ameni, "No widow have I oppressed," compared with these! Job was not content with mere abstinence from evil, mere negative virtue. He so actively and effectually relieved distress that affliction was turned into happiness, and lamentation into rejoicing.

Ver. 14.—**I put on righteousness, and it clothed me** (comp. Isa. lxi. 10; Ps. cxxxii. 9, etc.). Job "put on righteousness;" *i.e.* made it as the garment wherewith he clothed himself withal (Ps. cix. 18, 19), covered up with it all his own natural imperfections, and made it part and parcel of his being. It was a beautiful covering, and, when once he had put it on, it clung to him, and could not be removed. It "clothed him," or rather, if we translate the Hebrew literally, "clothed itself with him," putting him on, as he had put it on. It was not merely external; it was internal, a habit of his soul and spirit. **My judgment was as a robe and a diadem;** rather, *my justice* (see the Revised Version). My "justice," or "righteousness" (for the words are synonymous), was at once my robe and my crown, my necessary clothing and my ornament (comp. Isa. lxi. 10, "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels").

Ver. 15.—**I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame.** The Persian kings had officials, whom they called their "eyes" and their "ears"—observers who were to inform them of all that went on in the provinces ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. iii. p. 213). Job acted as "eyes" to the blind of his time, giving them the information which their infirmity hindered them from obtaining. He was also "feet" to the lame, taking

messages for them, going on their errands, and the like. He was kind and helpful to his fellow-men, not only in great, but also in little matters.

Ver. 16.—**I was a father to the poor** (comp. ver. 12, and see below, ch. xxxi. 16—22): **and the cause which I knew not I searched out**; rather, *the cause of him that I knew not I searched out* (see the Revised Version). When men were quite unknown to him, Job still gave to their causes the utmost possible attention, "searching them out," or investigating them, as diligently as if they had been the causes of his own friends.

Ver. 17.—**And I brake the jaws of the wicked** (comp. Ps. lviii. 6). It is scarcely meant, as Canon Cook supposes, that Job was himself the executioner. "Quod facit per alium facit per se." Job would regard as *his* doing what he ordered to be done. **And plucked the spoil out of his teeth.** Either by disappointing him of a prey which he was on the verge of making his own, or by compelling him to make restitution of a prey that he had actually laid hold of.

Ver. 18.—**Then I said, I shall die in my nest.** The metaphor of "nest" for "dwelling-place" occurs in Numb. xxiv. 21; Jer. xlix. 16; Obad. 4; and Hab. ii. 9. It is also employed by Hesiod ('Op. et Di.,' i. 301). **And I shall multiply my days as the sand.** Some translate, "I shall multiply my days as the phœnix," the fabulous bird which was supposed to live for five hundred years (Herod., ii. 72), to burn itself on a funeral pile of spices, and then to rise again from its ashes. But the view seems to be a mere rabbinical tradition, and is unsupported by etymology. *Khôl* (חוֹל) means "sand" in Gen. xxii. 17; Jer. xxxiii. 22; and elsewhere. It is taken in this sense by Rosenmüller, Schultens, Professor Lee, Canon Cook, and our Revisers.

Ver. 19.—**My root was spread out by the waters** (comp. Ps. i. 3; Jer. xvii. 8); rather, *to the waters*—so that the waters reached it and nourished it. **And the dew lay all night upon my branch.** Job compares himself, in his former prosperous state, to a tree growing by a river-side, which receives a double nourishment—from the actual water of the stream, which reaches its roots, and from the moisture evaporated from the stream, which hangs in the air, and descends in the shape of dew upon its leaves and branches. Both sources of refreshment represent the grace and favour of God.

Ver. 20.—**My glory was fresh in me**; *i.e.* "my glory remained fresh"—received no tarnish, continued as bright as it had been at the first. **And my bow was renewed in my hand.** My strength did not fail. When it seemed on the point of failing, it was secretly and mysteriously "renewed." Some commentators regard vers. 19 and 20 as a portion of the speech begun in ver. 18, and view the verbs, not as past tenses, but as futures (compare the translation of the Revised Version). The general meaning is much the same, whichever of the two views we take.

Ver. 21.—**Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel** (comp. vers. 9, 10). Job, however, does not repeat himself, since in the previous passage he is speaking of his work and office as judge, whereas now he declares the position which he had occupied among his countrymen as statesman and counsellor.

Ver. 22.—**After my words they spake not again.** When Job had spoken, the debate commonly came to an end. It was felt that all had been said, and that further remark would be superfluous. **And my speech dropped upon them** (comp. Deut. xxxii. 2, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew"). The silent, penetrating influence of wise counsel is glanced at.

Ver. 23.—**They waited for me as for the rain**; *i.e.* "they were as eager to hear me speak as the parched ground is to receive the winter rain, which it expects and waits for and absorbs greedily." **And they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain.** They drank in my discourse as the spring vegetation drinks in the spring showers, known in the East generally as "the latter rains."

Ver. 24.—**If I laughed on them, they believed it not**; rather, *if I smiled on them.* If, as a mark of favour, I smiled on any, they thought it such graciousness and condescension that they could scarcely believe it possible. **And the light of my countenance they cast not down.** They never put me out of countenance, or made me sad and gloomy, by opposing my views and ranging themselves against me.

Ver. 25.—**I chose out their way, and sat chief.** Though not an absolute monarch, but only a patriarchal head, I *practically* determined the course which the tribe took, since my advice was always followed. I thus "sat chief"—nay, **dwelt as a king in the army** (or, *in the host*, i.e. among the people), **as one that comforteth the mourners**; *i.e.* as one to whom all looked for comfort in times of distress and calamity, as much as for counsel and guidance at other times (vers. 21—23).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—25.—*Job's second parable*: 1. *Regretful memories of bygone days.* I. DAYS OF RELIGIOUS HAPPINESS. In tender elegiac strains Job resumes his monologue of sorrow, casting a pathetic glance upon "the times of yore," already faded in the far past and gone beyond recall; not the days of his youth (Authorized Version), but the autumn season of his mature manhood, when, like a field that the Lord had blessed (Gen. xxvii. 27), groaning beneath the exuberance of its harvest fruits, he was loaded with an abundance of good things (Ps. ciii. 1—5). Heaven's blessings were so many and so varied, so ripe and so ready, that it seemed to him like a very time of vintage for his soul. But, alas! these bright days of golden sunshine were departed, carrying with them all the treasures of felicity they had brought; and of these that which by its loss now struck the keenest pang of anguish into his melancholy soul was the blessed fellowship, the familiar, confiding, unreserved intercourse which he then enjoyed with Eloah, who, in the threefold capacity of Guardian, Guide, and Friend, was an habitual Visitor at his tent. 1. *As a Guardian.* Then Eloah preserved, or protected, him, as Satan, in the opening of the fundamental controversy of the poem, complained (ch. i. 10), and as Eliphaz (ch. v. 11—21; xxii. 25), followed by Zophar (ch. xi. 18), assured him God would again do, if he returned in penitential submission to Eloah's ways. This Divine guardianship must not be limited to the setting up of a fence around the patriarch's estate, but extended to that of which it was a symbol, the casting of a shield around the patriarch's soul. In the happy days of old Job nestled beneath the shadow of the Almighty's wings (Ruth ii. 12; Ps. xci. 1), body, soul, and spirit, feeling himself secure against calamity of every sort, inward or outward, spiritual or material. What God was to Job he likewise proved himself to be to David and other Old Testament saints, and to-day offers himself to be to all Christ's believing followers—a Defender against the charges of the Law, of conscience, or of Satan (Ps. xxxii. 1—5; lxv. 3; lxxxv. 2, 3; Isa. xliv. 22; Rom. viii. 1, 31, 33); a Protector against the ills and temptations of life (Ps. xlvi. 1; xlviii. 3; cxxi. 3; Prov. iii. 6, 23, 24; Isa. liv. 14—17; Zech. ix. 8; 2 Thess. iii. 3; 1 Pet. iii. 13). 2. *As a Guide.* Job also recollects that, in the bright days whose departure he laments, Eloah's candle (or lamp) shone above his head, enabling him to walk with perfect safety even in nights of thickest darkness. The allusion probably is to the custom of suspending lamps in rooms or tents over the head (Carey); and the meaning is that, while rejoicing in Heaven's favour and fellowship, Job's feet never stumbled in the path of duty. If perplexities arose around or before him, through Divine grace he was always able to resolve them, threading his way through the deepest intricacies, and moving straight on in an even path. This was no doubt owing partly to the circumstance that his consciousness of inward peace and sincerity permitted him to make the best possible use of his natural faculties, and partly to the fact that he enjoyed the special illumination of Heaven. If piety does not confer new powers, it enables old ones to be turned to the best advantage. Then the singleness of aim which a good man possesses largely facilitates the discovery of light in times of darkness. And, finally, saints have special promises guaranteeing providential guidance when placed in situations of perplexity or peril (Ps. xxv. 8, 9; xxxii. 8; xxxvii. 23; cxii. 4). 3. *As a Friend.* More particularly Job mentions that, in the times of blessedness referred to, "the secret," or favour (Cox), or blessed fellowship (Delitzsch), or counsel (Fry) of Eloah was upon his tent. Whether Job was honoured like Abraham to receive theophanies (Gen. xviii. 1, 2), so that he might actually speak of God being a Visitor at his tent (Carey), the language (literally, "in the seat or cushion of God being at my tent") obviously points to an intercourse of the most friendly and familiar kind between him and God—such a dwelling together as Eliphaz affirmed should take place (ch. xxii. 21) if Job and God were to be at peace. The friendship here depicted as having existed between Job and Eloah was realized in the case of Abraham and Jehovah (2 Chron. xx. 7; Isa. xli. 8; Jas. ii. 23), and is in a certain sense still realized in the experience of Christians and the Saviour (John xv. 15). As one result of this friendly intercourse between Eloah and Job, Job became acquainted with Eloah's counsel or secret purpose, as Abraham was informed of Jehovah's determination concerning Sodom (Gen. xviii. 17), as the

prophets generally were afterwards instructed about the mind of God (Amos iii. 7), as "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him" (Ps. xxv. 14; Prov. iii. 32), and as on believers is conferred an unction from the Holy One, enabling them to know all things (1 John ii. 20, 27; v. 20), but more particularly the mind of Christ (John xvi. 13—15; 1 Cor. ii. 16).

II. DAYS OF DOMESTIC FELICITY. It is a special mark of piety in Job that, enumerating his lost blessings, he begins with what the worldly or wicked man would have placed last, viz. the Divine friendship. As to David (Ps. lxiii. 3) and to Asaph (Ps. lxxiii. 25), so to Job the favour and fellowship of God constituted the principal ingredient in his full cup of blessing. But next to fellowship with a God of mercy and salvation, no earthly happiness can be compared to a home illumined by the sunshine of genuine religion, and gladdened by the cheery voices of loving and obedient children. Job cannot recall the time when the Almighty was still with him (ver. 5) without remembering that then also his children (his young men, his boys) were about him—a numerous, happy, loving, united, and, it may be hoped, a pious family (ch. i. 1—5; *vide* homiletics). It is contrary to religion for a good man, or any man, to prize his wife and children above his Saviour and his God (Matt. x. 37); it is contrary to nature to behold them taken from his side by the hand of death without weeping (Gen. xxiii. 2; John xi. 31, 33, 35); it is contrary to neither nature nor religion to cherish them with fondest affection, and to mourn for their death with sincere lamentation.

III. DAYS OF MATERIAL PROSPERITY. Guarded by Divine care and guided by Divine light, like Jacob in Padan-aram (Gen. xxxi. 5, 7, 11, 12, 42), Job attained to extensive wealth, the poetic imagery employed (ver. 6) to depict it meaning, when converted into unadorned prose, that his flocks became so abundant, and their yield of milk so rich and plentiful, that he might almost be said to wash his steps in butter, which among the Arabs was mostly a liquid preparation, and that everywhere throughout his domain the crags were clothed with olive trees so prolific that the very rocks appeared to pour forth oil. It was another mark of Job's fervent piety and well-balanced judgment that he preferred his children to his flocks and trees, giving these latter only the third place in his esteem, and that he ascribed his material prosperity, no less than his domestic felicity, to the circumstance that then the Almighty was with him. So did Jacob when serving with Laban (Gen. xxxi. 5), and Joseph when ruling for Pharaoh (Gen. xlv. 8), recognize God as the Author of their temporal advancement. So does Scripture habitually trace to God every blessing which the saint enjoys (Ps. lxxv. 6, 7; Jas. i. 17).

IV. DAYS OF CIVIC HONOUR. A saint of eminent piety, the father of a numerous family, and the proprietor of vast possessions, Job had likewise been the chief magistrate, or supreme dispenser of law and justice, in his clan. Passing beyond the bounds of his own private domain, and entering the adjacent city, when he took his seat among the elders in the broad way, *i.e.* in the open space usually reserved in Oriental cities, either in front of the gate (2 Chron. xxxii. 6; Neh. viii. 1, 3, 16), or in the vaulted recesses beneath the archway (Gen. xix. 1; 1 Kings xxii. 10), for the transaction of business (Ruth iv. 1), the dispensing of justice (Prov. xxxi. 23), or the conducting of other negotiations, he was saluted with marked tokens of respect. The younger men, conscious of his greatness, retired into the background; the old men amongst the councillors received him standing; the voice of the greatest magnate amongst them was silent until he had uttered his opinion. A remarkable testimony to the high esteem in which Job was held for his personal qualities and commanding abilities.

V. DAYS OF PUBLIC PHILANTHROPY. What Eliphaz once admitted (ch. iv. 3, 4), Job is now constrained to avow, that his whole by-past career had been one of unwearied benevolence. In his magisterial capacity he had: 1. *Espoused the cause of the poor and needy.* In conspicuous contradiction to Eliphaz, who had charged him (ch. xxii. 5—9) with intolerable oppression and cruelty, with robbing the poor, and inhumanly suffering the naked and hungry to perish, he had taken, it might be said, the whole family of the unfortunate under his protection. When a poor man oppressed by his neighbour had cried out for help, when an orphan had poured into his ear a tale of pitiful distress, when a miserable outcast half-dead through cold and nakedness, or through hunger and thirst, had found the way to his door, when a broken-hearted widow had appealed to him for assistance, he had had an ear for every cry, a heart for

every sorrow, and a hand for every need. Job's sympathies had inclined him to feel for the defenceless and the poor. And in this Job had shown himself to be a good man (Ps. xl. 1), and an eminent type of Christ (Ps. lxxii. 4; Matt. viii. 16, 17). Nay, Job had considered no care or trouble too much to expend on behalf of his clients. He had both taken pains to understand their complaint, and had not been satisfied till he had rectified their grievance. And with such skill, energy, and perseverance had he conducted their causes, that he commonly carried them forward to success, delivering the poor and fatherless who cried to him (ver. 12), causing the widow's heart to sing for joy (ver. 13), breaking the jaws of the wicked and plucking the spoil out of his teeth (ver. 17). And in all that Job had said or done in his magisterial capacity he had: 2. *Acted with the most scrupulous regard to justice.* He had not met chicanery and oppression by resorting to the same dishonest weapons. If he had stood forth for justice to the poor, he had not attempted to withhold it from the rich. So unchallengeably just had been his decisions, and so unimpeachable the principles of equity by which these were guided, that he felt himself entitled to say he had literally clothed himself in righteousness, and assumed integrity as a robe and turban; in this, again, typifying strikingly the Lord Jesus Christ (Ps. lxxii. 2; xcvi. 13). And so successful had Job been in his determination to combine "mercy and truth, righteousness and peace," in his magisterial capacity, that he had: 3. *Gained the good opinion and respect of all.* Unlike Aristides, whom his fellow-countrymen ostracized because they could not longer bear to hear him called the "just," the fellow-citizens of Job had saluted him on every side with words and looks of commendation and esteem (ver. 11).

VI. DAYS OF UNANTICIPATED EVIL. Pious, rich, honoured, useful, trusted, revered, Job was unconscious of a single gloomy foreboding. All round him, above him, before him, the prospect was clear and exhilarating. Not a speck of cloud lay upon the bright horizon that encompassed him. Job had no thought but that he should live a long, prosperous, and honoured life, multiplying his days like the sand, or like the phœnix, the fabulous bird of Egyptian mythology, or, perhaps, like the palm tree, and at last dying calmly in his nest, *i.e.* like Abraham (Gen. xxv. 8), in the bosom of his family. Two things contributed to foster such a pleasing anticipation in the mind of Job. 1. *The apparent stability of his outward or material prosperity.* Comparing himself to a tree planted by the rivers of waters—a frequent biblical emblem of a good man (Ps. i. 3; xcii. 12; Jer. xvii. 8)—he had hoped that, since his roots were open to the waters, whence they could always draw a plentiful supply of moisture, and since his branches were nightly laden with dew (ver. 19), nothing ever would or even could occur to interrupt the outward course of his temporal greatness. The sources of his wealth appeared so permanent and inexhaustible that he never imagined they could either be diminished or dried up. His honours were so fresh upon him (cf. 'Henry VIII.,' act iii. sc. 2) that he dreamt not of their decline. And his manly vigour, his capability of warding off danger, represented by the bow which he carried in his hand, was so full and so easily renewed that he feared not an overthrow to his unexampled fortune, or an eclipse to the shining splendour of his honourable name. 2. *The unlimited extent of his authority and influence.* The autobiographical fragment introduced in vers. 21—25 is not designed as a continuation or resumption of the theme treated of above (vers. 7, 8), but is intended to explain how dark forebodings never crossed the mind of Job when reposing in the brilliant sunshine of his earthly glory. The profound veneration in which his countrymen held him, causing them with patient silence and eager expectation to wait for his counsel (vers. 21, 23); the awful respect in which they held his words, regarding them as final on every subject they handled (ver. 22); the effect which his decisions never failed to produce upon those who heard them, his speech distilling upon them with reviving and enlivening influences, and being welcome to their hearts as the early and the latter rains (ver. 23); the influence he wielded over them by his kindly manners, his very smile being regarded as an act of gracious condescension which they could hardly believe was meant for them, but which, nevertheless, they were loth to lose, and which seemed to have a talismanic power in dispelling their sadness (ver. 24); and the unquestioning, nay, joyous, submission with which they hailed his instructions, his position among them being at once that of a monarch and a friend (ver. 25);—all these considerations rendered it difficult for Job to think that ever for him an evil day should dawn.

Learn: 1. The propriety and profit of recalling and reviewing the past. 2. In enumerating blessings, much depends upon assigning to each its exact place in the order of importance. 3. To a good man the things of God ever stand in the front rank. 4. Having first obtained Heaven's favour, a man may legitimately aspire to acquire the riches of the world and the good opinions of his fellow-men. 5. An upright and useful life seldom fails to meet its recompense, even upon earth. 6. He whom God has enriched with wealth, ability, and influence should devote them to the service of the poor and needy. 7. The blessings of those whom a good man relieves are greater riches than accumulated gold and silver. 8. The retrospect of a well-spent life is a great consolation in the season of adversity. 9. It is dangerous to look for permanence in anything on earth. 10. It is well when great men can combine love with authority, and sympathy with power.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—25.—*Wistful retrospect of past happy days.* I. PICTURES OF MEMORY; HAPPINESS FOUNDED ON THE FRIENDSHIP OF GOD. (Vers. 1—10.) 1. *Friendship with God the source of happiness.* (Vers. 1—5.) This is beautifully indicated in figurative expressions. He thinks of the days when *God's* light beamed upon his brow, by God's light he walked through the darkness; the days of his ripe and mellow age (rather than of his "youth"), when the secret, *i.e.* the intimacy, of the Almighty was a shelter and a blessing to his home. The word "secret" means "intimacy," confidential intercourse (see ch. xix. 19; Ps. xxv. 14; lv. 15; Prov. iii. 32). God was near to him, and the next greatest blessing to that favour of God, viz. the blessing of children, was granted to him. (Compare on the blessing of children, Ps. cxxvii. 3, *sqq.*; cxxviii. 3.) The outward blessings of life are chiefly to be valued as signs of the deeper, the inward good; the constant nearness of God, the consciousness of his approval, the certainty of his guidance. 2. *Features of outward happiness.* (Vers. 6—10.) (1) *Abundance of means.* Here the favourite Oriental figures are employed. He bathed his steps in butter, and the rock at his side gushed with streams of oil (comp. Deut. xxxii. 13). (2) *Respect and dignity.* When he went to the gate of the city, the great public place of assembly in Oriental cities, corresponding to the agora of the Greeks, the forum of the Romans, and the market-place of our old towns (ch. v. 4; xxxi. 21; Prov. i. 21; viii. 3); when he placed his seat in the market—the wide open place close by the gates—the young men retired in reverential respect before him, and the old men rose and remained standing until he had taken his seat; while princes ceased their conversation, laying the hand upon the mouth (ch. xxi. 5); the voice of persons of consideration was hushed, their tongue cleaving to the roof of their mouth. The possession of the respect of others is one of the noblest kinds of wealth, as the consciousness of being despised, looked down upon, scouted, and flouted is an element of the deepest misery. Out of the dark present Job looks back to those sunny days. His life is "in the sere and yellow leaf," and his is "the crown of sorrow," the "remembering happier things." "It is the pensive autumn feeling, the sensation of half-sadness that we experience when the longest day of the year is past, and every day that follows is shorter, and the light fainter, and the feebler shadows tell that Nature is hastening with gigantic footsteps to her winter grave." As Christians, we should learn to look forward, and forget the past, in so far as its recollection paralyzes or depresses (Phil. iii. 13, 14). (Read F. W. Robertson's sermon on this: 'Christian Progress by Oblivion of the Past.')

> "Not backward are our glances bent,
> But onwards to our Father's home."

The past is gone for ever; but there is a present and a future which is still our own.

II. THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS IN GOODNESS. (Vers. 11—17.) His benevolence and his strict integrity were *mediately* the cause of his prosperity. For although God is the one and only Cause of all things, the gracious Author of our bliss, yet his dispensations are not arbitrary. Blessing is conditioned by faith; and faith is proved by conduct. Job's public and private life was known and seen, and elicited approval from all. He was the succourer of the poor and the helpless orphan; the blessing of

the forlorn and the wretched was breathed forth on his behalf. He had clothed himself with rectitude (compare for this figure, Isa. xi. 5; li. 9; lix. 17; Ps. cxxxii. 9). It was to him like a robe and a turban. He was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; a father to the needy. He searched out the cause of unknown men, to help them as surety or otherwise if their cause was good. He put down men of violence and oppression, and recovered their ill-gotten booty from them, as one snatches the prey from the jaws of the wild beast. Despite the mournful mood of Job, what solace is there not, even in the greatest affliction, through the memory of having been permitted to do some good and reap some reward of affection from others in the world? And, looking to the sequel of the story, let us remember that God is not unrighteous to forget the labour of love. Every cause has its effect; every act of benevolence will be followed in due time by its bright flowers of peace and joy in the conscience and the memory. Go on, then, in the work of doing good, steadfast and immovable in the work of the Lord. Be like fountains watering the earth and spreading fertility. "Subdue discord, mutiny, widespread despair by manfulness, justice, mercy, and wisdom. Chaos is dark, deep as hell; let light be, and there is instead a green, flowery world. Oh, it is great, and there is no other greatness! To make some work of God's creation a little more fruitful, better, more worthy of God; to make some human hearts a little wiser, more manful, happier, more blessed; it is a work for God!" (Carlyle).

III. THE MEMORY OF BRIGHT HOPES; THE RESPECT AND INFLUENCE IN FORMER DAYS. (Vers. 18—25.) 1. *Everything in that happy period pointed with seeming prophetic power to a long life, to a blessed old age.* He thought within himself that he should end his days in his nest, in the bosom of his family, in peace and security; and like the sand (or the days of the phœnix) would be their number. If the word be taken as denoting the phœnix, then the allusion is to the legend of the bird living five hundred years, then burning in its nest, and rising from the ashes. Peace and prosperity bred in his mind great hopes. Like a well-watered tree, he thought his life would spread, the refreshing dew resting by night upon its branches, and that his honour would ever freshly remain with him; that his bow—the symbol of lusty manhood and strength (1 Sam. ii. 4; Ps. xlvi. 9; lxxvi. 3; Jer. xlix. 35; li. 56)—would renew itself in his hand. We learn here, in passing, the lesson not to build on the constancy of earthly things, not to lay up treasures of hope here. If it be well with us now, let us be prepared for reverses (Sirach xi. 25). This lesson comes back to us from many a saying of the ancient world, mixed no doubt with much of superstition, and ignorance of the nature of God, but still in the main expressed with the truth of experience. "There is nothing secure in the world, no glory, no prosperity. The gods toss all life into confusion, mix everything with its reverse, that all of us, from our ignorance and uncertainty, may pay them the more worship and reverence" (Euripides, 'Hec.,' 957). "God hath power to change the lowly for the lofty; he weakens the distinguished, he brings the obscure to the light; Fortune with shrill sound here removes the towering crest, and here she sets it up" (Horace, 'Od.,' i. 35). The brief sum of life's days forbids us to cherish a long hope (ibid., i. 4). We must learn in a Christian sense to "pluck the day, and have the smallest confidence in what is to come" (ibid., i. 11). What the morrow may bring we should shun to inquire, and count as a gain every day that may be given us (ibid., i. 9). "Too late is the life of to-morrow; live to-day!" (Martial). 2. *A further picture of the social esteem and respect in which his past days had been spent.* The members of his tribe or clan all looked up to him, listened in silence to his address, and had nothing to add after he had spoken. His speech fell upon them like the refreshing rain for which the thirsty pastures long—the late rain which in March or April blesses the ripening crops (comp. Deut. xi. 14; Jer. iii. 3; v. 24; Joel ii. 23; Hos. vi. 3). His cheerful smile dismissed men's rising fears, the light of his countenance was like the sun dispelling the clouds of doubt or alarm. He sat in the midst of the assembly of his tribe, guiding, commanding, directing, like a king in the midst of his battle-host; or, as if this picture were too warlike and remote from the peaceful scenes of the patriarch's life, he sat among them as a general consoler, a comforter of the mourners. Thus—

> "Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
> Sucks at his breast, and turns the past to pain."

But we have a power over this "bosom-spring," and may cheer or sadden ourselves

with retrospect, according as we take the golden key of faith or the iron key of despondency wherewith to unlock the door of the past. Do not these bright memories of a well-spent past afford solace to the afflicted hero, though they also touch the nerves to pain? Let it be ours so to use memory that it still yield instructive joy and hope. As we turn over her mixed records, let us say to ourselves, "The joys we have possessed are ever ours—out of the reach of chance and change. Let past years, so far as they are marked with the greatness of God, with acts of piety, works of love, breed in us perpetual benedictions."—J.

Vers. 1—25.—*A mournful reflection upon a happy past.* Job had lived in honour and great respect. He was "the greatest of all the men of the East." The Divine testimony concerning him was, "There is none like him in the earth." Job's was an enviable condition, and his own words indicate how sensible he was of it. In his mournful utterance, made as he looks back upon a dead past, we see wherein consisted his happiness; and we learn what are the elemental conditions of the highest felicity in human life—at least at that period of the world's history. Nor can we think of loftier conditions to-day. The conditions of happiness on the loss of which Job mournfully reflected are—

I. THE ASSURED FAVOUR OF JEHOVAH. The proof of this to Job was in his abounding prosperity.

II. DOMESTIC FELICITY. If the joy of home be destroyed, all joy must wither.

III. THE RESPECT OF SURROUNDING SOCIETY. It is always painful to a right-minded man not to be held in respect by his fellow-men; and although it may minister to pride in the unwary, it is to the prudent a source of the greatest satisfaction, especially when it is subordinated to the honour that cometh from God only.

IV. THE HONOURABLE REGARD EVEN OF THE GREAT. The very princes and nobles held silence when he spake. He who is so highly honoured cannot but honour himself. Happy the man whose self-respect so ripens.

V. THE EXERCISE OF CHARITY, without which the heart would become selfish.

VI. THE RESPONSIVE BLESSINGS OF MEN, sweet as nard of great price.

VII. CONSCIOUSNESS OF INTEGRITY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS—a conscience void of offence.

VIII. THE EXERCISE OF HIS POWER AND WEALTH FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE NEEDY AND OPPRESSED. Every kind act leaves a fragrance on the hand of him who does it.

IX. THE POSSESSION OF HOPE. It might be said the hope of the permanence of these precious possessions.

X. A CAUSE OF BLESSING TO OTHERS. In these lies the secret of the truest happiness; but many deserve them not, and having them are not able to retain their integrity and simplicity. Hence how often are they withdrawn! The absence of these Job is called to mourn. To hold fast his integrity in the loss as truly as amidst the possession of these things marks the true greatness and goodness of the man, and ultimately brings him the highest honour.—R. G.

Vers. 2—4.—*Regrets for the happy past.* I. IT IS NATURAL TO LOOK BACK WITH REGRET ON THE HAPPY PAST. The memory of past joy is not wholly pleasant. If the joy is gone, the memory only adds pain to the present sense of loss. Several things contribute to give intensity to the feeling of regret. 1. *Many of the best blessings are not appreciated while we possess them.* We have to lose them to learn their value. This is especially true of great common blessings, such as the buoyancy of youth, health, affluence. When all goes well with us we do not consider how many gifts of God we are enjoying. The charm of summer is appreciated when dull November makes us look back on the lost days of brightness. We wake up to the value of our loved ones when they have been taken from us by the hand of death. Adversity reveals the privileges of prosperity. Declining years teach the value of youth. 2. *Reflection grows with years.* It has been remarked upon as a misfortune that so many of the best things in life seem to be lavished upon an age that is carelessly negligent of them. Strength, energy, health, happiness, in abundance are enjoyed in youth without a thought. When these treasures are more scarce they are carefully economized and highly valued. In later years the habit of looking backward grows upon us, and

reflection takes the place of heedless activity. Thus we consider and appreciate with regret in the later years of life what we disregarded in the earlier times of possession. 3. *Memory throws a delusive glamour over the past.* The distant hills are beautiful; we see their purple shadows, we do not observe their stony paths. Youth is not so sunny as age paints it. Keen pains of youth are forgotten in after-years, especially if those years have brought with them the fortitude that despises such sufferings. For there is a gain in years, and this very gain leads to an over-valuation of youth. Patience and self-control are acquired by experience, and while they help us to bear much that would be intolerable to youth, they also lead us to smile at and under-estimate the wild distresses of earlier years.

II. IT IS GOOD TO APPRECIATE THE DIVINE BLESSINGS OF THE HAPPY PAST. Job acknowledged that God had preserved him in past days. The candle of the Lord had then shone upon his head. He enjoyed God's friendship when he came to maturity. 1. *This adds poignancy to the grief of regret.* God has not been sufficiently appreciated. His blessings have not been acknowledged with merited gratitude. Or if no self-accusations arise on these points, still the loss of God's favour seems to accompany the loss of his gifts. The regret has deeper thoughts than those concerning earthly good things. Apparently deserted by God, the troubled man cries, with poor Cowper—

> "Where is the blessedness I knew
> When first I saw the Lord?
> Where is the soul-refreshing view
> Of Jesus and his Word?"

2. *This should really inspire hope.* God is not fickle. His constancy is deeper than appearances. We may have lost hold of his goodness through our own sin or distrust. Perhaps, however, we are deluding ourselves; he is really nearer to us in adversity than he was in prosperity, only we cannot understand the mysteries of his providence. Assuredly, if God once loved and cared for his children, he will never forsake them. 3. *This should urge the young to appreciate their privileges.* It is not desirable that any should reflect overmuch on their present happy condition, because the charm of it is its unconscious freedom and activity. But it is only right to acknowledge the goodness of God with thankfulness; and to so use early privileges that we shall not afterwards look back with regret on a misspent youth.—W. F. A.

Vers. 8—12.—*The character that wins respect.* Job paints a glowing picture of his honoured condition in past days. Then he was more than prosperous. He was treated with great deference. Let us gather up the traits of the character that wins respect, and in order to do so let us distinguish them from false grounds of deference.

I. FALSE GROUNDS OF DEFERENCE. 1. *Power.* Multitudes cringe before mere power, either in fear of giving offence or with a hope of gaining some advantage. The Oriental makes his humble salaam to the infidel whom in his heart he despises. This deference is no credit to either party. 2. *Wealth.* The worship of mammon may be less visibly cruel than the worship of Mars, and yet in some respects it is more degrading, for it calls out no heroic qualities. The deference shown to the rich simply because they are rich is one of the most unworthy characteristics of human weakness. It is not peculiar to our own age; this miserable sycophantic spirit was ridiculed by Roman satirists and reprobated by New Testament writers (*e.g.* Jas. ii. 2). Its sordid meanness humiliates all who are enslaved by it. 3. *Self-assertion.* The world is often too easy in taking men at their own valuation of themselves. Because a great claim is made it is often tacitly assented to, simply because people are too indolent or too cowardly to question it. But self-importance is not greatness. 4. *Success.* There is more in this when it is not merely a business matter, when it indicates sterling qualities of ability and energy. Still, good fortune may have much to do with it, and conscientious scruples may have been trampled down in the fierce determination to win it at any cost. Then the failure that would not stoop to the lower and more easy means of success is infinitely more worthy of honour.

II. THE TRUE CHARACTER THAT WINS RESPECT. It is portrayed in Job's description of his own happy past. Why was this hushed deference of old men as well as young, of princes and nobles? The answer is to be found in the conduct of Job. 1. *Active*

benevolence. "Job delivered the poor that cried," etc. Here was more than princely generosity. It costs a man absolutely nothing to leave a big legacy to the poor, and it does not hurt him much to give freely during his lifetime out of his superfluous cash. On the contrary, the money may be profitably laid out, even from a purely worldly and selfish point of view, in the honour of standing well in subscription-lists. But the greater honour is due to those who exert themselves for the good of their brother-men. Lord Shaftesbury was a man of small means. His fame is not founded on money gifts; it rests on the more solid foundation of self-denying labours. 2. *Integrity.* Job put on righteousness, and it clothed him. Without this, benevolence is of little value. We must be just before we are generous. A Christian man of business should see to it that his name is without reproach in the commercial world. Truth and honesty are primary conditions of respect. 3. *Wisdom.* "Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel" (ver. 21). Had Job been a foolish, though a well-meaning man, deference to his counsel would have been a sign of weakness on the part of others. But he proved himself to be a man of strong mental power and of true wisdom. We owe respect to the "men of light and leading" when their leading is determined by their light.—W. F. A.

Ver. 13.—"*The blessing of him that was ready to perish.*" I. WHY IT IS VALUABLE. We cannot but be struck with this beautiful trait in Job's autobiographical sketch. It is better than all renown. The clamours of the multitude are poor plaudits compared with the blessing of the poor. Many people may be indifferent to it. They may be satisfied if only they can grasp power, and compel the homage of the great, although their path is followed by "curses not loud, but deep." Cruel conquerors, ruthless tyrants, hard-hearted men of the world, know nothing of the blessing Job here describes. Yet it is solid and real. 1. *It springs from true appreciation.* This is no superficial praise required by custom or prompted by shallow motives. It arises out of a genuine perception of goodness. 2. *It is characterized by gratitude.* Thus it contains warmer feelings than those of admiration. An element of awakening affection enters into it. Now, it is better to be loved by the obscure than to be merely honoured by the great; it is better to be loved by a few than to be applauded by a multitude. 3. *It is accompanied by the approval of Christ.* He tells us that what we do to one of the least of his brethren we do to him. He commends the good Samaritan to us as an approved example. Therefore the gratitude of the humble poor carries with it the smile of Heaven. 4. *It is powerful for good.* Men try to win the favour of the great who can do much for them, and selfishly disregard the opinions of the poor who seem to have power to do them but little good or harm. Yet the blessings of the helpless are prayers to the great Friend of the helpless. They bring down the blessings of God. Happy is the man who lives under these conditions!

II. HOW IT IS EARNED. 1. *By means of genuine goodness.* Clamours of applause may be won by very equivocal conduct. Superficial things may excite extraordinary admiration. People rush to stare and shout after any celebrity. But they want to know more before they will bless one. This devout well-wishing and praying for a person which we call blessing can only be earned by real and solid goodness. 2. *Through the exercise of sympathy.* The helpless and perishing may be constrained to avail themselves of favours tossed to them from a distance by a hand of proud patronage, and perhaps even of scornful contempt. But if there is no grace in the gift there will be little gratitude in the reception of it. If we would earn the blessing of the helpless we must win their love, and in order to do that we must manifest love to them. Sympathy unlocks the fountains of the heart. 3. *In deeds of active helpfulness.* If the sympathy is genuine it will lead spontaneously to such deeds. We cannot truly sympathize with a person in trouble without desiring to help him. Now, the active helpfulness will be the sign and seal of the sympathy. This it was that secured Job's place in the heart of the poor. Men have heaped honours on the head of the "Happy Warrior." The time has come when we should revive the better glories of Job's days. If we desire to win a position in the world, let us save our ambition from sordid or even wicked aims. Let him be first in love and service who would be first in honour. This is Christ's rule (Mark ix. 35).—W. F. A.

Ver. 14.—*Clothed with righteousness.* I. RIGHTEOUSNESS CLOTHES A MAN AS WITH A GARMENT. 1. *It covers.* If a man has but a good character, we can pardon much else in him. He may be weak, foolish, unfortunate. He may have failed in the world, and have come down to poverty. Yet he is not in rags. A royal robe covers him, and, in the eyes of those who can appreciate true worth, this is the one thing seen about him. 2. *It protects.* The garment is to keep off the chill winds and damping mists and scorching sun. Righteousness is more than a stout garment. It is a piece of armour—a breastplate, protecting the heart (Eph. vi. 14). When once a man is assured of the integrity of his cause he can look the whole world in the face; he can dare to go through fire and water; he is strong and safe where one with an evil conscience may well tremble and cower. 3. *It adorns.* This righteousness is not only decent and comforting, like a thick, warm, homespun garment; it is more beautiful than a king's clothing of purple and silk and gold embroidery. There is no beauty so fair as that of goodness. 4. *It cannot be hidden.* It is not a secret confined to the heart. It must be there first, it must spring from the heart. But it is not hidden within. Character is visible, like a garment worn in the street.

II. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH THUS CLOTHES MUST BE REAL. It is only the perversity of an erroneous theology that could ever make it necessary to utter so obvious a sentence as this. There is a way of referring to the imputed righteousness of Christ as though this dispensed with the necessity of our being ourselves righteous. Surely such a doctrine would be immoral. In what respects could this so-called robe of righteousness be distinguished from the hypocrite's cloak? If Christ's righteousness were only to hide our unrighteousness without curing it, not only would a great deception be practised, but no real good would be done. The result would be an unmitigated evil. For what is our curse and our ruin? Is it not our sin? If so, nothing can benefit us that does not destroy that sin. Therefore an attempt to cover it up and leave it unaltered will do us no good, but will injure us by drugging our conscience and giving us a false assurance. In Eastern cities an open drain runs down the middle of the street, and is not so offensive as one might think, because it is always being oxidized and purified by the fresh air. We cover over our drains, but make ventilating holes in our streets, through which gases of concentrated foulness, unmixed with pure air, are continually rising among the passers-by. Have we gained much?

III. ONLY CHRIST CAN CLOTHE US WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS. Self-righteousness is a delusion. We cannot make ourselves righteous, nor can any law put us right with God. St. Paul demonstrated this in the opening chapters of his Epistle to the Romans. But he also showed that God had given us righteousness in Christ (Rom. iii. 21, 22). Now, this comes first of all in forgiveness. We are then put in a right relation with God, before we have overcome all the sin that dwells within us. Christ is the promise of our future righteousness. In this way his righteousness means much to us. God cannot be taken in by any fiction. He can only regard us just as we are. But he can treat us for Christ's sake better than we deserve. So through Christ we are placed in right relations with God, and those right relations are the channels through which real righteousness comes into us.—W. F. A.

Ver. 18.—*The phœnix.* Accepting the rendering that is now adopted by most of the abler commentators—that which is given in the margin of the Revised Version—we see Job comparing himself in his earlier days to the phœnix, which, "according to the Egyptian legend, lived five hundred years, and then, setting fire to its nest, renewed its youth in the funeral pyre." Youth cannot believe in death, unless, indeed, it falls into a sentimental mood, or is startled by the ugly fact itself. Naturally, when health is unbroken, and all goes well, life seems to open up an endless vista of days to the young man. This view contains both a foolish delusion and a Divine truth.

I. THE FOOLISH DELUSION. The phœnix was only a fabulous bird; no such creature exists in nature. No one has ever found the elixir of life. The idea that life is long is a delusion of youth. It springs in part from the freshness of things, and in part from the overflowing vitality of youth. In his address to a butterfly, Wordsworth says—

"Sit near us on the bough!
We'll talk of sunshine and of song,

And summer days, when we were young;
Sweet childish days, that were as long
As twenty days are now."

Perhaps there is no reason to shatter this delusion. Why should we spoil the sunshine of youth with the shadow of coming years? The world could not go on without young enthusiasm, and hope is essential to young enthusiasm. Yet it is possible to be led into practical mistakes by this delusion. The young may think that there is plenty of time before them, and the thought may be used as an excuse for indolence, negligence, and the postponement of duty. Then a sudden awakening comes with a shock of alarm, as it is perceived only too late that the golden opportunities of youth are gone—for ever!

II. THE DIVINE TRUTH. Clement of Rome appealed to the phœnix as a witness for the resurrection. We smile at his credulity. But may we not appeal to the legend of the phœnix as an evidence of the instinct of immortality? Why is it so natural to us to believe that life will go on for ever? Shall we put this idea down entirely to the delusion of circumstances and of our own vitality? Does it not spring from something deeper in our nature? Be that as it may, however, Christ has come to satisfy the desire and to confirm the hope. Job confessed the foolishness of his youthful dreams, yet even he in those old-world days had occasional glimpses of the life beyond the grave, and we have a grand assurance of that life in Christ and his resurrection. The mistake is to dream of an earthly immortality. The old man who cherishes fond hopes of living a little longer is not much better off than the drowning man catching at a straw. But he who has a hold on the life eternal can afford to see the years rushing away, swifter than a weaver's shuttle. He must make the best of them while he has them; for *this* life is with him but once, and he will have to give an account of it hereafter; for there is a hereafter—a great day of God's eternity that knows no sunset.—W. F. A.

Vers. 21—23.—*Welcome counsel.* Among the happy circumstances of Job's sunny days of prosperity, he recalls the welcome that was accorded to his words of advice. Too often advice is more freely offered than thankfully received. Let us, then, consider the quality, the utility, and the acceptance of welcome counsel.

I. THE QUALITY OF WELCOME COUNSEL. What conditions must be fulfilled to make advice worthy of acceptation? 1. *It must be full of knowledge.* A glib tongue is ready enough to offer gratuitous advice, but we want to ascertain whether a full mind is inspiring it. Religious teachers must know for themselves before they can safely lead others. The doubt that is pardonable in the private person may be fatal to the public instructor. 2. *It must be based on experience.* Evidently Job was a man of wide experience. He spoke out of the fulness of his own observation of the world. Armchair counsellors are not much valued. An apprenticeship must be served to the affairs on which we would give advice. 3. *It must be accompanied by practical wisdom.* Knowledge and experience may find a man very foolish, and leave him so. We have to learn how to apply our acquisitions. We need practical tact in dealing with men and affairs. 4. *It must be offered in sympathy.* It is very little good to give preaching advice. We must talk to a man as a brother. We must let people see that we care for them, and that we are truly studying their good. A suspicion that the advice is not disinterested vitiates it entirely.

II. THE UTILITY OF WELCOME COUNSEL. Bushels of advice have to be thrown on one side as so much burdensome rubbish. Nevertheless, the rare value of really good advice is beyond all reckoning. 1. *Right living is supremely important.* Counsel deals with life rather than with opinions. It touches conduct. Now, as Matthew Arnold quaintly says, "conduct is three parts of life." Anything that really helps conduct must be valuable. 2. *Right living is not easy.* We are often perplexed and in uncertainty. Our prejudices and interests warp our judgments. 3. *External advice brings new light.* It may not be better than what we already possess; but it is an addition. The wise counsellor helps us to look at our affairs from a fresh point of view. At the same time, he comes with a certain calmness and detachment that enable him to take a fair view of the situation.

III. THE ACCEPTANCE OF WELCOME ADVICE. 1. *It needs humility to receive it.* We

are all ready to receive the advice that concurs with our previous opinions; but that advice is scarcely needed. The difficulty is to accept the advice that contradicts our notions or wishes. Pride resents it; yet it may be most needful to us. 2. *It should be taken with discrimination.* Well-meant advice may be very foolish; even wise advice is not infallible. We have to select what commends itself to our judgment. 3. *It ought not to supersede independent thought and choice.* We may be advised by counsellors; but we have no business to let ourselves be ruled by them. After all, it is we and not they who will be responsible for what we do. Let us, then, preserve independence of judgment, and cultivate strength of will. 4. *It deserves to be treated with gratitude.* For the sake of its value. Also because, if it is worth much, it must have cost our counsellor time and pains. Too often giving advice is a very thankless task. N.B.—All earthly counsel is useful only in so far as it follows the heavenly, of which it is a type. The most welcome counsel should be that which comes through the voice of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXX.

Vers. 1—31.—The contrast is now completed. Having drawn the portrait of himself as he was, rich, honoured, blessed with children, flourishing, in favour with both God and man, Job now presents himself to us as he is, despised of men (vers. 1—10), afflicted of God (ver. 11), a prey to vague terrors (ver. 15), tortured with bodily pains (vers. 17, 18), cast off by God (vers. 19, 20), with nothing but death to look for (vers. 23—31). The chapter is the most touching in the whole book.

Ver. 1.—But now they that are younger than I have me in derision. As Job had been speaking last of the honour in which he was once held, he begins his contrast by showing how at present he is disgraced and derided. Men who are outcasts and solitary themselves, poor dwellers in caves (ver. 6), who have much ado to keep body and soul together (vers. 3, 4), and not men only, but youths, mere boys, scoff at him, make him a song and a byword (ver. 9), nay, "spare not to spit in his face" (ver. 10). There seem to have been in his vicinity weak and debased tribes, generally contemned and looked down upon, regarded as thieves (ver. 5) by their neighbours, and considered to be of base and vile origin (ver. 8), who saw in Job's calamities a rare opportunity for insulting and triumphing over a member of the superior race which had crushed them, and thus tasting, to a certain extent, the sweetness of revenge. **Whose fathers I would have disdained** (rather, *I disdained*) **to have set with the dogs of my flock.** Job had not thought their fathers worthy of employing even as the lowest class of herdsmen, those reckoned on a par with the sheep-dogs.

Ver. 2.—Yea, whereto might the strength of their hands profit me? Men, who had no such strength in their hands as to yield an employer any profit—poor, weak creatures, **in whom old age** (rather, *manly vigour*) **was perished.** An effete race seems to be pointed at, without strength or stamina, nerveless, spiritless, "destined to early decay and premature death;" but how they had sunk into such a condition is not apparent. Too often such remanents are merely tribes physically weak, whom more powerful ones have starved and stunted, driving them into the least productive regions, and in every way making life hard for them.

Ver. 3.—For want and famine they were solitary; rather, *they were gaunt* (see the Revised Version). Compare the descriptions given to us of the native races of Central Africa by Sir S. Baker, Speke, Grant, Stanley, and others. **Fleeing into the wilderness;** rather, *gnawing the wilderness;* i.e. feeding on such dry and sapless roots and fruits as the wilderness produces. **In former time desolate and waste;** or, *on the eve of wasteness and desolation.*

Ver. 4.—Who cut up mallows by the bushes. One of the plants on which they feed is the *malluach*, not really a "mallow," but probably the *Atriplex halimus*, which is "a shrub from four to five feet high, with many thick branches; the leaves are rather sour to the taste; the flowers are purple, and very small; it grows on the sea-coast in Greece, Arabia, Syria, etc., and belongs to the natural order *Chenopodiaceæ*" (see Smith's 'Dict. of the Bible,' vol. ii. p. 215). **And juniper roots for their meat.** Most moderns regard the *rothem* as the *Genista monosperma*, which is a kind of broom. It is a leguminous plant, having a white flower, and grows plentifully in the Sinaitic desert, in Palestine, Syria, and Arabia. The root is very bitter, and would only be used as food under extreme pressure, but the fruit

is readily eaten by sheep, and the roots would, no doubt, yield some nourishment (see Dr. Cunningham Geikie's work, 'The Holy Land and the Bible,' vol. i. p. 258).

Ver. 5.—**They were driven forth from among** men. Weak races retreat before strong ones, who occupy their lands, and whose will they do not dare to dispute. They are not intentionally "driven out," for the strong races would gladly make them their drudges; but they retire into the most inaccessible regions, as the primitive population has done in India and elsewhere. **They cried after them as after a thief.** Outcast tribes naturally, and almost necessarily, become robber-tribes. Deprived of their productive lands, and driven into rocky deserts, want makes them thieves and marauders. Then those who have made them what they are vilify and decry them.

Ver. 6.—**To dwell in the cliffs of the valleys**; or, *in the clefts* (Revised Version). Western Asia is full of rocky regions, seamed with deep gorges and clefts, the walls of which rise abruptly or in terraces, and are themselves pierced with caves and cracks. The tract about Petra is, perhaps, the most remarkable of these regions; but there are many others which closely resemble it. These places afford refuges to weak and outcast tribes, who hide in them, either in **caves of the earth, or in the rocks.** The Greeks called these unfortunates "Troglodytes" (Herod., iv. 183; Strabo, xvi. p. 1102; Diod. Sic., iii. 14, etc.), the Hebrews "Horim," from חוֹר, "a hole."

Ver. 7.—**Among the bushes they brayed.** The sounds which came from their mouths sounded to Job less like articulate speech than like the braying of asses. Compare what Herodotus says of his Troglodytes: "Their language is unlike that of any other people; it sounds like the screeching of bats." **Under the nettles** (or, *wild vetches*) **they were gathered together**; rather, *huddled together.*

Ver. 8.—**They were children of fools.** The physical degeneracy whereof Job has been speaking is accompanied in most instances by extreme mental incapacity. Some of the degraded races cannot count beyond four or five; others have not more than two or three hundred words in their vocabulary. They are all of low intellect, though occasionally extremely artful and cunning. **Yea, children of base men**; literally, *children of no name.* Their race had never made for itself any name, but was unknown and insignificant. **They were viler than the earth**; rather, *they were scourged out of the land.* This must not be understood literally. It is a rhetorical repetition of what had been already said in ver. 5. The expression may be compared with the tale in Herodotus, that when the Scythian slaves rebelled and took up arms, the Scythians scourged them into subjection (Herod., iv. 3, 4).

Ver. 9.—**And now am I their song, yea, I am their byword** (see above, ch. xvii. 6; and comp. Ps. lxix. 12).

Ver. 10.—**They abhor me, they flee far from me**; rather, *they abhor me, they stand aloof from me* (see the Revised Version). **And spare not to spit in my face.** This has generally been taken literally, as it seems to have been by the LXX. But it, perhaps, means no more than that they did not refrain from spitting *in Job's presence* (see Professor Lee's 'Book of Job,' p. 422).

Ver. 11.—**Because he hath loosed my cord.** "He," in this passage, can only be God; and thus Job turns here to some extent from his human persecutors to his great Afflicter, the Almighty. God has "loosened his cord," *i.e.* has relaxed his vital fibre, taken away his strength, reduced him to helplessness. Hence, and hence only, do the persecutors dare to crowd around him and insult him. **And afflicted me.** God has afflicted him with blow after blow—with impoverishment (ch. i. 14—17), with bereavement (ch. i. 18, 19), with a sore malady (ch. ii. 7). **They have also let loose the bridle before me.** This has given his persecutors the courage to cast aside all restraint, and load him with insult after insult (vers. 1, 9, 10).

Ver. 12.—**Upon my right hand rise the youth**; literally, *the brood*; i.e. the rabble—a crowd of half-grown youths and boys, such as collects in almost any town to hoot and insult a respectable person who is in trouble and helpless. In the East such gatherings are very common and exceedingly annoying. **They push away my feet**; *i.e.* they try to throw me down as I walk. **They raise up against me the ways of their destruction.** They place obstacles in my way, impede my steps, thwart me in every way that they find possible.

Ver. 13.—**They mar my path**; *i.e.* interfere with and frustrate whatever I am bent on doing. **They set forward my calamity.** Professor Lee translates, "They profit by my ruin." **They have no helper.** If the text is sound, we must understand, "They do all this, they dare all this, even though they have no powerful men to aid them." But it is suspected that there is some corruption in the passage, and that the original gave the sense which is found in the Vulgate, "There is none to help *me.*"

Ver. 14.—**They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters**; *i.e.* with a force like that of water when it has burst through a bank or dam. **In the desolation they rolled themselves upon me.** Like the waves of the sea, which follow one after another.

Ver. 15.—**Terrors are turned upon me,**

Job seems to pass here from his human persecutors to his internal sufferings of mind and body. "Terrors" take hold upon him. He experiences in his sleep horrible dreams and visions (see ch. vii. 14), and even in his waking hours he is haunted by fears. The "terrors of God do set themselves in array against him" (ch. vi. 4). God seems to him as One that watches, and "tries him every moment" (ch. vii. 18), seeking occasion against him, and never leaving him an instant's peace (ch. vii. 19). These terrors, he says, **pursue my soul as the wind**; literally, *pursue mine honour*, or *my dignity*. They flutter the calm composure that befits a godly man, disturb it, shake it, and for a time at any rate, cause terrors and shrinkings of soul. Under these circumstances, **my welfare passeth away as a cloud**. It is not only my happiness, but my real welfare, that is gone. Body and soul are equally in suffering—the one shaken with fears and disturbed with doubts and apprehensions; the other smitten with a sore disease, so that there is no soundness in it.

Ver. 16.—**And now my soul is poured out upon me** (comp. Ps. xlii. 4). My very soul seems to be gone out of me. "I faint and swoon away, because of my fears" (Lee). **The days of affliction have taken hold upon me**. All my prosperity is gone, and I am come to "the days of affliction." These "take hold on me," and, as it were, possess me.

Ver. 17.—**My bones are pierced in me in the night season**. In *Elephantiasis anæsthetica*, says Dr. Erasmus Wilson, "when the integument is insensible, there are deep-seated burning pains, sometimes of a bone or joint, and sometimes of the vertebral column. *These pains are greatest at night*; they prevent sleep, and give rise to restlessness and frightful dreams" (Quain's 'Dictionary of Medicine,' vol. i. p. 817). **And my sinews take no rest**; rather, *my gnawings*, or *my gnawing pains* (see the Revised Version; and comp. ver. 3, where the same word is properly rendered by "*gnawing* [the wilderness]").

Ver. 18.—**By the great force of my disease is my garment changed**; or, *disfigured*. The purulent discharge from his ulcers disfigured and made filthy his garment, which stiffened as the discharge dried, and clung to his frame. **It bindeth me about as the collar of my coat**. The whole garment clung to his body as closely as it is usual for a man's collar, or "neck-hole" (Professor Lee), to cling about his throat.

Ver. 19.—**He** (*i.e.* God) **hath cast me into the mire**. "The mire" here is the lowest depth of misery and degradation (comp. Ps. xl. 2; lxix. 2, 14). Job feels himself cast into it by God, but nevertheless does not forsake him nor cease to call upon him (vers. 20—23). **And I am become like dust and ashes**; *i.e.* unclean, impure, offensive to my fellow-men, an object of dislike and disdain.

Ver. 20.—**I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me**. It is the worst of all calamities to be God-forsaken, as Job believed himself to be, because he had no immediate answer to his prayers. The bitterest cry upon the cross was "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" But no good man is ever really God-forsaken, and no rightful and earnest prayers are ever really unheard. Job "had need of patience" (Heb. x. 36), patient as he was (Jas. v. 11). He should have trusted God more, and complained less. **I stand up, and thou regardest me not**; rather, *I stand up*, as the manner of the Jews usually was in prayer (Luke xviii. 11), *and thou lookest at me* (see the Revised Version). Job's complaint is that, when he stands up and stretches out his hands to God in prayer, God simply looks on, does nothing, gives him no help.

Ver. 21.—**Thou art become cruel to me**; literally, *thou art turned to be cruel to me*. In other words, "Thou art changed to me, and art become cruel to me." Job never forgets that for long years God was gracious and kind to him, "made him and fashioned him together round about," "clothed him with skin and flesh, and fenced him with bones and sinews," "granted him life and favour, and by his visitation preserved his spirit" (ch. x. 9—12); but the recollection brings, perhaps, as much of pain as of pleasure with it. One of our poets says—

> "Joy's recollection is no longer joy;
> But sorrow's memory is a sorrow still."

At any rate, the contrast between past joy and present suffering adds a pang to the latter. **With thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me**; literally, *with the might of thy hand dost thou persecute me* (see the Revised Version). "Hæc noster irreverentius" (Schultens); comp. ch. xix. 6—13.

Ver. 22.—**Thou liftest me up to the wind; thou causest me to ride upon it**; *i.e.* thou makest me to be storm-tossed. I am as it were a straw caught up by a whirlwind, and borne hither and thither in the wide regions of space, unknowing whither I go. I am treated as I have described the wicked man to be treated (ch. xxvii. 20, 21). **And dissolvest my substance**. "Dissolvest me *entirely*" (Professor Lee); *dissolvest me in the storms* (Revised Version).

Ver. 23.—**For I know that thou wilt bring me to death**. Job has all along expressed his conviction that he has nothing to look for but death. He feels within himself the seeds of a mortal malady; for such, practically, was elephantiasis in Job's time. He

is devoid of any expectation of recovery. Death must come upon him, he thinks, ere long; and then God will bring him to the house appointed for all living. This, as he has already explained (ch. x. 21, 22), is "the land of darkness and the shadow of death, a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." It is a melancholy prospect; but we must regard it as cheered by the hope of an ultimate resurrection, such as seems indicated, if not absolutely proclaimed, in ch. xix. 25—27 (see the comment on that passage).

Ver. 24.—Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave, though they cry in his destruction. This is one of the most obscure passages in the entire Book of Job, and scarcely any two independent commentators understand it alike. To give all the different renderings, and discuss them, would be an almost endless task, and one over-wearisome to the reader. It will, perhaps, suffice to select the one which to the present writer appears the most satisfactory. This is the rendering of Professor Stanley Leathes, who suggests the following: "Howbeit God will not put forth his hand to bring a man to death and the grave, when there is earnest prayer for them, not even when he himself hath caused the calamity." The same writer further explains the passage as follows: "I know that thou wilt dissolve and destroy me, and bring me to the grave (ver. 23), though thou wilt not do so when I pray to thee to release me by death from my sufferings. Thou wilt surely do so [some time or other], but not in my time, or according to my will, but only in thine own appointed time, and as thou seest fit."

Ver. 25.—Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? *i.e.* do I claim a sympathy which I do not deserve? When men wept and entreated me, did not I do my best to give them the aid which they requested? Did not I weep for them, and intercede with God for them? Was not my soul grieved for the poor? (comp. ch. xxix. 12—17; xxxi. 16—22).

Ver. 26.—When I looked for good, then evil came unto me. Job was "looking for good," expecting fully the continuance of his great wealth and prosperity, when the sudden shock of calamity fell upon him. It was wholly unexpected, and therefore the harder to bear. And when I waited for light, there came darkness. This may refer to periods, after his calamities began, when he had hopes that his prayers would be answered, and a rest or pause, an interval of repose, be granted him (ch. ix. 34; x. 20), but when his hopes were disappointed, and the darkness closed in upon him thicker and murkier than ever.

Ver. 27.—My bowels boiled, and rested not; rather, *boil and rest not* (see the Revised Version). It is his present condition of which Job speaks from ver. 27 to ver. 31. His "entrails," *i.e.* his whole innermost nature, is disturbed, tormented, thrown into confusion. The days of affliction prevented me; rather, *are come upon me* (comp. ver. 16).

Vers. 28, 29.—I went mourning without the sun; rather, *I go about blackened, but not by the sun.* Grief and suffering, according to Oriental notions, blackened the face (see Lam. iv. 8; v. 10; Ps. cxix. 83; and below, ver. 30). I stood up, and I cried in the congregation; rather, *I stand up in the assembly, and cry for help* (see the Revised Version). Job feels this as the most pitiable feature in his case. He is broken down; he can no longer endure. At first he could sit in silence for seven days (ch. ii. 13); now he is reduced to uttering complaints and lamentations. He is a brother, not to dragons, but *to jackals.* His laments are like the long melancholy cries that those animals emit during the silence of the night, so well known to Eastern travellers. He adds further that he is a companion, not to owls, but *to ostriches;* which, like jackals, have a melancholy cry (see Micah i. 8; and comp. Dr. Hooker's article in Smith's 'Dict. of the Bible,' vol. ii. p. 650).

Ver. 30.—My skin is black upon me (see the comment on vers. 28, 29, *ad init.*), and my bones are burned with heat. The "burning pains" in the bones, which characterize at least one form of elephantiasis, have been already mentioned (see the comment on ver. 17). In ordinary elephantiasis there is often "intense pain in the lumbar region and groin," which the patient might think to be in his bones.

Ver. 31.—My harp also is turned to mourning. The result of all is that Job's harp is laid aside, either literally or figuratively. Its music is replaced by the sound of mourning (see vers. 28, 29). And my organ (or rather, *my pipe*) into the voice of them that weep. The pipe also is no longer sounded in his presence; he hears only the voice of weeping and lamentation. Thus appropriately ends the long dirge in which he has bewailed his miserable fate.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—15.—*Job's second parable: 2. A lamentation over fallen greatness.* I. THE CHARACTER OF JOB'S DERIDERS. 1. *Juniors in respect of age.* (Ver. 1.) These were

not the young princes of the city (ch. xxix. 8), by whom he had formerly been held in reverential regard, but "the young good-for-nothing vagabonds of a miserable class of men" (Delitzsch) dwelling in the neighbourhood. Job's inferiors in point of years, they should have treated him with honour and respect (Lev. xix. 32), especially when they beheld his intense wretchedness and misery. That they failed to accord him such veneration as was due to seniority in age, and much more that they made him the butt of their contemptuous derision, was not only an express violation of the dictates of nature and religion (cf. the Egyptian moral precept, "Do not mock the venerable man who is thy superior;" *vide* 'Records of the Past,' vol. viii. p. 160), but a special mark of depravity in themselves, as well as a certain index to the social and moral degradation of the race to which they belonged. The good qualities of an advancing and the bad qualities of a retrograding people, infallibly discover themselves in the moral characteristics of the youthful portion of the community. 2. *Base in respect of ancestry.* (Vers. 1, 8.) The foregoing inference from the ribald behaviour of the younger men Job confirms by describing them as "children of fools, yea, children of base men," literally, "of men without a name," and as men "whose sires" he "would have disdained to set with the dogs of his flock." It is doubtful if Job does not in this and other expressions of this passage (vers. 1—8) repay the contempt of his scornful assailants with fourfold liberality, thereby failing to evince that meekness in resenting injuries which good men should study to display, and perpetrating the same offence which he imputes to others, as well as talking about his fellow-men (God's creatures and God's children no less than himself) in a way that was scarcely excusable even in a patriarchal sage. Nevertheless, what he purposes to convey through the medium of his heated, if also poetic, language is that his revilers were the offspring of a vile, worthless, degraded, brutalized race, who had well-nigh sunk to the level of the beasts that perish. 3. *Worthless in respect of service.* (Ver. 2.) Like their fathers whom Job would have disdained to rank with the dogs of his flock, *i.e.* whom he regarded as not worthy of being compared to these wise and faithful animals who watched his sheep, they (*i.e.* these younger vagabonds) were idle and effeminate triflers, lazy, worthless rascals, as little able to work as willing, the ethnic deterioration they were undergoing revealing itself in enervated physical constitutions no less than in depraved moral dispositions. The truth here enunciated with regard to nations and communities is also true of individuals, that sin, vice, immorality, has a tendency to impair the bodily strength, mental vigour, and moral power of such as yield to its fatal fascinations. 4. *Famished in respect of food.* (Vers. 3, 4.) Strangely blending pity with scorn, Job informs us that in great part the feebleness of those wretched creatures, who "could bring nothing to perfection" (Cox), and were not worth employing to do the work of a shepherd's dog, was due to the difficulty they had in finding nourishment. Lean and haggard, benumbed from want and hunger, they literally gnawed the desert, picking up such scanty sustenance as the barren steppe afforded, plucking mallows in the thicket, *i.e.* "the salt-wort from off the stalk" (Fry), the salt-wort, or sea-purslain, being a tall shrubby plant which thrives in the desert as well as on the coast, "the buds and young leaves of which" also "are gathered and eaten by the poor" (Delitzsch); and taking the roots of broom for their bread, the broom abounding in the deserts and sandy places of Egypt and Arabia, and growing to a height sufficient to afford shelter to a person sitting down. A melancholy picture of destitution, which has its counterpart not only among expiring races, effete desert tribes, and wretched Troglodytes, but also in many a centre of modern civilization. It is hardly questionable that in the lower strata of society in our large cities there are thousands for whom the physical conditions of life are as severe as those just depicted by the poet. 5. *Outcasts in respect of society.* (Ver. 5.) In consequence of their pilfering and marauding habits, they were banished forth from the pale of the organized community. Nay, when it happened that they ventured near the precincts of civilized life, they at once became the objects of a hue and cry, men hallooing after them as they did after a thief, and chasing them away to their own miserable haunts of poverty and vice. It is clear they were the criminal classes of patriarchal times, and were regarded with much the same abhorrence as the pariahs of modern society, who wage war against all constituted authority, prey upon the industry of the virtuous and law-abiding, and as a consequence live in a perpetual state of social ostracism. 6. *Troglodytes in respect*

of habitation. (Ver. 6.) Driven beyond the pale of civilized society, they were compelled "to dwell in the cliffs of the valleys," literally, "in the horror of glens," *i.e.* in dismal and gloomy gorges, like the Horites (or cave-men) of Mount Seir (Gen. xiv. 6), betaking themselves for shelter to the caves of the earth and the holes in the rocks. According to modern scientific theory, they would exemplify man in the earliest or lowest stage of his development; according to the testimony of revelation, the Troglodytes would attest man's degeneracy from a primeval standard of perfection. And so persistent is this downward tendency in man apart from Divine grace, that almost every civilized community has its social and moral Troglodytes, who dwell in dismal valleys—its wretched outcasts, children of sin and shame, whose lurking-places are dens of infamy and haunts of vice. 7. *Dehumanized in respect of nature.* (Ver. 7.) Having previously (ch. xxiv. 5) described these evicted aborigines as leading a gregarious life, like wild asses roaming the desert under the guidance of a leader (ch. xxxix. 5), Job recurs to the comparison to indicate, not the eager ferocity with which they scour the steppe for fodder, but how near to the brutes they have been brought by their misery, representing them as huddling themselves together under the bushes, and croaking out, in unintelligible jargon like the brayings of an ass, a doleful lamentation over their miserable condition. Herodotus compares the language of the Troglodyte Ethiopians to the screeching of bats. The speech of savage races is mostly composed of "growling gutturals and sharp clicks" (Cox). As a nation advances in civilization its tongue purifies and refines. Like the cave-men of Western Asia and Ethiopia, the moral Troglodytes of society have a jargon of their own; *e.g.* the language of thieves.

II. THE BEHAVIOUR OF JOB'S DERIDERS. 1. *Mockery and contempt.* (Vers. 1, 9, 10.) Physically and morally degraded, this worthless rabble of marauders, half men and half beasts, having fallen in with Job in their wanderings, were so little touched by sympathy for his misfortunes, that they turned his miseries into merry jests, and made by words of his groans. It is a special mark of depravity when youth mocks at age (2 Kings ii. 3) and laughs at affliction. The experience of Job was reproduced in the cases of David (Ps. xxxv. 15; lxix. 12), Jeremiah (Lam. iii. 14, 63), and Christ (Matt. xxvii. 43; Luke xxiii. 35). 2. *Insult and outrage.* (Ver. 10.) They gave open and undisguised expression to the abhorrence with which they regarded him, by fleeing far from him, or standing at a distance, and making their remarks upon him. If they ventured to come near him it was either to spit in his presence, "the greatest insult to an Oriental" (Carey), or perhaps to spit in his face (cf. Numb. xii. 14; Deut. xxv. 9), thus carrying their contempt and scorn to the lowest depth of indignity. Job had fallen low indeed to be thus outraged by the vilest dregs of society; but not lower than did Christ, who was similarly treated by the rabble of Judæa (Matt. xxvi. 67; xxvii. 30), as long before it had been predicted that he should be (Isa. l. 6). No doubt in all this Job's sufferings were typical of Christ's. 3. *Hostility and violence.* (Vers. 12—15.) Not content with words and gestures, the young vagabonds proceeded to acts of open violence. Having found the poor fallen prince groaning in wretchedness and misery upon the ash-heap outside his house, they abstained not from direct hostility. Like a crowd of witnesses starting up on his right hand, they overwhelmed him with accusations; like an army of assailants thrusting his feet away, they disputed with him every inch of ground, compelling him to retire ever further and further back; pressing on like a tumultuous besieging host, they cast up their ways of destruction, *i.e.* their military causeways, against him, tearing down his path so as to render escape impossible, breaking in upon him as through a wide breach, and causing him to flee in terror before their irresistible approach, so that his nobility was dispersed like the wind, and his prosperity swept away like a cloud.

III. THE MOTIVE OF JOB'S DERIDERS. 1. *Not Job's unkindness.* It was true that these insolent vagabonds, with their fathers, had been summarily evicted from their pristine settlements—had been compelled, not without cruel oppression and intolerable hardship, to retire before the superior race who had dislodged them; it may also be that of that conquering Arab tribe Job was a conspicuous member, and might on that account be held responsible for the indignities and wrongs that had been heaped upon the wretched aborigines; but, in point of fact, Job disclaims having taken part in those ruthless acts of tyranny which caused the poor of the land to slink away and hide themselves, naked and shivering, in the dens and caves of the earth, in the holes and crevices

of the rocks (ch. xxiv. 4—8), and rather indicates that he regarded their sorrowful lot with compassion, even while, with disgust and aversion, he shrank from any contact with themselves. But: 2. *Their own wickedness.* They simply saw that he, whom they once knew as a powerful prince, was overtaken by evil fortune, and they turned upon him accordingly. That they traced Job's calamities, as Job himself did, to the hand of God (ver. 11), was unlikely. Yet the result was the same. God, according to Job—according to them, fate—had unloosed his bow and sent a shaft through the heart of this imperious autocrat, or had loosened the cord which upheld the tent of his hitherto vigorous body, and had laid him prostrate beneath a loathsome and painful disease; and so they, casting off restraint, assailed him with unbridled arrogance, acting out, in these early times, the familiar story of the kicking ass and the dead lion.

> "But yesterday the word of Cæsar might
> Have stood against the world; now lies he there,
> And none so poor to do him reverence."
>
> ('Julius Cæsar,' act iii. sc. 2.)

Learn: 1. The certainty that man may degrade himself beneath the level of the beasts. 2. The right of society to protect itself against the lawless and depraved. 3. The tendency of all wickedness to lead to misery even on earth. 4. The infallibility with which moral depravity perpetuates itself. 5. The instability which attends all human greatness. 6. The length to which wicked men will go in persecuting and oppressing others when God grants permission. 7. The inevitable approach of a nation's doom when its youth has become corrupt and depraved.

Vers. 16—31.—*Job's second parable:* 3. *A sorrowful survey of present misery.* I. JOB'S BODILY AFFLICTION. 1. *Overpowering.* It was no trifling ailment that wrung from the heart of this fallen great man the exquisitely plaintive lament of the present section. The malady which had struck its fangs into his vitals was one that made his bowels boil, and rest not (ver. 27); that caused his heart to melt like wax in the midst of his bowels (Ps. xxii. 14); yea, that dissolved his soul in tears (ver. 16). Most men have reason to be thankful that the afflictions they are called to endure are not absolutely intolerable; for which the praise is due to God's mercy alone. Yet not unless the soul is suitably affected by the ills that assail the body do these latter bring forth their designed results, the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The case of Job suggests that through the union and sympathy of soul and body man possesses an almost infinite capacity for suffering pain; while the fact that pain may minister to man's improvement is a testimony to man's superiority over the creatures. 2. *Sudden.* This was one of the circumstances that rendered Job's affliction so unmanning. It had sprung upon him unawares, apprehending him, and holding him fast as a detective might do a criminal (ver. 16), at the very moment when he had been saying to himself, "I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand" (ch. xxix. 18), and offering congratulations to himself on the apparently permanent as well as inexhaustible sources of his wealth, and on the palpably stable and unfading character of his glory. 3. *Wasting.* A second circumstance which tended to dissolve the soul of Job as he reflected on his physical trouble was the revolting character of the disease by which he had been overtaken. According to one view, Job by a strong poetic figure personifies the night (ver. 17; cf. ch. iii. 2) as a wild beast, which had leapt upon him in the darkness, and rent him limb from limb—the allusion being to the terrible nature of the *Lepra Arabica*, which "feeds on the bones and destroys the body in such a manner that single limbs are completely detached" (Delitzsch). To this, also, the wasting character of the disease (ver. 18) is believed by the just-named commentator to refer. 4. *Unsightly.* An additional source of grief to the patriarch in thinking over his malady was the disfigurement of his person which it had occasioned. "By its great strength the garment (of his skin) was changed" (Gesenius), probably through frequent purulent discharge, or through the foul incrustations which covered his body; his skin also had become black, and was peeling off from his emaciated skeleton, while his bones within him were being consumed by a parching heat (ver. 30). It is a special cross when God, through disease, renders a man of displeasing aspect to his fellows. 5. *Incessant.* The pain which Job suffered was seemingly continuous, and without interruption. Already frequently insisted on in

previous discourses (ch. iii. 24; vii. 3, 4, 13, 15; x. 20, etc.), it is here presented in a fresh series of images, Job describing his sinews as taking no rest (ver. 17), literally, "my gnawers," meaning either his tormenting pains (Gesenius), or the gnawing worms formed in his ulcers (Delitzsch), "rest not," and speaking of his disease as binding him fast, and sticking closely to him like the collar of his coat (ver. 18), and finally adding that his bowels, as the seat of pain, boiled and rested not (ver. 27). 6. *Manifold.* In this his last lament Job confines not his attention to the one point of his bodily ailment, but makes a survey of the whole course of his affliction—from the day when, bereft of his family and possessions, he went about the streets as a mourner, arrayed in sackcloth, without the sun (ver. 28), *i.e.* in such a state of grief and dejection that even the gladdening sunshine failed to give him pleasure, to that moment when he had become as "a brother to dragons and a companion to owls" (ver. 29). 7. *Degrading.* By reason of this terrible disease he had been cast into the mire, and had become like dust and ashes (cf. ch. xvi. 15, 16); nay, lower even than that, he had been reduced to the level of jackals and ostriches, creatures whose dolorous howlings fill men with shuddering and dejection.

II. JOB'S MENTAL ANGUISH. The thought which most keenly lacerated Job's bosom was the fixed and immovable idea which had fastened on his soul, that the God whom he had loved and served had become to him a changed God, who treated him with unsparing cruelty (ver. 21). Of this the proof to Job's mind lay in several considerations. 1. *That God was the real Author of Job's sufferings.* It was he and no other who had cast Job into the mire (ver. 19). In a very real sense this was true, since Job's malignant and unsleeping adversary could have had no power over him, except it had been given him from above; but in the sense which Job meant it was a hideous misconception, Satan and not God having been the enemy who had touched his bones and his flesh. Saints should be careful not to impute to God the blame of what he only permits. 2. *That God remained deaf to Job's entreaties.* "I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me;" *i.e.* lookest fixedly at me (ver. 20), meeting my earnest reverential upward glance with a stare of stony indifference, if not of hostile intent (cf. ver. 24). A fearful perversion of the truth which Job's prolonged misery cannot justify. God is the enemy of no man who does not first make himself an enemy of God. "The face of God is set against them that do evil;" but "God's eyes are ever towards the righteous" with looks of love and benignant compassion. Even when he forbears to help, and seems to be deaf to the good man's supplications, he hears and pities. If God answers not, it is in love rather than in hate. Whatever befalls a saint he should hold fast by the unchanging and unfaltering love of the Divine Father. Believers under the gospel should find this easier to do than Job did. 3. *That God was insensible to Job's feebleness.* With the strength of his omnipotent arm he appeared to be making war upon one who was insignificant and frail, heedless of the agonies he inflicted or the terrors he inspired, lifting up his victim upon the fierce hurricane of tribulation, causing him to drive along before its howling blasts and to vanish in the crashing of the storm, as a thin cloud is caught by the whirling tempest, "blown with restless violence round about the pendent world," and finally dispersed by the violent agitation it endures (vers. 21, 22). 4. *That God had fixedly resolved on Job's destruction.* In Job's anguish-laden mind it was a foregone conclusion that God had determined to pursue him to the grave, to bring him down to the dust of death; to shut him up in the house of assembly for all living (ver. 23). Job's conception of the grave was sublimely true. It was and is "the great involuntary rendezvous of all who live in this world." Job's belief that God would eventually conduct him thither was likewise correct. "It is appointed unto all men once to die." Job's apprehension that his immediate dissolution was decreed was wrong. The times of all are in the hand of God; and it is not given to any to anticipate with certainty the day and the hour of departure from this sublunary scene. So also was Job's inference erroneous that prayer was unavailing when God had determined on a creature's destruction (ver. 24). It was not so in the case of Hezekiah, to whom God, in answer to his fervent supplication, added fifteen years (2 Kings xx. 1—7; Isa. xxxviii. 1—6). But even should God decline to move the shadow on the dial backward, it is still not in vain for dying men to call aloud to him in prayer, inasmuch as he can help them by his grace to meet that which by his hand

he will not avert. 5. *That God took no account of Job's philanthropies.* Job had wept for him that was in trouble or whose day was hard, and his soul had been grieved for the needy (ch. xxix. 12, 13). Yet God was to all appearance indifferent. This, however, was only another misconception on the part of Job. The Almighty notes with loving eye every kind deed performed by his servants on earth, and will reward even a crust of bread or a cup of cold water given in his name to a poor one. Only the time of recompense will be hereafter. Hence no one is entitled to expect, like Job, that his good actions shall be rewarded here. "Do good, hoping for nothing again," is the maxim prescribed to Christ's followers. Acted upon, it will save them from the disappointment which almost crushed the soul of Job (ver. 26).

Learn: 1. The absolute impossibility of avoiding days of suffering. 2. The ease with which God can remove happiness from the lot of man. 3. The inability of any one to sustain the burden of affliction without Divine help. 4. The foolishness of glorying in either strength or beauty, since both can at a word be transformed into dust and ashes. 5. The extreme danger of allowing affliction to pervert the mind's views of God. 6. The error of supposing that God can regard any creature, much less any child of his own, with hate. 7. The propriety of frequently considering where life's journey terminates. 8. The certainty that death cannot be turned aside by either piety or prayers. 9. The evil case of him who can find no enjoyment in Heaven's mercies. 10. The sinfulness of giving free course to one's complaint, especially against God, in the time of affliction. 11. The inevitable tendency of trouble to deteriorate and debase those whom it does not exalt and refine. 12. The possibility of one who thinks himself a brother of jackals and companion of ostriches becoming a son of God and fellow of the angels. 13. The certainty that for all saints mourning will yet be turned into joy.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—31.—*The troubles of the present.* In contrast to the happy past of honour and respect on which he has been so wistfully dwelling in the previous chapter, Job sees himself now exposed to the scorn and contempt of the meanest of mankind; while a flood of miseries from the hand of God passes over him. From this last chapter we have learned the honour and authority with which it sometimes pleases God to crown the pious and the faithful. From the present we see how at other times he crucifies and puts them to the proof. They must be tried on "the right hand and on the left" (2 Cor. vi. 7; comp. Phil. iv. 12). We are reminded, too, of the transiency of all worldly good. The heavens and the earth shall perish; how much more the glory, power, and happiness of the flesh (Isa. xl.)!

I. THE CONTEMPT OF MEN. (Vers. 1—10.) The young men, who were wont to rise in his presence, laugh him to scorn; youths whose fathers, the lowest of mankind—thievish, faithless, and worthless—were of less value than the watch-dogs of his flock (ver. 1). Themselves, the young men had been of no service to him; they had failed of the full strength of manhood; dried up with want and hunger, they had derived their scanty subsistence from the desolate and barren steppe (vers. 2, 3); plucking up the salt herbs and bushes and juniper roots for food (ver. 4). These wretches led the life of pariahs; driven forth from the society of men, the hunt-cry was raised after them as after thieves. Their place of dwelling was in horrid ravines and caves and rocks (vers. 5, 6). Their wild shouts were heard in the bush; they lay and formed their plots of robbery among the nettles (ver. 7). Sons of fools and base men, they were scourged out of the land (ver. 8). A fearful picture of the dregs of human life! Perhaps those Troglodytes (comp. ch. xxiv. 4) were the Horites, the original inhabitants of the mountainous country of Seir, conquered by the Edomites (Gen. xxxvi. 6—8; Deut. ii. 12, 22). Of these degraded beings Job has now become the scoffing-song, the derisive byword (ver. 9). They show towards him every mark of abhorrence, retreating from him, or only drawing near to spit in his face with the silent coarse language of contumely and disgust (ver. 10; comp. Matt. xxvi. 67; xxvii. 30). Had Job in any way brought this treatment upon himself from the vilest of mankind? Certainly there is nothing in the story which leads us to cast the blame of haughty or

heartless conduct upon the hero. Still, it is ever true that we reap as we sow; but the sower and the reaper may be different persons. The cruel measure meted out to these unfortunates is now measured to the innocent Job. It is not in human nature to requite love with hatred or to give loathing in return for kindness. The responsibility of society for its outcasts is a deep lesson which we have only begun in modern times to learn. All men, however fallen and low, must be treated as the creatures of God. If we treat them as wild beasts, we can but expect the wild-beast return. Said Rabbi Ben Azar, "Despise not any man, and spurn not anything. For there is no man that hath not his hour, nor is there anything that hath not its place." Says our own Wordsworth—

> "He who feels contempt
> For any living thing, hath faculties
> That he hath never used, and thought with him
> Is in its infancy."

And again—

> "Be assured
> That least of all can aught that ever owned
> The heaven-regarding eye and front sublime
> Which man is born to, sink, howe'er depressed,
> So low as to be scorned without a sin,
> Without offence to God, cast out of view."

"Condescend to men of low estate." Gentleness and compassion to our inferiors is one of the chief lessons of our holy religion.

II. ABANDONMENT TO MISERY BY GOD. (Vers. 11—15.) Health and happiness are ours when God holds us by his hand; sickness, languor, and mental misery when he loosens his grasp. Job's nerves are relaxed. The war-bands of the Almighty have loosed the bridle; angels and messengers of ill, diseases and plagues, hunt the unhappy sufferer down (ver. 11). This dark throng seems to rise up at his right hand—the place of the accuser (Ps. cix. 6)—and to push away his feet, driving him into a narrow space, laying open before him their ways of destruction, heaping up against him besieging ramparts, thus tearing down his own path, his formerly undisputed way of life. They help forward his ruin, needing no assistance from others in the pernicious work (vers. 12, 13). On comes this terrible besieging host, as through a wide breach in the wall of life—rolls on with loud roar, while the defences fall into ruin (ver. 14). Terrors turn against him, sudden horrors of death (comp. ch. xviii. 11, 14; xxvii. 20) hunting after his honour—the honour depicted in ch. xxix. 20, *seq.* His happiness, in consequence of these violent assaults, passes away suddenly and tracklessly as a cloud from the face of heaven (ver. 15; comp. ch. vii. 9; Isa. xliv. 22). If God lays his hand upon the body or outward happiness of his children, there will seldom be release without inward conflict, anguish, fear, and terror. It is with such persons as with St. Paul; without is conflict, and within is fear (2 Cor. vii. 5).

III. INCONCEIVABLE INWARD DISTRESS. (Vers. 16—23.) His soul is melted and poured out within him; his frame is dissolved in tears. Days of pain hold him in their grasp, refuse to depart and leave him in peace (ver. 16). The night racks and pierces his bones, and allows his sinews no rest (ver. 17). By the fearful power of God he is so withered up that his garment hangs loose about him, wraps him like the collar of a coat, nowhere fitting his body (ver. 18). God has cast him upon the ash-heap—a sign of the deepest humiliation (ch. xvi. 15)—till his skin resembles dust and ashes in its hue (ver. 19). In this nerveless condition prayer itself seems unable to stir its loftiest, most hopeful energies. He can but cry, grievously and in supplication, but without the hope of being heard. "I stand, and thou lookest fixedly at me"—no sign of attention in thy glance, of favour in thine eye (ver. 20). The aspect of the almighty Father, seen through the medium of intense suffering, becomes one of cruelty and horror (ver. 21). Lifting him upon the storm-wind as upon a chariot (comp. 2 Kings ii. 11), God causes him to be carried away, and dissolved as it were in the yeasty surging of the storm (ver. 22). He knows that God is carrying him to death, the place of assembly for all the living (ver. 23).

IV. FAILURE OF ALL HIS HOPES. (Vers. 24—31.) According to human calculation, he must despair of life. But can the unhappy man be blamed if he stretches out his

hand for help amidst the ruin of his fall, and sends forth his cry as he passes into destruction? Is not this a law for all living creatures (ver. 24)? Did not Job show compassion in all the misfortunes of others, and has he not, therefore, a right to complain, and expect compassion in his own (ver. 25)? All the suffering of Job is condensed in the thought that, after the happiness of former days had bred hopes of the like future, he was visited by the deepest misery, and cast into the lowest distress (vers. 26—31). The light of former days glances upon him again, and so his address reverts to its beginning (ch. xxix.). Hoping for good, there ensued evil (Isa. lix. 9; Jer. xiv. 19); waiting for the light, deeper darkness came on. There is an inward seething of the mind. Days of affliction have fallen upon him. He goes darkened, without the glow of the sun; his swarthy appearance is due to another cause—he is smeared with dust and ashes. He stands in the assembly, giving loud vent to his lamentation amidst the mourning company who surround him. A "brother to the jackals, a comrade of the ostriches," these desert creatures of the loud and plaintive cry, is he. His black skin parts and falls from him; his bones are parched by a consuming heat. And then, in one beautiful poetic touch, the whole description of his woe is summed up, "My harp became mourning, and my shalm mournful tones." But he will yet learn to tune his harp again to gladness and praise. Now, however, his melancholy haunts him; and not one kindly glance pierces the gloom of his dark thoughts to give him comfort. But despair of self has never led Job to despair of God. There is still, therefore, a glimmering spark of hope amidst this wild storm. He carries in his hand a bud which will yet unfold into a flower. This is no example of the fatal sorrow of the world, but of the life-giving power of the sorrow that is after God (compare Robertson's sermon on the 'Power of Sorrow,' vol. ii.).—J.

Vers. 1—31.—*A sorrowful contrast.* Job's condition has become one of sorrowfulness, the humiliation of which stands in direct contrast to his former state. He graphically expresses it in a few words: "But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock." The picture of sorrowful humiliation, standing in contrast to previous honour, wealth, and power, is very striking. It is a typical example, showing to what depths the loftiest may be reduced. The details are as follows.

I. THE CONTEMPTUOUS TREATMENT OF MEAN AND UNWORTHY MEN. "They were children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth. And now am I their song, yea, I am their byword. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face." It requires the utmost strength of righteous principle, and the most complete self-command and self-restraint, to endure such treatment without violent outbreaks of passion.

II. GREAT MENTAL AFFLICTION. "Terrors are turned upon me;" "My soul is poured out in me."

III. GREAT BODILY PAIN. "My bones are pierced in me in the night season: and my sinews take no rest."

IV. APPARENT INDIFFERENCE OF GOD TO HIS PRAYER. Saddest hour of all the sad hours of the human life is that when the one unfailing Helper closes his ear. The lowest depth of sorrow reached by the Man of sorrows found expression in "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

V. To this is added THE FEAR THAT GOD HIMSELF TURNS HIS HAND AGAINST HIM. "Thou art become cruel to me." His afflictions appear to him as Divine judgments; yet he knoweth not why he is afflicted.

VI. THE GLOOMY APPREHENSION THAT ALL WILL END IN DEATH. "Thou wilt bring me to death." No brightness in the afar-off cheers the sufferer. There is no prospect of light at eventide.

VII. To all is added THE BITTER PAINFULNESS OF EXCLUSION. He is an outcast. There is no help for him in man. "I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls." Bitter, indeed, is the cup mixed of such ingredients. Strong the heart that can thus suffer and not break.—R. G.

Vers. 1—10.—*The fall from honour to contempt.* I. MISFORTUNE BRINGS CONTEMPT. Job has just been reciting the honours of his happier days. With the loss of prosperity

has come the loss of those honours. He who was slavishly flattered in wealth and success is cruelly scorned in the time of adversity. This is monstrously unjust, and Job feels it to be so. Nevertheless, it is only true to life. Men do judge by the outward appearance. Therefore any who experience in some proportion what Job experienced need not be taken by surprise. The judgment of the world is of little worth. The good opinion of men may shift like a weathercock. We need to look for a higher, more sure and true and lasting glory than that of man's honour.

II. PRIDE PREPARES FOR CONTEMPT. There is a note of pride in ver. 1, "Whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock." A relic of aristocratic hauteur creeps out in this utterance of the humiliated patriarch. If we treat men like dogs, we may expect that, when they get the chance to do so, they will turn on us like dogs. They may cower and cringe when we are strong, but they will be eager to snap at us when our time of weakness comes.

III. MEAN NATURES JUDGE SUPERFICIALLY. As Job describes them, the miserable creatures who turned upon him were the very dregs of the populace. They were outlaws and thieves and worthless people who had been driven to mountain-caves—idlers and degraded beings who grubbed up weeds to live on. Plainly these men are to be distinguished from the poor whose only defect is their want of means. Yet among them may have been some of those who in his more prosperous days blessed Job for helping them when they were ready to perish (see ch. xxix. 13). Ingratitude is only too common among all men, and we cannot be surprised at finding it in persons of low and brutal habits.

IV. IT IS PAINFUL TO SUFFER FROM CONTEMPT. In his prosperity Job would have despised the opinion of those who now vex him with their insults. Yet he could never have been complacent under contempt. It has been well said that the greatest man in the world would receive some discomfort if he came to know that the meanest creature on earth despised him from the bottom of his heart. The pride that is quite indifferent to the good or ill opinion of others is not a virtue. Humility will set some value on the favour of the lowest. If we have a spirit of brotherliness we cannot but desire to live on good terms with all our neighbours.

V. IT IS POSSIBLE TO TURN FROM THE CONTEMPT OF MAN TO THE APPROVAL OF GOD. The Christian should learn to bear contempt, since Christ bore it. He was "despised and rejected of men" (Isa. liii. 3). Like Job, he was insulted and spat upon. Yet we feel that all the insults with which he was loaded did not really humiliate him. On the contrary, he never appears to us so dignified as when "he opened not his mouth" in the midst of contumely and outrage. In that awful scene of the night before the crucifixion, it is the enemies of Christ who appear to us as lowered and degraded. Now we know that the cross was the ground of Christ's highest glory. "*Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted him" (Phil. ii. 9). The Church crowned the memories of her martyrs with honour. Despised, suffering Christians may learn to possess their souls in patience if they are walking in the light of God's countenance.—W. F. A.

Ver. 16.—*The thraldom of affliction.* Job is not only passing through the waters of affliction; he feels that he is laid hold of and overpowered by his troubles. Let us see what this condition involves—the state of thraldom and its effects.

I. THE STATE OF THRALDOM. This simply results from the fact that the affliction has mounted to such a height that it has overpowered the sufferer. 1. *The trouble cannot be thrown off.* There are troubles from which we can escape. Often we can beat down our adverse circumstances. We can face our enemy and defeat him. But other troubles cannot be driven back. When the enemy comes in like a flood, no human effort can stem the torrent. 2. *The distress cannot be calmly endured.* Milder troubles may be simply borne in patience. We cannot drive them away, but we can learn to treat them as inevitable. There is a strength that is born of adversity. The oak grows sturdy in contending with the storm. The muscles of the wrestler are strong as iron. But distress may reach a point beyond which it cannot be mastered. Patience is broken down. 3. *The affliction absorbs the whole life.* The pain rises to such a height that it dominates consciousness and excludes all other thoughts. The man is simply possessed by his agony. Huge waves of anguish roll over his whole being and drown every other feeling. The sufferer is then nothing but a victi-

Action is lost in fearful pain. The martyr is stretched on the rack. His torturer has deprived him of all energy and freedom.

II. THE EFFECTS OF THIS CONDITION. Such a state of thraldom must be an evil. It is destructive of personal effort. It excludes all service of love and submission of patience. And yet it may be a means to a good end. 1. *It should be a wholesome chastisement.* For the time being it is grievous. In its acutest stage it may not allow us to learn its lessons. But when it begins to abate its fury, and we have some calmness with which to look back upon it, we may see that the storm has cleared the air and swept away a mass of unwholesome rubbish. 2. *It should be a motive to drive us to God.* Such a tremendous affliction requires the only perfect refuge for the distressed. So long as we can bear our troubles we are tempted to trust to our own strength; but the miserable collapse, the utter break-down, the humiliating thraldom, prove our helplessness and our need of One who is mightier than we are. Now, the very possibility of such overwhelming troubles is a reason why we should seek the refuge of God's grace. It is hard to find the haven when the tempest is raving around us. We need to be fortified beforehand by the indwelling strength of God. 3. *It should make us sympathetic with others.* If we have escaped from the thraldom, it is our part to help those who are in it. We know its terrors and its despair. 4. *It should lead us to make the best use of prosperous times.* Then we can learn the way of Divine strength. Martyrs have triumphed where weaker men have been in bondage. The life of unselfish service, loyalty, and faith is a life of freedom. God will not permit such a life to be utterly enthralled by affliction. That awful fate is the doom of the lost.—W. F. A.

Ver. 21.—*Charging God with cruelty.* At the first onset of his afflictions it could be said of the patriarch, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (ch. i. 22). But the aggravation of his troubles, followed by the vexatious advice of his friends, has since then more than once forced unwise words from his lips, and now he is directly charging God with becoming cruel to him.

I. GOD'S ACTION MAY APPEAR CRUEL TO MAN. God permits or inflicts pain. When man cries for relief, relief does not come—at least in the way expected. It is not easy to see why the suffering is sent. To us it seems unnecessary. We think we could have done our duty better without it. There appears to be an iron fate bearing down upon us regardless of our needs, or deserts, or helplessness. This is brought home to us with peculiar poignancy, under the most trying circumstances. 1. *An accumulation of troubles.* One man has more than his share of them. Blow follows blow. The fallen is crushed. Tender wounds are chafed. This was Job's experience. 2. *The suffering of the innocent.* Bad men are seen to be flourishing while good men are in distress. This looks like indifference to moral claims. 3. *The overthrow of the useful.* Job had been a most helpful man in his time; his downfall meant the cessation of his kind services for many people in trouble. We see valuable lives cut off or made useless, while mischievous people thrive and grow fat. 4. *The refusal to deliver.* Job had not been proud, unbelieving, self-contained. He had prayed. But God appeared not to hear or regard him (ver. 20).

II. GOD IS NEVER CRUEL TO MAN. Job was now charging God foolishly. We have to judge of a man's character by his deeds till we know him. Then, if we become fully assured that he is good, we reverse the process, and estimate any dubious-looking conduct by the clear character of the man. In the same way, after we have come to know that God is a true Father, that his nature is love, our wisest course is not to fling off our faith, and charge God with cruelty when he deals with us in what looks to us like a harsh manner. He cannot be false to his nature. But our eyes are dim; our sight is short; our self-centred experience perverts our judgment. We have to learn to trust the constant character of God when we cannot understand his present conduct.

III. NARROW RELIGIOUS VIEWS LEAD TO UNJUST CHARGES AGAINST GOD. Job's three friends were to a large extent responsible for the patriarch's condition of mind, in which he was driven to charge God with cruelty. They had set up an impossible rule, and the evident falsehood of it had driven Job to desperation. A harsh orthodoxy is responsible for very much unbelief. Self-elected advocates of God have thus a good deal of mischief to answer for. In attempting to defend the Divine government some

of these people have presented it in a very ugly light. Whilst they have been dinning their formal precepts into men's ears on what they regard as the authority of revelation, they have been rousing a spirit of revolt, till what is most Divine in man, his conscience, has risen up and protested against their dogmas. From the days of Job till our own time theology has too often darkened the world's idea of God. If we turn from man to God himself, we shall discover that he is better than his advocates represent him to be. When it is our duty to speak of religion, let us be careful not to fall into the error of Job's friends, and generate hard thoughts of God by narrow, un-Christ-like teachings.—W. F. A.

Ver. 23.—*The house of death.* Job expects nothing better than death, which he regards as "the house appointed for all living," or rather as the house for the meeting of all living.

I. THE JOURNEY OF LIFE ENDS IN THE HOUSE OF DEATH. The living are marching to death. In a striking passage of 'The City of God,' St. Augustine, following Seneca, describes how we are always dying, because from the first moment of life we are drawing nearer to death. We cannot stay our chariot-wheels. The river will not cease to flow, and it is bearing us on to the ocean of death. It is difficult for the young and strong to take in the idea that they will not live for ever, and we come upon the thought of death with something of a shock. But this only means that we cannot see the end of the road while it winds through pleasant scenery that distracts our attention from the more distant prospect.

II. THE HOUSE OF DEATH IS IN DARK CONTRAST WITH THE JOURNEY OF LIFE. It is the living who are destined to enter this dreadful house. Here is one of the greatest possible contrasts—life and death; here is one of the most tremendous transitions—from life to death. All our revolutions on earth are as nothing compared with this tremendous change. Death is only the end and cessation of life, while all other experiences, even the greatest and most upsetting, are but modifications of the life which we still retain. It is not wonderful, then, that this dark house of death has strongly affected the imagination of men. The surprising thing is that so many should be indifferent to it.

III. THE HOUSE OF DEATH IS FOR EVERY LIVING MAN. No truism is more hackneyed than the assertion that all men are mortal. Here is a commonplace which cannot be gainsayed, yet its very evident character should emphasize its significance. Death is the great leveller. In life we go many ways; at last we all go the same way. Now some pass through palace gates and others through dungeon-portals; at the end all must go through the same narrow door. Should not this commonness of destiny help to bring all mortals nearer together in life?

IV. THE HOUSE OF DEATH IS A PLACE OF MEETING. It is described by Job as a house of assemblage. Multitudes are gathered there. They who depart thither go to "join the majority." There dwell many whom we have known on earth, some whom we have loved. Much mystery surrounds the house of death; but it cannot be an utterly strange place if so many who have been near to us on earth are awaiting us there. The joy of reunion should scatter the darkness of death. Every dear one lost to earth makes for us more of a home in the unseen.

V. THE HOUSE OF DEATH LEADS TO THE REALM OF LIFE FOR ALL WHO SLEEP IN CHRIST. It is no gloomy prison. It is but a dark ante-chamber to a realm of light and blessedness. Indeed, death is not an abode, but a passage. We have no reason for thinking that death is a lasting condition in the case of those whose souls do not die in sin; for the impenitent, indeed, it is a fearful doom of darkness. But for such as have the new life of Christ in them death may be but the momentary act of dying. Certainly it is not their eternal condition. We talk of the blessed dead; we should think of the glorified living, born into the deathless state of heavenly bliss.—W. F. A.

Ver. 26.—*Disappointment.* Job was disappointed in meeting with fearful evils when he was looking for good. Disappointment such as his is rare; yet in some form it is the frequent experience of all of us. Let us consider the significance of disappointment.

I. DISAPPOINTMENT IS ONE OF THE INEVITABLE TRIALS OF LIFE. We should not be overwhelmed with despair when we meet with it. It is part of the common lot of

man, part of the common fate of nature. How many blossoms of spring fall to the ground frost-bitten and fruitless! How many hopes of men are but "castles in Spain"! If all we had dreamed of attaining had become ours, earth would not be the world we know, but some rare paradise.

II. DISAPPOINTMENT AGGRAVATES TROUBLE. Its inevitability does not draw its sting. To be expecting good and yet to meet with ill is doubly distressing. It gives a shock like that which is experienced in coming upon a descending step where one was preparing to take an ascending step. All sense of security is lost, and a painful surprise is felt. Feeling is just experienced in the transition from one condition to another, and the violence of the transition intensifies the sensation. When the eye is adjusted to see a bright light, the gloom of a dark place is all the deeper. The sanguine suffer from pangs of distress which duller natures are not prepared to experience.

III. DISAPPOINTMENT SPRINGS FROM IGNORANCE. There must have been an error somewhere. Either we judged by mere appearances, or we trusted too much to the desires of our own hearts. God can never be disappointed, for God knows all and sees the end from the beginning. Hence his patience and long-suffering. It is well to see that God who thus knows everything is supremely blessed. No disillusions can dispel his perfect joy. Therefore not evil and pain, but good and gladness, must be ultimately supreme in the universe.

IV. DISAPPOINTMENT IS A WHOLESOME DISCIPLINE. God suffers us to be disappointed that we may profit by the painful experience. Sometimes we have been trusting to an unworthy hope; then it is best that the idol should be shattered. If any earthly hope has been idolized, the loss of it may be good, driving us to our true God. It is possible, however, to be the worse for disappointment, which may embitter the soul and lead to misanthropy and despair. We need a stout faith to stand up against the blows of unexpected trouble.

V. DISAPPOINTMENT WILL NEVER DESTROY THE TRUE CHRISTIAN HOPE. Earthly hopes may vanish in smoke, but the hope in Christ is sure. Even this may be lost sight of as the beacon-light is obscured by the driving storm; but it is not extinguished. For our Christian hope rests on the eternal constancy of God, and it concerns not fading and fragile earthly things, but the everlasting verities of heaven. Browning describes the man whose heart and life are strong against disappointment—

> "One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward;
> Never doubted clouds would break;
> Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph;
> Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
> Sleep to wake."

W. F. A.

Ver. 31.—*The harp turned to mourning.* This is disappointing and incongruous. The harp is not like the pipes used at Oriental funerals for lamentation. It is an instrument for joyous music. Yet Job's harp is turned to mourning.

I. MAN HAS A NATURAL FACULTY OF JOY. Job had his harp, or that in him of which the harp was symbolical. Some people are of a more melancholy disposition than others, but nobody is so constituted as to be incapable of experiencing gladness. We rightly regard settled melancholy as a form of insanity. Joy is not only our heritage; it is a needful thing. The joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh. viii. 10).

II. THE SAD WERE ONCE JOYOUS. Job's harp is *turned* to mourning. Then its use had to be perverted before it could be thought of as an instrument of lamentation. It was then put to a new, unwonted employment. This implies that it had been familiarly known as a joyous instrument. In sorrow we do not sufficiently consider how much gladness we have had in life, or, if we look back on the brighter scenes of the past, too often this is simply in order to contrast them with the present, and so to deepen our feeling of distress. But it would be more fair and grateful for us to view our lives in their entirety, and to recognize how much gladness they have contained as a ground for thankfulness to God.

III. LIFE IS MARKED BY ALTERNATIVE EXPERIENCES. Few lives are without a gleam of sunshine, and no lives are without some shadow of sorrow. The one form of experience passes over to the other—often with a shock of surprise. We are all too

easily accustomed to settle down in the present form of experience, as though it were destined to be permanent. But the wisest course is to take the vicissitudes of life, not as unnatural convulsions, as revolutions against the order of nature; but, like the changing seasons, as occurring in the ordered and regular course of events.

IV. IT IS POSSIBLE TO HAVE MUSIC IN SADNESS. Job does not describe himself as like those captives of Babylon who hung their harps upon the willows (Ps. cxxxvii. 2). His harp is sounding still, but the music must agree with the feelings of the time, and gaiety must give place to plaintive notes. Therefore the tune is in a minor key. Still there is melody. The Book of Job, which deals largely with sorrow, is a poem—it is composed in musical language. Sorrow is a great inspiration of poetry. How much music would be lost if all the harmonies that have come from sad subjects were struck out! If, then, sorrow can inspire song and music, it is natural to conclude that suitable song and music should console sorrow. Feeble souls wail in discordant despair, but strong souls harmonize their griefs with their whole nature; and though they may not perceive it at the time, when they reflect in after-days they hear the echo of a solemn music in the memory of their painful experience. When the angel of sorrow takes up the harp and sweeps the strings, strange, awful, thrilling notes sound forth, far richer and deeper than any that leap and dance at the touch of gladness. The Divine mystery of sorrow that gathers about the cross of Christ is not harsh, but musical with the sweetness of eternal love.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The conclusion of Job's long speech (ch. xxvi.—xxxi.) is now reached. He winds it up by a solemn vindication of himself from all the charges of wicked conduct which have been alleged or insinuated against him. Perhaps it may be said that he goes further, maintaining generally his moral rectitude in respect of all the principal duties which a man owes either to God (vers. 4—6, 24—28, 35—37) or to his fellows (vers. 1—3, 7—23, 29—34, 38—40). He protests that he is innocent of impure thoughts (vers. 1—4); of false seeming (vers. 5—8); of adultery (vers. 9—12); of injustice towards dependants (vers. 13—15); of hardness towards the poor and needy (vers. 16—23); of covetousness (vers. 24, 25); of idolatry (vers. 26—28); of malevolence (vers. 29, 30); of want of hospitality (vers. 31, 32); of hiding his transgressions (vers. 33, 34); and of injustice as a landlord (vers. 38—40). In conclusion, he once more makes a solemn appeal to God to pronounce judgment on his case (ver. 35), promising to give a complete account of every act in his life (ver. 37), and calmly to await his sentence. An accidental dislocation of the last three verses disturbs the order here assumed to be the proper one. This will be further considered in the comment.

Ver. 1.—**I made a covenant with mine eyes**; rather, *for mine eyes*. The covenant must have been *with* himself. Job means that he came to a fixed resolution, by which he thenceforth guided his conduct, not even to "look upon a woman to lust after her" (Matt. v. 28). We must suppose this resolution come to in his early youth, when the passions are strongest, and when so many men go astray. **How then should I look upon a maid?** Having made such a resolution, how could I possibly break it by "looking upon a maid"? Job assumes that he could not be so weak as to break a solemn resolution.

Ver. 2.—**For what portion of God is there from above?** The meaning seems to be, "For what portion in God would there be to me from above, if I were so to act?" *i.e.* if I were secretly to nurse and indulge my lusts. Impurity, perhaps, more than any other sin, cuts off from God, who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity" (Hab. i. 13). **And what inheritance of the Almighty from on high?** What should I inherit, *i.e.* what should I receive, from on high, if I were so sinful? The next verse gives the answer.

Ver. 3.—**Is not destruction to the wicked?** The inheritance of the wicked is "destruction"—ruin both of soul and body. This is what I should have to expect if I yielded myself to the bondage of lust and concupiscence. **And a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?** The rare word *neker* (נכר), translated here by "strange punishment," seems to mean "alienation from God"—being turned from God's friend into

his enemy (comp. Buxtorf, 'Lexicon Hebraicum et Chaldaicum,' who explains נכר by "alienatio;" and the comment of Schultens on ch. xxxi. 3, "*Necer*, a Deo alienatio").

Ver. 4.—**Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?** (see above, ch. vii. 18—20; and below, ch. xxxiv. 21. Comp. also Ps. cxxxix. 3; Prov. v. 21; xv. 3, etc.).

Ver. 5.—**If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hasted to deceit.** "If I have been a living lie, *i.e.* if, under a fair show of piety and righteousness of life, I have, as you my friends suppose, been all along a deceiver and a hypocrite, cloaking my secret sins under a mere pretence of well-doing, then the sooner I am exposed the better. Let me be weighed," etc. The painful suggestion of hypocrisy has been made by Job's friends repeatedly during the colloquy (ch. iv. 7—9; viii. 6, 12; xi. 4—6, 11—14; xv. 30—35; xviii. 5—21; xx. 5—29, etc.), and has deeply afflicted the patriarch. It is a charge so easily made, and so impossible to refute. All that the righteous man, thus falsely accused, can do is to appeal to God: "Thou, God, knowest. Thou, God, wilt one day show forth the truth."

Ver. 6.—**Let me be weighed in an even balance**; literally, *let him* (i.e. God) *weigh me in the balances of justice*. The use of this imagery by the Egyptians has been already noted (see the comment on ch. vi. 2). It is an essential part of every Egyptian representation of the final judgment of souls by Osiris. Each man's merits are formally weighed in a balance, which is carefully depicted, and he is judged accordingly. Job asks that this may be done in his case, either immediately or at any rate ultimately. He would have the act performed, **that God may know his integrity**; or rather, *may recognize it*. (So Professor Lee.) Job has no doubt that a thorough investigation of his case will lead to an acknowledgment and proclamation of his innocence.

Ver. 7.—**If my step hath turned out of the way.** If, *i.e.*, I have at any time knowingly and voluntarily departed from the way of thy commandments, as made known to me either by godly men or by thy law written in my heart, then let the consequences follow that are mentioned in the next verse. Or if **mine heart hath walked after mine eyes, and if** consequently **any blot hath cleaved to mine hands**; *i.e.* if I have been guilty of any plain act of sin. It is to be remembered that Job has the testimony of God himself to the fact that he was "a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (ch. ii. 3).

Ver. 8.—**Then let me sow, and let another eat** (comp. ch. v. 5; Lev. xxvi. 16; Deut. xxviii. 33, 51, etc.). The expression is proverbial. **Yea, let my offspring be rooted out**; rather, *my produce*, or *the produce of my field* (see the Revised Version).

Ver. 9.—**If mine heart have been deceived by a woman**; rather, *enticed*, or *allured unto a woman*. If, that is, I have suffered myself at any time to be enticed by the wiles of a "strange woman" (Prov. v. 3; vi. 24, etc.), and have so far yielded as to go after her; and **if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door**—watching for an opportunity to enter unseen, while the goodman is away (Prov. vii. 19). Job is not speaking of what he has done, but of what men may suspect him of having done.

Ver. 10.—**Then let my wife grind unto another**; *i.e.* "let the wife of my bosom be brought so low as to be compelled to do the servile work of grinding the corn in the household of another woman." The condition of the female slaves who ground the corn was regarded as the lowest point in domestic slavery (see Exod. xi. 5; Isa. xlvii. 2). **And let others bow down upon her.** Let them, *i.e.*, claim the master's right, and reduce her to the extremest degradation. There would be a just nemesis in this punishment of an adulterer (see 2 Sam. xii. 11).

Ver. 11.—**For this is an heinous crime.** The crime of adultery subverts the family relation, on which it has pleased God to erect the entire fabric of human society. Hence, in the Jewish Law, adultery was made a capital offence (Lev. xx. 10; Deut. xxii. 22), both in the woman and in the man. Among other nations the adulteress was commonly punished with death, but the adulterer escaped scot-free. In modern communities adultery is mostly regarded, not as a crime, but as a civil wrong, on account of which an action lies against the adulterer. **It is an iniquity** to be punished **by the judges**; literally, *it is an iniquity of judges*; i.e. one of which judges take cognizance.

Ver. 12.—**For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction**; *i.e.* it is a thing which brings down the wrath of God upon a man, so that "a fire is kindled in his anger, which shall burn unto the lowest hell" (Deut. xxxii. 22). Compare the sentence on David for his great transgression (2 Sam. xii. 9—12). **And would root out all mine increase**; *i.e.* "would destroy all my estate;" either by leading me to waste my substance upon my companion in sin, or by bringing down God's judgments upon me to my temporal ruin.

Ver. 13.—**If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant.** Job now disclaims a fourth sin—the oppression of his dependants. Eliphaz had taxed him gene-

rally with harshness and cruelty in his relations towards those weaker than himself (ch. xxii. 5—9), but had not specially pointed to this kind of oppressiveness. As, however, this was the commonest form of the vice, Job deems it right to disclaim it, before addressing himself to the several charges brought by Eliphaz. He has *not* ill used his slaves, either male or female. He has not "despised their cause," but given it full consideration and attention; he has heard them when they contended with him; he has allowed them to "contend;" he has been a just, and not a hard master. The slavery of which he speaks is evidently of a kind under which the slave had certain rights, as was the case also under the Mosaic Law (Exod. xxi. 2—11).

Vers. 14, 15.—**What then shall I do when God riseth up?** Job regards God as the Avenger and Champion of all the oppressed. If he had been harsh and cruel to his dependants, he would have provoked God's anger, and God would assuredly "rise up" one day to punish. What, then, could he (Job) do? What but submit in silence? **When he visiteth, what shall I answer him?** There could be no valid defence. The slave was still a man, a brother—God's creature, equally with his master. **Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?** God "hath made of one blood all nations of men," and all individual men, "to dwell on the face of the earth" (Acts xvii. 26). All have rights—in a certain sense, equal rights. All are entitled to just treatment, to kind treatment, to merciful treatment. Job is before his age in recognizing the substantial equality of the slave with the freeman, which otherwise was scarcely taught by any until the promulgation of the gospel (see 1 Tim. vi. 2; Philem. 16).

Ver. 16.—**If I have withheld the poor from their desire.** As Eliphaz had maintained (ch. xxii. 6, 7), and as Job had already denied (ch. xxix. 12, 16). The duty of relieving the poor, solemnly enjoined upon the people of Israel in the Law (Deut. xv. 7—11), was generally admitted by the civilized nations of antiquity. In Egypt it was especially insisted on. "The Egyptian's duties to mankind," says Dr. Birch, "were comprised in giving bread to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, oil to the wounded, and burial to the dead" ('Egypt from the Earliest Times,' p. 46). **Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail.** "Thou hast sent widows away empty," was one of the accusations of Eliphaz (ch. xxii. 9). "I caused the widow's heart," replied Job, "to sing for joy" (ch. xxix. 13). The widow's weakness has always been felt to give her a special claim on man's benevolence (see Exod. xxii. 22; Deut. xiv. 29; xvi. 11, 14; xxiv. 19; xxvi. 12, 13; Ps. cxlvi. 9; Prov. xv. 25; Isa. i. 17; Jer. vii. 6; Mal. iii. 5; 1 Tim. v. 16; Jas. i. 27).

Ver. 17.—**Or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof.** With the widow, the fatherless is usually conjoined, as an equal object of compassion (see Exod. xxii. 22; Deut. x. 18; Ps. lxviii. 5; Isa. i. 17; Jer. xxii. 3; Ezek. xxii. 7; Zech. vii. 10, etc.). Eliphaz had specially charged Job with oppression of the fatherless (ch. xxii. 9), and his charge had been denied by Job (ch. xxix. 12). He now claims to have always shared his bread with orphans, and made them partakers of his abundance.

Ver. 18.—**For from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb;** *i.e.* I have always, so long as I can remember, protected the orphan and done my best to help the widow. It has been my habit from my earliest years so to act. The language is exaggerated; but it had, no doubt, a basis of fact to rest upon. Job was brought up in these principles.

Ver. 19.—**If I have seen any perish for want of clothing** (comp. ch. xxii. 6, where Eliphaz taxes Job with so acting; and, on the duty of clothing the naked, see Isa. lviii. 7; Ezek. xviii. 7, 16; Matt. xxv. 36). **Or any poor without covering.** A pleonastic parallelism.

Ver. 20.—**If his loins have not blessed me** (see above, ch. xxix. 11, 13), **and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep.** Clothed, *i.e.*, with a garment spun from wool yielded by my own sheep. A great sheikh like Job would keep in store many such garments, ready to be given to such as were naked or poorly clad, when they came under his observation (Isa. lviii. 7).

Ver. 21.—**If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless;** *i.e.* if I have in any way oppressed him. **When I saw my help in the gate;** *i.e.* when I had the power to do so—when I saw my friends and hangers-on mustered in force at the gate where causes were being tried. The wrong and robbery which the poor suffer in the East have always been caused, to a large extent, by failure of justice in the courts, where might, and not right, carries the day.

Ver. 22.—**Then let mine arm** (rather, *my shoulder*) **fall from my shoulder-blade.** Job was, perhaps, led to make this rather strange imprecation by the fact that, in the disease from which he was suffering, portions of bone sometimes detach themselves and come away. **And mine arm be broken from the bone.** My fore-arm, *i.e.*, detach itself from

the bone of the upper arm, and come away from it.

Ver. 23.—**For destruction from God was a terror to me.** I *could* not, i.e., have acted in the way charged against me by Eliphaz, since I was always God-fearing, and should have been deterred, if by nothing else, at any rate by dread of the Divine vengeance. **And by reason of his highness I could not endure.** God's majesty and excellency are such that I could not have had the face to resist them. If I had begun such a course of life as Eliphaz laid to my charge (ch. xxii. 5—9), I could not have persisted in it.

Ver. 24.—**If I have made gold my hope.** This is a sin with which the patriarch had not been directly charged. But it had been more or less insinuated (see ch. xv. 28; xx. 10, 15, 19; xxii. 24, etc.). He may also, perhaps, have felt some inclination to it. **Or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence.** (On the wicked man's trust in riches, see Ps. xlix. 6; lii. 7; lxii. 10; Mark x. 24; Luke xii. 16—19.)

Ver. 25.—**If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much.** Job feels that it is wrong even to care greatly for wealth. He seems almost to anticipate the saying of St. Paul, that "covetousness is idolatry" (Col. iii. 5); and hence he passes on without pause from this sort of creature-worship to others common in his day (vers. 26, 27), which he likewise disclaims.

Ver. 26.—**If I beheld the sun when it shined**; literally, *the light*; i.e. the *great* light, which God made to rule the day (Gen. i. 16). Sun-worship, the least ignoble form of idolatry, was widely spread in the East, and in Egypt, from a very early date. According to the views of some, the religion of the Egyptians was little else than a complicated sun-worship from its earliest inception to its very latest phase. "The religious notions of the Egyptians," says Dr. Birch, "were chiefly connected with the worship of the sun, with whom at a later period all the principal deities were connected. As Har, or Harmachis, he represented the youthful or rising sun; as Ra, the midday; and as Tum, the setting sun. According to Egyptian notions, that god floated in a boat through the sky or celestial ether, and descended to the dark regions of night, or Hades. Many deities attended on his passage or were connected with his worship, and the gods Amen and Khepr, who represented the invisible and self-produced god, were identified with the sun" ('Egypt from the Earliest Times,' Introduction, pp. ix., x.). Even those who do not go these lengths admit that the solar worship was, at any rate, a very main element in the cult of Egypt (see the author's 'History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. pp. 342—364). In the Babylonian and Assyrian religion the position of the sun-god was less prominent, but still, as San, or Shamas, he held an important place, and was the main object of religious veneration to a large body of worshippers ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. pp. 126—128; vol. ii. pp. 17, 18). In the Vedic system the sun figured as Mitra, and in the Zoroastrian as Mithra, in both holding a high position. Among the Arabians the sun, worshipped as Orotal, is said to have been anciently the only god, though he was accompanied by a female principle named Alilat (Herod., iii. 8). **Or the moon walking in brightness.** The worship of the moon has, in most countries where it has prevailed, been quite secondary and subordinate to that of the sun. In Egypt, while nine gods are more or less identified with the solar luminary, two only, Khons and Thoth, can be said to represent the moon. In the Vedic and Zoroastrian systems the moon, called Soma, or Homa, almost dropped out of the popular religion, at any rate as a moon-god. In the Arabian, Alilat, a goddess, probably represented the moon, as did Ashtoreth, a goddess, in the Phœnician. In Assyria, however, and in Babylonia, moon-worship held a higher position, Sin, the moon-god, taking precedence over Shamas, the sun-god, and being a very much more important personage (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. pp. 123—126; vol. ii. pp. 16, 17). Thus both moon-worship and sun-worship were prevalent among all, or almost all, Job's neighbours.

Ver. 27.—**And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand.** The sin of the heart is placed first, as the *fons et origo mali*, the spiritual root of the matter. On this naturally follows the outward act which, in the case of idolatry, was commonly the act exactly expressed by the word "adore"—the movement of the hand to the month in token of reverence and honour (see Pliny, 'Hist. Nat.,' xxviii. 2, "Inter adorandum *dexteram ad osculum referimus*, et totum corpus circumagimus;" and Minucius Felix, 'Octav.,' ii., "Cæcilius, simulacro Serapidis denotato, ut vulgus superstitiosum solet, *manum ori admovens* osculum labiis pressit").

Ver. 28.—**This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge** (see the comment on ver. 11, *ad fin.*). It is rightly concluded from this expression that, in the country and age of Job, the sort of idolatry which is here mentioned was practised by some, and also that it was legally punishable. **For I should have denied the God that is above.** The worship of any other god besides the supreme God is, practically, atheism, since "no man can serve two

masters." Moreover, to set up two independent gods is to destroy the idea of God, which implies supremacy over every other being.

Ver. 29.—**If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me.** "If at any time I was malevolent, if I wished evil to others, and rejoiced when evil came upon them, being (as the Greeks expressed it) ἐπιχαιρέκακος—if I so acted even in the case of my enemy—then," etc. The apodosis is wanting, but may be supplied by any suitable imprecation (see vers. 8, 10, 22, 40). **Or lifted up myself**—*i.e.* was puffed up and exalted—**when evil found him.** In the old world men generally regarded themselves as fully entitled to exult at the downfall of an enemy, and to triumph over him with words of contumely and scorn (comp. Judg. v. 19—31; Ps. xviii. 37—42; Isa. x. 8—14, etc.). There appears to be but one other passage in the Old Testament, besides the present, in which the contrary disposition is shown. This is Prov. xvii. 5, where the writer declares that "he who is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished."

Ver. 30.—**Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul.** Much less, Job means, have I gone beyond the thought to the word, and imprecated a curse upon him with my mouth, as the manner of most men is towards their enemies (see 2 Sam. xvi. 5; 1 Sam. xvii. 43; Neh. xiii. 25; Ps. cix. 28; Jer. xv. 10, etc.).

Ver. 31.—**If the men of my tent said not, Oh that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied.** A very obscure passage, but probably to be connected with the following verse, in which Job boasts of his hospitality. Translate, *If the men of my tent did not say, Who can find a man that has not been satisfied with his meat?* The apodosis is wanting, as in ver. 28.

Ver. 32.—**The stranger did not lodge in the street**; *i.e.* "I did not suffer any stranger who came under my notice to lodge in the street, but, like Abraham (Gen. xviii. 2—8), went out to him, and invited him in, to partake of my hospitality." This is still the practice of Arab sheikhs in Syria, Palestine, and the adjacent countries (see Dr. Cunningham Geikie's 'Holy Land and the Bible,' vol. i. p. 283). **But I opened my doors to the traveller**; literally, *to the way*; i.e. "my house gave on the street, and I kept my house door open." Compare the Mishna, "Let thy house be open to the street" ('Pirke Aboth,' § 5).

Ver. 33.—**If I covered my transgressions as Adam**; or, *after the manner of men.* It does not seem to me likely that Job had such a knowledge of Adam's conduct in the garden of Eden as would have made an allusion to it in this place natural or probable. The religious traditions of the Chaldees, which note the war in heaven, the Deluge, the building of the Tower of Babel, and the confusion of tongues, contain no mention of Adam or of Paradise. Nor, so far as I am aware, is there, among other ancient legends, any near parallel to the story of the Fall as related in Gen. iv. Much less does the subordinate detail of Adam hiding himself make its appearance in any of them. The marginal rendering, "after the manner of men," is therefore, I think, to be preferred. **By hiding mine iniquity in my bosom.** This is not particularly apposite to the case of Adam, who "hid himself from the presence of the Lord God *among the trees of the garden*" (Gen. iv. 8).

Ver. 34.—**Did I fear a great multitude!** rather, *because I feared the great multitude*, or *the great assembly*; i e. the gathering of the people in the gate on occasions of public business. If Job had been conscious of any great and heinous sins, he would not have led the open and public life which, previously to his calamities, he had always led (ch. xxix. 7—10, 21—25); he would have been afraid to make his appearance at public meetings, lest his sins should have become known, and should draw upon him scorn and contempt, instead of the respect and acclamations to which he was accustomed. **Or did the contempt of families terrify me!** rather, *and the contempt of families terrified me.* The contempt of the assembled tribes and families, which might have been poured out upon him at such meetings, would have been quite sufficient to prevent his attending them. If by any accident he had found himself at one, and had seen that he was looked upon with disfavour, he must have **kept silence** in order to avoid observation. Prudence would have counselled that more complete abstention which is implied in the phrase, **and went not out of the door**; *i.e.* "stayed at home in mine own house."

Ver. 35.—**Oh that one would hear me!** *i.e.* Oh that I had an opportunity of pleading my cause before a just judge! of having charges openly brought against me, and having "one" to hear my reply to them! Job does not regard his "comforters" as such persons. They are prejudiced; they have even made themselves his accusers. **Behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me**; rather, *behold, here is my signature! let the Almighty answer me.* This passage is parenthetic. Job would prefer to be judged by God, if it were possible, and therefore throws out the wish. Here is his plea in ch. xxix.—xxxi.; and here is his attestation by word of mouth, which is equivalent to his signature. **And that mine adversary had written a book**; or, *had penned an indictment against me.*

Job would have matters brought to an issue. In default of a Divine trial and sentence, which he cannot expect, it would suffice for him that his arraigner should formally draw out his list of charges, and present him with a copy, and so give him an opportunity of making answer to it. If this were done, then (he says)—

Ver. 36.—**Surely I would take it upon my shoulder**—the place of honour (see Isa. ix. 6; xxii. 22)—and **bind it as a crown to me**; *i.e.* adorn my head with it, as with a diadem.

Ver. 37.—**I would declare unto him the number of my steps**; *i.e.* I would conceal nothing. I would willingly divulge every act of my life. I would make full and complete answer to the indictment in every particular. **As a prince would I go near unto him.** There should be no timidity or cringing on my part. I would face my accuser boldly, and bear myself as a prince in his presence.

Vers. 38—40.—It is generally supposed that these verses, with the exception of the last clause of ver. 40, are misplaced. As a termination, they form an anti-climax, and greatly weaken the peroration. Their proper place would seem to be between vers. 32 and 33.

Ver. 38.—**If my land cry against me**; *i.e.* if my land disclaim my ownership, as having been acquired by wrong or robbery. **If the furrows likewise thereof complain**; or, *weep*, as having been torn from their rightful proprietors, and seized by a stranger. The apodosis is in ver. 40.

Ver. 39.—**If I have eaten the fruits thereof without money**; *i.e.* without acquiring a title to them by purchase. **Or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life.** Either by actual violence or by depriving them of the means of support (see the comment on ch. xxix. 13). Job had been accused of robbery and oppression both by Zophar (ch. xx. 12—19) and Eliphaz (ch. xxii. 5—9). He had not, however, been accused of actual murder.

Ver. 40.—**Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockles instead of barley.** Then let me be appropriately punished by finding the land, whereof I have wrongfully become possessed, produce nothing but thistles (or thorns) and noxious weeds, such as cockles (Authorized Version) or hemlock (Professor Lee). **The words of Job are ended.** This may be regarded either as Job's own conclusion of his long speech, or as a remark of the author's. On the whole, the former view is to be preferred.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—40.—*Job's second parable: 4. A solemn protestation of innocence.* I. WITH RESPECT TO THE LAW OF CHASTITY. (Vers. 1—4.) 1. *The wickedness he eschewed.* Not alone the crime of seduction, or the actual defilement of virginal innocence, but even the indulgence of so much as a lascivious desire in connection with an unmarried female, was an ungodliness which Job regarded with abhorrence and indignation. Job's morality on this point, as also upon some others, is a remarkable anticipation of the sermon on the mount, which forbids the unchaste look, the unclean imagination, the impure desire, as well as the lewd and incontinent act (Matt. v. 28). Job's interpretation of the Law of God is like St. Paul's (Rom. vii. 14)—the precepts of the Decalogue covered the entire realm of the inner no less than of the outer life. 2. *The rule he observed.* That he might the better guard against the uprise within his heart of any prurient desire or lustful imagination, Job "made a covenant with his eyes," as their lord and master prescribed for them a law that they should not "fixedly gaze upon a maiden." Considering how much of evil enters by the eye (*e.g.* the cases of Eve, Gen. iii. 6; of the wife of Lot, Gen. xix. 26; of Achan, Josh. vii. 21), the wisdom of Job's resolution cannot be questioned. In particular the eye has often proved itself "the inlet of lust" (Robinson), or, according to a Talmudic proverb, "the procuress of sin;" as, for instance, it did with Judah (Gen. xxxviii. 5), Samson (Judg. xvi. 1), David (2 Sam. xi. 1—5), Amnon (2 Sam. xiii. 1—20). Few things are more dangerous to an unprincipled, or indeed a principled, mind, than the too ardent contemplation of female beauty, which, besides being a deceitful vanity in itself (Prov. xxxi. 30), is prone to inflame the heart with unlawful passions. Hence the propriety of the royal preacher's counsel (Prov. vi. 25), the Hebrew psalmist's prayer (Ps. cxix. 37), and the Divine Saviour's warning (Matt. xviii. 9). 3. *The motives he possessed.* In thus habitually exercising self-restraint, Job was actuated by two considerations. (1) Fear of the Divine power. "It was no fear of man, no dread of temporal consequences, no respect for public order and well-being, no pure and stately self-respect even, which made and kept him pure"

(Cox). It was the calm, clear, deliberate conviction that such wickedness could not escape the just and righteously allotted punishment of Eloah, and that sooner or later, if he should enter on such a course of impiety, he would find himself overwhelmed by some strange, startling, intolerable calamity; nay, that he should deserve to be so overwhelmed (vers. 2, 3). Job was manifestly no milk-and-water moralist, like some of the nineteenth century, who regard fornication and seduction as indiscretions, and uncleanness generally as an infirmity rather than a sin. Instead of being leniently judged and softly scolded, if not lovingly caressed, as, alas! is too frequently his portion and inheritance from modern society, the violator of virgin innocence, in Job's estimation, was a monster of iniquity, who deserved to be castigated by some horrible and degrading punishment, and who, he believed, would ultimately get his deservings. Nor was Job too spiritual, on the other hand, to admit that this formed one of the arguments which drove him to strict watchfulness over his heart and eyes. He was afraid of the just judgment of Almighty God upon them that committed such appalling wickedness; and accordingly he acted on the principle of resisting its first beginnings. So St. Paul, knowing the terror of the Lord, persuaded men (2 Cor. v. 11); and Christ counselled his apostles to fear him who could destroy both soul and body in hell (Luke xii. 5). If not the highest motive for leading a chaste and virtuous life, it is still a sound and good one, and the only one by which many are capable of being impressed. (2) Respect for the Divine omniscience. Job knew that, though it might be possible to elude the utmost vigilance of man, he could not evade him who beheld all his ways, and counted all his steps (ver. 4). The Divine omniscience is not dependent on, but co-ordinate with, the Divine omnipresence. God's minute and universal knowledge of mundane affairs, and in particular of all that enters into the complicated texture of a human life, frequently denied by the ungodly (ch. xxii. 13), and sometimes forgotten by the pious (Isa. xl. 27), is emphatically asserted in Scripture (1 Kings viii. 39; Ps. xi. 4; cxxxix. 1—4), and nowhere more so than in this book (ch. xxi. 22; xxiii. 10; xxiv. 1, 23; xxviii. 24; xxxiv. 21, 22, 25). Rightly viewed, it operates as a powerful deterrent from sin, not only by proving the certainty of detection, and therefore the impossibility of escaping punishment, but also by filling the mind with a constant sense of the Divine presence, forgetfulness of which is perhaps one of the most frequent causes of sin.

II. WITH RESPECT TO THE LAW OF JUSTICE. (Vers. 5—8.) 1. *An explicit declaration.* Hypothetical in form, Job's language amounts to a vehement assertion that his life was as unimpeachable with regard to equity as with regard to chastity. With falsehood in every shape and guise he had lived at open war. With deceit and imposition in either word or deed he had had no dealings whatever. From the straight path of integrity he had never turned aside. Never once under the dominion of secret avarice had he suffered his heart to be beguiled into hankering after his neighbour's property, as Ahab coveted the vineyard of Naboth (1 Kings xxi. 2). Not so much as a speck of defilement cleaved to his palm after any transaction in which he had been engaged. No living man could accuse him of underhand dealings or extortionate practices. So Samuel called his countrymen (1 Sam. xii. 3), and St. Paul challenged the elders of Miletus (Acts xx. 33—35), to attest his personal integrity. So are Christ's people exhorted to renounce the hidden things of dishonesty (2 Cor. iv. 2), to provide things honest in the sight of all men (2 Cor. viii. 21), and to carefully maintain a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly (Heb. xiii. 18). 2. *A solemn invocation.* So confident does Job feel that he has not swerved a hair's breadth from the law of equity, that he does not hesitate to appeal to God, challenging Eloah, as few men besides would have done (Ps. cxxx. 3), to weigh him in an even balance, literally, in the scales of righteousness, when his integrity, or moral perfection, would become apparent. If Job meant this absolutely, it was presumption and self-righteousness; but the probability is he understood, by preferring such a claim, no more than God himself did when he declared Job to be perfect and upright; though the vehemence with which he asserted and protested his blamelessness insensibly obscured his vision of the truth which he at other times acknowledged, that in God's sight no flesh living could be justified. 3. *A dreadful imprecation.* Not content with calmly submitting the question of his innocence to the severe and impartial arbitrament of Heaven, he invokes upon himself a curse of extreme severity. If by legal chicanery or violent extortion he has robbed

another of his land, the commonest and most valuable sort of property, then he desires that he himself may be made the victim of a like oppression, that he may sow and another reap, and that his "things which spring up," not his descendants or children, as elsewhere the word is employed (ch. v. 25; xxi. 8; xxvii. 14), but, as the parallelism demands, the produce of his ground, his harvest, may be rooted up. God's punishments are often similar in kind to the offences they follow. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7).

III. WITH RESPECT TO THE LAW OF MARRIAGE. (Vers. 9—12.) Different from the opening section, which treated of seduction, the present stanza alludes to the sin of adultery. In the former instance it is an unmarried virgin, in the latter it is a wedded wife, that is sinned against. The adulterous enterprise, which Job for himself disavows, is described in detail. 1. *By its origin.* It takes its rise in a bewitched or befooled heart. "Out of the heart proceed adulteries" (Matt. xv. 19). Therefore "keep the heart with all diligence" (Prov. iv. 23). This beguilement of the heart may be deliberately effected by the adulterous woman displaying her charms so as to fascinate her lover's eye (Prov. vii. 10—21); or, as in the case of David, it may result from lascivious admiration of the married woman's beauty. 2. *By its practice.* The adulterous lover, waiting for the twilight, disguiseth his face, and lieth in wait at his neighbour's door, obviously a common crime in Job's time (ch. xxiv. 15), as it afterwards was in David's and Solomon's (Ps. l. 18; Prov. vi. 24—29; vii. 5—9), Jeremiah's (v. 8) and Ezekiel's (xviii. 6), Christ's (John viii. 3—9) and the apostles' (1 Cor. vi. 9; 2 Pet. ii. 10). 3. *By its criminality.* Job stigmatizes it as an act of infamy, and an iniquity to be brought before the judges (ver. 11), meaning that, besides being a violation of the moral law (Exod. xx. 17), it is likewise an offence falling within the penal code of the land. Punished by death under Moses (Lev. xx. 10; Deut. xxii. 22), in patriarchal times it was visited by burning (Gen. xxxviii. 24). Probably this was the penalty attached to it in the land of Uz (ver. 12). Most heathen nations of antiquity pronounced it a capital offence. 4. *By its demerit.* The sinner who defiled his neighbour's wife deserved to have the same sorrow meted out to himself—a thought euphemistically expressed in ver. 10 (*vide* Exposition). So David's sin against Uriah's wife was punished by Absalom's wickedness in lying with his father's concubines (2 Sam. xvi. 22). 5. *By its results.* In addition to civil penalties and providential retributions, its ultimate issue is widespread sorrow, if not fatal ruin. Like a consuming fire, if persevered in, it has nothing but physical, moral, and eternal destruction for the perpetrator (Prov. vi. 32; vii. 23, 26, 27; 1 Cor. vi. 18; Heb. xiii. 4; Rev. xxi. 8). Even a solitary act is like the taking of a hot coal into one's bosom (Prov. vi. 27—29). Not only does it demoralize the nature of him who commits it, but it spreads sorrow and desolation through the heart of her against whom it is committed. It breaks the peace of otherwise happy families. It awakens the demon of jealousy, even when it is not discovered. Detected or concealed, it is a secret fountain of death.

IV. WITH RESPECT TO THE LAW OF MASTER AND SERVANT. (Vers. 13—15.) 1. *The case supposed.* Job instances a state of matters that might readily have occurred in his household, viz. the existence of some ground of complaint against him, the master, on the part of his manservant or maidservant, *i.e.* his bondman or bondwoman. Such contendings and disputings between master and servant, which are not unusual in modern free society, were much more likely to arise in ancient times when servants were simply slaves. 2. *The course pursued.* In the event of any such charge or complaint being preferred against him, Job protests that he neither crushed it out by the strong hand of oppression nor tossed it aside with contemptuous indifference, but gave it the most kindly attention and the most patient, careful, and impartial examination. If his accusers proceeded to impeach him at a bar of justice, he did not deny them the right of public redress, as other masters might have done and as the Israelitish master was entitled by the Law to do. But counting them as persons, not as goods and chattels, he accorded to them equal rights in this matter with himself. Slavery in Job's house, as also in Abraham's, was a widely different thing from that practised in modern times. 3. *The reasons alleged.* (1) He was answerable to God for the treatment he accorded to his servants. He should tremble when God arose to judgment, and be speechless when God came round as an Inspector, to examine into the controversy pending between him and his servants, unless he acted on the principles of strictest equity. That

God will one day hold such a court of inquiry, in which masters and servants, rulers and ruled, will be judged, is announced in Scripture (Ps. xcvi. 13; Eccles. xi. 9; Acts xvii. 31; 2 Cor. v. 10). Hence masters are responsible for their treatment of servants (Col. iv. 1); and this thought should deter them, as it did Job, from inflicting upon those who serve, or are dependent upon them, either injustice or severity (Eph. vi. 9). (2) His servants were possessed of the same human nature with himself. They had been fashioned by the same Divine power as himself. Both alike were God's handiwork (ch. xxxiv. 19; Ps. xxxiii. 15), God's creatures (Isa. xlv. 12), God's offspring (Mal. ii. 10; Acts xvii. 29). Both had been produced by the same human agency. Both had been curiously and secretly elaborated in a woman's womb (Ps. cxxxix. 13). Both had been made of one blood (Acts xvii. 26). Hence both belonged to a common brotherhood. Physically, intellectually, morally, the slave is the fellow of his master, having on the ground of a common humanity equal rights with that master in the sight of God and before men. The language of Job is a powerful condemnation of the modern kind of slavery.

V. WITH RESPECT TO THE LAW OF KINDNESS. (Vers. 16—22.) 1. *The objects of Job's compassionate regard.* The poor and the needy, the hungry and the naked, the fatherless and the widow. The care of such persons is a dictate of nature, which, however, is frequently powerless to enforce obedience to its own precepts. Among heathen nations generally the helpless and the destitute have been neglected and left to perish, if not openly oppressed and destroyed. Religion, however, both natural and revealed, prescribes kindness to the poor and needy as one of its essential virtues. The Mosaic code provided special legislation for the poor (Lev. xix. 10, 13; xxiii. 22; Exod. xxiii. 11; Deut. xv. 7—11; xiv. 28, 29), for the widow (Exod. xxii. 22; Deut. xxiv. 17; xxvii. 19), for the orphan (Exod. xxii. 22; Deut. x. 18; xiv. 29). In the Hebrew Church these were the objects of God's peculiar care (Ps. lxviii. 5; cxlvi. 9; Jer. xlix. 11; Mal. iii. 5). In the Christian Church they are regarded as Christ's brethren (Matt. xxv. 40). The care of them a special duty of the pious (Jas. i. 27). 2. *Job's habitual behaviour towards the poor and needy.* Previously described (ch. xxix. 11—17), it is here again set forth both negatively and positively. (1) Negatively, by reciting the special acts of unkindness towards the poor which he was careful to avoid, such as (*a*) withholding the poor from their desire (ver. 16), it might be from the wages for which they had toiled or the alms which they had craved; (*b*) causing the eyes of the widow to fail, by denying her assistance or refusing her redress against her powerful oppressor (ch. xxiv. 3); (*c*) eating his morsel alone, "in misery and grudging seclusion," lest the fatherless should see it and require to be invited to partake (ver. 17); (*d*) looking on with heartless unconcern while the naked shivered in their rags, and perished for want of clothes (ver. 19); (*e*) shaking the hand, *i.e.* using a threatening gesture towards the orphan who sued him in a court of justice, the moment he recognized the judges to be his friends (ver. 21). (2) Positively, by sketching the manner of life towards them which from his youth up he had pursued (ver. 18), and which in large measure had become a second nature to him; according to which Job had been a father to the orphan and a son to the widow (ver. 18), training up the one with paternal solicitude and comforting the other with filial devotion, while the hungry never failed to find a meal at his hospitable board (ver. 17), or the naked to exchange their rags for the warmest fleeces of his sheep (ver. 20), his own heart finding its truest joy and amplest reward in the happiness he conferred on others. 3. *The Spirit that inspired Job in his charitable deeds.* He was afraid of the Divine retribution, and he stood in awe of the Divine majesty. It was the fear, not of man, but of God, that deterred him; the apprehension, not of unpleasant consequences in time, if he acted otherwise, but of the all-devouring wrath of the Almighty in the future. 4. *The proof that Job offered of his veracity in what he said.* He invoked upon himself a curse if he had sinned in any of the ways above named, but more particularly if he had lifted up his hand against the orphan; he desired that his shoulder might fall from its shoulder-blade, and that his arm might be broken from its bone (ver. 22).

VI. WITH RESPECT TO THE LAW OF WORSHIP. (Vers. 24—28.) 1. *The twofold idolatry from which Job had abstained.* (1) Mammonism, or the worship of money. Formerly possessed of great wealth (ch. i. 3; cf. xxii. 24), Job had carefully avoided those particular sins which great wealth is prone to foster. (*a*) He had not allowed his

confidence for time or for eternity to rest in the abundance of his gold. Probably money, in consequence of the seeming almightiness which belongs to it (Eccles. vii. 2; x. 19), is the most formidable rival God encounters in his demands upon the human heart (Matt. vi. 24), which almost universally betrays a disposition to trust in uncertain riches rather than in the living God (1 Tim. vi. 17). But Job had never permitted his gold to usurp the throne of his affections, had never even esteemed it as the chief good, and certainly had not accorded it the homage due to the Supreme. The all-absorbing devotion of a human soul to the pursuit or possession of wealth is idolatry (Eph. v. 5; Col. iii. 5), is incompatible with true piety (Mark x. 24; 1 John ii. 15), and should be carefully eschewed by all followers of Christ. (*b*) He had not exultingly rejoiced in the greatness of his wealth. A person might stop short of actually reposing his heart's trust in his money, and yet be guilty of excessive delight therein. But not even of the common sin of setting too high an estimate upon his gold and silver, of looking on with inward gratification at the growing pile of his material goods, was Job guilty. Having the Almighty as his gold and his silver of strength (ch. xxii. 25), *i.e.* esteeming the Divine favour and fellowship as greater riches than any earthly treasures, it was impossible that the mere increase of material possessions could fill him with extravagant rejoicing. The most effectual way to prevent the soul from delighting in a creature is to teach it to delight in the Creator. (*c*) He had not even arrogantly taken credit to himself for achieving his immense fortune. No doubt his personal industry and sagacity had contributed to the grand result (Prov. x. 4; xiii. 4), but he piously refrained from saying, "My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deut. viii. 17), probably remembering, as the Israelites were counselled to do (Deut. viii. 18), that it was the Divine blessing alone which enabled him to become rich (Prov. x. 22). (2) Sabæism, or the worship of the heavenly bodies. "The oldest and also comparatively the purest form of heathenism" (Delitzsch), the adoration of the stars, prevailed amongst the Chaldeans in the time of Abraham, Uruk, one of the early monumental kings of Babylonia, having founded at Ur a temple of the moon, at Larsa a temple of the sun, and at Erech a temple of Venus, called Bit-anna, or the house of heaven ('Records of the Past,' vol. iii. p. 9). It was practised by the ancient Arabians, who "adored the sun and the moon as Divine," ancient testimonies being witness. It was diffused throughout Syria in the time of Moses, so that the Israelites, prior to their occupation of Canaan, were specially warned against it (Deut. iv. 19). Nevertheless, under the monarchy, Israel frequently relapsed into this abomination (2 Kings xxiii. 5, 11). In later Babylonia it was rampant (Ezek. viii. 16), as again the monuments attest, Nebuchadnezzar having erected in the centre of Babylon "a great temple of Ninharissi (wife of the sun)," "to the moon-god a large house of alabaster as his temple," and "to the sun a house of cement and brick" ('Records of the Past,' vol. v. p. 122). The customary method of paying homage to these stellar deities was by kissing the hand to them (1 Kings xix. 18; Hos. xiii. 2), which, it may be noticed, is the literal import of the English verb "to adore." The early and widespread diffusion of this particular form of idolatry affords a striking testimony to man's need of a God outside of himself. Perhaps also, in the absence of revelation, it is not surprising that the human heart, impressed with the brilliance of the sun, the great light, shining in meridian splendour, and the exceeding beauty of the moon, the solemn and majestic night-wanderer, should ascribe to them supernatural power and dignity. Yet man's position at the crown and summit of creation renders all devotion offered to the creatures not only sinful, but absurd. From such impiety Job declared that he had kept himself free. 2. *The twofold argument by which Job had been deterred.* Had Job been addicted to either of the above specified forms of idolatry, he would have been guilty (1) of a punishable crime. Probably Job means that in his day sun-worship was an offence against the statute law of the land (*vide* on ver. 11), as under the Mosaic code in Israel it could be expiated only by death (Deut. xvii. 2—7); but possibly the phrase, "an iniquity for judges," may only signify a transgression deserving to be punished, in which case it will hold good of both forms of idolatry. Job shrank from making a god to himself out of either the gold and silver which he possessed, or the celestial luminaries which he beheld, because of the penal consequences to which he knew such a misdeed would lead. And also because he felt that he would be guilty (2) of a detestable hypocrisy in professing to worship God while secretly he

was adoring the sun and kissing hands to the moon. A noble testimony to Job's spirituallty of mind and sincerity of heart! He could easily have offered homage to the host of heaven without exposing himself to observation by his fellows; or if, wanting courage to risk detection, he had refrained from outward gestures of devotion, he might have inwardly with his heart acknowledged their supremacy. But Job understood that God could read the heart as well as interpret the outward act, and that only that was acceptable worship which was inwardly sincere as well as outwardly correct. Here, again, the doctrine of the sermon on the mount (Matt. vi. 6) and of the New Testament generally (John iv. 23, 24) has been marvellously anticipated.

VII. WITH RESPECT TO THE LAW OF LOVE. (Vers. 29, 30.) Job declares his manner of life in dealing with his enemies. 1. *Their treatment of him.* They hated him. Their enmity was in all likelihood excited and fostered by his piety. Good men seldom pass through the world without meeting adversaries and opponents. David did not (Ps. xxxviii. 19, 20). St. Paul did not (1 Cor. xvi. 9). Even Christ did not (John xv. 18). Neither can Christ's followers expect to live without molestation (John xv. 20). They that will live godly shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. iii. 12). 2. *His treatment of them.* Not only did he not rejoice in their destruction when evil fortune overtook them (ver. 29), but he was conscious of never having wished that such evil fortune should overtake them (ver. 30). To exult in the downfall of an enemy, if natural to the sinful heart, is yet heathenish, fiendish, diabolic (Micah vii. 8); it was sorely punished in the case of Edom when she rejoiced over Judah (Obad. 12, 13); it is explicitly condemned in the Old Testament (Prov. xxiv. 17, 18); and is directly antagonistic to the spirit of the Mosaic Law (Exod. xxiii. 4; Lev. xix. 18), and much more to that of Christ's gospel (Matt. xix. 19; Rom. xiii. 9; Gal. v. 14; Jas. ii. 8), which enjoins not only a negative abstinence from wishing harm to one's enemies, the virtue which Job claimed (ver. 30), but the positive bestowment on them of acts of kindness (Matt. v. 44; Rom. xii. 20), which also we may be sure Job practised. Job's doctrine is here again a striking approximation towards the teaching of Christ, and Job's conduct a lofty exhibition of the spirit of Christianity, which will only shine out with brighter lustre if the reading (ver. 31) be adopted which supposes Job was urged by the men of his tabernacle to avenge himself upon his adversary.

VIII. WITH RESPECT TO THE LAW OF HOSPITALITY. (Vers. 31, 32.) This also Job maintained he had observed: 1. *With conspicuous publicity.* So open-handed had been his beneficence that with triumphant confidence he appealed to the members of his vast household to give witness in his behalf. They could testify, he was certain, that they had never seen a poor man depart unsatisfied from his mansion gate, but rather that they had every day beheld the contrary. So Job allowed his light to shine before men. 2. *With unrestricted liberality.* So lavish had been his hospitality that his domestics could fairly ask—Where was the man whom their master had not sumptuously entertained? His table had stood open for all comers—for friends and relatives, as a matter of course, but also for strangers and travellers of every sort and degree. So did Abraham and Lot invite travellers and strangers to their tents (Gen. xviii. 1—4; xix. 1); so are Christians exhorted to be given to hospitality (Rom. xii. 13; Heb. xiii. 2). 3. *With unstinted generosity.* Not simply had he practised hospitality, but he had done so with no niggard hand. The stranger he had welcomed to a lodging in his house. To the hungry traveller by the way he had extended, not a crust of bread merely, but a full meal, yea, a rich feast. So are Christians commanded to use hospitality without grudging (1 Pet. iv. 9).

IX. WITH RESPECT TO THE LAW OF SINCERITY. (Vers. 33—37.) The language may be understood as conveying: 1. *An important admission.* Job's use of the phrase, "my transgressions," is by some (Canon Cook) regarded as tantamount to an acknowledgment that, notwithstanding his blameless character and life, he was not free from sin—a statement which was certainly correct in itself, since "there is not a just man on earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccles. vii. 20), and hopeful as an indication of the mind of Job, inasmuch as it proved he was not depending on his virtues for salvation, as well as comforting for those who should afterwards peruse the story of his life, and who but for this recognition of the fact of sin might be prone to think that Job's morality was beyond their reach. Still, it is open to grave question whether Job really intended to make this admission, or whether he did not rather design to convey

an opposite idea, viz. that, as he had perpetrated no open crime, so neither was he hiding any secret wickedness. In either case his words contain: 2. *An emphatic protestation.* He was not attempting, and never had attempted, to play the hypocrite by either denying his guiltiness in general, or concealing his wicked acts in particular. In all he had said to them about the manner of his life, as in all the approaches he had ever made to God, he had acted with transparent sincerity. There was no secret stain upon his soul which he had not confessed to God; there was no undivulged crime which he feared to make known to man. Pre-eminently Job claimed to be one in whose spirit there was no guile (Ps. xxxii. 2). Job's accents contain a ring of defiance, which seems to ask whether he was likely to be afraid of either the hootings of the mob or the contempt of the aristocratic families of the land, that he required to skulk within doors, and keep silent about anything that he had ever done. Doubtless Job was universally recognized as a man of courage; and, because it was so, he could appeal to that in proof of his sincerity. But beyond this his utterance, if really intended, exhibits: 3. *An instructive comparison.* The contrast which Job institutes between himself and Adam, if the translation of the Authorized Version be followed, is a valuable authentication of the biblical tradition of the Fall. It proves that the writer of the Book of Job, to whatever age he belonged, accepted the story in Genesis concerning Adam as historically correct. By putting the name Adam into the mouth of one who flourished in pre-Mosaic times, it also demonstrates that, in the judgment of the author at least, the contents of the Hebrew narrative were credited beyond the bounds of Palestine at a time when the First Book of Moses was probably not yet composed. And now, having strenuously asserted that he was guilty of no concealment, he adds, in authentication of his truthfulness: 4. *A personal subscription.* "Behold my signature!" he exclaims, alluding to the practice in ancient courts of law of submitting a defence in writing, attested by the signature or mark of the accused party, and meaning that, so far as he was concerned, so confident did he feel in his own integrity, and so well prepared was he to reply to any indictment that might be brought against him, that he was willing to see the case go to trial without delay. Nay, having tendered his defences, he closes with a shout of triumph, throwing out as his ultimatum: 5. *A sublime proclamation,* in which he challenges his unseen adversary, God (ch. ix. 15; xvi. 9), to draw up an indictment against him (Carey, Cox), or, according to another interpretation (Delitzsch), in which he draws attention to the already prepared indictment of his opponents, viz. the three friends. In either case he offers, if only God will allow the matter to go to trial, not to shrink from the ordeal of examination, but binding the indictment (God's or that of the friends) on his shoulder as a badge of distinction, "winding it around his head like a magnificent crown of diadems" (Delitzsch), to approach God with all the princely majesty of one who is conscious of innocence, and to lay bare before his searching gaze, with the most assured confidence of ultimate vindication, every step in his by-past career.

X. WITH RESPECT TO THE LAW OF PROPERTY. (Vers. 38—40.) 1. *The crime which Job disowns.* The fraudulent appropriation of land, by either withholding the stipulated rent or murdering the legal proprietor, was apparently not unknown in the days of the patriarch, as, alas! in our time it is both known and practised. But of any such iniquity Job's hands were clear. For every rood of soil he cultivated he had honestly paid the market price; and, of course, he had never dreamt of killing his landlord to get his farm, as Jezebel despatched Naboth to secure his vineyard. 2. *The curse which Job invokes.* Had Job been guilty of any such wickedness, not only would his fields have cried out against him, and the furrows which he ploughed have wept over his ungodliness, but he would have richly deserved that Heaven's blight should descend upon his acres; and such a blight he prays to descend upon his broad domain if he has been guilty of any such wickedness as that which he has just disowned. "May thistles spring up instead of wheat, and darnel instead of barley!"

Learn: 1. That the LAW of God, *i.e.* the moral Law, or the law of holiness, has been the same from the beginning of the world until now. 2. That the spirituality of the Law of God is only concealed from them who make no attempt to keep it. 3. That the Law of God takes cognizance of man in every department of his being and every sphere of his life. 4. That the Law of God is as certain and severe in its penalties as it is stern and imperative in its requirements. 5. That the Law of God is the one

absolute and invariable rule of life for men under the Christian as well as under the Mosaic or patriarchal dispensation, for the pardoned believer no less than for the unconverted sinner. 6. That the true gauge of a soul's piety is the earnestness with which it endeavours to keep the Law of God in all its precepts. 7. That the loftiest incentive to such a keeping of the Law of God is a reverential regard for the Law-maker, especially as he is seen in Christ. 8. That no mere man is able to keep the Law of God perfectly, even Job's performances being not altogether unmixed with sin. 9. That the most dangerous thing a man can do with his transgressions of the Law of God is to cover them. 10. That that man is grossly deceived who imagines God could not indict him for violations of his Law, because he (the man) cannot indict himself. 11. That those who are advancing in holiness, or sincere keeping of the Law of God, should guard against being either too proud of, or too reliant on, their own attainments. 12. That the loftiest morality attainable on earth will not enable man to dispense with the services of a Daysman or Mediator.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—40.—*Solemn assurances of innocence.* Job can discover no connection between his present sufferings and those well-founded hopes of his former life to which he has been referring; but there remains the assumption of his guilt as an explanation. In his intense longing for redemption he is led, in conclusion, to affirm in the most solemn and sacred manner his innocence, invoking the sorest punishments upon himself if his words are untrue. Thus, in effect, he makes a final appeal to God as his Judge. In this solemn assurance of innocence, he begins with that which is the root and source of sin—evil lust; he then touches on the sins proceeding from it, and explains the rule of life and the disposition of heart which rendered him incapable of the commission of such sins.

I. LUST RESISTED: THE HEART GIVEN TO VIRTUE. (Vers. 1—4.) 1. He had governed the eye and restrained its lust. He had guarded that noble organ, which may be either the avenue of purest pleasures or the tempter to most shameful vice. He had prescribed to the eye its conduct and its law. The eye seems almost as much the receptacle and seat of our passions, appetites, and inclinations as the mind itself; at least it is the outward portal to introduce them to the mind within, or rather the common thoroughfare to let our affections pass in and out. Love, anger, pride, avarice, all visibly move in those little orbs (Addison). It is not enough to watch over the heart, the inner citadel of the man, but all its avenues—the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot—must be guarded against the approach of sin. 2. He had referred himself in this to the judgment and the all-seeing eye of God (compare Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 9; and Ps. cxxxix. 2, *sqq.*). The thought of men's knowledge is often a more powerful deterrent from actual crime; it is the thought of God which alone can sanctify and keep in safety the heart. Job rises above the mere commandments of the Law. Law forbids the desire of others' goods (Exod. xx. 17; Deut. v. 21)—a negative virtue; Christ carries us directly to God, and bids us be pure in heart that we may behold him. To live consciously in the eye of God is to have a pure and right direction for our own.

II. FIRST PROTESTATION: EVIL DESIRES HAVE NOT BEEN YIELDED TO. (Vers. 5—8.) He did not "go about with falsehood," nor did his foot hasten to deceit. May God, he says, pausing, weigh him in a just balance, and, instead of being found wanting like Belshazzar (Dan. v. 27), may his integrity be known and proved! Among the Greeks, Themis, or Diké, held the scales symbolical of judgment; the Arabs speak of judgment as the "balance of works." Every man's work, every man's character, shall finally be tried, proved, made known; and many that are last shall be first, and the first last. His steps had not turned out of the right way, the way marked out and appointed by God; no stain of ill-gotten wealth had cleaved to his hands (Ps. ci. 5; Deut. xiii. 17). Another imprecation, ratifying his assurances of innocence: "Then let me sow, and let another eat"—let another enjoy the fruit of his ill-spent, dishonest toil (comp. ch. xxvii. 16, 17; Lev. xxvi. 16; Deut. xxviii. 33; Amos v. 11); and let his shoots—the plants of the earth which he has set—be rooted out!

III. HIS PURE AND RIGHT CONDUCT IN DOMESTIC LIFE. (Vers. 9—15.) 1. *His*

chastity. (Vers. 9—12.) He had not been *befooled* into any gross sin against the marriage-tie. He expresses the utmost detestation of such sin. "It would be a crime, and a sin before the judges." It would be as a devouring fire, resting not in its course until it had brought the criminal to the pit of hell, and all his property had been rooted out (comp. Prov. vi. 27, *et seq.*; vii. 26, 27; Jas. iii. 6). 2. *His conduct towards his domestic slaves.* He had not abused the rights of his menservants or maidservants. His relation to them was patriarchal, like that of Abraham to Eliezer of Damascus (Gen. xv. 2; xxiv. 2, *et seq.*). He felt that he and they, masters and slaves, were of one blood, the children of one Father, offspring of one Creator; how could he, were he guilty of sin against them, face the dread tribunal of God? "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" (Mal. ii. 10). Refer to St. Paul's exhortation to masters (Eph. vi. 9). The relations of masters and servants, employers and employed, have undergone vast changes since those ancient days. We all live under the equal protection of the laws of the land, and the general spirit of the law is to protect the weaker against the stronger, the poor against the encroachment of the rich. But in Christianity this relation receives a new meaning and sanctity by being brought under the great central relation in which we stand to Christ. And we have a beautiful example of the Christian treatment of the servant in St. Paul's Epistle to Philemon. To set our servants good examples, and to care for their moral and spiritual welfare, is the duty of a Christian master or mistress.

IV. HIS JUST AND COMPASSIONATE CONDUCT IN SOCIAL LIFE. (Vers. 16—23; comp. ch. xxix. 12—17.) He did not refuse his inferiors their wishes when it was in his power to gratify them; did not withhold what he had the ability to give, nor shut up his compassions towards his poor brother; did not leave the widow to languish in longing expectation of help. He had not eaten alone in solitary greed a rich repast, like Dives; he had shared his bread with the orphan. All his life long he had been a father to the fatherless, a support to the widow, thus seeking to follow and imitate the all-compassionate God; to reproduce his heavenly pity in a gentle life on earth (Ps. lxviii. 5). He had clothed the neglected and the poor, and earned their thanks and blessing. In his capacity as ruler and judge he had not lifted up his hand with the purpose of violence; he had not perverted his great influence in the gate, or place of justice, to do them wrong. Forced to self-defence, he sets the seal of a most solemn imprecation upon his testimony concerning the past. And, further, he again sets forth the deep religious ground on which all his conduct to his neighbours was built. It was the fear of God, which is the beginning of all piety, the root of all morality, the great deterrent from sin. It was, therefore, morally impossible for him to have committed the sins laid to his charge (ver. 23). Here from the ancient patriarchal world shines out upon us a picture of those social virtues which are essentially the same in every age and every land. These are the primal duties which gleam aloft like stars, or adorn the earth like flowers. Our duties to our inferiors in wealth and status are an essential part of Christian piety. We are to do good when we can hope for nothing again. The poor cannot recompense us, but we shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just (Luke xiv. 14; Matt. xxv. 36). Much converse with the weak and the lowly produces simplicity of heart, and chastens our feverish ambition to shine among our equals or superiors.

> "Far other aims our hearts will learn to prize,
> More bent to raise the wretched than to rise."

Compare the whole picture of the village pastor in Goldsmith's 'Deserted Village.' The contemplation of these pictures, in the poet's description or in actual life, sweetens the heart, calms our thoughts; above all, we are thus led to dwell with still more delight on the sacred picture of him who went about doing good, the Divine Type of all compassion and condescension.

V. JOB'S INWARD LIFE: THE FINER CONSCIENTIOUSNESS. (Vers. 24—40.) He proceeds to mention several sins of a more depraved and base character, defending himself against the charge of complicity with them. 1. *The lust of gold.* (Vers. 24, 25.) He had not put his trust in riches. The deadliness of the sin of covetousness has been among the lessons of all moralists, sacred and profane. The "accursed hunger for gold," the "root of all evil;" "Thy money perish with thee;" "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be

required of thee;" "Take heed, and beware of covetousness;" are sayings that occur to us all. This is really the most fruitful source of all the darker crimes and sins, because there is no passion so unsocial, so anti-social. Men lose their souls to save their pelf. "Covetousness is the alpha and omega of the devil's alphabet; the first vice in corrupt nature which moves, and the last which dies." It is an "immoderate desire and pursuit of even the lawful helps and supports of nature." "Holding fast all it can get in one hand, and reaching at all it can desire with the other." "It has enriched its thousands, and damned its ten thousands." 2. *Idolatry and blind worship of power.* (Ver. 26, *et seq.*) As he had kept his heart with all diligence in presence of the temptations of gold, so he had watched against the inducements of false religion. In presence of the glorious objects of nature, the worship of which so extensively prevailed in the East, and at one period probably over the whole world, he had refrained from throwing towards them the kiss which was the gesture of reverence. For his heart had been touched with true reverence for its alone worthy Object, the God who is a Spirit; and to have declined to these beggarly elements would have been a crime against conscience, a practical infidelity, a denial of the God above. If we have ever been taught and trained in a spiritual faith, we cannot lapse into mere formalism—a confusion of the external symbol with the living reality—without a denial of our spiritual conscience, a turning of the light within us into darkness. To bow before the mere power and beauty revealed in nature, ignoring God as the Author both of nature and of the moral law; or to make worship a mere sensuous enjoyment rather than a spiritual exercise; are subtle temptations of our time analogous to those of Job. Our view of Nature is only religious when we seek through her sensuous medium for the supersensuous, the moral, the Divine (compare Mozley's noble sermon on "Nature"). 3. *Hatred of enemies.* (Ver. 29, *et seq.*) He had lived in the light of a most lofty morality. The general principle of ancient morality was, "Love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy," among both Jews and Gentiles. "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," was the maxim of the savage justice of the early times. Even the great Aristotle says, in his 'Ethics,' "They who are not enraged when they ought to be, seem to be weak creatures; to endure insults and neglect one's friends is the part of a slave" ('Eth. Nic.,' iv. 5). "The first duty of justice," says Cicero, "is to injure no one, *unless provoked by a wrong*" ('Off.,' i. 7). Let us contrast with this the gentle morality of Heaven. The Law of Moses ordained that if a man should meet his enemy's ass or his ox going astray, he should surely bring it back to him again (Exod. xxiii. 4). Men were not to avenge, nor bear any grudge against others, but to love their neighbours as themselves (Lev. xix. 18). Especially do we find this doctrine preached in the Book of Proverbs, "Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he will save thee" (xx. 22); "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thy heart be glad when he stumbleth" (xxiv. 17); "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink" (xxv. 21). Job had not defiled his mouth with curses imprecating death upon his foes. Nor had his morality been negative merely, which is all that many seem able to conceive of one's duties to one's neighbours. He had been hospitable and generous (vers. 31, 32). The "people of his tent," the inmates of his dwelling, had never to complain of scant fare, of short commons, at his table. He did not leave the stranger to pass the night in the street, but opened his doors to the wanderer.

> "No surly porter stood in guilty state,
> To spurn imploring famine from the gate. . . .
> His house was known to all the vagrant train;
> He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain."

Compare the stories of Abraham's hospitality at Mamre, Lot's at Sodom, of the old man at Gibeah (Gen. xviii. [Heb. xiii. 2]; Judg. xix. 15, *et seq.*). Among peoples who led an unsettled, wandering life, hospitality necessarily became one of the foremost of duties to one's neighbour; and there are many Arab popular anecdotes of Divine punishment of the inhospitable. Wetstein says that while exploring the lake *Râm*, the fountain of the Jordan, the Bedouins asked him if he had not heard of the origin of the lake; and related that many centuries ago a flourishing village once stood there. One evening a poor traveller came while the men were sitting together in the open place of the village, and begged for a supper and lodging. They refused; and when he said he was starving, an old woman reached out to him a clod of earth, and drove him from the

village. The man went to the village of Nimra hard by, where he was taken in. The next morning a lake was found where the neighbouring village had stood. The conditions of modern life are different. The place of hospitality in the scale of social duties is changed. But for all who have enough and to spare of this world's goods, there remains open a wide field of Christian beneficence and of refined culture in the practice of a sincere and discriminating hospitality. The model lesson on this subject is in Luke xiv. It is a deep lesson that no man is poorer for all the expense of love. It is the habit of needless hoarding that empties the heart. When the affections are centred on the granary, or the counting-house, or the bank, or the fields, the man's wealth is imaginary, not real. Real wealth lies in the power of self-sufficiency for our outward condition, and of having something over for others. "Use hospitality without grudging;" "God loveth a cheerful giver." "The world teaches me that it is madness to leave what I may carry with me; Christianity teaches me that what I charitably give while I live I may carry with me after death; experience teaches me that what I leave behind I lose. I will carry with me by giving away that treasure which the worldling loses by keeping; and thus, while his corpse shall carry nothing but a winding-sheet to his grave, I shall be richer underground than I was above it" (Bishop Hall). 4. *Hypocrisy and concealment of sins.* (Vers. 33—40.) The way of man (or of "Adam") is to hide guilt, and bear a hypocritical front. The motive of such concealment is suggested in ver. 34—the fear of the great multitude, or of the nobler families who were one's equals and associates. So may a guilty conscience lay a weight upon the tongue; as in Plutarch's story of Demosthenes, who, having taken a bribe, refused to speak in the assembly, appearing there with his throat muffled up, and complaining of a quinsy; whereupon one cried out, "He is not suffering from a throat-quinsy but from a money-quinsy." "Garments once rent are liable to be torn on every nail and every brier, and glasses once cracked are soon broken; such is a good man's name, once tainted with just reproach. Next to the approbation of God, and the testimony of my own conscience, I will seek for a good reputation among men; not by concealing faults lest they should be known to my shame, but by avoiding all sins that I may not deserve it. It is difficult to do good, unless we be reputed good" (Bishop Hall). 5. *Renewed protestations.* Would that he had one to hear this his assurance of innocence! He is thinking of God, and he desires his judicial interference in his favour. "Behold, there is my handwriting; let the Almighty answer me." As if he should say, "Here is the original of my justification, with my signature attached. This is my documentary defence; let the Almighty try it, and let his judgment be given." On the other hand, would that he had the accusation, the statement as it were of the prosecution against him (ver. 35). He here thinks of God as his Accuser, and longs to know *what* he has against him! Had he this document, he would bear it like a mark of honour upon his shoulder (for the idea, comp. Isa. ix. 4; xxii. 22), or like a diadem for his head. Such is the triumphant consciousness of innocence. He would declare to God the number of his steps —would conceal nothing, but confess all to him. He would approach him like a prince, with stately step and unabashed port, as becomes one whose conscience is clear (ver. 37). Lastly, by some additional light of memory now flashing on his mind at the close of his protestation, he gives a special example of his freedom from the guilt of blood. His had been no life containing deeds like that of Ahab to Naboth (1 Kings xxi. 1). No such fearful crime was the cause of his sufferings. "If my land cries against me"—for revenge, because of some crime against a former possessor—"and its furrows weep; if I have wasted its power, its fruit and produce, without payment, and blasted the life of its possessor," by violence, "instead of wheat let thorns spring forth, and instead of barley stinking weeds." That consciousness of God's omniscience, which strikes terror into the secret sinner, is a comfort to the heart of the sincere child of God. The day-break frightens the robber, but cheers the honest traveller. Thou that art sincere, God sees that sincerity in thee which others cannot discern; yea, he often sees more sincerity in thy heart than thou canst discern thyself. This may uphold the drooping spirits of a disconsolate soul when the black mouths of men, steeled with ignorance and prejudice, shall be opened in hard speeches against him. How severely, though blindly, do they judge of men's hearts! But here the sincere soul may comfort itself when on the one hand it can reflect upon its own integrity, and on the other upon God's infinite infallible knowledge, and say, "Indeed, men charge me with this and this, as false-hearted

and a hypocrite, but my God knows otherwise." As Daniel, by trusting in God, was secure from the mouths of the lions, so thou, by having faith in and drawing comfort from God's omniscience, mayest defy the more cruel mouths of thy persecutors. When a man is accused of treason to his prince, and knows that his prince is fully assured of his innocence, he will laugh all such accusations to scorn. It is thus with God and a sincere heart. In the midst of all slanders he will own thee for innocent, as he did Job, when his friends, with much specious piety, charged him with hypocrisy. Wherefore commit thy way to the all-seeing God—to that God who is acquainted with all thy ways; who sees thy goings out and thy comings in, and continually goes in and out before thee, and will one day testify and set his seal to thine integrity. Comfort thyself in the consideration of his omniscience, from whence it is that God judgeth not as man judgeth, but judgeth righteous judgment; and hold fast thy integrity that lies secret in the heart, whose praise is of God, and not of man (South).—J.

Vers. 1—40.—*The consciousness of integrity.* The Divine solution of the riddle of human life is being wrought out in this poem, although at times it seems as though the entanglement became more and more confused. The case, as put in these three chapters, is the condensation of all as far as it has gone. It still awaits the solution. Job was in riches, dignity, and honour; he is now cast down to ignominy and suffering. Yet he is righteous—this, at least, is his own conviction; and in this chapter he makes his appeal to the facts of his history and invites scrutiny, and judgment if he be found guilty. This is the progress of the writing up to the present moment. His companions are baffled. They know of no other explanation of such suffering than deep and hidden sin. It will yet be proved that the godly suffer—"he whom thou lovest is sick"—although the world will long wait for a verbal explanation; and even now does the cry never ascend to heaven, "Wherefore dealest thou thus with me?" Job's appeal to the uprightness of his life and to his perfect integrity relates to the whole of his conduct, and to the various conditions in which he has been placed. The outward Divine testimony, he is "a perfect and an upright man," has its echo in Job's breast. Hence he makes his appeal—

I. To HIS CHASTITY. He makes his appeal in the sight of the all-searching One—to him who seeth "my ways" and counteth "all my steps."

II. To HIS TRUTHFULNESS AND JUSTNESS.

III. To HIS PURITY OF CONDUCT.

IV. To HIS FIDELITY.

V. To HIS EVEN-HANDED JUSTICE.

VI. To HIS UNFLINCHING RECTITUDE.

VII. To HIS CHARITY AND COMPASSION.

VIII. To HIS FREEDOM FROM UNDUE CONFIDENCE IN HIS WEALTH.

IX. To HIS FREEDOM FROM IDOLATRY.

X. To HIS FREEDOM FROM HATRED AND HARSH TREATMENT, EVEN OF HIS ENEMIES.

XI. To HIS KINDNESS AND HOSPITALITY.

XII. To HIS EXEMPTION FROM COVERT OR OPEN SIN. He hid no iniquity in his bosom, and therefore feared not the presence of men. Hypocrisy was not his failing. He makes his final appeal to his honesty and uprightness of dealing even by a reference to his fidelity to the very fields which he owned. Well might such a man long for a true judgment—for an open ear into which he could pour his complaint. Well may such a man commit himself to Jehovah's judgment, knowing "the Almighty will answer for me." Thus does Job vindicate his integrity and make his appeal to the highest tribunal.—R. G.

Ver. 4.—*God's watchfulness.* I. ITS CONCENTRATION ON CONDUCT. God sees Job's *ways.* He is not confined to the observation of external deeds, for he reads the hearts of men and he judges by the course of the inner life. Still, it is by a man's actions, including the internal actions, that God judges a man. What is of most concern to our great Master is how we exercise our will, what way we choose to walk in, how we shape our daily conduct. He cares little for our opinions and emotions, except in so far as these guide and influence our behaviour. If, then, God values conduct chiefly, conduct should be of primary importance with us. Whatever other things

we may be anxious about, our first anxiety should be to see that our *ways* are right.

II. ITS ABSOLUTE THOROUGHNESS. Job speaks of God as counting all his steps. Therefore God takes note of every one of them. No false step can escape his notice. The little slip is not unseen by God. He sees us stumble when we do not fall, and observes how we stray for a brief time, even though we afterwards return to the right path. This truth has an encouraging side to it. God knows how many steps we have taken; therefore if the way is long and weary he has not forgotten us, and he can give us rest and strength. He knows how many steps we have yet to take; therefore he will give us a sufficient supply of grace, whether the road be long or short, and he will not expect more of us than the length or brevity of life permits.

III. ITS PROMPTING MOTIVE. God does not watch as a spy, like Satan when he was eager to detect some weakness in Job in order to inform against him (ch. i. 7—10); nor with any design of ruining, like Satan who now goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. v. 8); nor with cold curiosity, amusing himself with the frailties of his children; nor with merely judicial insight, seeking for truth and dealing fairly, but with no sympathy or interest in his creatures. God watches with the most profound interest—with the interest of love. His watchfulness is like that of the mother who bends over the cradle, carefully noting every changing symptom in her ailing child.

IV. ITS ULTIMATE RESULTS. God does not watch for nothing. He is more than an inspector; he acts according to what he sees, and his watching is followed by his doing. 1. *Sin cannot go unpunished.* There is no eluding the eye of the great Watcher of men. The foolish notion that secrecy may find a door of escape is only a delusion when we have to deal with one who knows everything, to whom all secrets are open. 2. *Need cannot suffer from neglect.* The poor and suffering are forgotten among men, and miserable people drop out of sight after they have fallen into adversity, for great cities hide multitudes of unknown and solitary sufferers. Yet God counts every painful step in the path of disappointment, and as he knows all he will assuredly give the needful help. Because he saw the condition of men he provided for their recovery by redemption through the gift of his Son.—W. F. A.

Ver. 6.—*An even balance.* Job only desires to be weighed in an even balance. He feels that his friends have judged him in anything but a fair manner, and he now craves for the true justice of God.

I. THE JUSTICE OF AN EVEN BALANCE IS GREATLY TO BE DESIRED. People have taken a very narrow view of justice, so narrow a view as to be practically false and most fallacious. Justice has been regarded as the power that punishes sin, and while, of course, this is true, this is not a description of the true nature and ultimate character of it, but only a statement of one of its special functions—a function which would not exist if sin had not entered the world. Yet justice would have an ample field if there were no wickedness. It is not like the executioner, whose occupation would be gone with the cessation of lawlessness. Justice is righteousness. It is the principle that insists on seeing right done. Every lover of the good must desire to see such a principle flourish. Between man and man justice is fairness. When we say God deals justly we imply that he deals fairly. This may not mean equality. For to load a mule with the same burden we would put on an elephant's back is not fair dealing at all. Equity is not equality. But it is a suitable and proportionate dealing with each individual.

II. THE JUSTICE OF AN EVEN BALANCE IS RARE AMONG MEN. Job did not see it, and therefore he greatly longed for it. Many things falsify the scales of justice. 1. *Prejudice.* Truth should be on one side of the scales—as in the Egyptian legend of weighing the souls of the dead. But prejudice either pares the weight of truth and so lessens its value, or adds its own weight. 2. *Self-interest.* Justice should be impartial; but men are not. A pure detachment of mind is very difficult to acquire. Instead of considering merit, people take account of what pleases them or what may be profitable to them. 3. *Ignorance.* When there is the utmost genuineness of desire to weigh justly, we may make a mistake simply because we do not put all the facts into the scale.

III. THE JUSTICE OF AN EVEN BALANCE IS FOUND WITH GOD. 1. *Pure equity.* He allows no prejudice to warp his judgment, no self-interest to pervert his verdict. God is perfectly just in his own character. Therefore he can judge men justly. Being righteous himself, he is never prompted to act otherwise than righteously. 2. *Knowledge.* God makes none of the unintentional mistakes that are so common with men. The whole tangled mass of events is unravelled by his perfectly penetrating gaze. When we despair of having a case truly seen by our fellow-men, we can lift up our eyes to the great Judge of all the earth and be assured that he knows all. Surely, then, it is most necessary to stand right with the justice of God, that this may vindicate and not condemn us. But only the God-given righteousness in Christ can make this possible to us.—W. F. A.

Ver. 11.—*A heinous crime.* Job justly regards adultery as a heinous crime which is deserving of punishment.

I. THE GREAT EVIL OF THIS CRIME. It contains within it a combination of various dreadful kinds of wickedness. 1. *Unfaithfulness.* Husband and wife have vowed to be true to one another. Adultery is a breach of marriage vows. Even if purity were not originally binding, the voluntary assumption of the yoke of matrimony would have made it so. The sin of unfaithfulness to the marriage tie is one of breaking a most solemn promise. 2. *Cruelty.* This is not a sin that can be committed wholly on one's own account. A grievous and irreparable wrong is done to another. For the sake of selfish pleasure, a home, which might have been a centre of love and joy, is torn to pieces by outraged jealousy and made miserable with the total wreck of the hopes of youth. 3. *Impurity.* Some have thought that, as happiness does not always accompany marriage, "free love" would be more desirable. It is forgotten that the very term is a misnomer. No true love can exist without constancy and fidelity. When those virtues are removed, what is called love is at best a passing fancy; at worst it is a foul passion. The soul of the adulterer is stained and corrupted. 4. *Godlessness.* This great sin darkens the vision of God. It involves a violation of a Divine institution, and is thus unfaithfulness to God as well as to a human companion. The soul of the adulterer is lost to the life of holiness and the true service of God.

II. THE JUST TREATMENT OF THIS CRIME. 1. *Not by the abolition of marriage.* This is but the refuge of despair. It is said in some quarters that marriage is a failure. But wherever it is a failure some of its necessary ingredients have been neglected. If there is no true love, if sympathy is wanting, if mutual forbearance is not practised, the close union of husband and wife must lead to perpetual quarrelling. But what we want is to raise the standard of marriage. The abolition of lifelong marriage is virtually the abolition of that most sacred Christian institution—the family. It must open the floodgates of vice by allowing suggestions of licence that are now, at least to some extent, kept in check by the social conscience that respects the marriage tie. 2. *By the most effectual form of reprobation.* Job considered it to be an iniquity to be punished by the judges. This was the old Jewish method, and the Puritans of New England attempted to revive it. But great difficulties stand in the way of criminal prosecutions for adultery. Moreover, it is not the function of the state to punish vice, but to prevent direct or indirect injuries. Now, though adultery is an injury, the course for a legal treatment of it as such is not clear. But this does not mean that the vice should go unchecked. It deserves the severest social stigma. It lies under the wrath of God. It should be prevented as far as possible by a wise and pure bringing up of the young and the inculcation of principles of social purity.—W. F. A.

Ver. 24.—*The hope of gold.* Job here reminds us of the Egyptian 'Book of the Dead,' in which the soul, summoned before its judges, recites a long list of sins, and declares itself innocent of them all. In this chapter the patriarch runs over many kinds of wickedness, and invokes just punishment if he has been guilty of any of them. His self-vindication has been forced from him by the repeated false accusations of his friends. We know that Job was not without the consciousness of sin; but he was not guilty of the crimes and of the great deeds of wickedness which had been charged against him. Among other evil things, he honestly repudiates resting his hope and confidence in gold.

1. THE FASCINATION OF THE HOPE OF GOLD. This hope has a wide influence over men. It is not by any means confined to the owners of wealth. The poor make too much of the hope of gold which they covet, while the rich overvalue that which is within their grasp. The passion for gold goes mad at the diggings; but it is found in sober walks of business life. Let us consider its sources. 1. *Wide purchasing power.* Gold is not sought for its glitter. The old miser who dived his hand into his bags of coins with wild glee is extinct. The modern gold-worshipper is too wise to hoard his money uselessly. But whether the money is spent or not it is held as a potential good. It buys all visible commodities. People come to think that whatever they want can be had for gold. 2. *Materialism.* The habit of engrossing one's self with earthly things appears to enlarge the value of gold by blotting out of view everything that is above the earth. The heavens are lost sight of, and the universe shrinks into the circle of the objects that can be procured for money.

II. THE FATALITY OF THE HOPE OF GOLD. The fascination is fatal; it lures to ruin. 1. *It lowers the soul.* The worshipper is always being assimilated to his idol. He who adores gold comes to have a heart that is as hard and earthly as the metal he is enslaved to. Thus all the finer spiritual qualities are crushed and quenched, and a sordid appetite for money dominates the inner man. 2. *It encourages selfishness.* The hope is for one's self. We see this in the frightfully prevalent vice of gambling. The infatuated gambler is intoxicated with an excitement the root of which is pure greed, heartless selfishness. His gains are not productions, adding to the wealth of the world, but simply and solely what can be got out of other people's possessions. His whole profit is made by the loss of other people. Gambling is the most anti-social vice. 3. *It leads to crime.* Gold is thought more of than truth or duty, or the rights of one's neighbour. 4. *It is dishonouring to God.* God is the true Hope of his children. When men turn from him to gold they turn to an idol, and are unfaithful to their Lord. 5. *It ends in disappointment.* Gold cannot buy the best things—peace of mind, purity, love, heaven. Midas is a failure in the end. We must learn to see the limits of the utility of money, and look beyond them for our true hope and confidence in what is better than gold—the unsearchable riches of Christ.—W. F. A.

Vers. 33, 34.—*The shame of public exposure.* Job asks whether he has hidden his sin, and shrunk from public exposure for fear of the multitude? On the contrary, he has been frank and fearless, daring to face the world because he is true and honest.

I. THE GUILTY MAN IS AFRAID OF PUBLIC EXPOSURE. This is a common feeling. It is "after the manner of men." It was seen in Adam hiding in the garden. Shame follows sin. Guilt creates cowardice. He who held his head aloft in his innocence dares not look on his fellows when he has committed a crime. Every eye seems to follow him with suspicion. His imagination transforms the most unconcerned passer-by into a detective. Fear magnifies the importance of trifles, till the smallest events seem to be links in a chain that is dragging the miserable criminal down to ruin. He feels himself caught in a net, and he knows not which way to turn for release.

II. THERE IS NO MORAL WORTH IN THE FEAR OF PUBLIC EXPOSURE. The sinner is not conscious of inward unworthiness, or at least this is not his strongest feeling. All he dreads is public exposure. He is not repentant of his sin; he is only ashamed of its disgrace. Moreover, though he is so fearful of discovery by man, he has no thought that God's eye is on him, and no concern that God disapproves of him. His one thought is of his fellow-men, the opinion of the world. This fear is altogether low and selfish. It does not spring from conscience; it only concerns itself with the consequences of wickedness, not with the wickedness itself. It has no regard for the outraged law; it only thinks of the threatening punishment. That punishment may come in visible penalties. The criminal may have to go to prison or the gallows, or when the mob seizes its victim it may "lynch" him. The terror of a miserable creature who is hiding from the expected vengeance of the people must be an awful agony. Nevertheless, there is nothing to touch the higher nature in this. Possibly, however, the fear is only of a social stigma. The man who had been in a position of honour finds himself an object of universal contempt. The disgrace is unbearable. He hides his head for very shame. He is miserably selfish in his degradation.

III. IT IS A HAPPY THING TO HAVE NO OCCASION FOR THE SHAME OF PUBLIC

EXPOSURE. Some men are so sunken in wickedness that they are beneath shame, so familiar with disgrace that they do not feel it. No doubt it would be a step upward for such men to awake to a consciousness of their abject condition. But for those who are not lost to all sense of public decency, it certainly is well to be able to stand out boldly before the world and not dread investigation. Yet even when this can be done there may be misunderstandings that lead to false accusations, or there may be worldly sins that our fellow-men do not condemn. Therefore he who remembers that he has to give account of himself to God will not be satisfied with winning the approval of his fellows, nor cast down to despair if he loses it, so long as he has the smile of his supreme Master. When a man's conscience is clear towards Heaven, he need fear no public exposure. He may meet with social contempt, like the martyrs. But though this may be painful to him, he can be calm and patient, knowing that in the end God will vindicate the right.—W. F. A.

Ver. 35.—*The indictment.* Job desires something like a legal indictment. His experience suggests confusion, uncertainty, irregularity. He sets "his mark," and now he wants his Adversary—who, to Job's thought, can be none other than his Judge, God—to draw up an indictment that he may know once for all what charges are brought against him.

I. MAN CANNOT UNDERSTAND GOD'S DEALINGS WITH HIM. This thought repeatedly recurs in the Book of Job; it is one of the great lessons of the poem. We can now see that Job was almost as much misjudging God as the three friends were misjudging Job. But at the time it was not possible for the patriarch to comprehend the Divine purpose in his sufferings. Had he known all, much of the gracious design of his trial would have been frustrated. The very obscurity was a necessary condition for the testing of faith. While we are enduring trial we can rarely see the issue of it. Our view is almost limited to the immediate present. Moreover, there are future consequences of God's present treatment of us which we could not truly comprehend if they were visible to us. The child is not capable of valuing his education and appreciating the good results of it. The patient is not able to understand the medical or surgical treatment he is made to undergo. While we walk by faith, we must learn to expect dispensations of providence that are quite beyond our comprehension.

II. IT IS NATURAL TO DESIRE AN EXPLANATION OF GOD'S TREATMENT OF MAN. 1. *That doubts may be removed.* It is difficult not to distrust God when he seems to be dealing hardly with us. If only he would roll back the clouds we should be at rest. 2. *For our own guidance.* Is God accusing us of sin? Are we to take his chastisements as punishments? Then what are the sins in us that he most disapproves of?

III. GOD DOES NOT PUNISH WITHOUT ALLOWING US TO SEE THE GROUNDS OF HIS ACTION. Job craved an indictment. He wanted to see the charges against him in black and white. 1. *When we are guilty conscience will reveal the fact.* It would be monstrous to condemn and punish the criminal without even letting him know of the offence with which he is charged. We dare not ascribe such injustice to God. He has implanted within us an accusing voice that echoes his accusations. If we seek for light and the guidance of conscience, we must be able to see how we have sinned and come under the wrath of God. 2. *When no consciousness of guilt is to be found, the suffering cannot be for the punishment of sin.* We are all conscious of sin, but sin may be forgiven; we may not be falling away from God, but cleaving to him—though with weakness and sin in our hearts, still with faithful adhesion. Then God will not punish. If, therefore, the blow falls, it is for some other than a penal reason. Consequently, we need not search about anxiously for some unseen and unsuspected wickedness. Job made a mistake in asking for an indictment. There was none, simply because there was not any ground for one. Over-scrupulous consciences suspect the wrath of Heaven when the gracious purging of the fruitful branch is really a sign of the husbandman's appreciation of it.—W. F. A.

SECTION V. CH. XXXII.—XXXVII. HARANGUE OF ELIHU.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A new personage is now introduced upon the scene, who speaks in a new style and almost in a new language. No previous mention has been made of him; no subsequent notice is taken of his arguments; and nothing is said of him in the historical section wherewith the work concludes (ch. xlii. 7—17). It is therefore scarcely surprising that some exception has been taken to the genuineness of the entire passage (ch. xxxii.—xxxvii.), or that it has been regarded by many excellent critics as an interpolation into the Book of Job, made by one who was not the original author, at a date considerably later than the rest of the composition. A modification of this extreme view is suggested by M. Renan, who thinks that the original author may have added the passage in his old age. This view is entitled to consideration. The subject has been discussed at some length in the Introduction, so that no more need be stated here. We are confronted with the fact that the passage has come down to us as a substantive portion of the Book of Job, in all the Hebrew manuscripts that have reached our time, as well as in all the ancient versions—the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Chaldee, the Arabic, the Æthiopic, the Vulgate, etc. To excise it, therefore, would be too bold a measure, though some moderns have not shrunk from doing so.

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EXPOSITION.

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speeches of the three friends was *nil*; they had entirely failed to answer Job's arguments.

Ver. 13.—**Lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom**; or, *beware lest ye say, We have found wisdom* (see the Revised Version). "Do not suppose, *i.e.*, that you have triumphed in the controversy, that your mode of meeting Job's complaints is the wise and right one. The exact reverse is the case. You have not vanquished Job. On the contrary, he is unvanquished, and remains master of the field. If he is ever to be vanquished, it will not be by you. **God thrusteth** (rather, *may thrust*) **him down, not man.** A true prophecy! (see ch. xl. 1—14).

Ver. 14.—**Now he hath not directed his words against me.** Elihu thinks that he can interfere in the controversy with the better prospect of a good result, since he is untouched by any of Job's words, and can therefore speak without passion or resentment. **Neither will I answer him with your speeches.** He is also going to bring forward fresh arguments which, as they avoid the line taken by the three friends, may soothe, instead of exasperating, the patriarch.

Ver. 15.—**They were amazed, they answered no more.** A change from the second to the third person, possibly as seeming less disrespectful. Or perhaps Elihu turns from the three friends at this point, as Professor Lee supposes, and addresses himself to Job. Job's "comforters," he says, "were amazed" by his last speech, and could find nothing to say in reply to it. Consequently, **they left off speaking.**

Ver. 16.—**When I had waited (for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more)**; rather, as in the Revised Version, *and shall I wait, because they speak not, because they stand still, and answer no more?* Am I to wait until they shall have recovered themselves, and found something to answer? Surely this is not necessary. Neither courtesy nor etiquette prescribes it. Especially when I have waited so long, and have so much to say, and am so exceedingly anxious to say it (see vers. 18—20). Elihu shows all the impatience and ardour of a young speaker (see ver. 6), and feels the confidence that young men so often feel in the wisdom and persuasiveness of their words (comp. ch. xxxiii. 1—6).

Ver. 17.—**I said, I will answer also my part, I also will show mine opinion.** The initial "I said" is superfluous. Elihu, having asked himself the question, "Shall I wait?" in ver. 16, here gives the answer. He will not wait any longer, he will take the word, he will set forth his conviction.

Ver. 18.—**For I am full of matter**; literally, *I am full of words*; i.e. I have very much to say. **The spirit within me constraineth me**; literally, *the spirit of my belly*; i.e. "my inward feelings and emotions." Compare Zophar's statements in ch. xx. 2, 3; and Job's own declarations in ch. xiii., that he *must* speak (vers. 13, 19). There is a state of intense excitement, when reticence becomes impossible.

Ver. 19.—**Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent.** The process of fermentation properly takes place in the vat, from which the gas evolved in the operation can freely escape. When wine was put into skins before fermentation was complete, and gas continued to be evolved, the effect was that the skins became distended, as the gas had no vent, and then not unfrequently the skins would burst, especially if they were old ones (see Matt. ix. 17). **It is ready to burst like new bottles.** Even if the skins were new, they would undergo distension, and would appear as if "ready to burst," though the actual catastrophe might be avoided. Elihu's pent-up feelings seem to him, if they do not obtain a vent, to threaten some such a result.

Ver. 20.—**I will speak, that I may be refreshed**; rather, *that I may obtain relief*; or, according to some, "that I may be able to breathe" (Cook, Rosenmüller). Elihu feels almost suffocated by conflicting feelings of rage (vers. 1—3), disappointment (vers. 11, 12), and anxiety to vindicate God's honour (ver. 2). **I will open my lips and answer.** In the remainder of Elihu's discourse the attempt is made to "answer" Job (see ch. xxxiii.—xxxvii.), with what success will be considered elsewhere.

Ver. 21.—**Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person.** Elihu hopes that, in what he is about to say, he will not permit himself to be swayed by any personal bias; that he will neither unduly favour the upper classes nor the vulgar (see Professor Lee, on the difference between אִישׁ and אָדָם, 'Book of Job,' p. 444), but will treat all fairly and equitably. **Neither let me** (he says) **give flattering titles unto man.** Professor Lee observes on this: "The Oriental practice of giving long and fulsome titles is too well known to need anything beyond the mere mention of the fact." Elihu certainly, in the whole of his address, flatters no one.

Ver. 22.—**For I know not to give flattering titles**; *i.e.* it is not my habit to give flattering titles, nor have I any knowledge of the art. I should expect that, if such were my habit, **my Maker would soon take me away**; would soon, *i.e.*, remove me from the earth, as one whose influence was not for good, but for evil. Flattery is condemned by Job, in ch. xvii. 5; by David, in the Psalms (iii. 9; xii. 2, 3; lxxviii. 36); and by Solomon, in the Book of Proverbs (ii. 16; vii. 21; xx. 19; xxviii. 23, etc.).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The intervention of Elihu.* I. THE DISCOMFITURE OF THE FRIENDS. "So these three men"—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—"ceased to answer Job;" *i.e.* did not respond to the lamentations and protestations which he uttered in his parable. 1. *The reason they perhaps assigned for their silence.* "Because he," *i.e.* Job, "was righteous in his own eyes." If this was scarcely accurate in the strict theological sense of the expression, since Job had more than once acknowledged himself a sinner (ch. vii. 20, 21; ix. 2, 3), and even subscribed to the sentiment of Elíphaz and his associates that no mortal man can be just before God (ch. ix. 20; xiv. 3, 4), it is yet difficult to exonerate the patriarch entirely from the charge here preferred against him; for, though righteous to the extent of being free from flagrant transgression, which his friends alleged he was not, and sincerely devoted to the ways of holiness, as God himself had testified (ch. i. 1), he nevertheless insisted on his blamelessness of life and uprightness of character with such pertinacity as to overstep the bounds of true humility, advancing these as a ground or reason why God should have dealt with him differently from what he had done, and thus, as it were, constructing out of them a claim of merit, or self-righteousness before God. 2. *The reason they forgot to assign for their silence.* "Because they had found no answer," *i.e.* to Job. For this explanation of their conduct we are indebted to the observation of Elihu, a new interlocutor who appears upon the scene. Unable to convince Job of immorality and hypocrisy, they were likewise, in Elihu's judgment, incompetent to reply to his arguments and protestations. Doubtless the matter did not so present itself to the contemplation of the friends. According to their theology, Job, being a great sufferer, must have been a great sinner; and any declarations on his part to the contrary only proved that he had not been sufficiently humbled before God, and was indulging in self-deception. This, however, as Job explained, entirely failed in its applicability to him, whose past life of stainless purity, fervent piety, and unwearied philanthropy gave conspicuous demonstration of the falsehood of their allegations, and whose present consciousness reproached him with no dereliction of duty, but rather loudly proclaimed the steadfast character, untarnished beauty, and unmixed sincerity of his integrity to Heaven. But, inasmuch as the above-cited nostrum was the only specific which remained in the pharmacopœia of the friends, they judiciously abandoned the case as beyond their skill. They had spent every weapon in their quiver without overthrowing their antagonist; and, accordingly, with commendable prudence, observing a discreet reticence as to the secret motive of their behaviour, they retired from the contest.

II. THE INTERPOSITION OF ELIHU. "Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram." 1. *The personality of Elihu.* Details such as these—concerning the name (Elihu, equivalent to "He is my God"), parentage (son of Barachel, or "God blesseth"), country (the Buzite, probably a descendant of Nahor through his second son (Gen. xxii. 21), and therefore of Aramæan extraction, though by birth an Arabian, Buz being mentioned with Dedan and Tema as a city of Idumea in the time of Jeremiah, xxv. 23), kindred (of the family of Ram, otherwise unknown, unless connected with Aram, the son of Shem, Gen. x. 23, the brother of Buz, Gen. xxii. 21, or the grandfather of Nahshon, cf. Numb. i. 7 with 1 Chron. ii. 9, 10)—dispose of the patristic conceit that the new interlocutor was Jesus Christ. Equally, however, do they preclude the hypothesis (Cox) that he was simply one of the young men of Job's city (ch. xxix. 8). They rather hint that he "belonged to a family which had retained the knowledge of the God of heaven" (Cook); and, indeed, when it is considered that Elihu distinctly claims to speak under Divine impulse (ch. xxxii. 8; xxxiii. 4), proposes himself as a response to Job's oft-repeated demand for a daysman (ch. xxxiii. 6), and unfolds views of Divine truth concerning the remedial character of affliction and the doctrine of atonement (ch. xxxiii. 14—30) that seem like anticipations of gospel discoveries, it is hard to resist the inference that in Elihu we have a young Arabian prophet who had been providentially brought upon the scene, as the friends were, and was moved at the appropriate juncture to deliver certain preliminary judgments on the cause then pending. 2. *The time of his appearing.* We are inclined to think that, as the result of the strife of tongues between the patriarch

and his friends, to which also we can suppose that Elihu had listened, the citadel of Job's integrity, if not in danger of being captured, was at any rate rudely shaken, and that victory, in the grand fundamental debate or controversy of the poem, was inclining to the side of the devil. But as God never leaves his people in their hour of need, so neither was Job suffered to be taken captive by the craft of Satan. And accordingly Elihu is at this point introduced upon the stage. 3. *The purpose of his introduction.* (1) Doctrinal completeness. Considered as a theological discussion, nothing could have been less satisfactory than the position of matters at the close of Job's monologue. On the one hand, the friends had exhausted themselves in an attempt to demonstrate their particular theory without convincing Job. On the other hand, Job had uttered his last word without converting them to his way of thinking. On the one side, they remained exactly as they were, both as to the truth of their dogma and as to its bearing on the case of Job. On the other side, Job himself was hopelessly entangled in a futile endeavour to reconcile the seemingly insoluble contradiction which existed between his outward lot and his inward condition. So far as the right relation of suffering to sin was concerned, neither of the disputants had discovered it. Occasionally, indeed, Job seemed to get a glimpse of it (ch. xxiii. 10), as also did Eliphaz (ch. v. 17); but for the most part the remedial, corrective, beneficent, pædagogic uses of adversity were not understood. This view of affliction, therefore, required to be prominently exhibited, if the poem were at all to be redeemed from a charge of incompleteness, of starting a problem it could not answer, of propounding an enigma it could not solve; and this was done by setting forth Elihu to clear away the doctrinal fogs which had gathered around the otherwise acute mind of Job, no less than round the less penetrative intellects of his friends. (2) Dramatic unity. Recurring to the problem lying at the basis of the poem, the controversy represented as existing between God and Satan, and solemnly put to trial in the person of Job, was not whether man, standing alone and unaided on the platform of nature, could maintain his integrity to Heaven, but whether man could do so on the platform of grace (*vide* ch. i. 9, homiletics). It was needful, therefore, that, just at the moment when Job seemed to be on the eve of giving way, he should receive such assistance as grace could impart; and this, again, was done by Elihu, who, speaking from a Divine impulse, "sets before Job clearer, fuller, and more accurate views of the Divine character and modes of procedure in dealing with the children of men, and thereby seeks to reinforce him in his struggle with his friends, and to prevent him from succumbing beneath the temptations of the foe" (*vide British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, October, 1872, art. "The Problem of Job," by the Rev. T. Whitelaw, M.A.). Thus the interlocution of Elihu is not so much "what Job had repeatedly called for, a confutation of his opinions, not effected by an overwhelming display of Divine power, but by rational and human argument" (Canon Cook, in 'Speaker's Commentary'), or "the *human* verdict on the controversy between Job and the friends, which we want to hear almost as much as the *Divine* verdict" (Cox), as the special illumination which Divine grace had to shed upon the problem agitated between him and them, which illumination was conveyed to him through the instrumentality of Elihu, as it is now more amply and luminously unfolded to us in the gospel. 4. *The spirit of his intervention.* (1) His wrath was kindled. That Elihu should have given way to an uncalled-for ebullition of anger, if such be the view adopted of his passionate excitement, was no more a proof that he did not speak under inspiration than was the fact that he made use of Aramaisms, and committed certain inelegancies of style. "It is good to be zealously affected in a good thing," and Elihu's indignation was amply vindicated by the conduct first of Job (ver. 2), and secondly of the friends (ver. 3). Yet (2) his modesty was conspicuous. The style of severe animadversion adopted by many commentators, both ancient and modern, in stigmatizing Elihu as "an emblem of confident arrogance" (Gregory the Great), as an example of the ambitious orator (Strigel), as "arrogant and bold" (Herder), as "a conceited prater" (Umbreit), and his addresses as "the weak and rambling speeches of a boy," is quite unwarranted. Not only had he waited respectfully until his elders had concluded their disputations (ver. 4), but with much humility he attributed any value his contributions might possess, not to the intrinsic excellence of his own genius, but to the fact of his inspiration (ver. 8), which rendered him little more than the mouthpiece of Heaven.

Learn: 1. It is one mark of true wisdom to know when to be silent. 2. It is specially becoming in young men to be deferential towards their elders. 3. It is quite possible for good men to be righteous in their own eyes. 4. It is commonly the case that of two controversialists both are wrong. 5. It is not unseemly for even young men to be jealous of the Divine honour. 6. It is no sin for young men who know the truth to instruct old men who know it not. 7. It is right in those who speak for God to be raised above the fear of man. 8. It is certain that God never suffers saints to be tempted without reinforcing them by Divine grace and teaching. 9. It is observable that heavenly succour mostly comes to men when human resources are exhausted.

Vers. 6—22.—*The apology of Elihu.* I. THE REASONS OF HIS PREVIOUS RETICENCE. Elihu had been an earnest listener to the controversy Job waged with his three friends, "waiting for Job with words" (ver. 4), *i.e.* eager to pour out in speech the arguments that trembled on his lips; and now he declares that two things had restrained him from joining earlier in the discussion. 1. *A modest respect for their superior age.* He was but a young man (literally, "few of years"), while they were very old. Their venerable aspect had inspired him with such awe that he feared to utter his opinion in their presence. Young men in modern times are not always so deferential towards their elders. But *seniores priores* is a maxim which should be of universal application. While it is at all times unbecoming and impertinent for a youth to interrupt or precede an elder in conversation, it is a special mark of rudeness in religious discussion for an inexperienced boy to "show his opinion" before men of mature years have delivered theirs. Jesus, at the age of twelve, among the doctors in the temple, was not delivering his convictions, but "hearing and asking them questions." 2. *A lofty esteem for their superior knowledge.* He considered that old age, with its rich experience, should have had wise and weighty thoughts immeasurably more worthy of being listened to than any crude sentiments and immature judgments that he could utter. A young man who thus accurately gauges the relative importance of the wisdom of age and the "opinions" of youth is a rare phenomenon. It is characteristic of youth, though born like a wild ass's colt, to fancy itself as wise as Solomon. For the most part, the education of a lifetime is required to enable any one to gather successfully the ripe fruits of wisdom; and even then, the wisdom one gathers is chiefly this, that what one knows is as nothing in comparison to that of which one is ignorant. Occasional examples may be found of amazing talent, immense learning, extraordinary genius, in youth; but ripe wisdom, *i.e.* carefully verified, well-digested, skilfully arranged knowledge, is pre-eminently the property of age.

II. THE MOTIVES FOR HIS PRESENT INTERFERENCE. In justification of his behaviour, he offers the following considerations. 1. *That true wisdom in its ultimate analysis is an inspiration of Heaven.* "Truly it is the spirit in man [literally, 'weak, feeble, mortal man'], and the breath of Shaddai that giveth them [*i.e.* man collectively] understanding" (ver. 8). That is to say, human life in all its departments—physical, intellectual, spiritual—is not an evolution or development from dead matter, but is the creation of God's Spirit (Gen. ii. 7). It is the breath of the Almighty that sustains the thinking principle in man no less than the principle of purely animal existence. Hence wisdom, spiritual insight, intellectual penetration, religious understanding, has its origin rather from within than from without. It is dependent not so much (if at all) upon accidental circumstances, such as age, capacity, opportunity, as upon the quickening influence of the vitalizing and enlightening Spirit. Nay, it demonstrates the possibility of a supernatural communication of wisdom to whomsoever Shaddai wills, and upon whatsoever theme he may please. It proves that no man can justly, or without presumption, claim a monopoly of wisdom. The doctrine of Elihu, that all intelligence in man, and much more all spiritual understanding, proceeds from a Divine afflatus which breatheth when, where, and how it wills, was the doctrine of Pharaoh (Gen. xli. 38), of Moses (Exod. xxxi. 3), of Nehemiah (ix. 20), of Isaiah (xi. 2), of Christ (John xvi. 13), of St. Paul (1 Cor. ii. 10), and of St. John (1 John ii. 20). 2. *That true wisdom is not necessarily the property of age.* "Great men are not always wise; neither do the aged understand judgment" (ver. 9). This was an advance upon the previous thought. Not only was wisdom not the property of age alone; the discourses

to which he had listened had painfully convinced him it was not necessarily a characteristic of age at all. This witness is true. If juvenile witlings abound among all ranks and classes of society, there is unfortunately no lack of aged dullards. Partly through lack of capacity, partly from defective education, partly from long-continued negligence, many come to old age without acquiring wisdom (ch. iv. 21), and sometimes without possessing common sense. It is not, therefore, wrong for young men of piety and culture to offer to instruct these persons in Divine truth or secular information; only even to such as these it becomes young men to manifest the courtesy and deference that are always due to age. 3. *That in particular the old men before him had not displayed a high degree of wisdom.* He had hearkened to their "understandings," *i.e.* their explanations of the subject-matter in dispute, and had carefully examined the replies with which they had endeavoured to convince and silence Job; but in no single instance had they fairly combated his position. It was not reasonable to say, "Lo! we have found out wisdom," and here it is: "God thrusteth him down, not man," so that from this his punishment we infer his guilt (ver. 13); because that was exactly the point at issue throughout the entire course of the discussion. Nor, again, was it reasonable to assert that their dogma was the absolute wisdom, though Job was of so obstinate a temper that only God could convince him, since obviously man could not. That, again, was to beg the question entirely; and, in default of argument, to abuse the plaintiff's attorney. Job's words must be fairly and honestly controverted. But these old preachers did not understand the business. A well-known interpretation of ver. 13 makes Elihu say that only God could overthrow Job, while he really means that only such uncommon genius as he (Elihu) possessed could vanquish a disputant so obstinate as Job (Umbreit); but this is putting the worst construction possible on language which may legitimately signify that in Elihu's judgment Job's position could not be turned by merely human wisdom, but demanded the light of inspiration such as he was about to shed upon the theme. 4. *That the contribution he proposed to offer was entirely fresh and original.* The position he intended to occupy was not one against which Job had already directed his attacks; nor had the arguments he designed to use in confutation of the patriarch occurred to any of the friends. The new thoughts Elihu proposed to introduce into the discussion related chiefly to the disciplinary character of affliction; and it is doubtful if such a view of life's tribulations could have occurred to any one apart from Divine revelation. The interpretation which understands Elihu to say that, inasmuch as he had not been personally interested in the debate which Job and the friends had conducted, he was able both to deliver an impartial verdict on the point at issue, and to preserve a more equal temper than they, the friends, had been able to do, though perhaps admissible, is not so forcible or apt. 5. *That the strength of his convictions would no longer admit of his keeping silence.* So powerfully had the truth seized upon him, and so long had he endeavoured to restrain it, that now his soul (literally, "his belly," as the seat of spiritual emotions) seemed like a wine-skin on the eve of bursting through the fermentation of the liquor it contained (vers. 17—19). So every Heaven-born idea, to whomsoever it is first communicated, irresistibly strives after utterance. For a season the living thought may be kept in abeyance, carefully secluded from the world at large, but ultimately there comes a moment when it asserts its Heaven-granted supremacy over the mind of the man that has received it, and, refusing to be longer concealed, eventually drives that mind to speak forth the God-imparted message. So the Word of the Lord was in Jeremiah's heart as a burning fire shut up in his bones (Jer. xx. 9). So SS. Peter and John told the Sanhedrin they could not but speak the things which they had seen and heard (Acts iv. 20). So St. Paul felt that necessity was laid upon him to preach the gospel (1 Cor. ix. 16). So Mahomet proclaimed to the rude Arab tribes of a later day the sublime discovery of the unity of God; and Luther could not keep back the truth which God's Spirit had flashed into his soul on Pilate's Staircase, that "the just shall live by faith." So when God gives to any man—prophet, poet, preacher, writer, inventor, discoverer, or man of genius generally, a new idea, it renders him uncomfortable until it has been liberated, brought to the birth, as it were, and sent forth to wander through the world on its Heaven-designed mission. If the possessor of such an idea would have ease and comfort in his soul, he must give it voice. As Elihu says, he must speak in order to be refreshed.

III. THE CHARACTER OF HIS FORTHCOMING UTTERANCE. The two closing verses are

by some understood to contain an additional reason for Elihu's interposition, viz. that continued silence would evince such a mean and cowardly deference to merely human authority, that he could not hope to escape punishment for it at the hands of God ('Speaker's Commentary;' Cox); but it seems preferable to view them as setting forth first the principles he intended to observe in his proposed interlocution, and, secondly, the reasons or arguments on which those principles were based (Delitzsch, Carey, Fry, etc.). 1. *The principles he intended to observe.* These were: (1) The strictest impartiality as between man and man: "Let me not, I pray thee, accept any man's person" (ver. 21). The acceptance of persons, or the favouring of the great at the expense of the small, of the rich at the expense of the poor, of the powerful at the expense of the weak, results either from moral cowardice, intellectual vanity, or personal dishonesty. Condemned in the Word of God (Prov. xviii. 5), it is specially unbecoming in the followers of Christ (Jas. ii. 1). Charged by Job against the friends (ch. xiii. 8), it was a sin which Elihu felt it incumbent upon him to avoid. (2) The directest honesty as regards the individual himself. "Neither let me give flattering titles to any man." Unlike his Oriental countrymen, Elihu would be guilty of no adulation or compliment to any man; but with simplicity and godly sincerity would deliver the sentiments with which he had been charged. So Elijah preached to Ahab (1 Kings xviii. 18), and the Baptist to Herod (Matt. xiv. 4). So did St. Paul preach the gospel at Corinth (2 Cor. i. 12), Thessalonica (1 Thess. ii. 4), Athens (Acts xvii. 22), and elsewhere. So preached Luther to the princes of Germany, Latimer to Henry VIII. of England, and John Knox to Mary Queen of Scots. 2. *The reasons he alleged for his intended behaviour.* These were extremely creditable to himself. (1) He had not learnt the art of flattery. He possessed a soul too large, honest, and independent to reside in a courtier's bosom. Adulation was abhorrent to his nature. Such souls are scarce. Yet there is no better mark of true spiritual nobility than an incapacity to either give or receive the honeyed words and fawning courtesies of flattery. (2) He would certainly be punished if he did commit the wickedness alluded to—punished, according to the interpretation of the last clause (Carey, Fry), with the richly merited contempt of God: "How little would my Maker esteem me!"—according to another rendering (Delitzsch, Cook, Cox), with some signal manifestation of his displeasure, as *e.g.* by sudden death.

Learn: 1. There is a time to speak and a time to keep silence, even in regard to the most sacred matters. 2. It is a high proof of wisdom to be able to recognize whence all wisdom comes. 3. It is proper to sift the opinions and doctrines of even the oldest and wisest of men; to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. 4. It would largely contribute to the world's happiness if those who undertook to teach others never spoke until they were impelled by the force of inward conviction. 5. The men who move the world are those whose souls are illumined and inflamed by the light and fire of great ideas. 6. One of the greatest pleasures a human soul can enjoy on earth is that of propounding and diffusing new and lofty thoughts. 7. Sincerity of mind and heart is an indispensable qualification for the teacher whom God employs. 8. Want of fidelity to the truth and to those who hear is one of the greatest crimes a preacher can commit. 9. God despises and will punish those who yield to fear or favour. 10. God can easily remove those who are unfaithful to the trust they have received.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1—ch. xxxvii. 24.—*Elihu and his discourse.* In the person of the young Elihu a new speaker comes forward, who mediates between Job and his friends. Calmer and juster in thought than either, he takes up the word when "wit and reason" on both sides are at an end; he shows the weakness of the friends, but at the same time reproaches Job with his past wild speeches, and refutes certain of his errors. Thus he prepares the way for the appearance of Jehovah himself. In ch. xxxii. and xxxiii., after a long introduction, he advances an argument for the truth that man may not esteem himself pure and just in the presence of God.—J.

Ver. 1—ch. xxxiii. 7.—*Appearance of Elihu: the motives of his address.* I. His character indicated. (Vers. 1—6.) In a few touches the temper and spirit of this

new speaker are set before us. 1. *His warm piety*, which could not tolerate the confidence and the self-justifying spirit of Job. His sense of the greatness of God and his holiness is so profound that he cannot endure what seems to be the bold and haughty attitude of the creature. His feeling seems to be, "Let God be true, and every man a liar!" 2. *His spirit of justice*, which was indignant at the unfairness of the friends, who held Job for guilty, and condemned him without being able to give an answer to his plea. These are two grand elements in a noble character. Without zeal for God and his righteousness, our sympathy for the suffering may degenerate into a sickly and immoral sentimentalism. But without feeling for the wrongs of the oppressed, without the passion for justice, our zeal for God will become an unholy and pernicious fire. This last has been the cause of many of those terrible persecutions which have defaced the history of the world. Let us beware in our spirit and temper of these extremes—and avoid either dishonouring God through a weak pity for mere suffering, or being cruel to men through a zeal for God. Zeal is a good servant, but a bad master; the spring of heroic deeds or of dreadful crimes. 3. *His modesty and respect*, shown by his keeping silence in the presence of his elders, so long as they might desire to speak. As the shade to a figure in a picture, so does modesty impart a strength and beauty to the character; it adds to virtue the charm that chastity adds to beauty. But there is a limit to every grace; and modesty becomes a weakness if it leads a man to withhold truth from the world, or to keep his mouth shut when the "word in season" ought to be spoken.

II. THE EXPLANATION OF ELIHU'S INTERFERENCE. (Vers. 6—10.) His modest sense of his own youth and his respect for their age held him back in the presence of his seniors. But, on the other hand, conscience and the inspiration of God's truth within him impelled him to speak. This little fragment is very instructive, and yields several important lessons. There is a lesson of *prudence* and *tact*. The speaker should ever seek to gain the good will of his audience, by laying aside every appearance of assumption or conceit, by testimonies of graceful respect for his audience. Especially should this rule be kept in mind by those who have the most important truths to deliver. Before sowing the seed let the ill weeds be rooted out, and the soil be well broken up. We must try to soften the minds of our hearers as a preparative for impressing them. Augustine says, "He who strives to persuade others to goodness should neglect none of these three things: to *please*, to *teach*, to *sway* their minds; thus he will be heard *gladly*, *intelligently*, *obediently*." But higher than these is the lesson of conscientiousness—attention to the voice within. The Spirit of God finds its truest echo in the conscience. All distinctions of persons and of age fade away in presence of this supreme truth. For wisdom depends not on age, but on the Divine illumination. Well for us if we can forget in whose presence we are speaking, whether younger or elder, richer or poorer, wiser or more unlearned, because absorbed like Elihu in the sense of God's truth and the desire for his glory. "Let no man despise thy youth" (1 Tim. iv. 12). If young men have a sound knowledge of Divine things, the elder need not be ashamed to listen and learn from them.

III. THE JUSTIFICATION OF ELIHU'S INTERFERENCE. (Vers. 11—22.) In this passage his character and spirit are further unfolded in points that are worthy of admiration and imitation. 1. *His love of reason.* He waited expectantly to hear some satisfactory reply from the friends to Job's clear arguments and statements in self-vindication. He expected either that they would confute him, or that they would candidly admit they were worsted in the strife. "We found wisdom (in Job); God can strike him, not man." His wisdom is so superior to ours that God only can drive him from the field (ver. 13). This is a lesson on the morals of controversy. Meet your antagonist with reason for reason; and, when you can do so no longer, be willing to own yourself beaten. Reasonableness and candour, the desire to persuade others or to be persuaded one's self of the truth,—this is the chivalry of controversy; these are the jewels that shine amidst the cloud of words; the precious balsam-drops that these woeful wars distil. A sullen conspiracy of silence is the retreat and fortress of the dishonourable and the coward. 2. *His depth of heart* Elihu is not convinced by Job; his mind teems with matter of deep and living truth. His is no shallow logic of the schools, which falls powerless upon the true heart armed with the justice of its cause. His is no fool's bolt, soon shot, and leaving him in helplessness. His bosom is like a skin of new wine; he is

bursting to tell forth all that experience and reflection have taught him concerning the truths of life. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Let us harvest the instruction of time, lay up a good store of heart-memories, that we may ever have a good and useful word to speak in season. Let us take care of those strong impulses that they are true and pure before we speak; but never hesitate to speak when we are conscious that God is inspiring us. To be led by the Spirit, we must walk in the Spirit. 3. *His fearless sincerity.* He has no respect of persons when truth is concerned, reverential as he otherwise is in the presence of his elders. He will not flatter; he does not understand the base art. The fear of God is before his eyes. "Flatterers are the worst kind of traitors," says Sir Walter Raleigh. He who is true to God and to himself will never distil this poison from his tongue. In Elihu, then, we have the picture of what a man should be, of what we all should desire in a friend—fairness, honour, candour; sympathy and affection based upon the only sure foundation, love of truth, piety toward God.

IV. ELIHU'S SPECIAL APPEAL TO JOB FOR A PATIENT HEARING. (Ch. xxxiii. 1—7.) Here we see the following traits: 1. *Intense earnestness.* (Vers. 1, 2.) For these opening words, which might seem to our Western ears like a "beating about the bush," are in fact Oriental phrases by which the speaker calls the most solemn attention to, and lays the greatest weight upon, what he is about to speak. Such opening formulæ may be found in Matt. v. 2; Acts x. 34; 2 Cor. vi. 11. Let it be clear in one way or another to those who listen that we *mean* what we say, that we are not talking to fill up time, or using words to conceal the void of thought. 2. *Perfect sincerity.* (Ver. 3.) His sayings are the straightforward utterances of his heart, very different from the stale and secondhand commonplaces of the three friends. True eloquence, like the substance of every virtue and every art, is in the heart. The bullet finds its way to the mark, according to the old legend, that has been first dipped in the marksman's blood. Words that come from the heart will reach to the heart. 3. *The sense of dependence upon God* (ver. 4), for all light and wisdom, which, while it makes a man humble, makes him truly confident and strong. God's Spirit has made him. He appeals to no special inspiration, however, but simply to that genuine human wisdom, that common sense which he recognizes to be a Divine endowment. It is a mark of true piety to own the presence of the Divine Spirit in all the ordinary as well as the extraordinary gifts of intelligence. It is this that chastens, sweetens, and sanctifies the use of every bright talent of the mind and heart. 4. *Fellow-feeling.* (Vers. 6, 7.) He does not pretend to stand nearer to God than the fellow-man he has arisen to comfort and instruct. He is made of the same clay, moulded by the hand of the Divine Potter. Therefore Job has not to fear an unequal struggle with Elihu as he has with God. Would that all teachers would remember this! The artificial distinctions of life, as prince or peasant, lettered or unlettered, mean but little; those of talent, character, and attainment have a certain value; but the common constitution God has given us is the great ground of appeal, the great source of authority. Those are the best teachers who most deeply read and interpret this common nature; and every truth must at last be certified, not by the *ipse dixit* of a dogmatizing teacher, but by the utterance of the universal heart and conscience.—J.

Vers. 1—22.—*The voice of juvenile self-confidence.* We now approach the solution of the mystery, the untying of the knot, the end of the controversy. Job's three friends have failed to convince Job that he is suffering the well-merited consequences of evil-doing; and he has failed to convince them of his integrity. Now a younger friend speaks with kindled wrath because the three friends "had found no answer." He speaks with the undue confidence of youth; but he weaves many words of truth and wisdom into his speech, from which we may gather some for our guidance. With some hesitation, and a complimentary reference to the claims of age, Elihu nevertheless reveals the impatient self-confidence of youth. Even though truth may be on its side, youthful self-confidence is an error. The error manifests itself here as so often elsewhere—

I. IN AN UNDUE ASSUMPTION OF EQUALITY WITH AGE. The "spirit" that is "in man," and "the inspiration of the Almighty," is assumed to give them "understanding" equally. At least Elihu puts himself on their level, though he afterwards affirms their inferiority.

II. IN A DESPISAL OF THE TEACHINGS OF AGE. So the young lips are ready to affirm, "Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment."

III. IN AN UNWARRANTED SELF-CONFIDENCE. How ready is youth to give its judgment! "I also will show mine opinion."

IV. IN AN EAGERNESS TO GIVE EXPRESSION TO OPINIONS. "I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me," etc.

V. IN A PRESUMPTION OF FREEDOM FROM PREJUDICE. "I know not to give flattering titles." Thus speaks youth in a confidence which is so often the effect of ignorance and inexperience. The true attitude for youth is (1) lowliness and humility; (2) teachableness; (3) patience; (4) reverent regard for age and for the counsels of experience.—R. G.

Ver. 1.—*Silence after the storm.* The three friends first comforted Job with seven days of silence (ch. ii. 13). They relapse into silence after their painful controversy with the suffering man. We feel a sense of relief, and breathe freely now that their dogmatic delusions are done with, and we have silence after the storm.

I. IT IS WISE TO KNOW WHEN TO BE SILENT. We cannot attribute much of this wisdom to the three friends. They would have been more commendable if they had practised it throughout. Still, they were not wholly senseless and heartless. They were able to perceive at length that no more words of theirs would help their case. Part of the art of speaking is to perceive the time for ceasing to speak. It is difficult for many people to come to an end of their words. Let us note some of the times for silencing our speech. 1. *When we have no more to say.* A man should only speak because he has something to say, never because he has to say something. 2. *When our words are not heard.* If we speak to heedless ears we waste our breath. It is vain to pour out words that our auditors cannot or will not drink in. 3. *When our words are not accepted.* If we cannot persuade men by what we say, we shall not do so by mere reiteration. We may find that no words will move our hearers; then further words are wasted on them. If we are altogether out of sympathy with our audience we cannot benefit them by adding words to words. 4. *When the time for action has arrived.* It will not be wise for the general to be haranguing his men when the enemy are already in the field. Words have their place; but this is not to usurp the place of deeds. 5. *When another should be heard.* Elihu has been waiting patiently while the old men have been talking. Now his time has come. Talkative people are tempted to be selfish. St. Paul ordered that when many wished to speak in the Church at Corinth each should have his turn, one giving place to another (1 Cor. xiv. 30).

II. SILENCE IS MOST VALUABLE WHEN IT FOLLOWS A STORM. This second silence has not the beauty of the first silence of sympathy. But it has a deeper significance in some respects. 1. *It is a relief from distressful controversy.* It is painful to be perpetually arguing with our friends. When the controversy rises to angry words the best thing is to break it off and relapse into silence. 2. *It affords time for reflection.* If anything worth remembering has been said, it is well that people should have time to think over it. Probably our religious services would be more fruitful if people would only have patience to allow of pauses for quiet meditation. 3. *It is a means of establishing peace.* When words only irritate, peace will be best secured by silence. If the three friends wished to be reconciled to Job, their wisest course was to wait for the heat of discussion to cool down. 4. *It is itself a blessing.* Other voices speak in the silence. Then the unseen world draws near to us. After the storm is hushed the heavens open. We all need more silence, especially after times of strain and difficulty. —W. F. A.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Elihu the young man.* We now reach another act in the drama. The vexatious controversy between Job and his three friends is over. Suddenly and quite unexpectedly a new character appears on the stage. We need not trouble ourselves with the question as to whether the Elihu episode was an original part of the poem or whether it was inserted later by the author or even by another hand. We may be thankful that we have it, and we may make use of its lessons with confidence; for we do not know who was the author of any part of the Book of Job, and yet we

find the grand work alive with Divine inspiration and rich in spiritual lessons. Let us consider the character of Elihu. Most contradictory opinions have been expressed about him.

I. A YOUNG MAN. The elders have spoken; now is the time for youth. Wisdom does not wholly reside with age. In the present day an American freedom is doing away with old-fashioned restraints upon youth, and young people are enjoying a prominence which was once regarded as not becoming. Whether the change is wholly profitable may be gravely questioned. But most assuredly it is not without some advantages. There is an *élan*, a freshness, and a vivacity which only the young can contribute to life; all the world should be thankful for the breezy vigour that accompanies youthful activity, for all the world is the better for it.

II. A CONFIDENT MAN. Elihu waited in modesty while the old men were speaking; yet there is a touch of satire in his tone of humility. For, in fact, he has a supreme contempt for the droning commonplaces of the elder advisers. Even Job comes under his lash. He hits out all round. It is exceedingly difficult for young people to believe that they are not infallible. The confidence that is natural to youth tends to develop into censoriousness.

III. A KEEN-SIGHTED MAN. Elihu had some ground for his confidence. He could see that the three friends had blundered most outrageously. Job, too, was in error. Elihu comes forward with a new truth. The friends should not accuse Job; Job should not accuse God. The sufferings of Job were not penal at all; they were medicinal. Thus this young man lifts the question on to a new stage. He it is who introduces the great thought of the disciplinary character of suffering.

IV. AN INSPIRED MAN. Elihu claimed a direct inspiration—not one that is peculiar to seers like Eliphaz, and that comes in startling vision, but one that is vouchsafed to man as man. He claims to have a share in this inspiration himself. Thus he too would speak for God; and to a certain extent he is right. Hence the truth and value of his words. We can only reach truth when we touch God. We must be free from worldly maxims and selfish prejudices, and open to the voice of Heaven, if we would possess Divine truth.—W. F. A.

Ver. 6.—*Youth and age.* Elihu speaks with becoming modesty in these words, although most of his discourse shows that he is perfectly self-confident, and full of contempt for the old censors of Job. He cannot but admit at least the conventional distinctions between the claims and dues of youth and age. Let us look at these distinctions.

I. DEFERENCE IS DUE TO AGE. We all feel that this is appropriate, even though age does not always appear in a light that fully justifies its claims. On what grounds does this deference rest? 1. *The experience of age.* Certainly age has had opportunities of gaining wisdom that are not afforded to youth. Whether a good use has been made of those opportunities is another matter. Still, it is scarcely possible to pass through the world without learning something, if only from one's own blunders. 2. *The maturity of age.* There is a certain rawness about youth. Apart from its acquisitions from without, the growth of the inner life of a man should ripen, and time should mellow his temperament. 3. *The dignity of age.* Age is not always dignified; still, the fatherly relation implies a certain rank that is only found with added years. We must respect the orderly arrangement that gives places of honour to years. 4. *The achievements of age.* The old hero may have become a feeble invalid. Yet he still wears the scars of the battles of bygone days, and we must respect him for what he has done. 5. *The infirmities of age.* These claim considerate and sympathetic treatment, not slighting and scornful disregard.

II. MODESTY IS BECOMING IN YOUTH. This is especially fit on two grounds. 1. *The claims of age.* If these are to be respected, youth must stand back for a time. However it might desire to assert itself, youth here finds itself confronted by an obstacle that must not be rudely thrust aside. It may chafe against the restraints, and think them most unreasonable. Perhaps it would be well for the young to consider that they will be aged some day, and will need the consideration shown to age. Meanwhile their advantages are greater than those of the aged in many respects, so that the attempt to surround a naturally melancholy lot of increasing infirmities with honours is really

a pathetic confession of the loss of many of the solid boons of life. The young need not envy the honours of age, seeing that they have the powers and opportunities and delights of the sunny spring-time of life. 2. *The imperfection of youth.* New and untried powers promise great things, but they need regulating and guiding. It is possible to do immense harm by rushing forward ignorantly and without circumspection. It is wiser to begin quietly, and feel our way by degrees.

III. NEITHER THE DEFERENCE DUE TO AGE NOR THE MODESTY BECOMING IN YOUTH SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO INTERFERE WITH DUTY. Old men should be careful not to suppress the generous enthusiasm of youth. They should rather mourn that they have lost it, if it is no longer with them. No venerable position can justify the obstruction of good works. The young have to learn to combine a suitable modesty with fidelity to truth and right. There will be no progress if the constitutional timidity of age is permitted to stand in the way of every proposed improvement. Deference does not mean absolute submission. After all, the consequences of actions are much more important to the young, who will live to reap them, than to the old, who will soon leave the world. The future is for the young; the young must be allowed to shape it.—W. F. A.

Ver. 8.—*The common inspiration of man.* Elihu here utters a great and daring thought. He turns from the dogmas of the ancients to the present Divine inspiration; from the teaching of authority to the voice of truth in the heart of man.

I. THERE IS A DIVINE INSPIRATION OF MAN. Elihu affirms its existence. The old men had grown stiff in thought, worldly, and dim-sighted. If ever they had quivered beneath the touch of inspiration this was in bygone days, and they had forgotten the experience. But the young, enthusiastic Elihu is alive to spiritual influence. Here we are at the root of religion, which does not spring from man's worship of God, but from God's touching man.

II. THIS INSPIRATION IS FOR ALL MEN. Elihu is not thinking of the special and rare vision of the seer which Eliphaz had described as so awe-inspiring (ch. iv. 12—16). He is thinking of something more simple, more natural, and more common. God does not only teach us indirectly by means of prophets and intermediate messengers. He has not left himself without witness in the heart of man. Conscience is the voice of God in the soul. Reason in man is a spark from the *Logos*, the great Word and Reason of God. Whenever men read truth they are in contact with the ever-present Spirit of truth. We do not live in a God-deserted world, nor in one that is only visited at rare intervals by Divine influences. God is nearer to us than we suspect. Job has been crying out for God; Elihu shows that God is not far off.

III. THE COMMON INSPIRATION OF MAN IS SEEN IN VARIOUS FORMS. It does not make every man a prophet, much less does it always confer the gift of infallibility. In Bezaleel it was a faculty for artistic workmanship (Exod. xxxv. 30—35). Samson found it a source of physical strength (Judg. xiii. 25). God gives his Spirit in *science*, leading men to truth; in *art*, teaching what is beautiful, and helping men to discriminate between meretricious, hurtful art and true, fruitful art; in *daily life*, affording guidance in perplexity and strength in difficulty; in *religion*, not only under the Jewish and Christian dispensations, where indeed it is most gloriously developed, but in every truly religious life. God has not abandoned India, nor did he abandon Greece or Egypt. Even amidst the monstrous delusions and the gross corruptions of heathenism the still small voice of God may be detected. Whatever is good and true in the world is an inspiration of God.

IV. CHRISTIANITY DEEPENS AND QUICKENS THE INSPIRATION OF MAN. Joel predicted the time when God's Spirit should be poured out on all flesh (Joel ii. 28), and St. Peter claimed that that time had come on the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 16—18). St. Paul tells us that all Christians together constitute a temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 19). If the Spirit of God is felt in the world, much more must the gracious Divine presence be enjoyed in the Church. Every Christian is, indeed, an inspired man. He is not infallible. But he has a Guide to truth, a Comforter in distress, a Strength for service, and a Grace for holiness.—W. F. A.

Ver. 20.—*The refreshment of speech.* Elihu will speak that he may be refreshed. Let us consider some of the ways in which this refreshment may be experienced.

I. THE SENSE OF RELIEF. 1. *In utterance of what is strongly felt.* It is difficult to restrain powerful emotions. Passion inspires speech. We long to tell out what burns in our hearts. Difficulty of utterance often arises from deadness of soul—often, but not always, for many of the best men have no facility of speech. Still, the surest road to eloquence is through emotion. 2. *In confession of what is deeply distressing.* It is hard to hide a dark secret. Criminals have been known to confess their evil deeds simply because they could not endure to keep silence about them. Great sorrows find relief in utterance. While the sufferer suppresses himself in stony grief his reason is in danger; let him weep and speak, and the worst anguish of his soul will find some relief. Prayer in great distress is not only appealing to God for help; it is also relieving the overburdened soul by utterance. It is much to be able to unbosom one's self to God, to open out sad secrets to Heaven.

II. THE EXERCISE OF POWER. No doubt the lower motive of desiring to feel his power was influencing Elihu, though he would have been too vain to have admitted it. Some people delight to hear the sound of their own voices. The importance and publicity of speaking before others is found to be attractive. When the speaker discovers that he can move an audience by his eloquence, a new fascination lays hold of him, and if he can influence by means of speech, he will find a pleasure in wielding so powerful an instrument. But there is great danger in all this, lest the speaker should idolize his own eloquence, and try to influence others merely for the sake of making them feel the weight of his utterance. It must be remembered that there is great responsibility in speech. A hasty utterance may be followed by a long repentance, when the speaker will give worlds to recover his mischievous words.

III. THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GOOD. A good man will desire to speak for the profit of others. He who knows God's truth will long to declare it to others. So great a treasure is not to be hidden. For Christ's sake and for the world's sake it must be made known far and wide. The Christian should feel that a serious obligation is upon him to lead others to share in those privileges of the gospel which all need, and which are designed for all. St. Paul felt an awful necessity laid on him, and exclaimed, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. ix. 16). The lepers of Samaria felt that they would be guilty of a great sin if they feasted in the camp of the Syrians, and did not let the starving city know that there was abundance of good outside the gates (2 Kings vii. 9). But not only is it a duty to preach Christ; it is a great joy. The body may be wearied by the effort, but the soul will be refreshed. There is a cheering and invigorating influence in making truth known; this is greatest when the work is to bring the knowledge of God's love in Christ to sorrowing men and women. —W. F. A.

Vers. 21, 22.—*Flattery.* Elihu promises to be frank and outspoken, not "accepting any man's person" in perversion of truth, and giving "flattering titles" to no man. This resolve would be very significant in the East, where personal rank counts for much even in courts of justice, and where a "flattering title" is given as a matter of course, especially when some favour is sought, even though it belies the true opinion held by the flatterer; *e.g.* Acts xxiv. 2.

I. TEMPTATIONS TO FLATTERY. 1. *To win favour.* This is the lowest motive with which to flatter; it is without any valid excuse; its character is wholly selfish. 2. *To avoid harm.* This is also a selfish motive; but it may be urged by fear and encouraged by weakness. The flattery of a tyrant is not creditable to anybody concerned; but it is one of the certain effects of tyranny on weak natures. 3. *To give pleasure.* Without any deep design of gain, agreeable people wish to please those with whom they are associated. A certain foolish kindness may help the flattery. 4. *To express humility.* Very humble people are tempted to ascribe good qualities to others in contrast with their own unworthiness.

II. THE SIN OF FLATTERY. Elihu justly repudiates the idea of flattering any one, though he does so with a needless ostentation of independence. Flattery is bad in many ways, and involves many evil things. 1. *Falsehood.* This is the very first element of flattery. You praise a man to his face beyond your true thoughts of him. 2. *Cowardice.* If the flattery is indulged in in order to propitiate a powerful tyrant, the flatterer humiliates himself, and appears in the miserable character of a cringing coward.

3. *Godlessness.* Flattery of man tends to a disregard of the law and will of God. If the dignity and rank of a person is made too much of, he is really becoming to us almost a god; we are in danger of giving to him the deference which should only be offered to our Maker.

III. THE EVIL CONSEQUENCES OF FLATTERY. 1. *The overthrow of justice.* If a man "accepts persons" he will neglect justice. Instead of considering what is right and fair, the flatterer considers what is pleasant. Thus right and equity are set aside. 2. *The destruction of confidence.* Flattery is sure to be discovered, and the habit of flattering will be soon recognized. Then words of admiration cease to have any meaning. It becomes impossible to give true honour to a person, because this cannot be distinguished from the false honours which the sycophant heaps on his patron. It is no longer possible to know whether approval, support, and loyalty are maintained or not. Traitors hide under the cloak of flattery. 3. *The anger of God.* Elihu talks somewhat brusquely about his Maker taking him away. It is a trait of his self-confidence to be quite at home in speaking of God. Yet there is a truth in his words. God cannot endure falsehood and injustice. His favour is not won by flattery; the flattery of men is sure to be detected by God, and therefore the flatterer must lie under the disfavour of Heaven, even while he enjoys the favour of his earthly patron.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Vers. 1—33.—In this chapter Elihu, turning away from the "comforters," proceeds to address Job himself, offering to reason out the matter in dispute with him, in God's stead. After a brief exordium (vers. 1—7), he takes exception (1) to Job's self-assertion (vers. 8, 9); and (2) to his charges against God (vers. 10—13), which (he says) are unjust. He next brings forward his theory of God-inflicted sufferings being, in the main, chastisements proceeding from a loving purpose, intended to purify, to strengthen, to purge out faults, to "save from the pit," to improve, and to enlighten (vers. 14—24). He points out in what spirit chastisement should be received (vers. 25—30); and concludes with a recommendation to Job to remain silent, and hear him out, while at the same time he expresses a willingness to listen to what Job has to say, if he has objections to offer (vers. 31—33).

Ver. 1.—**Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches**; rather, *howbeit, Job, I pray thee, hear my speech* (see the Revised Version); *i.e.* "However you regard me personally, hear what I have to say." **And hearken to all my words.** Give me your *full* attention; do not suffer aught that I say to escape you. Elihu has a deep conviction of the importance of what he is about to utter (comp. ch. xxxii. 8, 10, 17).

Ver. 2.—**Behold, now I have opened my mouth.** (On the solemnity of the phrase, "opened my mouth," see the comment upon ch. iii. 1.) **My tongue hath spoken in my mouth**; literally, *in my palate* (comp. ch. vi. 30). Each word has been, as it were, tasted; that is, seriously considered and examined beforehand. My remarks will not be crude, extempore remarks; so may they be the better worth attending to.

Ver. 3.—**My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart.** Moreover, whatever I say will be said with entire sincerity. My heart is upright, and I shall speak "from the uprightness of my heart," without pretence, deception, or concealment of any kind. **And my lips shall utter knowledge clearly.** I shall say only *what I know*, and shall endeavour to say it simply and clearly, so that no one can mistake my meaning.

Ver. 4.—**The Spirit of God hath made me.** This is assigned as the main reason why Job should give his best attention to Elihu's words. Elihu claims to be quickened and informed by the Divine Spirit which was once breathed into man (Gen. ii. 7), whereby man became a living soul (comp. ch. xxxii. 8). **And the breath of the Almighty hath given me life**; or, *quickened me*—originated and preserved my life. Elihu does not, however, claim that his words are actually inspired, or that he has a message to Job from the Almighty.

Ver. 5.—**If thou canst answer me**; rather, *if thou canst, answer thou me* (see the Revised Version). **Set thy words in order before me, stand up** (comp. ch. xxiii. 4).

Ver. 6.—**Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead**; *i.e.* I am the antagonist for whom thou hast asked (ch. ix. 33; xiii. 19), ready to enter into controversy with thee, instead of God. **I am thine equal, a creature like thyself. I also am formed out of the clay** (comp. Gen. ii. 7). **Therefore—**

Ver. 7.—My terror shall not make thee afraid. Thou canst feel no alarm at *me; I* cannot terrify thee, as God would (ch. vi. 4; vii. 14; ix. 34, etc.). **Neither shall my hand** (literally, *my pack-saddle*) **be heavy upon thee.** Thou wilt not feel my presence a burden, or be crushed under the weight of my words.

Vers. 8—12.—His exordium over, Elihu proceeds to point out what he blames in Job's discourses, and at present notices two departures from truth and right only. Job, he says, asserts his absolute innocence (ver. 9); he also maintains that God deals with him harshly, as an enemy (vers. 10, 11). Neither assertion is justifiable.

Ver. 8.—Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying. Elihu does not quote exactly what Job had said. He probably intended to be perfectly fair and just, but in reality he greatly overstates the truth. Job had never said the words he ascribes to him in ver. 9; at best they are an inference, or deduction, from what he had said. And he had said a great deal on the other side, which Elihu overlooks (see the comment on ver. 9).

Ver. 9.—I am clean without transgression, I am innocent. Job had not said that he was "clean," or "without transgression," or "innocent." With respect to "cleanness," he had observed, "Who can bring a *clean* thing out of an *unclean*? not one," implying that all men were unclean (see ch. xiv. 4). Concerning "transgressions," he had declared, "I have sinned. . . . Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?" (ch. vii. 20, 21); and again, "Thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth" (ch. xiii. 26). Further, he had asked to be told the number of his iniquities and sins (ch. xiii. 23), and declared that God kept his transgressions and iniquities sewn up and sealed in a bag (ch. xiv. 17). With regard to "innocence," the only observation that he had made was, "I know that thou wilt *not* hold me innocent" (ch. ix. 28). What he had really asserted was his uprightness, his integrity, his "righteousness" (ch. xii. 4; xvi. 17; xxiii. 7; xxvii. 5, 6; xxxi. 5—40). And these are exactly what God bore witness to (ch. i. 8; ii. 3). It is plain, then, that Elihu overstated his case, and, whatever his intentions were, was practically almost as unfair to Job as the "comforters." **Neither is there iniquity in me.** Nor had Job said this. He had frequently acknowledged the contrary (see ch. vii. 21; xiii. 26; xiv. 17).

Ver. 10.—Behold, he findeth occasions against me. This charge may perhaps be justified by reference to Job's complaints in ch. vii. 17—19 and x. 3—6; but the exact words are not Job's. **He counteth me for his enemy.** Certainly, Job had *said* this more than once (see ch. xvi. 9; xix. 11). But he cannot really have believed it, or his trust in God must have failed. The fact that to the last he clung to God, appealed to him, hoped to receive judgment from him (ch. xxxi. 2, 6, 28, 35—37), is proof sufficient that he knew God was not really alienated from him, but would in the end acknowledge him and vindicate his character.

Ver. 11.—He putteth my feet in the stocks. A reference to Job's words in ch. xiii. 27. **He marketh all my paths** (comp. ch. xxxi. 4, and see also ch. vii. 17—19).

Ver. 12.—Behold, in this thou art not just. It would certainly not have been a just charge to make against God, that he counted Job as an enemy; and, so far as Job's statements go, it must be admitted that he had laid himself open to Elihu's rebuke. But it is no logical "answer" to Job's charge to say, in reply to it, **I will answer thee, that God is greater than man.** Might does not constitute right, and it is a poor way of justifying God to urge that he is all-powerful, and may do what he likes. So Cambyses was justified in his worst acts by the royal judges (Herod., iii. 31); and so in an absolute monarchy it is always possible to justify the extremest acts of tyranny. Certainly God cannot act unjustly; but this is not because his doing a thing makes it right, but because his justice is a law to his will, and he never wills to do anything that he has not previously seen to be just (see Cudworth's 'Immutable Morality,' which deserves the careful study, not alone of moralists, but also of theologians).

Ver. 13.—Why dost thou strive against him? Why dost thou insist on taking the attitude of one who contends with God, who would fain enter into a controversy with him, and force him to plead in his own defence? It is not alone his omnipotence that makes such conduct folly, but his remoteness, his inaccessibility. He cannot be forced to make answer; it is not his wont to do so; **he giveth not account of any of his matters.** It is presumptuous to suppose that God will condescend to reveal himself from heaven and make answer to thy overbold challenges.

Ver. 14.—For God speaketh once, yea twice. God has his own ways of speaking to man, which are not those that Job has been expecting. He speaks silently and secretly, not in thunders and lightnings, as at Sinai (Exod. xix. 16—20), not by extraordinary theophanies, but nevertheless quite as effectually. Yet man **perceiveth it not.** Man often does not recognize God's action

in this silent teaching of his. Man wants something more startling, more sensational. In our Lord's time, the Jews demanded "a sign"—"a sign from heaven;" but no sign of the kind was given them. Job now did not understand that God, whom he called upon to answer him (ch. x. 2; xiii. 22; xxiii. 5, etc.), was already speaking to him in various ways—by his judgments, by thoughts suggested inwardly to his heart, by the dreams and visions whereof he complained (ch. vii. 14).

Ver. 15.—**In a dream, in a vision of the night.** So God spoke to Abimelech (Gen. xx. 3—7), to Jacob (Gen. xxxi. 11), to Laban (Gen. xxxi. 24), to Joseph (Gen. xxxviii. 5, 9), to the Pharaoh whom Joseph served (Gen. xli. 1—7), to Solomon (1 Kings iii. 5), to Daniel (Dan. ii. 19), to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. ii. 28; iv. 5—18), and to many others. Sometimes men recognized such visions as Divine communications; but sometimes, probably quite as often, they regarded them as mere dreams, fancies, phantasies, unworthy of any attention. Elihu seems to hold that Divine visions came only **when deep sleep falleth upon men**; and similarly Eliphaz, in ch. iv. 13. This method of revelation seems to belong especially to the more primitive times, and the earlier stages of God's dealings with men. In the New Testament dreams scarcely form any part of the economy of grace. **In slumberings upon the bed.** A pleonastic addition, which must not be regarded as diminishing from the force of the precedent clause.

Ver. 16.—**Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.** At such times, Elihu holds, God gives men spiritual wisdom, instructs them, makes them understand his dealings with them and his purposes with respect to them. If Job is perplexed concerning the Almighty's ways with himself, and desires explanations, let him have his ear open to the Divine teaching on such occasions, and seriously lay it to heart. He will thus, it may be, find his perplexity diminished.

Ver. 17.—**That he** (*i.e.* God) **may withdraw man** from his **purpose**; literally, *from his work*, assumed to be a wrongful work. Elihu regards the Divine teaching through visions as intended to elevate and purify men. Sometimes God so works upon them as to make them abandon an evil course on which they had entered. Sometimes his object is to save them from indulgence in an evil temper into which, without his help, they might have fallen. In this latter case he may occasionally **hide pride from man.** Elihu, perhaps, thinks that Job is unduly proud of his integrity.

Ver. 18.—**He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.** By these interpositions God may even save a man from utter ruin, when, but for them, he would have rushed upon it. He may cause a person to give up designs or enterprises which would have brought him into danger, and perhaps led to his being slain with the sword.

Ver. 19.—**He is chastened also with pain upon his bed.** God also speaks to men, secretly and silently, in another way, viz. through chastisements. He afflicts the strong man with a grievous sickness, causes him to take to his bed, racks him with pain there, and wrings **the multitude of his bones with strong pain.** But here again his purpose is kind and loving.

Ver. 20.—**So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat.** Eating and drinking are detestable to the man who is stretched on a bed of sickness (comp. Ps. cvii. 18, "Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death"). The chains that bind to earth fall off, and the soul is left open to loftier influences.

Ver. 21.—**His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen**; literally, *from the sight*; but the Authorized Version gives probably the correct meaning. **And his bones that were not seen stick out.** These are general features of a wasting illness (comp. Ps. xxii. 17, "I may tell all my bones"). Such illness gives the sufferer time to review thoroughly his life and conduct, and see to it "if there be any way of wickedness in him," or any particular form of sin to which he is tempted.

Ver. 22.—**Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers.** "The destroyers" are probably the angels to whom the task is assigned of ultimately inflicting death, if minor chastisements prove insufficient (comp. 2 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17; Ps. lxxviii. 49, etc.).

Ver. 23.—**If there be a messenger with him**; rather, *an angel* (see the Revised Version). It is generally supposed that "the angel of the covenant" is meant, and that the whole passage is Messianic; but much obscurity hangs over it. The Jews certainly understand it Messianically, since they read it on the great Day of Atonement, and use in their liturgies the prayer, "Raise up for us the righteous Interpreter; say, I have found a ransom." Elihu's knowledge of **an Interpreter,** or Mediator, **one among a thousand,** who should deliver the afflicted man from going down to the pit, and find a ransom for him (ver. 24), is certainly very surprising; and we can scarcely imagine that he understood the full force of his words; but it cannot be right to denude them of their natural signification. Elihu certainly did not mean to

speak of himself as an "angel-interpreter, one among a thousand;" and it is not probable that he intends a reference to any merely human helper. **To show unto man his uprightness**; either "to show to a man what it is right for him to do," or "to indicate to a man in what true righteousness consists."

Ver. 24.—**Then he is gracious unto him, and saith.** Some interpret, "Then he (*i.e.* God) is gracious unto him, and he (*i.e.* the angel) saith." Others make God the subject of both clauses. But the angel is the natural subject. **Deliver him from going down to the pit.** The mediating angel thus addresses God, and adds, **I have found a ransom,** leaving the nature of the ransom unexplained. Some notion of ransom, or atonement, underlay the whole idea of sacrifice, which appears to have been universally practised from the remotest times by the Oriental nations.

Ver. 25.—**His flesh shall be fresher than a child's.** The chastisement having done its work, and the sufferer being delivered from death by the mediating angel, a restoration to health follows. The recovery of "flesh fresher than a child's" stands as the natural antithesis to Job's leprosy. **He shall return to the days of his youth.** Youthful strength, youthful vigour, youthful feelings, shall come back to him. He shall be once more as he was in the days of his prime.

Ver. 26.—**He shall pray unto God, and he** (*i.e.* God) **will be favourable unto him.** Being restored to God's favour, he will once more be able to address him in "effectual fervent prayer," and obtain whatever he desires of him. **And he shall see his face with joy.** God's face shall no longer be a terror to him, but he shall look upon it with joy and gladness. **For he** (*i.e.* God) **will render unto man his righteousness.** That is, will both account and make him righteous—both justify and sanctify him.

Ver. 27.—**He looketh upon men**; rather, *he* (i.e. the restored penitent) *singeth before men.* He is jubilant, and confesses his former offences with a light heart, feeling that now he is pardoned and restored to God's favour. **And if any say, I have sinned, and perverted** that which was **right.** This is altogether a mistranslation. The construction of the Hebrew is simple enough, and runs thus: *And he* (the penitent) *saith, I have sinned and perverted that which was right.* **And it profited me not**; *i.e.* "I gained nothing by my transgressions—they brought me no advantage." Compare St. Paul's inquiry (Rom. vi. 21), "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" Some, however, translate, "And it was not requited to me," which also gives a good meaning.

Ver. 28.—**He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light**; rather, as in the margin, *he hath delivered my soul from going into the pit* (comp. ver. 24), *and my life shall see the light.* The restored penitent is still speaking.

Ver. 29.—**Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes** (literally, *twice and thrice*) **with man.** Elihu, from this point to the end of the chapter, speaks in his own person. God, he says, thus works with man, through visions or through chastisements *oftentimes*—not, in the latter case, taking vengeance on them for their sins, but graciously leading them on to a better mind and a higher spiritual condition. This is part of God's ordinary moral government, and Job has no need to suppose himself exceptionally dealt with. Elihu has reason on his side in all this, and his words may have given Job some comfort. But they did not exactly fit Job's case. Elihu, unless supernaturally enlightened, could not possibly penetrate into the special circumstances of Job's trial. He could only try to bring his case under general laws, of which it was not an illustration; and so, though well-meant and probably of some service, his argument was no complete answer to Job's difficulties.

Ver. 30.—**To bring back his soul from the pit.** For discipline and correction, not for vengeance—in love and not in anger (comp. Heb. xii. 5—11, where the doctrine is set forth fully). **To be enlightened with the light of the living**; or, *that he may be enlightened.* This is God's purpose, ordinarily, in afflicting men; or, at any rate, a part of his purpose. He aims at enlightening their understandings, and so enabling them to comprehend his ways, and clearly see the path which it is their true wisdom to walk in.

Ver. 31.—**Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me**; *i.e.* "Mark well what I say. Note it, and lay it up in thy heart." **Hold thy peace, and I will speak.** It may be conjectured that Job at this point showed some inclination to break silence and answer Elihu. But Elihu thought that he had a great deal more to say, which was of importance, and wished not to be interrupted. He therefore checked Job's utterance. Then, fearing lest he had gone too far, he made the concession of the next verse.

Ver. 32.—**If thou hast anything to say, answer me.** Nevertheless, *i.e.*, if there is really anything that thou wouldst fain urge on thine own behalf at this point, **speak**—I am ready to hear—**for I desire to justify thee**; *i.e.* "I am anxious, if possible, or so far as possible, to defend and justify thy conduct." Then, probably, Elihu made a pause, to allow of Job's speaking; but, as the patriarch kept silence, he continued.

Ver. 33.—If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom. Elihu is certainly quite sufficiently impressed with the sense of his intellectual capacity. Job's silence may have been meant as a sort of tacit rebuke to him. Considering his youth (ch. xxxii. 6), there is something of arrogance in the whole tone of his address, and especially in his notion that he could "teach Job wisdom." It is significant that neither now, when expressly invited to reply, nor at any subsequent point of the discourse, nor even at its close, does Job condescend to make any answer at all to Elihu's speech.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—13.—*Elihu's first address to Job:* 1. *An exposure of Job's sin.* I. ELIHU BESPEAKS JOB'S ATTENTION. This he does on four distinct grounds. 1. *That what he was about to say had been deliberately, thoroughly, and impartially weighed.* (Ver. 2.) He was not about to open his mouth at random or under any feeling of excitement, but after having tasted every word, as it were, in his palate—a metaphor suggestive of the wise discrimination with which both his thoughts had been prepared and his language selected. "A fool's mouth poureth forth foolishness: but the tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright" (Prov. xv. 2). The conduct of Elihu is worthy of imitation by all, but especially by preachers of the gospel, who should never speak on sacred things without long, wise, painful, prayerful premeditation and preparation. 2. *That what he was about to say would be uttered with the utmost sincerity.* (Ver. 3.) The harangues of the friends had been conspicuously lacking in words of uprightness (ch. vi. 25). Elihu's orations should be the uprightness of his heart. (1) They should be pure and unmixed truth, not fancies or speculations, ancient maxims or wise apothegms, such as Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar had dealt in, but ascertained facts, established doctrines, verified experiences. (2) They should be clearly and simply stated, without any adventitious mixture of rhetoric or eloquence, without any meretricious graces of language or ornaments of diction that would only serve to hide the truth which they pretended to convey. (3) They should be honestly and honourably meant, not advanced simply for the sake of argument, or in order to exhibit the speaker's skill, and still less with any sinister purpose as regards the hearer, but as believed to have a direct and important bearing on the subject in hand. The determination of Elihu again deserves the earnest study of Christian ministers, who, in the prosecution of their sacred callings, should remember to set forth the pure and unadulterated truth of God, like St. Paul (1 Cor. ii. 2), like St. Peter (1 Pet. iv. 11), and to do so with "great plainness of speech" (2 Cor. iii. 12), never seeking to exalt self (1 Cor. ii. 1—5; ix. 16) or to please men (Gal. v. 11; 1 Thess. ii. 4), but always to glorify God (1 Cor. x. 31) and edify the hearer (1 Cor. xiv. 3; 2 Cor. xiii. 10). 3. *That what he was about to say was, in a certain sense, an inspiration of the Almighty.* (Ver. 4.) To redeem the language from a charge of superfluity, if not of presumption, it must be held that Elihu here claims to be the subject of a Divine afflatus, which so excited within his breast the convictions he then possessed that they were completely irrepressible. Once more Elihu stands forth as a pattern to the messengers of Christ, who, though not perhaps inspired exactly as Elihu was, are yet dependent on that same Spirit's teaching for a perfect understanding of what through the prophets and apostles has been revealed (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10; John xvi. 13—15), and who should aim, in addressing their fellow-creatures on Divine things, to have their hearts illumined, excited, and warmed by the light, fire, and heat of the Holy Ghost. That preacher most nearly approaches the ideal of a genuine gospel minister who can in a measure adopt Elihu's words, and describe himself as moved by the Spirit of God, enlightened and set on fire by the breath of the Almighty.

II. ELIHU CHALLENGES JOB'S REFUTATION. Job had frequently asserted that he could triumphantly repel any charges that might be brought against him (ch. xiii. 22; xxiii. 4—7; xxxi. 35—37). Accordingly Elihu requests him to prepare such a vindication of himself as he had spoken of. On the supposition that Job was right, such a task should not be difficult. 1. *Elihu was the sort of antagonist whom Job had desired to meet.* (Ver. 6.) Job had urged that his invisible opponent was not a man like himself (ch. ix. 32), and had craved the intervention of a daysman who might lay his

hand upon both (ch. ix. 33). In reply, Elihu says, "Behold, I am according to thy mouth to ['of,' 'for,' or 'by'] God," meaning either (1) I am according to thy wish unto, *i.e.* for or instead of God (Authorized Version); or (2) I am like thee (*sc.* created) by God (Gesenius), or what appears preferable, I am as thou art unto God, *i.e.* I stand to him in the same relation as thou dost—I, like thyself, am his creature (Carey); or I, like thee, belong to God (Delitzsch), *i.e.* I am a human being like thyself, fashioned by the hand of God, nipped off from the clay as when a potter nips off a piece of clay from the larger lump to construct of it a vessel or a human figure. Elihu's language in a striking manner recalls the Mosaic account of the creation of man (Gen. ii. 7). 2. *There was nothing about Elihu to intimidate Job or prevent him from replying if he could.* "Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee;" literally, "and my burden, pressure, or load upon thee shall not be heavy." Job would have nothing to overpower or discourage him in making the fullest statement of his case; he would feel himself to be dealing with an equal, with one who would scorn, even if he could, to take undue advantage of his opponent. In Elihu we seem to see a type, or at least a resemblance, of the Man Christ Jesus, who, endowed with the Holy Ghost without measure, has become the Mediator and the Judge of men.

III. ELIHU DECLARES JOB'S OFFENCE. 1. *That Job justified himself.* He had said, "I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me" (ver. 9). That Elihu does not greatly misrepresent the patriarch may be proved by comparison of the statements here made with Job's utterances previously recorded (ch. ix. 21; x. 7; xii. 4; xvi. 7). But Elihu, it is said, does not sufficiently allow for certain other declarations in which Job admits a consciousness of natural sinfulness (ch. ix. 2; xiv. 4). The object of Elihu, however, was not to indicate the portions of Job's addresses and appeals that were doctrinally and practically correct, but to point out where Job had overstepped the bounds of rectitude and truth; and this he does by citing what he regards as the substance of Job's own utterances, as language that even a justified sinner conscious of his own integrity and moral purity should be chary in adopting, and should never be over-vehement in maintaining. 2. *That Job condemned God.* Under this head Elihu refers to the *ipsissima verba* of the patriarch. Infinitely jealous of his own reputation, Job had been fearfully reckless with regard to God's. Resenting with a fierce indignation the faintest whisper that might be breathed against himself, he did not hesitate to impeach the Almighty of harshness, saying, "Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy. He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths," language taken directly from the lips of Job (ch. x. 13—17; xiii. 24—27; xix. 11; xxx. 21).

IV. ELIHU EXHIBITS JOB'S ERROR. Probably the mere reproduction of Job's words was enough to convince him of their impropriety. In addition, he is reminded of the superhuman greatness of God, in which, as in a mirror, he may behold the fallacy of all that he has maintained. 1. *The mistake of concluding that he himself was righteous.* "Behold, in this thou art not just," *i.e.* thou art not right in supposing thyself to be clean and free from transgression, because, even though thy heart condemn thee not, God is greater than thy heart, and knoweth all things (1 John iii. 20). "Even when we have confidence before God respecting our own integrity, our confidence may be misplaced, and our own hearts may have deceived us" (Fry). Cf. the language of St. Paul (1 Cor. iv. 4). 2. *The foolishness of thinking God regarded him as an enemy.* The exalted character and infinite power, not to say immeasurable grace, of God should have delivered him from any such misconception. Had Job adequately reflected on the Divine greatness, he would never have suffered himself to think, far less to speak, of God as an unkind Adversary and ever-vigilant Assailant. 3. *The absurdity of expecting God to respond to his interrogations.* God is too exalted, too lofty and glorious a being, to be questioned by man. Hence Elihu offers himself to answer Job in God's stead. Hence also preposterous is the delusion of thinking to contend with him in any court of justice, since "he giveth not account of any of his matters."

Learn: 1. That if Elihu was deserving of Job's attention, much more is Christ deserving of ours. 2. That Christ's humanity affords to sinful men the greatest encouragement to approach his throne without fear. 3. That they who come to plead with Christ must be prepared to acknowledge their offences. 4. That Christ is well

informed concerning all the transgressions of those for whom he intercedes. 5. That one of the greatest mistakes a human soul can commit is to say that God regards him as an enemy. 6. That the deepest folly a finite creature can perpetrate is to strive against God. 7. That the highest tribunal before which any of God's actions can be brought is his own just, holy, and loving Godhead.

Vers. 14—33.—*Elihu's first address to Job: 2. The philosophy of Divine instruction.* I. THE METHODS OF DIVINE INSTRUCTION. 1. *Through the medium of dreams.* The dreams, or visions, referred to were supernatural revelations in early times imparted to men, when the spirit, probably wrapt in meditation on Divine things, was cast into a deep sleep, such as fell on Adam at the creation of Eve (Gen. ii. 21). That nocturnal dreams usually find their psychological basis in the mental idiosyncrasies of the individual, and in large degree borrow their shapes and colours from the phenomena of waking existence, is no proof that God may not sometimes have employed them, and may not still employ them, as channels for imparting instruction to men. That they were so employed in early times, not only for instructing heathens like Abimelech (Gen. xx. 6), Laban (Gen. xxxi. 24), Pharaoh (Gen. xli. 1), and Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 5), but also saints like Abraham (Gen. xv. 12), Jacob (Gen. xxxi. 10), Joseph (Gen. xxxvii. 5), Eliphaz (ch. iv. 13), and Joseph the husband of Mary (Matt. i. 20), is explicitly declared in Scripture. That men cannot readily distinguish between such dreams and visions as are the creations of their own excited imaginations, and such as are sent from above, does not demonstrate the impossibility of God still in the same supernatural fashion "opening the ears of men, and sealing instruction upon their souls." 2. *Through the instrumentality of affliction.* The sufferer described by Elihu passes through an experience similar to Job's. The disease which assails him has many of the characteristics of elephantiasis. (1) Painful. "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed" (ver. 19), which pain, if we may take advantage of the various readings and translations of the following clause, is represented as sudden, "while the multitude of his limbs is still vigorous" (Ewald); universal, "and the multitude of his limbs with strong pain" (Authorized Version); vehement, "so that he writheth in great agony" (Cox); and incessant, "and with the unceasing conflict of his limbs" (Delitzsch); or, "and the contest never resteth in his bones" (Umbreit); or, "and the racking of his bones is incessant" (Fry). (2) Nauseating. "So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat;" literally, "meat of desire" (ver. 20). The case of Isaac (Gen. xxvii. 4) was exceptional. Loss of appetite and nausea are usual concomitants of a weak and sickly condition of body. (3) Wasting. "His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen"—literally, "out of sight," which may also signify "from comeliness, so that it becomes unsightly" (Delitzsch)—"and his bones that were not seen stick out" (ver. 21); or, according to another reading, "his bones waste away and disappear" ('Speaker's Commentary'), *i.e.* they lose their beautiful form, till eventually he becomes little better than a fleshless, bloodless, marrowless, emaciated skeleton. (4) Destroying. "Yea, his soul draweth near to the grave, and his life to the destroyers" (ver. 22); either to those angels whom God commissions to slay man when he continues impenitent, or to those destructive agencies which God employs to terminate the vital functions. 3. *Through the friendly offices of an interpreter.* The word "interpreter" has obviously in this place the sense of "internuncius," *i.e.* ambassador, or representative, who communicates the will of a superior, and indicates the special office entrusted to the "messenger" alluded to by Elihu as that of authoritatively making known, as a Heaven-commissioned teacher or prophet, the will of God. Diversity of view prevails as to whether the messenger to whom this task is deputed should be regarded as human, angelic, or Divine (*vide* Exposition), as a teacher, prophet, or minister like Elihu, a superhuman angelic being, or the angel of the Presence, the Messenger of the covenant. Against the first, there can be no insuperable objection; only it is obvious that in this case Elihu cannot refer to himself without extraordinary self-conceit, since he characterizes the messenger whom the sick man requires as mediator as "one of a thousand," *i.e.* not one of many, but one without an equal, one possessed of pre-eminent gifts of insight and teaching. Nor is it impossible that Elihu, remembering the language of Eliphaz (ch. iv. 18), may have been thinking of an angelic helper; only the qualifying clause, "one of a thousand,"

determines that one to be the Angel of Jehovah, who alone among the myriad hosts of angels stands without a peer. That a young Arabian prophet of Aramæan extraction should be familiar with the angel-interpreter is no more remarkable than that the Angel of the Lord should be known to the patriarchs.

II. THE PURPOSES OF DIVINE INSTRUCTION. 1. *To deter man from sin.* In particular the withdrawing of man from his purpose (ver. 17), literally, from his work, generally in an evil sense, is exhibited as the specific object aimed at by God's supernatural warnings to the soul, as *e.g.* in the cases of Abimelech (Gen. xx. 6) and Laban (Gen. xxxi. 24); but none the less is affliction designed to exercise on wicked men a deterrent influence, restraining them from sin, as in the cases of Pharaoh (Exod. vii. 16) and Manasseh (2 Chron. xxxiii. 12); while the third method of instruction referred to, that of spiritual enlightenment (whether human or Divine as to its agency,) distinctly contemplates as its aim, among other things, the subjugation of evil impulses in the soul, and the obliteration of evil deeds from the life, of man (John xv. 3; xvii. 17; 1 Thess. ii. 13; 2 Tim. iii. 16). 2. *To withdraw man from pride.* Pride is the homage which a human soul pays to itself, the arrogant assumption by self of that worship which is due to God. The great sin to which man in innocence was tempted by the devil (Gen. iii. 5), it has ever since been a characteristic of the fallen heart (Ps. x. 2), which, seemingly oblivious of its weakness, is always looking out for symptoms of its power, styling itself a *geber*, "a strong one," a valiant hero, when in reality it is an *enosh*, "a frail and feeble creature" (cf. the Laodicean Christians). Besides being extremely foolish in itself, and infinitely dangerous to the subject of it, such a disposition and mind is intensely hateful to God (Ps. ci. 5; Prov. viii. 13; Isa. xiii. 11; Jer. l. 31; 1 Cor. i. 29; Jas. iv. 6), who, by the threefold ministry above specified, aims at its complete extirpation from the human heart—first checking its outward manifestations by providential warnings, supernatural or otherwise, as in the cases of Hagar (Gen. xvi. 9), Miriam and Aaron (Numb. xii. 2—10), David (2 Sam. xxiv. 10), and Hezekiah (2 Kings xx. 13; 2 Chron. xxxii. 31); then striking at its inward roots by the sharp axe of affliction, as he did with Pharaoh (Exod. vii., *et seq.*), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 30—34), Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii. 19—35); and finally, by the personal example and teaching of Christ (Matt. xi. 29), casting it out, and hiding it, from the souls of those in whom such affliction is sanctified. 3. *To deliver man from ignorance.* More specifically is this declared to be the object contemplated by the "Maleach Malitz." Sinful man is pre-eminently in darkness concerning "his uprightness;" *i.e.* either God's rectitude and justice in dealing with individuals (Carey), or, what seems preferable, man's right course to be followed (cf. 1 Sam. vi. 12; Prov. xiv. 2)—the path which he ought to pursue when lying under God's chastening hand; "in one word, the way of salvation, which he must take in order to get free of sin and death, the way, viz., of repentance and of faith" (Delitzsch, Good, Fry, Cox, and others). In large measure this absence of moral and spiritual enlightenment as to the way of salvation accounts for man's hardness and impenitence of heart. Consequently, the Divine administration has provided for bringing the needful illumination to man's benighted soul by means of a special Angel-Interpreter (first Christ, then the Holy Ghost, and, under them, the angels or ministers of the Churches); and the time selected for sending in a flood of heavenly light upon man's darkened understanding is the season of affliction, when, his pride having been laid low, his heart has become soft and amenable to instruction. 4. *To save man from death.* It is unreasonable to insist that Elihu knew nothing of a spiritual deliverance of the soul from condemnation and everlasting death, and that his language (vers. 18, 24, 30) about the pit must be confined exclusively to the grave. On the other hand, it would be equally preposterous to deny that Elihu does here allude to the temporal and physical recovery of a sick man as the result of accepting with penitence and faith the teaching of the Angel-Interpreter; as *e.g.* in the case of Hezekiah, to whom Isaiah acted in the capacity of a "Maleach Malitz," and who, in answer to his prayers and tears, was restored to health (Isa. xxxviii. 5), and as in early Christian times the invalid who called for the elders of the Church and listened to their instructions was directed to hope that in response to the prayer of faith God would raise him up (Jas. v. 14, 15). The probability is that both forms of deliverance were in the contemplation of Elihu: (1) of the sinful man's soul from the pit of condemnation of which David sings (Ps. xl. 2), and (2) of the sick man's body from the pit of corrup-

tion into which Hezekiah looked (Isa. xxxviii. 18)—the latter being the consequence as well as the sign of the former.

III. THE RESULTS OF DIVINE INSTRUCTION. 1. *Emancipation.* When the purpose aimed at by the Divine warnings, afflictions, and teachings is accomplished, the penitent is liberated like a captive from his bondage, like a prisoner from his confinement, this being in all probability the import of the word translated "deliver," which occurs nowhere else; and this emancipation of the chastened soul is minutely depicted by the speaker. (1) Its primal source is the grace of God (ver. 24). To the true penitent God is pitifully inclined, regarding him with tender mercy and forgiving love; and in this Divine emotion towards man all redemption has its rise (Ps. iii. 8; lxviii. 19, 20; lxxxvi. 15; Isa. xlv. 21; Eph. ii. 5, 8; Titus ii. 11). Not that God either can or will pardon any on the ground simply of their penitence, without the intervention of an atonement; but that, wherever genuine contrition exists, there God is merciful and gracious (Ps. li. 17; Isa. lvii. 15), while he neither is nor can be forgiving and benignant towards the impenitent and rebellious (Isa. i. 20). (2) Its essential nature is deliverance; both physical and spiritual, both temporal and eternal (*vide supra*), the latter being symbolized by the former, the recovery of the soul to God's favour and fellowship by the restoration of the body to health and vigour. The sick man, who has been reduced by disease to a thin, feeble, emaciated, transparent skeleton, begins to put on flesh till his well-covered bones become fat and plump, as if he had returned to the days of his youth like Naaman the Syrian (2 Kings v. 14); and in this is vouchsafed to him a visible token of God's returning favour. (3) Its meritorious ground is the ransom or redemption-price paid for getting free from captivity or death (Exod. xxi. 30; xxx. 12; Isa. xlii. 3), that ransom being not the repentance (Hofmann, Carey) or the sufferings (Umbreit) of the chastened one, but the mediatorship of the Angel (Delitzsch, Cook, Fry)—a thought in which "we readily recognize a presage of the mystery unveiled in the New Testament, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." To pronounce such a doctrine in the mouth of Elihu "an anachronism," is to forget the protevangel of Eden (Gen. iii. 15), and to gratuitously assume that outside the line of the chosen family in patriarchal times faith in this sublime gospel had become entirely extinct. To affirm that such an anachronism (so-called) is "rebuked by the plain and obvious sense of the passage itself, and of the meaning and intention of the chapter in general" (Cox), is to demonstrate that one has failed to distinctly grasp the scope and purpose both of this particular section and of Elihu's interlocution as a whole. If Elihu spoke by inspiration, why should not the Spirit of Christ which was in him (1 Pet. i. 11) have testified beforehand of the work of him who, when he came to earth, was to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. xx. 28), and all the more that the finding of such a ransom was a work transcending human ability, and requiring as is here declared the intervention of God himself? 2. *Acceptation.* As a next result of Divine teaching, of accepted warnings, sanctified afflictions, improved instructions, the subdued penitent, now admitted into the Divine favour, receives a recompense for his righteousness, *i.e.* a gracious reward for his having turned to God in contrition (cf. Isa. lxiv. 5), and for his upright conversation generally, or is henceforth regarded and treated as a righteous or justified person; the treatment accorded to him and the reward bestowed upon him being the same, and comprised in three inestimable privileges. (1) Free access to God's throne. "He shall pray unto God" (ver. 26). Prayer is the language of the new-born spirit (Acts ix. 11); a necessary characteristic of God's children (Rom. viii. 15); the imperative duty of all men (Ps. lxii. 8; Isa. lxv. 6; Luke xviii. 1); and a special privilege of believers (Eph. ii. 18; Heb. iv. 16; x. 22). The pardoned sinner enjoys the fullest liberty to address God in prayer when, where, and how he will (Phil. iv. 6; 1 Thess. v. 17), provided always, of course, he does so in faith (Heb. xi. 6), in the Name of Jesus Christ (John xiv. 13, 14), and for things agreeable to God's will (1 John v. 14). (2) Certain enjoyment of God's favour. "He," *i.e.* God, "will be favourable unto him" and to his petitions. God never says to any of the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain" (Isa. xlv. 19), but, on the contrary, expressly engages to fulfil the desires of them that fear him (Ps. lxxxi. 10; xci. 15; Isa. lxv. 24; Jer. xxix. 12; Zech. xiii. 9; Matt. vii. 7; John xvi. 23; 1 John v. 14). "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight" (Prov. xv. 8). "The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the

righteous" (Prov. xv. 29). Greater encouragement to "continue instant in prayer" can scarcely be imagined. (3) Filial joy in God's presence. "He," *i.e.* the pardoned sinner, "shall see his," *i.e.* God's, "face with joy." Now by faith coming before him as a happy child exulting in a father's love (Eph. ii. 18); and hereafter in heaven when as one of the glorified he shall stand before the throne (Ps. xvii. 15; Rev. xxii. 4). 3. *Jubilation.* Like Hezekiah (Isa. xxxviii. 20) and like David (Ps. xl. 3; civ. 33), the recovered sick man and accepted penitent breaks forth into singing. "He chanteth unto men and saith" (ver. 27), the burden of his anthem being: (1) A humble acknowledgment of sin. "I had sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it was not requited unto me." Confession of sin, though indispensable to forgiveness (Lev. xxvi. 40—42; Josh. vii. 19; Prov. xxviii. 13; Ps. xxxii. 5; Hos. v. 15; Luke xviii. 13; 1 John i. 9), is never so frank, full, or fervent before conversion as after it. The justified sinner sees more clearly than the newly awakened penitent the exceeding heinousness of sin, realizes more acutely the greatness of his own personal guilt, and appreciates more highly the Divine clemency in passing by the transgression he might justly have visited with condign punishment. (2) A hearty acknowledgment of grace. Not only does he magnify the Divine clemency in not requiting to him his evil deeds, but he extols the Divine loving-kindness in delivering his guilty soul from condemnation and death. "He hath delivered my soul from going down into the pit, and my life rejoiceth in the light." Cf. David's anthem (Ps. ciii. 1—5).

Learn: 1. The extreme anxiety with which God seeks man's instruction. 2. The natural insensibility of man to Divine teaching. 3. The efficiency with which God can seal instruction on the human heart. 4. The indebtedness of wicked men to God's restraining grace. 5. The folly as well as sin of indulging in pride. 6. The inevitableness of man's destruction unless God interposes to save. 7. The beneficent design of affliction. 8. The facility with which God can destroy the pleasantness of life, and conduct even the strong man to the grave. 9. The infinite mercy of God in providing man with an Angel-Interpreter and a ransom. 10. The impossibility of any man escaping the pit unless God says, "Deliver." 11. The blessedness of the man whose sins are pardoned, and whose transgression is covered. 12. The obligation lying on all saints to declare what great things God hath done for their souls.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 8—33.—*Elihu's first discourse: the guilt of man in the sight of God.* I. JOB'S CONFIDENCE IN HIS INNOCENCE CENSURED. (Vers. 8—11.) Elihu gathers up in brief some of those sayings of Job which had shocked his ear and scandalized his spiritual conscience. Job had asserted his own purity, and had accused God of enmity against his person (compare Job's words, ch. ix. 21; x. 7; xvi. 17; xxiii. 10; xxvii. 5, 6; x. 13, *seq.*; xix. 11; xxx. 21).

II. THE TRUE RELATIONS OF MAN TO GOD SET FORTH. (Vers. 12—30.) By many intimations of inward and outward experience God seeks to warn man and to bring him to himself. He is no Being of passions such as Job represents him; "higher than a mortal," it is no part of his nature to crush in anger and revenge a defenceless creature. Nor is he dumb, voiceless, cold to his creatures' cries and appeals, as Job thinks. He speaks again and again; but the fault is in the deafness and dulness of the listener (vers. 12—14). Some modes of Divine instruction are then described. 1. *The voice of conscience in dreams.* (Vers. 15—18.) The ear is opened; the sensuous nature is stilled, the imagination is kindled into life; memory unlocks her stores; the past suggests the future; and thus hints and warnings are "stamped upon the instruction" of the soul. These are not merely facts of a past age of the world. If the Divine instruction by dreams was ever real, it is real still. The study of the physiology and psychology of our dream-life may yield a fund of interest of a directly religious kind to all who believe our nature to be in immediate intercourse with the unseen and the Divine. We are still warned and comforted of God in dreams. The purpose of these communications is to *restrain man from evil; to hide pride from him,* that is, so that he ceases to indulge it; *to keep back his soul from the grave;* to warn him against death and all that is deadly—against the sudden oncoming of the fatal blow. Whatever view be taken of the subject of special visions and communications from the other world, it is open to us all to observe

how in our physical constitution we are never without warnings, forebodings, timely hints, of coming pain and disease; how in our moral constitution in like manner coming events of retribution cast their shadows before, and rouse us from the stupor of guilt and shame. A kindly voice is ever calling us in these ways to flee from the wrath that is to come. 2. *Severe sickness as the visitation of God.* (Vers. 19—22.) Suffering is felt to be chastisement. When all the frame is unstrung, when the sweet sense of life turns to loathing, and the body wastes away, and death draws near, then man feels his dependence on a higher power; then often for the first time learns to pray, to believe in God, and to feel his nearness and his goodness. No doubt there was much of superstition in ancient times with regard to supposing suffering to be a direct visitation of the anger of God. But while we get rid of the superstition, let us preserve the truth of which it is a distortion—that in this mixed constitution of ours the proper effect of pain is to lead the mind to the Author of all that we both enjoy and suffer. "In some constitutions affliction seems peculiarly necessary as a hint of God. Some trees will not thrive unless their roots be laid bare; or unless, besides pruning, their bodies be gashed and sliced. Others that are too luxuriant need their blossoms to be pulled off, or they will yield nothing. Rank corn, if it be not timely eaten down, may yield something to the barn, but little to the granary. Every man can say he thanks God for ease; but for me, I bless God for my troubles" (Bishop Hall). 3. *The ministry of angels.* (Vers. 23—28.) Literally in the last verse the "destroyers" are the "angels of death," sent upon their fatal errand by the Almighty. In contrast we have now the mention of the good, delivering angel who brings release from the doom. The ministering angel draws near to the penitent sufferer in compassion, and says, "Relieve him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom." In the forms of the poetical imagination, an unexpected recovery from deadly sickness is thus described. Then returning health covers his flesh again with the bloom of youth; the sorrow vanishes from his mind; it is once more summer in the soul. He prays to the Almighty, and is graciously heard and accepted; he basks in the sunshine of God's countenance; and the lost peace is restored to the purified conscience. And the heart breaks out into singing, for a new song is put into the restored one's mouth—a song of praise to God. And this is its burden: "I had sinned and perverted right; but it was not requited to me; he redeemed my soul, that I might not go into the grave, and my life sees his pleasure in the light" (comp. Ps. xxii. 23, *seq.*; li. 17). Such is the portion of the man who hears the rod, and who has appointed it; who bows beneath affliction only to rise to a purer height of spiritual joy. His sins are pardoned, his good endeavours accepted, his crosses sanctified, his prayers heard; everything that he has is a blessing to him, everything that he suffers an advantage.

CONCLUSION. (Vers. 31—33.) *These* are the dealings of God with man; this the purport of all his afflictions. Experience seals the truth. Let Job or any other gainsay or refute it if he will or can! But rather this strong deep personal conviction of Elihu will vibrate and awake a response in the sufferer's heart. There is a contagion in true faith. Oh for the victory that overcomes the world! Once realize God to be our God, our Refuge and Strength, our present Help in trouble, and earth or hell in vain labour to make us other than blessed.—J.

Vers. 1—33.—*The Divine correction.* In the self-assurance of his competency to give wisdom to Job, and to correct his errors and to solve the mystery of his affliction, Elihu continues his speech and invites reply. "If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, stand up." He makes his accusation against Job that he has not only affirmed his own innocence, but that he has also made charges against God. He then proceeds to vindicate the purposes of God in human affliction. "God speaketh once, yea twice;" the error is on man's part, who "perceiveth it not." He gives a view of the Divine corrections.

I. AS TO THEIR METHOD. The God that "is greater than man," who worketh secretly and "giveth not account of any of his matters," giveth instruction: 1. In a dream, in the visions of the night; opening the ears of men, and sealing their instruction. 2. By the severities of affliction; when man is "chastened with pain upon his bed." This is applicable to Job; and the former may have been mentioned gently to introduce this.

II. AS TO THEIR PURPOSE. This is always gracious. It is to save from impending danger, and to lead in safe and good ways. 1. To restrain man from evil paths. "To withdraw him from his purpose." 2. To hide pride from man. To bring down the high looks of the self-complacent and the wicked. 3. To save from untimely death, and from the weapons of destructive violence. To keep "his life from perishing by the sword." Sin tends to death both by natural causes and by violence. Then Elihu views these corrections—

III. IN THEIR HAPPY RESULT. (1) Should the mediating Counsellor be near, and the way of life, the right way—the way of righteousness—be pointed out; and (2) the smitten one return with repentance, saying, "I have sinned, and perverted that which was right;" and (3) lifting up his voice "pray unto God;" then (4) shall the Divine deliverance come: (*a*) in an expression of the Divine forbearance; (*b*) in admission to the Divine favour—"he shall see his face with joy;" (*c*) in a gracious restoration, delivering "his soul from going into the pit," and bringing him to rejoice in the light. This is the Divine response to repentance which Elihu urges upon Job. Happy is every smitten one who, returning to God, finds a ransom price paid for his soul, and rejoices in a deliverance which restores to him the days of his youth, when "his very flesh becometh fresher than a child's."—R. G.

Ver. 4.—*The inspiration of creation.* Elihu assures Job that he is a man, made by God, and by his very creation having the Spirit of God in him. There is some pretentiousness in the manner of Elihu. Yet what he says is important, because it is not true of him alone, but of every man.

I. MAN IS MADE BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD. 1. *His origin is outside himself.* Whatever man can do for himself, he certainly cannot make himself. When we come back to the question of origins, the most self-reliant person must confess that he could not have caused his own being. 2. *His origin is from God.* Man derives his life originally from the First Cause of the whole series of living creatures. Whether man was created immediately out of the dust of the earth, or, as evolutionists teach, mediately, through other creatures, he in common with all things living derives his being from the great Parent of nature. Evolution does not destroy creation; it only describes the process, and throws back the time of the beginning of creation. 3. *His origin is in the Spirit of God.* The Spirit of God at first brooded over the face of the waters (Gen. i. 2). When man appeared God breathed into him the spirit of life (Gen. ii. 7). The Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of life. In his spiritual nature man is especially related to the Spirit of God. He is a spark from the eternal Sun. 4. *His very existence is maintained by the Spirit of God.* Man lives only because God lives in him. By nature his life is an inspiration from heaven. At any moment, if God were to withdraw, man would perish. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." Thus not only the original creation, but also the present life, should be regarded as inspired by God.

II. THE INSPIRATION OF CREATION IS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE. 1. *The Maker may be known by his work.* All creation reveals God; but man, the highest creature, most fully expresses the Divine. To us there can be no higher revelation of God than that which is made through a perfect man. Therefore the incarnation of Christ is our most complete vision of the Father. But all men are in a measure revealers of the hand that made them. 2. *The spiritual nature of man is a type of God.* All nature reveals God; suns and stars, trees and flowers, birds, beasts, and fishes, give lessons of the Divine; but they do so through their material structures. Man reveals God in the constitution of his spiritual nature. He is not merely the building that sets forth the ideas of the Architect; he is the child, himself made in the image of the Father. His spiritual nature is essentially like God, who is Spirit. Thus he is made in the image of God. 3. *The indwelling of the Spirit of God is a permanent revelation of God.* God not only makes himself known by what he has done, he is daily revealing himself by his present life in our midst. Nature is not like a fossil that shows in its dead lineaments the traces of an old-world life; she is a mirror of the Divine activity. Our own souls are witnessing to God by their vitality. The dwelling of God within us is a continuous proof that he lives, that he works, that he loves. We know what God is now by what God is now doing in our hearts and lives.—W. F. A.

Vers. 6, 7.—*The human mediator.* Elihu declares that his attitude towards God is just the same as Job's. He stands like Job in respect of God. He is a mortal man formed out of the clay. Then, though Job dreads the awful, invisible God, he may listen to a fellow-creature without fear. If he cannot find God in the darkness, he may be cheered and strengthened by feeling the presence of a brother-man. He may take his lessons from Elihu quite simply and naturally as from one like himself. In these ideas Elihu shadows forth what may be perfectly realized in Christ. It was a mark of Elihu's confident vanity for him to speak as he did. But his words, somewhat superfluous as regards himself, set him forth in a striking light as a type of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. WE NEED HUMAN SYMPATHY IN RELIGION. Although man is made in the image of God, and although his very life is a constant inspiration, and depends on the presence and power of God, still God is invisible, God is great, God is an infinite Spirit. The soul of man hungers for brotherly sympathy. We all want to feel the fellowship of one who is like ourselves. 1. *That we may understand aright.* We cannot understand a being of a different species from ourselves. We cannot even comprehend the meaning of our own dog when he looks up at us with pathetic eyes, for we are of another species. 2. *That our affections may be awakened.* We most naturally love one who is kindred to ourselves. The difficulty of loving God is to perceive that there is that in him which is akin to our own natures. When he appears strange to us we shrink from him; we cannot reach out to him in confidence and joyous emotion.

II. CHRIST BRINGS US HUMAN SYMPATHY IN RELIGION. We must not think of him as standing half-way between us and God. Such a Christ would be a monstrous being—neither one with us nor one with God. United with the Father on the Divine side, our Lord is a perfect Man on the human side. 1. *He is intelligible to us.* We can see him, hear him, understand him. And he has told us that when we see him we see the Father (John xiv. 9). 2. *He wins our heart's affections.* His kinship makes this possible; his brotherly love makes it actual; his great work and death for us perfect his hold upon us. Thus our hearts are drawn out to God by the sympathy of Christ.

III. MEN SHOULD SHOW HUMAN SYMPATHY IN RELIGION. What Elihu aimed at, what Christ realized, that is the ideal for us. Without the ostentation of the young Buzite, we are called upon to remember our human nature when we try to help our fellow-men in religious as well as in others matters. There is a sort of sanctimonious spirituality which ignores humanity. This is disgusting to men, and it is the cause of much popular aversion to religion. We cannot help our fellow-men till we recollect we are human like them—frail, fallible, mortal; nay, sinful, fallen, ourselves needing a Saviour. Brotherly sympathy is the first essential for helpful religious influence. —W. F. A.

Vers. 14—17.—*Divine voices.* I. THE ADVENT OF THE DIVINE VOICES. Elihu reminds us of Eliphaz, yet with a difference. Both men believe in superhuman influences, in God-sent messages. But Eliphaz tells of a stately vision, an awful and overwhelming apparition; Elihu, on the other hand, is satisfied with dream-voices. God approaches man in various ways. The most awe-inspiring is not necessarily the most instructive. Dreams have been continually recognized among the channels of Divine communication, *e.g.* the stories of Joseph and Daniel and the prediction of Joel (ii. 28). It is very easy to misinterpret a dream, and to attribute to a Divine impulse what only springs from the vagaries of one's own fancy. We need some assurance that the voices are from God. Now, the test is in their character. All holy thoughts proceed from God, and none that are unholy. When we are visited by a holy thought, whether in sleep or in waking hours, we may rejoice with gratitude to know that God has spoken to us.

II. THE REPETITION OF THE DIVINE VOICES. "God speaketh once, yea twice." Pharaoh's dreams were repeated (Gen. xli. 32). Joseph's different dreams reiterated the same message (Gen. xxxvii. 9). Prophet followed prophet with warning and promise for Israel. The new Christian voice followed the old Jewish voice. God is speaking now, sending one message after another in his providence. We have all heard from God more than once. His was the voice that instilled the first eager desires for goodness in childhood, and his the voice that pleaded amid the passionate enthusiasms of youth. It has sounded in our ears repeatedly among the varied scenes of life

warning against sin, and calling to Christian service. It is repeated whenever the Bible is read, whenever Divine truth is preached, whenever conscience is aroused.

III. THE RECEPTION OF THE DIVINE VOICES. Too often they are unheeded. "Man perceiveth it not." A mood of spiritual dulness may let the voices pass unheard. But this is not a natural condition. The little child is not thus deaf.

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

Later years deaden our perceptions, not indeed by the simple wear and tear of life, but by the evil things that are engendered. Distracting worldliness and sin, the deadliest foes to the heavenly voices, make us careless of the messages from God.

IV. THE PURPOSE OF THE DIVINE VOICES. They are to guide and save. "To withdraw man from his purpose," when that purpose is evil or dangerous. "To hide pride from man," *i.e.* to save man from his pride. Thus the voices are warning and deterrent. They remind us of the "demon" of Socrates, which, he said, told him when he was *not* to do something, but did not prompt him to do anything. We know that God inspires for action, that heavenly voices summon to toil and battle. Yet perhaps we may perceive that the inner voice is more often a restraining than a stimulating voice. For the stimulus we look to the living Christ. Yet the restraint is sent in mercy. God warns, that he may save.—W. F. A.

Vers. 19—22.—*Chastisement.* Elihu now approaches his own special and new contribution to the great controversy. God addresses man in various ways. First he speaks with the still, small inner voice of conscience. But when the repetition of this voice is unheeded he proceeds by another method, and calls attention through the rousing voice of chastisement.

I. SUFFERING IS CHASTISEMENT. As he elaborates his thought we see what Elihu is making clear. Suffering is not the vindictive punishment of sin; nor is it the work of a malignant or even of an indifferent being. It is sent by God for the wholesome discipline of his children. No doubt this discipline is often rendered necessary by sin, and when it is so chastisement is virtually punishment; but even then it is punishment with a merciful end. It is the rod that corrects, not the gallows that ends a career without hope. It looks forward to better things; it is directly designed to help and bless and save. But often it is not connected with sin. It is the wholesome discipline that seasons the soldier with hardship.

II. CHASTISEMENT IS A DIVINE MESSENGER. The poor sufferer, "chastened also with pain upon his bed," is not deserted by God. He is tempted to look upon his trouble as a proof that God has left him, if it is not a sign that God has become his Enemy. But both ideas are wrong. God is neither inimical nor negligent. The very suffering is a sign of God's present care. It is a process by means of which he is bettering his child. Therefore it is a message of mercy. Yet it is not always possible to discern the mercy in the message. Still, the message is not fruitless. Perhaps there was a danger of too much self-confidence; pride was creeping in; success was lifting up the soul to dangerous heights. Then the chastisement came to cast down and humble. At first this seemed harsh and hurtful. But on reflection it is seen to be the very thing needful for saving the better life and refining it.

III. THE SUFFERING OF CHASTISEMENT SHOULD DRIVE US TO GOD. Perhaps we would not heed him in the cheerful hours. Now we need him. The voices that were drowned in the noisy scenes of pleasure may steal into our ears in the lonely watches of pain. Thus we learn to trust in the darkness.

"Lord, in thy sky of blue
No stain of cloud appears;
Gone all my faithless fears,
Only thy love seems true.
Help me to thank thee, then, I pray;
Walk in the light and cheerfully obey.

"Lord, when I look on high,
Clouds only meet my sight;
Fears deepen with the night;
But yet it is thy sky.

Help me to trust thee, then, I pray;
Wait in the dark and tearfully obey."

W. F. A.

Vers. 23—26.—*The messenger and the ransom.* Elihu shows that God has three ways of speaking to man—by inward voices (vers. 14—18), by the experience of chastisement (vers. 19—22), and now lastly by a living messenger (vers. 23—26).

I. GOD SPEAKS BY A MESSENGER. It is a question whether we should understand the word rendered "messenger" in the usual sense attached to it, *i.e.* as standing for "angel." God has spoken through angel-messengers from the days of Abraham. But any one charged with a Divine message becomes God's angel to those to whom he delivers it. Every prophet is God's messenger, one who speaks for God. The apostle is one sent forth by Christ. Angels, prophets, apostles—they are all, so far, the same. They are God's missionaries. Christ is once called an Apostle (Heb. iii. 1), because he too was sent forth by his Father (1 John iv. 14). Our Lord's mission on earth was to bring the new message of salvation from heaven, and to make it a real and living thing among men. Every true follower of Christ is called to be a messenger from God to his fellow-men. People will listen to the human voice when they are deaf to the pleadings of conscience and blind to the teachings of experience. The true preacher is God's messenger. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 20).

II. GOD'S MESSENGER BRINGS A RANSOM. It is contrary to the whole course of historical revelation, which develops truth by slow degrees, to suppose that the ransom intended by Elihu was the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. Such an anachronism implies an entire lack of perspective in the view of the interpreter. Nevertheless, the essential ideas of a ransom are here brought forward. 1. *Deliverance.* It is the duty of God's messenger to preach "deliverance to the captives." He is more than a revealer of truth; he is a herald of salvation. 2. *A costly method.* Elihu may have no conception of the price of redemption. Yet he perceives more or less dimly that some ransom must be paid. We have a much clearer view of the subject, because we can read it in the light of history. We now know that our deliverance is effected through the death of Christ. "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28).

III. THE DIVINE RANSOM SECURES A GLAD WELCOME FROM GOD. The message may seem to come in stern tones of anger, following a John the Baptist preparation of chastisement. Yet it is a gospel. Ver. 26 paints a glowing picture of the redeemed man. 1. *Acceptable prayer.* Until he was ransomed his prayer seemed to be in vain. Now God hears it with favour. 2. *The beatific vision.* "He shall see his face with joy." Reconciled to God, he rejoices in communion with God. 3. *Restoration of righteousness.* "He restoreth unto man his uprightness." This is the grand human result of redemption. Deliverance from doom is not enough, is not the chief end. The restoration of the broken and defiled image of God to its original, or more than its original, beauty is the great outcome of the redeeming work of Christ.—W. F. A.

Vers. 27—30.—*The restored penitent.* I. THE CONDITION OF RESTORATION. The redeemed man is represented as chanting a grateful psalm in recognition of his merciful deliverance. In this psalm he both acknowledges his guilt and recognizes that he has not been treated as he deserves. Guilt is a fact to be first of all owned. There is no forgiveness without confession. Even when a man is forgiven, though God may put aside his guilt, the man cannot do so. The thought of what he has been delivered from heightens his gratitude while it deepens his humility.

II. THE STATE OF RECOVERY. It is deliverence from death—"the pit." Death is the natural penalty of sin. But when God forgives and restores he does more than remit the penalty. Salvation is far more than this negative blessing. The sin has already poisoned the life of the sinner. Already he is "dead in trespasses and sins." Therefore he needs the gift of life. Now, this positive boon comes with the great restoration of souls in redemption. God, who first gave natural life, now gives spiritual life. Thus the blessing is internal and personal. It is not a change of the soul's estate, but a regeneration of the soul itself.

III. THE SOURCE OF REDEMPTION. God himself brings about the new, happy condition of the restored penitent. He could not restore himself; no creature in the universe could give him what he needs. For the evil was death, and the requirement was a gift of life. Only he who first created life, and who ever lives in all his creatures, can renew life. Regeneration implies a Divine energy. Those forms of religion which are satisfied with man as he is may dispense with any very marked activity on God's side in religion; but when the ruin of man is acknowledged, the chief element in religion must be, not man's devotion, but God's salvation. Now, this is what we see in the Bible. There man appears in his sinfulness and helplessness, utterly unfit for heaven, or even for earthly life in its beauty and fruitfulness, and there God is seen as the mighty Deliverer coming to the rescue of his helpless child.

IV. THE METHOD OF RENEWAL. Elihu has spoken of the Divine voices, the experience of chastisement, and the personal messenger. By these means God reaches man. What else is done is not so fully seen here as in the later revelation of the New Testament, in which we discover the cross of Christ as the root of man's new life. But throughout God's dealings with man in all ages it has been apparent that there are various processes of spiritual experience through which God leads returning penitents. Therefore, if the present process is dark and mysterious and even painful, we have great encouragements for submitting to it with more than patient faith, with joyous hope, looking to the end which is, "to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living."—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Vers. 1—37.—In this chapter Elihu turns from Job to those whom he addresses as "wise men" (ver. 2), or "men of understanding" (ver. 10). Whether these are Job's three special friends, or others among the company which had perhaps gathered to hear the debate, is uncertain. He makes the subject of his address to them Job's conduct—scarcely a polite thing to do in Job's presence. Job, he says, has scorned God and charged him with injustice (vers. 5—9). He will vindicate him. This he proceeds to do in vers. 10—30. He then points out what Job's course ought to be (vers. 31—33), and winds up by an appeal to the "men of understanding" to endorse his condemnation of Job as a sinner and a rebel (vers. 34—37).

Vers. 1, 2.—**Furthermore Elihu answered and said, Hear my words, O ye wise men.** Having, as he may have thought, reduced Job to silence by the force of his reasonings, Elihu, wishing to carry with him the general consent of his audience, makes an appeal to them, or, at any rate, to the wise among them, to judge Job's conduct and pronounce upon it. It is probable, as Schultens remarks, that a considerable number of influential persons had by this time collected together to hear the discussion which was going on. To these Elihu specially addresses himself: **Give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge.**

Ver. 3.—**For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.** A proverbial expression, already used by Job in the dialogue (ch. xii. 11). "It is as much the business of the ear to discriminate between wise and foolish words, as of the palate to distinguish between wholesome and unwholesome food."

Ver. 4.—**Let us choose to us judgment;** *i.e.* "Let us seek to come to a right conclusion (*mishphat*) on each subject that comes before us for consideration." **Let us know among ourselves that which is good.** "Let us know, discern, and recognize that which is right and good." Excellent sentiments, but somewhat pompously put forth by a young man addressing elder ones.

Ver. 5.—**For Job hath said, I am righteous.** Job had maintained his "righteousness" in a certain sense, *i.e.* his integrity, his honesty, his conviction that God would ultimately acquit him; but he had not maintained his sinlessness (see the comment on ch. xxxiii. 9). He had not even said, in so many words, "I am righteous." The nearest that he had come to saying it was when (in ch. xiii. 18) he had exclaimed, "I know that I shall be held righteous," or "justified." **And God hath taken away my judgment.** Job had said this (ch. xxvii. 2), but in the sense that God had withheld from him the judgment on his cause which he desired, not that he had perverted judgment, and wrongfully condemned him (see the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 97).

Ver. 6.—**Should I lie against my right?** This was an essential portion of Job's argument (see ch. xxvii. 4). Against the theory of his secret heinous wickedness put forward by his "comforters," he maintained consistently his freedom from conscious deliberate opposition to the will of God, and refused to make the confessions which they suggested or required, on the ground that they would have been untrue—in making them he would have "lied against his right." In this certainly Job "sinned not." But it was essential to the theory of Elihu, no less than to that of Eliphaz and his friends, that Job was suffering on account of past iniquity, whether he were being punished for it in anger or chastised for it in love (see ch. xxxiii. 17, 27). **My wound** (literally, *my arrow*; comp. ch. vi. 4) **is incurable without transgression**; *i.e.* without my having committed any transgression to account for it.

Ver. 7.—**What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water?** This comment is not only unnecessary, but unfair. It was not for Elihu, who professed a desire to "justify" (or completely exonerate) Job, to aggravate his guilt by means of rhetorical comment; and the comment itself was unfair, for Job had not indulged in scorn to any extent, much less "drunk it up like water" (comp. ch. xv. 16). He had in no respect scorned God; and if he had occasionally poured some scorn upon his "comforters" (ch. vi. 21; xii. 2; xiii. 4—13; xvi. 2; xxi. 2—5; xxvi. 2—4), must it not be admitted that they had deserved it? It was the duty of Elihu to act as moderator between Job and the "comforters," whereas he here seeks to exasperate them, and lash them up to fury against their afflicted friend. Perhaps Job's impassive attitude has embittered him.

Ver. 8.—**Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity.** It is impossible to supply any other antecedent to "which" than Job himself. Elihu therefore accuses Job of having turned aside from righteousness, and betaken himself to the "counsel of the ungodly, the way of sinners, and the seat of the scornful" (Ps. i. 1). This is grossly to exaggerate Job's faults of temper, and puts Elihu very nearly on a level with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar in respect of misconception and rudeness. **And walketh with wicked men.** If no more is meant than that Job has adopted principles and arguments commonly used by wicked men (Canon Cook), the language employed is unfortunate.

Ver. 9.—**For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.** Again it must be remarked that Job had not said this. The nearest approach to it is to be found in ch. ix. 22, where this passage occurs: "It is all one; therefore I say, He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked" (Revised Version). Elsewhere Job speaks, not generally, but of his own individual case, remarking that his righteousness has not saved him from calamity (ch. ix. 17, 18; x. 15; xvii. 9—17, etc.). And the fact is one that causes him the deepest perplexity.

Ver. 10.—**Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding** (comp. ver. 2). Elihu repeats himself, wishing to call special attention to his justification of God (vers. 10—30). **Far be it from God, that he should do wickedness.** Elihu probably means that to do wickedness is contrary to the very nature and idea of God; but he does not express himself very clearly. **And from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.** An evil God, a God who can do wrong, is a contradiction in terms—an impossible, inconceivable idea. Devil-worshippers, if there are or ever have been such persons, do not conceive of the object of their worship as really God, but as a powerful malignant spirit. Once rise to the height of the conception of a Power absolutely supreme, omniscient, omnipresent, the Author of all things, and it is impossible to imagine him as less than perfectly good.

Ver. 11.—**For the work of a man shall he render unto him.** God "rewardeth every man according to his work" (Ps. lxii. 13), renders to each one good or evil, according as his own deeds have been the one or the other. But this must be understood of the man's *whole* conduct, and God's *entire* treatment of him. Such an absolute rectitude of God's moral government, considered as a whole, is implied and involved in his absolute and perfect justice. **And cause every man to find according to his ways.** We "find according to our ways" when, having "ploughed iniquity, and sown wickedness, we reap the same" (ch. iv. 8), or when, on the other hand, having "sown in righteousness, we reap in mercy" (Hos. x. 12). Exact retribution is the law of God's rule; but the exactness cannot be seen, or tested, or demonstrated in this life. It will appear, however, and be recognized by all, at the consummation of all things.

Ver. 12.—**Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.** Elihu is fond of rhetorical amplification, like most young speakers. Vers. 11, 12 contain nothing that is really additional to the statement in ver. 10.

Ver. 13.—**Who hath given him a charge over the earth?** The argument seems to be that if God had "received a charge," and were in possession of a mere delegated authority, like the subordinate gods of

heathen nations, he might have an interest apart from that of those whom he governs, and so be tempted to be unjust; but as he is the Author of all and the sole Ruler of all, his interest must be bound up with the true interests of his creatures, and cannot clash with them. He can thus never be unjust, since he can have no temptation to be unjust. **Or who hath disposed the whole world?** rather, *Who hath laid upon him the whole world?* (see the margin of the Revised Version). Elihu repeats the idea of the previous clause in other words.

Ver. 14.—**If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath.** Two renderings are proposed, both supported by about equal authority: (1) "If he (*i.e.* God) set his heart upon *himself*, if he should gather to himself *his own* spirit and breath," then all flesh would perish, etc. (2) "If he [*i.e.* God] set his heart upon [or, 'against'] *man*, if he were to gather to himself *man's* spirit and *man's* breath," then, etc. The difference is not great. God could, either by withdrawing from man the breath and spirit which he has given him, or simply by withholding from man the quickening and sustaining influences which he is perpetually putting forth, reduce all humankind to nothingness. Being so completely master of man, he would surely not condescend to treat him with injustice. Injustice implies something of opposition, struggle, rivalry.

Ver. 15.—**All flesh shall perish together** (comp. Ps. civ. 29). Without God's sustaining hand, all creatures would fall back into nothingness. **And man shall turn again unto dust.** Either Elihu refers here to Gen. iii. 19, or else he has a traditional knowledge of man's origin, handed down from a remote antiquity, which is in entire conformity with the Hebrew belief.

Ver. 16.—**If now thou hast understanding, hear this.** The appeal is not to Job, but to any wise and intelligent man among the many hearers who were present (see the comment on vers. 1, 2). **Hearken to the voice of my words** (comp. vers. 2, 10).

Ver. 17.—**Shall even he that hateth right govern?** Is it conceivable that there can be at the head of the universe, its Ruler and Guide, One who hates justice? The appeal is to the instinctive feeling that in the one God perfect goodness and omnipotence are united. Its spirit is exactly that of Abraham's question, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (see Gen. xviii. 5). **And wilt thou condemn him that is most just?** rather, *him that is both just and strong* (see the Revised Version).

Ver. 18.—**Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly?** Would any subject of an earthly king deem it fitting to accuse his sovereign of wicked and unjust conduct? Would he even tax those who stood next to the king—the princes and great officers of the court—with ungodliness? If a sense of what is becoming and seemly would restrain a man from the use of language of this sort towards his earthly ruler, can it be right that he should allow himself in such liberty of speech towards his heavenly King, his absolute Lord and Master? Job had not really used such language of God, though the complaints which he had made with respect to God's treatment of him might not unreasonably be held to imply some such accusation.

Ver. 19.—How much less to him **that accepteth not the persons of princes!** How much less becomingly is such language used of One so far above princes that he regards them as on a level with all other men, and pays them no special respect! Worldly rank is, of course, nothing with God. All mankind are his subjects and servants, whom he differentiates one from another solely by their moral and spiritual qualities. **Nor regardeth the rich more than the poor.** If earthly rank is of no account with God, much less is abundance of possessions. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus places his complete indifference in a strong light. **For they all are the work of his hands.** All classes of men, rich and poor, powerful and weak, are equally God's creatures, brought into the world by him, given by him their several stations, and regarded by him with favour or disfavour, according as they conduct themselves in their various occupations and employments.

Ver. 20.—**In a moment shall they die.** All lie under the same law of death—

> "Pallida Mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
> Regumque turres."
> (Horace, 'Od.,' i. 4, ll. 13, 14.)

"In a moment," whenever God wills, they pass from life and disappear, the rich equally with the needy, the powerful prince as much as the outcast and the beggar. **And the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away** (comp. Exod. xii. 29; 2 Kings xix. 35). Such sudden catastrophes are infrequent; but it is within the power of God to produce them at any time. When they occur, they strikingly exemplify the equality of his dealings with all classes of men, since none escape (Exod. xi. 5; xii. 29). **And the mighty shall be taken away without hand;** *i.e.* without human agency (comp. Dan. ii. 34).

Ver. 21.—**For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.** Elihu proceeds to a fresh argument. The omniscience of God is a security against his acting

unjustly. He knows exactly each man's powers, capacities, temperament, temptations, circumstances. He can exactly measure each man's due, and will assuredly mete it out to each without partiality or prejudice.

Ver. 22.—**There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.** "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 13). However careful wicked men may be to conceal their misdeeds by "waiting for the twilight" (ch. xxiv. 15), or doing them "in the dark" (ch. xxiv. 16), they will find it quite impossible to escape the all-seeing eye of the Almighty, which is as clear-sighted in the deepest darkness as in the brightest light ("Yea, the darkness is no darkness with thee, but the night is as clear as the day; the darkness and light to thee are both alike," Ps. cxxxix. 11, Prayer-book Version).

Ver. 23.—**For he will not lay upon man more than right**; rather, *for he needeth not further to consider a man* (see the Revised Version). He has no need to consider any man's case twice; he sees it at the first glance, and judges it infallibly. **That he should enter into judgment with God.** Were it not so, a man might perhaps claim to have a second trial, and, pleading in his own defence, might "enter into judgment with God," or (according to others) "go before God in judgment;" but God's absolute omniscience precludes this.

Ver. 24.—**He shall break in pieces mighty men without number**; rather, *in ways that are unsearchable*, or *in ways past finding out* (see the Revised Version). **And set others in their stead** (comp. 1 Sam. ii. 7; Ps. lxxv. 7; Dan. ii. 21).

Ver. 25.—**Therefore** (*i.e. to that end*, or *with that object in view*) **he knoweth** (rather, *taketh knowledge of*) **their works.** As God governs the world, and governs it, to a large extent, by exalting some men and depressing others, he is bound to take strict account of their conduct, that he may exalt the worthy and depress the unworthy. **And he overturneth them in the night** (comp. ver. 20). **So that they are destroyed**; literally, *crushed*. God's judgments fall on men suddenly, either "in the night," or *as* "in the night," *i.e.* suddenly, unexpectedly, when they are quite unprepared; and fall on them with "crushing" force, with a might that is wholly irresistible.

Ver. 26.—**He striketh them as wicked men**; *i.e.* as open and acknowledged malefactors. **In the open sight of others**; literally, *in the place of beholders*; i.e. publicly, openly, where their fate is an example to others.

Ver. 27.—**Because they turned back from him.** (On the sin of "turning back," see 2 Kings xvii. 15, 16; Prov. xxvi. 11; 2 Pet. ii. 22.) **And would not consider any of his ways** (comp. Ps. xxviii. 5; Isa. v. 12). The folly and wickedness of such conduct is reproved by Solomon in the strongest terms, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (Prov. i. 24—32).

Ver. 28.—**So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him.** Elihu views the wicked man as almost certainly an oppressor, whose misdeeds "cause the cry of the poor to come before God," and provoke God, the Avenger of the poor and needy, to visit him with chastisement. **And he heareth the cry of the afflicted** (comp. Exod. ii. 23, 24; xxii. 23, 24; Ps. xii. 5, etc.). God's ears are ever open to the cry of the oppressed, and his hand is ever heavy upon those who "afflict" the weak and defenceless (Isa. i. 24; iii. 12—15; Amos v. 11, 12; Micah iii. 1—4; Hab. i. 13).

Ver. 29.—**When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?** literally, *Who then can condemn?* The sentiment is the same as that of St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, "If God be for us, who can be against us? . . . Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. viii. 31—34). **And when he hideth his face, who then can behold him?** When God hideth away his face, then all flesh is troubled (Ps. civ. 29); man shrinks into himself, and despairs of happiness; nature itself seems to fail and fade. None can behold him when he hides himself; none can do more than deprecate his anger, and pray, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us" (Ps. iv. 6). **Whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only.** The results are similar, whether God withdraws the light of his countenance from a nation or from an individual. In either case, there is no help from without; **ruin and destruction follow.**

Ver. 30.—**That the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared**; rather, *that an ungodly man reign not, that a people be not a snare.* (So Schultens, Professor Lee, and others.) The passage is obscure from its brevity; but this seems to be the best sense. God withdraws his favour from an ungodly king or from a wicked nation, that the king may cease to injure men by his rule, and the nation cease to be a snare to its neighbours.

Ver. 31.—**Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne** chastisement. (So Rosenmüller and others.) If the passage be thus rendered, Elihu must be considered as, like Eliphaz (ch. v. 8), Bildad (ch. viii. 5), and Zophar (ch. xi. 13—15), counselling Job to submit himself to God, acknowledging his sin, accepting his punishment, and promising amendment for the future (ver. 22). But perhaps it is better to regard the passage as interrogative, and Elihu as asking—What man, among those whom God has cast down and punished, has ever sought to deprecate his wrath by contrition, confession, and promise of amendment, implying that, had they done so, God would have relented and forgiven them? (see the Revised Version). In this case no direct counsel is offered to Job; but still an indirect hint is given him. **I will not offend** any more. This is preferable to the marginal rendering of the Revised Version, "though I have not offended."

Ver. 32.—**That which I see not, teach thou me**; *i.e.* "If in anything I fail to see thy will, teach thou it me. Make thy way plain before my face." **If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.** The hypothetical form seems to be preferred, as more acceptable to Job, who maintained his righteousness, than a positive confession of sin.

Ver. 33.—Should it be **according to thy mind? he will recompense it.** The two clauses should be taken together, and the translation should run, "Should God recompense" (*i.e.* make his awards) "according to *thy* pleasure," or "as *thou* willest?" Elihu turns to Job and directly addresses him, "Can he expect that God will make his decrees—condemn and absolve men—just as Job thinks right?" **Whether thou refuse**; rather, *since thou refusest them.* Job had refused to acknowledge the justice of God's awards and decisions. **Or whether thou choose; and not I**; rather, *but thou must choose, and not I.* It is Job who must determine how he will act. Elihu, a friend, can only point out and recommend a course, as he had done in vers. 31, 32. It is for Job himself to determine what course he will take. **Therefore speak what thou knowest**; *i.e.* "Say what thou hast determined on."

Ver. 34.—**Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wise man hearken unto me.** As Job does not answer him, Elihu turns to his "men of understanding" (*supra*, vers. 2, 10). He feels sure that he will at least have carried them with him, and that they will join in the condemnation of Job's words as wanting in true wisdom. "Men of understanding," he says, "will say unto me, yea, every wise man that heareth me will say, Job speaketh without knowledge," etc. (see the Revised Version).

Ver. 35.—**Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words** were **without wisdom**; literally, *not in wisdom.* The words intended are, of course, those in which Job has seemed to tax God with injustice (see the comment on ver. 9).

Ver. 36.—**My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end**; literally, *Would that Job were tested to the uttermost!*—"tested," *i.e.*, as gold is tested by the touchstone, and "to the uttermost," so that there should be no doubt as to the result. Elihu had his wish. Job was tried as severely as possible, and the issue was pronounced by God himself, "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, *as my servant Job hath*" (ch. xlii. 8, Revised Version). **Because of** his **answers for wicked men**; rather, *after the manner of wicked men* (comp. above, vers. 5, 6, 9). This was the view which Elihu took of Job's rash words.

Ver. 37.—**For he addeth rebellion unto his sin.** Elihu holds that it is Job's "sin" which has brought on him his chastisement, and regards his expostulations and complaints as flagrant "rebellion" against the Most High. **He clappeth his hands among us**; *i.e.* he applauds himself, approves of his own conduct, and, instead of repenting, makes a boast of it. **And multiplieth his words against God.** Job had continued to the last (ch. xxxi.) to justify himself and protest his integrity; which, in the view of Elihu, was to tax God with injustice.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—37.—*Elihu to the bystanders: the case of Job tried.* I. THE COURT CONSTITUTED. 1. *The panel.* Job, a good man, a great sufferer, sorely calumniated, deeply perplexed, involved in doubt and darkness, and guilty of much presumption. 2. *The judges.* Either the three friends ironically addressed as "wise men," or the bystanders, among whom were doubtless many possessed of sound wisdom and

discretion—"wise" and "knowing ones" (ver. 2), "men of understanding," literally, "men of heart," *i.e.* persons of intelligence and ripe experience, capable of forming a judgment upon so high a matter as that about to be submitted to them. 3. *The prosecutor.* Elihu. Details of his personality have been given in ch. xxxii. 2. A young Arabian prophet claiming to speak under a Divine impulse, and introduced for the purpose of delivering a preliminary verdict upon Job's case, with a view to preparing Job for the subsequent theophany of Jehovah (ch. xxxviii. 1). 4. *The address.* Elihu invites the court of jurymen to attend to the details of the case, as he should present it for their consideration, to use discrimination in sifting what the ear heard, so as to separate the essential from the accidental, the important from the unimportant, the pertinent from the irrelevant, the ear being endowed with a faculty of trying words as the palate is with a capacity for tasting meats (ver. 3), and, in the exercise of a sound judgment, to resolve upon arriving at the truth (ver. 4). What are here commended to the listeners and spectators beside the "ash-heap" as indispensable qualifications for judging the case of Job aright, viz. attention, discrimination, and probation, are needful for all inquirers after truth, and are specially enjoined upon believing students of the Word of God, who are commanded not only, like the Bereans, "to receive the Word with all readiness of mind," and "to search the Scriptures daily" (Acts xvii. 11), but, like the Thessalonians, to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. v. 21).

II. THE INDICTMENT PREFERRED. 1. *That Job had declared himself to be righteous.* Elihu doubtless alludes to those passages in which Job had asserted his innocence as against the baseless aspersions of his friends (ch. ix. 17, 21; x. 7; xiii. 18; xvi. 17). Though true in the sense that Job was guiltless of flagrant wickedness, yet in the judgment of Elihu such vehement protestations of stainless integrity as had fallen from his lips were hardly becoming in a sinful creature (*vide* ch. xxxii. 2, homiletics). 2. *That Job charged God with injustice.* Again Elihu faithfully reports what he regards as the substance of Job's contention, that he would be guilty of falsehood and hypocrisy were he to admit the correctness of his friends' allegations (ch. xxvii. 4); that the seemingly incurable malady which had overtaken him (God's arrow, as in ch. vi. 4; xvi. 9; xix. 11) had come upon him although he was "without transgression" (ch. x. 17), and that consequently God had taken away his right (ch. xxvii. 2), which he supposes to mean, had denied him justice and treated him as a criminal, while in reality he was innocent. 3. *That Job had indulged in blasphemy.* In charging Job with "drinking up scorning like water," *i.e.* uttering blasphemous censures against God, Elihu, it has been said (Canon Cook), "goes now for the first time far beyond the truth," since "Job's words" of fierce and bitter remonstrance "were wrung from him by agony, and by the taunts of his unfriendly counsellors," while "his scorn was altogether directed against them, not, as Elihu seems to assume, against God." But it may be questioned whether this is not an illustration of forgetting to act upon Elihu's canon, "Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is right." Excusable as was the scornful contempt Job hurled against the friends, it is impossible to recall the wild, passionate, often reckless and unreasonable appeals and expostulations he addressed to God without agreeing with Elihu that at such moments he did overstep the limits of a just and holy moderation, and came perilously near, if he did not actually touch, the bounds of an impious and blasphemous irreverence. "We cannot but feel that he often pushed his inferences against the Divine justice and providence much too far, as indeed he himself confessed he had when at last he saw Jehovah face to face" (Cox). 4. *That Job had adopted the sentiments and maxims of the ungodly.* Without explicitly asserting that Job had himself been a ribald and profane jester at holy things, Elihu affirms that by maintaining that "it profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God" (ver. 9), Job had practically gone over to the side of the irreligious. Though nowhere is the above declaration stated in so many words, it is by no means an unnatural inference from Job's words (ch. ix. 22; xxi. 7; xxiv. 1; xxx. 26). A reasoner is not unfairly held responsible for what may be deduced by just and necessary consequence from his premisses, even though he himself should fail to perceive, or, perceiving, should not mean, what these premisses involve. Now, Job had repeatedly insisted on the apparently anomalous distribution of good and evil among mankind; and while, as

an answer to the friends, that was perfectly legitimate, it was possible to so exhibit that perplexing circumstance as to make it carry the conclusion that the supreme Governor of the universe was indifferent to the characters of his subject intelligences, and that a good man derived no advantage from his piety, while a wicked man suffered no disadvantage in consequence of his irreligion. This, in the judgment of Elihu, Job had done, and against this Elihu proceeded to protest.

III. THE COUNTER-PROPOSITION STATED. The position taken by Elihu was the negative of Job's, viz. that the perpetration of wrong against any of his creatures was on the part of God simply impossible, that with him such a thing as perversion of judgment was inconceivable, and that, when rightly comprehended, the principle of the Divine administration was one of absolute equity. The three friends maintained, not only that such was the principle of the Divine administration, but that its operation was always visible. Job contended that the operation of such a principle was not always visible in God's dealings with mankind, and hence Job sometimes doubted whether that was the principle on which the universe was governed, though in his inmost soul he felt that it ought to be. Elihu affirms that, whether visible or not to human intelligence and in particular cases, such and no other was the law or rule of the Divine procedure.

IV. THE NEEDFUL DEMONSTRATION OFFERED. 1. *The absolute supremacy of God.* (Vers. 13—15.) The argument has three points. (1) God governs the world with no delegated authority. No one hath given him a charge over the whole earth, or committed to him, as to a satrap or underling, the viceroyalty of the globe (ver. 13). On the contrary, he rules with a right that is essential and underived, indisputable and irresponsible. (2) God governs the world with no insufficient power. Were God selfishly to fix his attention on himself alone (Grotius, Eichhorn, Delitzsch, Umbreit, Carey, Cook, Cox), rather than on man, regarding him as an enemy (Vulgate, Targums, De Wette, Rosenmüller), and in consequence to gather unto himself his Spirit and his breath, by which all living creatures are sustained (ch. xii. 9, 10), the result would be the complete extinction of all animated being on the face of earth (ver. 15). The meaning is that God has all creatures so entirely in his hand that they are nothing, and can do nothing except in so far as they are upheld by him. Hence (3) God governs the world for no selfish end. If he did, he could easily dispose of a rebel universe by reducing it to dust or consigning it to annihilation. That he does not is proof that he regards not himself alone, or, in other words, that he is impelled by considerations of unselfish love for man. And this being so, it is manifestly impossible that God can inflict injustice on a creature whom he loves. 2. *The immaculate purity of God.* (Ver. 17.) Elihu's argument amounts to this: that the necessary basis of all government is right—integrity in the Person and equity in the Law of the Ruler; that without this every administration, human or Divine, would fall into anarchy and confusion; and that, consequently, unless these conditions were supplied by the supreme Governor of mankind, the administration he conducted would sooner or later be overwhelmed in ruin. If it be true that the stability of any government depends ultimately upon the righteous character of its rulers and the equitable nature of its laws, much more must the moral administration of the universe be founded on the immaculate holiness of God and the unchangeable justice of his laws. 3. *The strict impartiality of God.* According to Elihu it is little short of lese-majesty, or high treason, for a subject to accuse either kings or princes of corruption (Exod. xxii. 28), thereby denying them the first and most indispensable qualification of a ruler.

> "The king-becoming graces
> Are justice, verity, temperance, stableness."
> (Shakespeare.)

And "he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (2 Sam. xxiii. 3). What, then, must it be to impeach him who "accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor?" (ver. 19). Respect of persons, a common enough failing even with good people (Deut. i. 17; xvi. 19; Jas. ii. 1, 9), is impossible with God (2 Sam. xiv. 14; Acts x. 34; 1 Pet. i. 17), whose impartiality towards men is based on the consideration that they are all alike "the work of his hands" (ver. 19), therefore all alike possessed of the same essential dignity, amenable to the same high

authority, and entitled to be cared for by the same paternal government. And as it is based on the fundamental equality of men in the sight of Heaven, so is it proved by the palpable fact that all alike are subjected to the same impartial doom (ver. 20); great and mighty potentates dying in a moment, like Belshazzar (Dan. v. 30) or like Pharaoh (Exod. xiv. 28), or, being taken away without hand (cf. Dan. ii. 34; viii. 25), *i.e.* by some supernatural visitation, like the rebellious princes of the congregation (Numb. xvi. 29) or like Herod (Acts xii. 23), and their peoples being troubled at midnight, like the Egyptians (Exod. xii. 29), or suddenly and unexpectedly overthrown, like the antediluvians (Gen. vii. 22) and the inhabitants of the cities of the plain (Gen. xix. 24, 25). 4. *The all-encompassing omniscience of God.* (Ver. 21.) The eyes of the Supreme are constantly on the ways of man. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where workers of iniquity can hide themselves from his penetrating glance. With such accuracy can he read the human heart, that he does not require to regard a man twice in order to understand his character and conversation. He has no need to pause before bringing the individual into judgment. Job's demand that God should hold a court of assizes and put his case to trial was wholly superfluous. So thoroughly does God comprehend man by the glance of his omniscient eye that he can proceed to break the mighty without investigation, making short work of their trial, and setting others in their stead (ver. 24). Clearly, reasons Elihu, a God who thus exactly and fully comprehends every case that is brought before him is not likely to be guilty of committing wickedness by perverting judgment. 5. *The unchallengeable righteousness of God.* (Vers. 24—30.) Elihu means that the absolute integrity of God may be established by a consideration of the character of his judgments, which are: (1) Sudden. "He overturneth the wicked in the night" (ver. 25); *i.e.* instantaneously and unexpectedly, which, of course, he would not and could not do unless he were completely satisfied with the righteous character of his judgments. But "he knoweth their works" without investigation, in virtue of his omniscience; and hence he does not hesitate, as if fearing miscarriage of justice, to proceed to swift execution. (2) Public. "He striketh them as wicked men"—*i.e.* as convicted malefactors, about whose criminality there can be no question—"in the open sight of others," literally, "in the place of spectators." "He that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." But God, whose works are all of them verity and judgment, and done in truth and uprightness (Ps. cxi. 7, 8), has no need to shun observation or be afraid of criticism. Hence he never does resort to star-chambers or secret inquisitions, but courts the greatest possible publicity for all he does. (3) Retributive. When God steps out of his place to inflict sufferings on men, it is never for the gratification of any private feeling of revenge, never in the reckless exercise of merely arbitrary power, but always for the vindication of insulted justice, always for the punishment of some outrageous display of wickedness. When mighty tyrants are struck down in the open sight of others, it will generally be found, says Elihu, that it has been "because they turned back from him, and would not consider any of his ways," but proceeded to such a height of daring impiety, oppressing and trampling on the poor, that they "caused the cry of the poor to come unto him," and in a manner obliged him to hear the cry of the afflicted (ver. 28). Examined into, every such case will be found in its most essential features to be in complete accord with the eternal fitness of things. (4) Unimpeachable. They are so evidently right, so self-justifying, in fact, that no one can venture to assail them on the ground of inequity. "When he giveth quietness"—*i.e.* maketh peace by striking down the oppressor of the poor (Delitzsch, Gesenius, Carey), rather than "when he striketh to the earth" (Umbreit)—"who then will condemn him?" or "who then will make a noise?" as if he had perpetrated an injustice. And *vice versâ*, "when he hideth his face," in the sense of being angry with and punishing an individual or a nation (Ps. xxx. 8; civ. 29), "who then can behold him, *i.e.* make him visible, and cause him to restore his favour, as if by withdrawing his regard he had been guilty of doing wrong? The universal conscience feels, says Elihu, that the Almighty in so acting is acting rightly. (5) Beneficent. And not only so, but God's judgments evince the most benevolent and philanthropic design, being dictated by a lofty regard for the general welfare of mankind, to the end that "the hypocrite [literally, 'the ungodly,' such as lead others to impiety] reign not, that they be not snares to the people" (ver. 30), as wicked rulers commonly are; *e.g.* Jeroboam (1 Kings xii. 28), Omri

(1 Kings xvi. 25, 26), Ahab (1 Kings xvi. 31), Jehoahaz (2 Kings xiii. 2), and other monarchs both of Israel and of Judah. It is a special mercy to a people when God cuts short the lives of wicked kings.

V. THE COUNSEL GIVEN. To adopt the model confession next recited (vers. 31, 32), in which are three things worthy of consideration. 1. *A humble submission to God's chastisements.* "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne!" (*sc.* chastisement). Resignation in affliction is the duty of all (Prov. iii. 11); it is specially incumbent on God's people (Luke xxi. 19), indispensable as a condition of returning favour (Lev. xxvi. 40—42), and one of the surest signs of a truly penitent heart (Jer. xxxi. 18). Nothing enables one to manifest genuine resignation like the clear recognition of God's hand in affliction (Micah vi. 9; 1 Sam. iii. 18; Jas. iv. 7), and of the true design of affliction to chastise rather than punish (Heb. xii. 5; Ps. cxix. 75). Resignation in affliction and submission to Divine chastisement were exemplified by Aaron (Lev. x. 3), the children of Israel (Judg. x. 15), Eli (1 Sam. iii. 18), David (2 Sam. xv. 26), Job (ch. i. 21; ii. 10), Micah (vii. 9), St. Paul (Acts xxi. 14). 2. *A hearty promise of amendment.* "I will not offend any more" (ver. 31); "If I have done iniquity, I will do no more" (ver. 32). Such a promise distinctly involved the confession that one had offended; and without confession there can be no forgiveness (Prov. xxviii. 13; 1 John i. 9), as, on the other hand, without amendment there is no evidence that confession is sincere (ch. xxii. 23; Isa. i. 16; Ezek. xiv. 6; Hos. xiv. 8). 3. *An earnest desire after Divine instruction.* "That which I see not teach thou me" (ver. 32). Converted souls are always more or less deeply sensible of their ignorance, especially in regard to spiritual things, as *e.g.* the wickedness of their own hearts (Jer. xvii. 9), the subtlety of sin (Ps. xix. 12), the specific purposes of providential dispensations (John xiii. 7), the right path of holy living (Jer. x. 23); and with reference to all these and many other points they are ever ready to receive heavenly enlightenment, saying, "Teach me to know thy way" (Ps. xxvii. 11), and "to do thy will" (Ps. cxliii. 10).

VI. THE APPLICATION MADE. 1. *An appeal to Job.* (1) A question. "Shall he"—*i.e.* God—"recompense it" (*sc.* man's wickedness, and actions generally) "according to thy mind?" *i.e.* shall God adopt a mode of government or principle of administration to please thee? (2) A reason. "For thou hast found fault" (Delitzsch); "For thou hast despised" (*sc.* his judgments) (Cook). That is, Job had expressed dissatisfaction with God's dispensations. Whence the obvious inference arose that Job deemed these dispensations should have been framed according to his ideas. (3) A duty. "So that thou hast to choose, and not I," meaning that in the circumstances Job had better make up his mind about that better plan of government for the world than God's, and publish it as soon as possible: "And what thou knowest speak out." 2. *An address to the bystanders.* Finding Job silent, Elihu turns to the listeners and spectators, whom he dexterously salutes as "men of understanding" and "wise ones," asking them to say whether it is not the case that they agree with him in the verdict, "Job speaketh without knowledge, and his words are without wisdom" (vers. 34, 35). A severe verdict, whether the audience appealed to endorsed it or not! Yet Jehovah afterwards affirmed its truth (ch. xxxviii. 2). And surely it is an index of folly for puny man, as Job did, to sit in judgment on God. 3. *A declaration by Elihu.* (1) Elihu's desire. That Job's trial might be further continued, which may signify either that Job's sentiments might be more thoroughly examined, or that Job's afflictions might be further prolonged—the first, a wish becoming a genuine seeker after and an earnest preacher of the truth; and the second, though seemingly harsh, yet not necessarily unkind or inconsistent with the obligations and claims of friendship. (2) Elihu's reason. Generally, that Job's affliction had not yet produced that beneficial effect upon him for which it was intended. Particularly, that (*a*) his sentiments were irreligious—"his answers" were "after the manner of evil men;" (*b*) his wickedness was great—"he addeth rebellion," or the most aggravated form of transgression, "that of blasphemous speeches" (Delitzsch), "unto sin," *i.e.* his unconscious and unintentional errors; (*c*) his scorn was conspicuous—"among us he clappeth" (*sc.* his hands), expressive of triumphant contempt, showing that "though victorious in the argument," he was "not yet humbled in spirit" (Robinson); and (*d*) his irreverence was extreme—he "multiplieth his words against God," "carrying himself as victor, not only over men, but also over God" (Robinson).

Learn: 1. That good men, in pronouncing judgment upon their fellows, should proceed with the utmost care and caution. 2. That God's people should be studious in giving utterance to words calculated to leave wrong impressions on the minds of hearers. 3. That saints may sometimes be mistaken for sinners because of the indiscreetness of their talk. 4. That the justice of God is a fundamental maxim in all sound theology. 5. That equally the unselfishness (or graciousness) of God must in every adequate conception of his character stand correlative with his justice. 6. That the God of the Bible is the only Deity possessed of qualifications adequate for the government of the world, not to say the universe. 7. That God's judgments, as exhibited in his providential government of the earth, are admirably fitted to teach man righteousness. 8. That God is profoundly interested in the welfare of nations and communities as well as of private persons. 9. That the Divine administration is ever carried on in the interests of holiness. 10. That the true attitude of man in presence of the Divine government is meek and cheerful submission.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—37.—*Elihu's second discourse: man has no right to doubt of God's justice.* I. CENSURE OF JOB'S DOUBTS. (Vers. 1—9.) In silence Job has listened to the reproof of his friend, and has apparently taken to heart the lesson that in justifiable self-defence we may carry our protests beyond the true boundary, and exaggerate our innocence while rejecting false imputations. Elihu therefore rises again, and proceeds with his second reproof. Job has represented God as a cruel, unjust persecutor of his innocence. He doubts then of the justice of the world-ruling dominion of God. To the refutation of this position the present discourse is directed. Elihu appeals to the common sense of men, to the unbiassed wisdom of experience. The ear has a power of trying words, the mind has a faculty of judgment and taste, analogous to that of the body, whereby we discriminate the false from the true, and the good from the evil. This, indeed, must be the last appeal in every controversy whether on Divine or human things. A written word, a positive revelation, is always open to diverse interpretations; and this makes it the more necessary to ascertain the broad dictates of conscience and of the common judgment, with which every true revelation agrees. The question now is—Does this common religious sense condemn the utterances and the attitude of Job or not? He has asserted, "I am innocent, and yet God has denied me justice, has taken away my right. In spite of the fact that right is on my side, I shall be a liar if I maintain it. The wound caused by the shaft of God's wrath is incurable." This, according to the speaker, was the effect of Job's language. He indignantly repels it. Borrowing an expression from Eliphaz (ch. xv. 16), he denounces Job as one who drinks scoffing like water; and by these blasphemies associates himself with the wicked. Job denies, according to the speaker, that there is any profit or use in piety—in living in friendship with God. He had never said this in so many words; but the sense of much that he had said resembled this (ch. ix. 22, 23; xxi. 7, 8; xxiv. 1, *sqq.*). Such expressions seemed to deny the very foundation of religion. Job was turning against the light within. And though he had several times censured and half recalled his own words, the offence had nevertheless been repeated.

II. PROOFS OF THE DIVINE JUSTICE. (Vers. 10—30.) 1. *From the creative goodness of God.* (Vers. 10—15.) The point is to show that God is incapable of doing wrong, of perverting justice and right in his dealings with men; to show that he rewards men according to their works, gives them the proper fruit of their sowing, causes the life-path they choose to conduct to the happy or unhappy issue, according to the rightness of their choice or otherwise. He sets before them blessing and cursing; and the responsibility of the result is theirs alone. But how may we have the conviction that all this is so? The answer is by showing that the works of God exclude the thought of selfishness; and selfishness alone can explain the perversion of right. We cannot conceive of self-seeking in God. None entrusted to him the charge of the earth; none but he has founded the circle of the earth. As first and absolute Cause, all things are his; there is no division of power, profit, or glory. Ambition, greed, jealousy—every passion that tempts men to wrong their fellows—is shut out of the very idea of God. He is ever pouring forth out of the fulness of his life and blessedness upon

his creatures—the very opposite action to that of selfishness, which draws as much as possible into itself of good, and parts with as little as possible. Only suppose for a moment that God were to become a self-absorbed Being, "directing his heart only to himself, taking in his spirit and breath," instead of giving it forth, universal death must at once ensue; men must perish, returning to the dust. The very impossibility of such a supposition shows the impossibility of ascribing self-seeking and self-love to God. He is the Eternal Father; and as the pure parent's love has the least alloy of self in it of any earthly love, we are to take this as the type of the nature of God. These are sublime and inspiring thoughts. God cannot injure man, or do wrong, because he would thus injure himself and sully his own glory. No one can *consciously* betray or wrong himself. All that we call wrong-doing implies that man has his equals as free beings by his side, and disposes of the property of others. This is impossible with God, because all things belong to him, being the product of his loving activity, his self-giving fulness of life. 2. *From the idea of God as the supreme Ruler.* (Vers. 16—30.) As the Governor of the world, he cannot be unjust, because government can only be maintained by constant and equal righteousness, and must be destroyed by the lack of it. God is at once the Just and the Mighty, because he could not exercise the one quality without the other. Experience, the great teacher, shows this by the constant course of events.

III. CONCLUSION. THE FOLLY AND CONTRADICTORY NATURE OF JOB'S ACCUSATIONS AGAINST GOD. (Vers. 31—37.) A reluctant confession is introduced, as if uttered by Job: "I am chastised, without doing evil; what I see not, that do thou show me! If I do wrong, I will do so no more!" (vers. 31, 32.) He seems to say that he will repent provided only wrong be pointed out (comp. ch. vii. 20; xix. 4). But, asks Elihu, shall God pass unpunished thy discontented complaint against his mode of retribution, and adopt a mode that is agreeable to thy mind? Are the laws of the Divine government to be dictated by individual wishes or notions of what is right? Is man to choose, and not God, the way in which he is to be rewarded or punished? And say, then, what is the true retribution? Speak! But this direct appeal must convince the murmurer of his inability to suggest a better method of administering the world. God's ways may not be clear to us in many particulars; but we should recollect, as Bishop Butler teaches, that we see only "parts of a scheme imperfectly understood." Were all known, doubt and distress would cease. In conclusion, the speaker sums up his meaning in the words of the men of understanding to whose judgment he appeals, condemning the want of true insight in the words of Job, and expressing the hope that he may be further tried, because of his replies "in the manner of the reprobate," because he adds insult to sin, adopts the tone of the scoffer, and multiplies words against God. Whether this view of Job's state of mind be right or wrong, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." Blessed he who can exclaim, amidst sufferings which he cannot but feel to be dissociated from guilt, "Search me, O God, and try me; prove me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."—J.

Ver. 10.—*The righteousness of the Divine dealings.* Elihu's words continue. His accusation against Job is that he saith, "I am righteous." He "addeth rebellion unto his sin" (ver. 37). And in his own self-justification he casts a shadow upon the Divine procedure. "He multiplieth his words against God" (ver. 37). Such is Elihu's contention. He says Job declares, "God hath taken away my judgment." To defend the Divine work and so bring Job to acknowledge his sin is the purpose of Elihu. He here declares the righteousness of the Divine dealings. "Far be it from God to do wickedness." The righteousness of God's ways is seen—

I. IN HIS ABSOLUTE IMPARTIALITY TOWARDS MAN. "He accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor." Truly there is no respect of persons with God. "The work of a man shall he render to him" (ver. 11), be it good or evil.

II. IN THE PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE NAME is to be found the utmost pledge of justness. "Surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment" (ver. 12). "For he will not lay upon man more than right" (ver. 23). This is further illustrated—

III. IN THE SELF-IMPOSED GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD. "Who hath given him a charge over the earth?" If he please he can "gather unto himself his spirit and his breath." Then would "all flesh perish together, and man would turn again to dust." He has no temptation to depart from right in his dealings with men, since all are entirely in his hand. But a further and striking evidence of the righteousness of the Divine ways is seen—

IV. IN THE JUDGMENT UPON THE UNGODLY. The evil ones "he striketh as wicked men in the open sight of others" (ver. 26). Elihu finds a further confirmation of this—

V. IN THE EFFECTUAL PURPOSES OF THE DIVINE BENIGNITY. "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" etc. (ver. 29). All this is done "that the hypocrite reign not." From all this he would lead Job to confession. "If I have done iniquity, I will do no more." So must the purpose of the righteous ways of God be to lead: 1. To consciousness of evil. 2. To confession of known wrong. 3. To amendment of life. 4. To patience under Divine afflictions. This Elihu teaches, though he knows not yet the purpose of Job's suffering.—R. G.

Ver. 3.—*The test of truth.* I. IT IS LEFT FOR MAN TO TEST TRUTH. There is no unmistakable oracle. In the multitude of voices we have to discover which is the cry of truth, which that of error. We know the voice of God, not because we are assured beforehand that it is he and he only who will speak to us, but because we detect the heavenly utterance in contrast with the many syren-songs that would fain allure us to destruction, detect it by its own tones, and not merely because of any authority that assures it to us. The Church may claim to guide us in this important quest; but the Church consists of human members, who have to use those faculties which God has given them, although no doubt the Church is aided with the presence of the Holy Spirit in her midst. So when individual men seek for truth, God's Spirit is for them a Light and Guide. Still, the search must be made; words must be tried and sifted. 1. *This is a warning against credulity.* Many voices claim our attention. Let us be careful that we are not deceived. 2. *This is a stimulus to thought.* We are not to be like the dull earth that gives growth to whatever seeds fall into it—ugly weeds as much as beautiful flowers, poisonous plants as well as fruitful crops. We have an independent capacity to sift and winnow, choose and reject. Therefore let us use our minds. 3. *This is for the cultivation of our souls.* The very effort of testing truth contributes to mental and spiritual growth. When we hold it after testing it, the truth is more real to us than if we had received it without an effort. 4. *This should drive us to prayer.* How shall we distinguish between the many specious voices? Our unaided faculties are likely to err. Therefore let us seek light from above, not to supersede our own powers, but to strengthen and illuminate them.

II. THE TEST OF TRUTH IS LIKE THE TASTE OF FOOD. 1. *It is natural.* God has given us a natural sense of taste by which to discriminate between what is wholesome and what is noxious in our food, and he has implanted in us a similar faculty of mental and spiritual discernment. 2. *It should be trained.* In some respects the natural appetite is not a safe guide. The child may delight in sweet but unwholesome delicacies. Some poisons are not distasteful. Therefore the mere perception of agreeableness is not sufficient. Some very pleasant because flattering ideas are very false and hurtful. What is "just to our taste" may be neither true nor good for us. To select favourite ideas is not to obtain certain truths. We have to train the truth-testing faculty to recognize sterling worth in what is not attractive, and to reject meretricious charms. 3. *It may be corrupted.* The appetite may be vitiated. An unhealthy liking for unwholesome food may be engendered by practice; good, wholesome food may seem disgusting to one who is in a bad state of health. Corrupt thoughts and feelings lead to a degeneration of the truth-testing faculty. Even the natural sense for truth is blunted. The needle ceases to point to the north. The chemical reagent is impure, and so it fails to act as a test. The false and impure soul chooses lies and rejects truth. 4. *It needs correction.* After all, the test of truth is not like a bodily sense. It is not immediate. It involves reflection. But, in order that the reflection may be true and sound, the whole spiritual nature needs to be pure and simple and healthy. It is dangerous to rely too much on our private faculty of testing truth.

Our only safety is in keeping close to Christ, who is the Truth, and to Christ's Church, which he bade us "hear" (Matt. xviii. 17).—W. F. A.

Ver. 10.—*The certain justice of God.* Job appeared to have arraigned the Divine justice. Elihu emphatically asserts its absolute perfection. Whatever else we may fail to see, one landmark must not be lost sight of. God is perfectly free from all evil. We may not understand his ways of action, but most assuredly he is acting justly.

I. THE GROUNDS OF FAITH IN THE CERTAIN JUSTICE OF GOD. Why can we thus dogmatically assert that God is perfectly just? Notice three grounds of assurance. 1. *The essential character of God.* We understand the very idea of God to involve justice. He would not be God if he ceased to be just. Now, his absolute justice is like his infinite power. There is no reason for limiting it. If either attribute exists at all, it is most natural to suppose that it exists in perfection. There is nothing to limit God. God is too great to be tempted to be unjust. 2. *The revealed character of God.* All through the Bible the justice of God is asserted and reasserted. Those men who knew God best affirmed most clearly that he was just. 3. *The tried character of God.* We know God in life. We may not be always able to assure ourselves of the justice of what God does while he is doing it. Then it may look dark and dreadful. But how often have we found, on looking back on the most gloomy tracts of life, that the clouds have passed, and the justice of God has been made clear as the noonday!

II. THE TRIAL OF FAITH IN THE CERTAIN JUSTICE OF GOD. To each individual man the fact of God's justice must be a matter to be taken on faith. That is to say, though there is good evidence for it, we cannot see how it obtains in our own personal circumstances. This is to be expected, however, and may be accounted for by various causes. 1. *Partial views.* We cannot see the whole pattern at which God is working, and therefore the crossing threads often seem to us confusing and wrongly placed. 2. *Perverted ideas.* We judge of God by our own standard. But that standard may have been warped. Then what is straight in God looks crooked to us, simply because our rule is crooked. 3. *Trial of faith.* There is a reason in God's providential government why he should permit us to be in the dark as to the meaning and purpose of some of his actions. He wishes to lead us to trust him. If we could see all, faith would have no scope, no exercise, and therefore no development. It would perish for want of use.

III. THE EXERCISE OF FAITH IN THE CERTAIN JUSTICE OF GOD. 1. *In our own lives.* Here we are called upon to walk by faith. When the way is hard and painful, let us call to mind the truth that God is doing well with us, though we cannot see how. 2. *In history.* Nations are led by the King of kings. Through strange revolutions he is bringing about his righteous will. If we could believe this, we should view the dark and threatening aspect of the world without dismay. 3. *In nature.* Here, too, God is acting for the good of the whole, and in justice to each. The fierce strife of nature looks cruel. But peace! God is just. 4. *In redemption.* Here God shows himself both a just God and a Saviour, upholding righteousness while he has pity on sinners.—W. F. A.

Ver. 29.—*The peace of God.* I. PEACE IS A BLESSING OF THE HIGHEST VALUE. There is a quietness of death; the defeated are stilled; lethargy and inertness are quiet. And there is no blessedness in these things. True peace is alive, watchful, full of power and faculty, yet calm. The peace which our souls crave is inward restfulness. This may be found with much external activity, with much life and thought within also, but without confusion or tumult. The activity is harmonious. It is possible for peace to coexist with many sorrows. Peace is deeper than pain. When it dwells within it gives a strength as well as a sense of satisfaction, so that suffering which otherwise would seem intolerable becomes quite bearable, though it can never cease to be distressful. The deepest desire is not for joy; it is for satisfaction of some hunger of the soul. There is an unrest that torments. Even appetite craves peace—not so much the enjoyment that accompanies its satisfaction, as that satisfaction itself, *i.e.* the ultimate peace.

II. MAN FAILS TO FIND PEACE. Two opposite methods have been tried. 1. *The satisfaction of desire.* This is the way of the voluptuary; but it brings

weariness and disgust, not peace. Many desires cannot be satisfied, and the vain effort to give them their ends is a cause of inward tumult. Even when one desire is satisfied, another springs up clamorous in its place. The capacity for desire is immeasurable, but the facilities for satisfaction are very limited. Hence an inevitable disappointment. 2. *The suppression of desire.* This is the ascetic method. It is less disappointing in some respects, but it is only possible for strong natures. Indeed, in its completeness it is not possible for any. Desires will arise unsought. But if all desires could be crushed, the result would be torpor, death. For we live by hope. Therefore the peace of mere suppression is but the peace of death, and no true peace.

III. GOD GIVES PEACE. The quietness of a strong and happy life is from him and from him alone. Yet it is not given as a direct boon irrespective of our condition. God gives peace through confidence. Christ said, "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me." Therefore we must trust in order to be at rest. Nevertheless, the peace is a Divine gift; it is more than the natural consequence of trusting. Something must be done to quell turbulent passions and to harmonize conflicting desires, and this is done by the influence of God's Spirit in the heart of man.

IV. THE PEACE OF GOD IS SECURE. "Who then can make trouble?" This is a solid peace. 1. *Resting on a good foundation.* Earthly peace is like an unstable equilibrium. It looks fair and inviting, yet it is overturned by the first touch of opposition. But the peace of God is stable; we can learn to put it to the test. It is not a mere mood of the soul; it is of a strong and vital character. 2. *Protected from serious assaults.* When quietness of soul is given by God, it is also guarded by him. He shelters his haven of refuge. By providential watchfulness he keeps off what will destroy peace; by inward grace he fortifies the soul against disturbing influences. All this is experienced so long as the soul is trusting God, and therefore living in communion with him. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."—W. F. A.

Vers. 31, 32.—*Lessons of affliction.* Affliction is a school, and its scholars are put to learn valuable lessons. Let us consider some of them.

I. PRAYER. The whole passage is concerned with prayer, with what it is meet to say unto God. Affliction does not teach all men to pray; some only learn despair and hardness of heart. But the design of affliction is to lead us to God. It makes us feel our helplessness; it reveals to us the action of an unseen hand, and so reminds us of the presence of God; it shows us that earthly things will not satisfy; it gives us an opportunity to use and enjoy the Divine blessing of that peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

II. PATIENCE. "I have borne chastisement." Here is a reflection gathered from the contemplation of experience. It is a thought that comes from a soul enriched by what it has passed through. We have to let "patience have her perfect work." A visitor to the Royal Hospital for Incurables is struck with the spirit of peace that pervades it. What is outwardly a palace of pain is found to be in fact a home of peace. The sufferers have been drilled by suffering into patience; into more than patience, indeed, for a cheerfulness is seen among the hopeless sufferers. Long endurance has brought forth wonderful fruits which we scarcely see among the happy and heedless.

III. HUMILITY. The prayer reveals in every clause a spirit of humility. Pride is broken down completely. Prosperity was self-contained and self-satisfied. Its favours were too much accepted as rights and even as rewards. But affliction has dispelled the illusion. It may be that the trouble is not the punishment of sin; but still it proves the weakness and littleness of man, and it makes him see that he has no claim on the good things that he had been enjoying.

IV. CONTRITION. All men who suffer greatly are not great sinners; often the best men suffer most. This is made clear to us by the Book of Job, and Elihu is not so blind to it as the three friends. Still, every man sins, and therefore every man needs to learn contrition. Now, the school of affliction is designed to lead us into this wholesome condition. Without comparing one person with another, without venturing to charge our neighbours with sin because they suffer, without supposing that there is any proportion between the guilt of sin and the amount of suffering, we may yet, each

for himself, search our own hearts and make confession of our own sins in the still hour of sorrow.

V. AMENDMENT. The sufferer is to seek for guidance for the future. Where he is wrong and does not see it, he prays that God may reveal his error to him. Then he will abandon the mistakes and sins of the past. He resolves not to do iniquity any more. It is not every sufferer who so acts. Purgatory does not always purge. But the good man will try to turn his affliction to advantage, not only by heart-searchings into the past, but also by earnest resolves to live better for the future.—W. F. A.

Ver. 33.—*The limits of private judgment.* Elihu has been appealing to private judgment, saying, "The ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat" (ver. 3). Now he seems to turn round on this principle and repudiate it. Yet he is not inconsistent, for there must be limits to private judgment. We cannot sit in judgment on Providence. Let us, then, consider in what respect the decision as to truth is to be removed from the court of our own reason and judgment. What are the limits to private judgment? We may consider these from two points of view—from that of our own imperfection, and from that of God's greatness.

I. THE LIMITS THAT RESULT FROM OUR OWN IMPERFECTION. 1. *Ignorance.* The best judge cannot decide aright till all the facts are laid before him. We know but a few of the circumstances that determine the action of Providence; and we do not know the laws and principles that have to be applied. 2. *Prejudice.* We are not impartial judges; our justice is not blindfold; our scales are not even. Pride, self-interest, and passion blind our eyes and warp our judgment. 3. *Sin.* This is worse than prejudice; it is a directly deceiving influence. It leads us to ignore moral distinctions, and even to call evil good. We are unjust judges concerning truth when we are the enemies of the highest truth and justice. 4. *Natural weakness.* Apart from all these defective conditions, there are natural conditions that limit our powers of judgment. With all possible enlightenment and moral rectification we should still remain human, *i.e.* we should still be creatures of very small capacity in regard to the great problems of the universe. These problems are too high for us; we cannot attain unto them. They baffle thought.

II. THE LIMITS THAT RESULT FROM THE GREATNESS OF GOD. Our imperfection limits us in judging all questions; but more especially does it limit us in estimating the action of God. The special idea of Elihu is that we cannot judge of God's providential dealings with us. The three friends were wrong in their defence of it—as Job said, "speaking wickedly for God;" and Job was wrong in thinking hardly of it. For neither party was in a position to decide about it. We cannot choose our own course in the world wisely, much less can we decide how God shall act. The greatness of God and of his works far exceeds the range of our view. 1. *Supreme wisdom.* Ideas quite above our comprehension rule in the purposes of God. 2. *Large designs.* God is not confined to the consideration of a single individual or a little circle; he administers a universe. Therefore his schemes and purposes must far exceed our view in the extent of their range as well as in the character of their aim. 3. *Perfect goodness.* God must decide aright, for in him is no evil. His holiness and love should make us feel that we dare not sit in judgment on his actions. If they are dark to us, they are so from excess of light.—W. F. A.

Ver. 36.—*The completion of trial.* Elihu wishes Job to be "tried unto the end." His desire strikes us as cruel. Yet, perhaps unknown to himself, great good may come out of the fulfilment of it.

I. THERE IS AN END OF TRIAL. As we look down the long vista of troubles we can see no terminus; it seems to run on for ever into the darkness. But whatever may be the appearance, the reality is not everlasting. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Never was night more long. Its slow hours drag on wearily; yet they must pass, and day must come in God's good time. The long life of trouble will end at last in the peace of the grave. But many earthly troubles pass like stormy noons, and there is "light at eventide."

II. A GOOD USE OF TRIAL MAY HASTEN THE END OF IT. So long as we fret against it God may find it necessary to keep it with us. If we are slow in learning our

lesson we must be kept long at school. But when the lesson is learnt the school may be broken up.

III. THE COMPLETION OF TRIAL IS SEEN IN ITS FRUITS. The fire has not done its work if the dross has not been separated from the metal. Only when the crucible shows the required chemical change is the test complete. Therefore we should be watching for results. Great troubles are wasted on men who will not submit to them, so that they may bear their designed fruits in patience, humility, contrition, amendment, etc.

IV. WE CANNOT JUDGE OF TRIAL TILL WE HAVE SEEN THE END OF IT. We have to read to the end of the story of Job before we can discover for what he is being led through the deep waters. The rounded life shows the place and purpose of its several episodes, but those episodes by themselves look fragmentary and meaningless. Therefore we have to "wait for the end." When this arrives many a riddle will be solved, many a hard experience will be explained, many a black cloud will be glorified into golden splendour.

V. GOD MAY DISPENSE WITH THE NATURAL COMPLETION OF TRIAL. Trouble is not like a tunnel, from which there is no exit except at its ends. It is a burden which may be lifted whenever God sees fit. The object of trial may be obtained by other means, and it is possible that gentler methods may bring about the same results. Thus God leads to repentance by his goodness as well as by purgatorial afflictions. Therefore we should not live as though some iron fate held us to a certain amount of trial. God is a living Spirit and a loving Father; and he will not permit his children to suffer, when peaceable methods of discipline will do the desired work for them. Our part is to take patiently what God sends, and to use it profitably, trusting God to cut short the trouble or lengthen it as he sees best.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Vers. 1—16.—In this short chapter, once more Elihu addresses himself to Job, first (vers. 1—8) answering his complaint that a life of righteousness has brought him no correspondent blessings; and then (vers. 9—14) explaining to him that his prayers and appeals to God have probably not been answered because they were not preferred in a right spirit, *i.e.* with faith and humility. Finally (vers. 15, 16), he condemns Job for haughtiness and arrogance, and reiterates the charge that he "multiplies words without knowledge" (comp. ch. xxxiv. 35—37).

Vers. 1, 2.—**Elihu spake moreover, and said, Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's?** Once more it is to be observed that Job had said no such thing. At the worst, he had made statements from which it might be argued that he regarded himself as having a more delicate sense of justice than God (*e.g.* ch. ix. 22—24; x. 3; xii. 6, etc.). But Elihu insists on pushing Job's intemperate phrases to their extremest logical issues, and taxing Job with having *said* all that his words might seem to a strict logician to involve (compare the comment on ch. xxxiv. 5, 9).

Ver. 3.—**For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? *i.e.*** What advantage will thy righteousness be unto thee? Job had certainly argued that his righteousness brought him no *temporal* advantage; but he had always a conviction that he would ultimately be the better for it. Elihu, however, does not acknowledge this; and, assuming that Job expects to receive no advantage at all from his integrity, argues that God is not bound to afford him any. **And, What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin?** rather, *And what profit shall I have, more than if I had sinned?* (see the Revised Version, and compare the comments of Rosenmüller and Canon Cook).

Ver. 4.—**I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee; *i.e.*** "thy comforters, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar." Elihu has pledged himself to confute their reasonings, no less than those of Job (ch. xxxii. 5—20), and now proposes to carry out this intention. But it is not very clear that he accomplishes his purpose. In point of fact, he does little more than repeat and expand the argument of Eliphaz (ch. xxii. 2, 3).

Ver. 5.—**Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou; *i.e.*** "look to the material sky and heavens, so far above thee and so unapproachable, and judge from them how far the God who made them is above thy puny,

feeble self—how incapable he is of being touched by any of thy doings."

Ver. 6.—**If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him?** Man's sins against God cannot injure *him*, diminish from his power, or lower his dignity. They can only injure the sinner himself. God does not punish them because they harm him, but because they are discords in the harmony of his moral universe. **Or even if thy transgressions be multiplied**; *i.e.* if thou persistest in a long course of sin, and addest "rebellion" to transgression, and self-complacency to rebellion, and "multipliest thy words against God" (ch. xxxiv. 37)—even then, **what doest thou unto him?** *i.e.* what hurt dost thou inflict upon him? None.

Ver. 7.—**If thou be righteous, what givest thou him?** By parity of reasoning, as our sins do not injure God, so our righteousness cannot benefit him. As David says, "My goodness extendeth not to thee" (Ps. xvi. 2). **Or what receiveth he of thine hand?** All things being already God's, we can but give him of his own. We cannot really add to his possessions, or to his glory, or to his felicity. We cannot, as some have supposed they could ('Religions of the Ancient World,' pp. 143, 144), lay him under an obligation.

Ver. 8.—**Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the son (rather, *a son*) of man.** Job must not think, Elihu means, that, because his good actions benefit and his bad actions injure his fellow men, therefore they must also in the one case injure and in the other benefit God. The cases are not parallel. God is too remote, too powerful, too great, to be touched by his actions. Job has done wrong, therefore, to expect that God would necessarily reward his righteousness by a prosperous, happy life, and worse to complain because his expectations have been disappointed. It is of his mere spontaneous goodness and bounty that God rewards the godly.

Vers. 9—14.—Job had made it a frequent subject of complaint that God did not hear, or at any rate did not answer, his prayers and cries for relief. Elihu answers that Job's case is not exceptional. Those who cry out against oppression and suffering frequently receive no answer, but it is because they "ask amiss." Job should have patience and trust.

Ver. 9.—**By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry**; rather, *by reason of the multitude of oppressions, men cry out.* It is not Job only who cries to God. Oppressors are numerous; the oppressed are numerous; everywhere there are complaints and outcries. **They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty.** The oppressors are, for the most part, the mighty of the earth—kings, princes, nobles (see Isa. i. 23; iii. 14, 15; Hos. v. 10; Amos iv. 1, etc.).

Ver. 10.—**But none saith, Where is God my Maker?** The oppressed, in many cases, do not appeal to God at all. They mutter and complain and groan because of their afflictions; but they have not enough faith in God to cry to him. Or, if they do so cry, it is not in a right spirit; it is despondingly, despairingly, not confidently or cheerfully. God is one **who giveth songs in the night.** The truly pious man sings hymns of praise in his affliction, as Paul and Silas did in the jail at Philippi, looking to God with faith and a lively hope for deliverance.

Ver. 11.—**Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven.** Elihu probably alludes to Job's defence of his complaints as natural, like the instinctive cries of beasts and birds (ch. vi. 5). God, he says, has given to man a higher nature than he has bestowed on the brutes; and this nature should teach him to carry his griefs to God in a proper spirit—a spirit of faith, piety, humility, and resignation. If men cried to him in this spirit, they would obtain an answer. If they do not obtain an answer, it must be that the proper spirit is lacking (comp. Jas. iv. 3).

Ver. 12.—**There they cry.** "There," smitten by calamity, they do at last cry to God. **But none giveth answer.** They "ask, and receive not." Why? **Because of the pride of evil men.** Because, *i.e.*, they ask proudly, not humbly; they claim relief as a right, not as a favour; they approach God in a spirit that offends him and prevents him from granting their requests.

Ver. 13.—**Surely God will not hear vanity.** God will not hear prayers that are rendered "vain" by sin or defect in those who offer them, as by a want of faith, piety, humility, or resignation. **Neither will the Almighty regard** any such petitions.

Ver. 14.—**Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him**; rather, *How much less when thou sayest thou canst not see him!* (compare the Revised Version); *i.e.* how much less will God attend to thy prayers when thou sayest that thou canst not see or find him (ch. ix. 11; xxiii. 3, 8—10), that he is altogether hid from thee, and treats thee as an enemy (ch. xxxiii. 10)! Still, **judgment** (or, *the cause*, i.e. "thy cause") **is before him**, or "awaits his decision." **Therefore trust thou in him.** Wait on, in patience and trust The last word is not yet spoken.

Vers. 15, 16.—Leaving his advice to sink into Job's mind, Elihu turns from him to the bystanders, and remarks, with some severity, that it is because Job has not been punished enough, because God has not visited him for his petulance and arrogance, that he indulges in "high swelling words of vanity," and continues to utter words which are foolish and "without knowledge."

Ver. 15.—**But now, because it is not so, he hath visited in his anger.** This is an impossible rendering. The Hebrew is perfectly plain, and is to be translated literally as follows: *But now, because he hath not visited his* (i.e. Job's) *anger.* (So Schultens, Canon Cook, and, with a slight difference, our Revisers.) God had not visited Job with any fresh afflictions on account of his vehement expostulations and overbold and reckless words. **Yet he knoweth it not in great extremity.** The Authorized Version again wholly misses the meaning. Translate, with the Revised Version, *Neither doth he greatly regard* (Job's) *arrogance.*

Ver. 16.—**Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain**; or, *in vanity* (comp. ver. 13). **He multiplieth words without knowledge**; *i.e.* he is bold to speak words that are vain and insensate, because God has not, as he might have done, punished him for his previous utterances.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—16.—*Elihu to Job: the trial of Job continued.* I. JOB'S OFFENCE RESTATED. Returning to the charge, Elihu accuses Job of having given utterance to two dangerous assertions. 1. *That his* (*Job's*) *righteousness was greater than God's.* "Thinkest thou this to be right?"—dost thou hold this for a sound judgment?—"that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's?" (ver. 2). That Job never used this expression may be true; but that Elihu does not unfairly represent the patriarch's meaning may be inferred from the circumstance that even at an earlier stage in the controversy Eliphaz distinctly understood this to be the import of his language (ch. iv. 17). Besides, it is a legitimate deduction from those passages in which Job, maintaining his own integrity, complains that God does not accord to him even-handed justice, but treats him, though innocent, as a criminal; so that practically it is involved in the milder rendering, "I am righteous before God" (LXX., Umbreit, and others), Job meaning thereby to affirm that he failed to discern in God a corresponding righteousness to that which he beheld in himself, or, in other words, that his righteousness was more (visible and real) than God's. Whether designed or not, the inevitable result of regarding with too much admiration one's own righteousness (natural or gracious, legal or evangelical) is to obscure one's perceptions of the righteousness of God, as, on the other hand, the more exalted views a saint entertains of the righteousness of God, the less will he feel disposed to magnify his own. 2. *That his* (*Job's*) *piety was of no advantage to himself.* "For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? and, What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin?" literally, "(from it) more than from my sin" (ver. 3). This, which Job himself had put into the mouth of the ungodly (ch. xxi. 15), adding, "The counsel of the wicked be far from me," had already been assigned to Job by Elihu (ch. xxxiv. 9; *vide* homiletics), and might well seem to be implied in such utterances as ch. ix. 22—31, in which God is represented as involving "the perfect and the wicked" in one indiscriminate destruction, and in a time of sudden and overwhelming calamity "laughing at the trial of the innocent" (ch. xxi. 7—13; xxiv. 18—24), and in which the prosperous lives and happy deaths of the ungodly are set over against the evil fortunes commonly allotted to the good. Such questions as these of Job about the profit of religion, though common in the mouths of saints (*e.g.* Asaph, Ps. lxxiii. 13; St. Peter, Matt. xix. 27), proceed from mistaken views as to the essential character of piety, which is nothing if not disinterested. Yet, in the truest and most comprehensive sense, "godliness is profitable unto all things" (1 Tim. iv. 8; cf. Matt. xix. 28).

II. JOB'S FOLLY EXPOSED. Reversing the order of Elihu's words, we discover: 1. *A sound premiss.* That a man may be hurt by the irreligion, and benefited by the godliness, of his neighbour. Nothing more demonstrable, or indeed less demanding demonstration, than that moral character is contagious, and evil character even more so than good. Every wicked man does an injury, directly as well as indirectly, unconsciously even when not consciously, to the world in which he lives, the neighbourhood in which he

dwells, the society in which he moves, the individuals with whom he comes in contact. The ungodly man may be compared to a walking pestilence. On the other hand, "the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life" (Prov. xi. 30). However humble the position he occupies or the talents he possesses, the good man, whose breast is the seat of fervent piety, is a distinct gain to the world and the age (Matt. v. 13, 14). 2. *A fallacious deduction.* Correct enough in thinking that a man might make his fellow a debtor by his goodness, or incur towards his fellow obligations in consequence of damage done by his wickedness, Job was utterly at fault in inferring that the same relations could exist between man and God. "If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?" (vers. 6, 7). That is, human piety cannot add to the blessedness of God in such a way as to make God the debtor of his creature, and lay him under obligation to make the good man happy; neither can man's impiety so diminish the Divine felicity as to require God to protect himself against the machinations of the wicked by always entailing on them misery as the recompense of their wickedness (*vide* homiletics on ch. xxii. 2—4). If God makes a good man happy, he does so of grace and favour; if he allows him to pass his life in misery, he does not thereby commit an act of injustice. 3. *A complete refutation.* Elihu disposes of Job's bad logic by reminding him first of the lofty elevation of the heavens (ver. 5), and *à fortiori* of the infinite exaltation of him who dwells above the heavens beyond the highest and purest creature on the earth. Since God thus transcends even the best of men, it is clearly impossible to suppose that he can be tried by purely human standards.

III. JOB'S MISTAKES INDICATED. 1. *Dwelling too exclusively upon the greatness of his misery.* "By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry;" or they, *i.e.* the oppressed, raise a cry: "they cry out by reason of the arm," *i.e.* violence, "of the mighty" (ver. 9). So Job had complained (ch. xxiv. 12), animadverting severely on the seeming indifference of God to what he could not but be cognizant of, viz. man's inhumanity to man; and to this Elihu now alludes with the view of suggesting to the mind of Job the direction in which to look for an explanation of this remarkable phenomenon—God's silence in the presence of human sorrow. The cry which rises from the oppressed is in no sense a believing appeal to the Creator for assistance. It is simply a groan of anguish. Instead of turning with hope and expectation to their Maker, they fix their thoughts upon their misery and raise a shout. It is impossible not to think that, in holding up such a mirror before the mind of Job, Elihu designed the patriarch to catch a reflection of himself. Had not he too been crying out under the severity of the stroke which had fallen on him, rather than anticipating the hour of deliverance when God would fill his mouth with rejoicing? The mistake of magnifying one's troubles, and dwelling too exclusively upon them, is one which even Christians, no less than Job, are not careful to avoid. Besides springing from unbelief, it has a tendency to hinder their beneficent design, and commonly obscures the soul's discernment of the source as well as of the first approaches of relief. 2. *Neglecting to repair to God for succour.* "None saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" Instead of giving way to wailing, the victim of oppression (and such Job deemed himself to be) ought to turn in believing confidence and with hopeful expectation, not to his fellows, like Asa the King of Israel (2 Chron. xvi. 12), or to false gods, like Ahaziah the son of Ahab (2 Kings i. 2), or to any form of creature-help whatsoever (Ps. cxlvi. 2), but like David to the living God (Ps. cxxi. 2), remembering (1) who God is in himself—Eloah, the all-powerful and all-sufficient One; (2) the relation in which he stands to the sufferer, that of Maker; and (3) the gracious character in which he delights to present himself to his creatures, viz. as a God "who giveth songs in the night," *i.e.* who, by granting deliverance to afflicted sufferers in the night of tribulation, gives them occasion to celebrate his praise in anthems of gratitude and joy. Such nights of sorrow and tribulation occur in all men's lives (ch. v. 7), but especially in the lives of saints (Acts xiv. 22). Yet no night is too dark for God to turn the shadow of death into the morning (Amos v. 8). God, who caused Israel to sing upon the shores of the Red Sea (Exod. xv. 1), and David after escaping from the hands of Saul (2 Sam. xxii. 1), and Paul and Silas in prison at Philippi (Acts xvi. 25), can cause the most despairing sufferer to shout "Hallelujah!"

Still nothing is more frequent than for saints to forget God, and turn to almost every other quarter before they seek unto him (Isa. li. 13), though one principal end of affliction is to impel men to seek unto him who alone can put a new song into their mouths. 3. *Forgetting the superior dignity of his nature.* Simply to howl over one's miseries, Elihu intends to say, is to reduce one's self to the level of the brute creation, which express their natural sense of pain by means of such bellowings (ch. vi. 5). But man belongs to an order of creation loftier than the wild ass or the ox; and, being possessed of nobler faculties and larger intelligence than these, should not be content with such modes of giving utterance to emotion as are shared in by them, but should address himself to God in the filial confidence of prayer. And to this the example of the beasts, viewed in another light, may be said to urge him. Another rendering supplies the thought that God "teacheth us by the beasts of the earth"—by the young lions, *e.g.*, who roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God (Ps. civ. 21); "and maketh us wise by the fowls of heaven"—for instance, by the ravens who cry to God for food (Ps. cxlvii. 9). 4. *Offering prayers that spring from vanity and pride.* "There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men. Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it" (vers. 12, 13). Again under the general case Elihu deals with the case of Job. Job had repeatedly complained that his prayer had not been answered (ch. xix. 7; xxx. 20). Elihu indirectly meets his objection by explaining why the prayers of sufferers in general remain unheard. They are not prayers in the proper sense of the expression, being dictated by wounded pride rather than by conscious need, and consisting of emptiness and wind, mere "sound and fury signifying nothing," rather than the aspirations and desires of a believing heart. It is impossible to resist the impression that Job's outcries and entreaties were sometimes inspired by lacerated pride and insulted vanity rather than by lowly humility and fervent piety. Hence they were suffered to ring through the vault of heaven unheeded. So are all similar prayers by whomsoever presented (Ps. lxvi. 18; Isa. i. 15; Prov. xxviii. 9; John ix. 31; Jas. iv. 3). A prayer, to be acceptable, must be sincere, lowly, reverent, and devout. 5. *Supposing God did not understand his case.* This an extremely natural inference from the oft-reiterated demand that God would permit Job to lay his cause before him. But Elihu assures him that this was quite unnecessary; that, although he did not, and apparently could not, see God, *i.e.* come to God's presence (ch. xxiii. 3—9), the whole case he wished to submit to God was already before him, and all he (Job) needed to do was simply to wait for God's gracious intervention (ver. 14)—words suggestive of (1) a great temptation to which suffering saints are not seldom exposed, viz. a temptation to despond of Divine succour and Divine favour, like Job himself (ch. xxiii. 3), like David (Ps. xlii. 6), Asaph (Ps. lxxvii. 7—9), Heman (Ps. lxxxviii. 6), Jonah (ii. 4), and others; (2) a great consolation which all desponding and despairing ones may cling to, viz. that God perfectly understands their case in all its minutest details, as he knew the cases of Job (ch. xxiii. 10), Hagar (Gen. xvi. 13), and Israel (Exod. iii. 7); and (3) a great duty which is equally incumbent on all, to wait patiently on God till he is pleased to come with deliverance and favour (Ps. lxii. 5; Lam. iii. 26; Micah vii. 7; Hab. ii. 3). 6. *Misimproving the Divine clemency.* Understanding Elihu to say, "And now, because he," *i.e.* God, "does not visit" (*i.e.* hostilely, in the sense of punishing) "his," *i.e.* Job's, "anger, and does not know" (in the sense of regarding or taking notice of) "his wickedness or pride greatly; therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain, he multiplieth words without knowledge" (vers. 15, 16), the meaning is that Job's sufferings have not been severe enough, and that the Divine clemency in dealing sparingly with Job has only been recompensed by the continuation and manifestation in Job of a rebellious and refractory spirit.

Learn: 1. That God's servants ought to cry aloud and spare not in exposing the wickedness of men, whether saints or sinners. 2. That it is of great advantage when a faithful reprover can particularly specify the sin which he condemns. 3. That men's words commonly afford a good index to the state of their hearts. 4. That by the quality of their speech shall men eventually be either acquitted or condemned. 5. That preachers of the gospel should ever, like Elihu, be able to defend as well as recommend the faith which they proclaim. 6. That God is not too high to bless man, though he is certainly too exalted to be injured by man. 7. That while man can

enrich God with nothing, God both can and does enrich man with all things. 8. That "man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn." 9. That God is perpetually cognizant of all the wickedness and misery, crime and wretchedness, that exists on earth. 10. That the only power competent to banish sin and sorrow from the heart or from the world is the power of God. 11. That men have usually themselves to blame when their prayers are not heard. 12. That God is infinitely worthy of the unwavering confidence of men.

Ver. 10.—*Man's forgetfulness of God, and God's remembrance of man.* I. MAN'S FORGETFULNESS OF GOD. "None saith, Where is God my Maker?" 1. *The cause of it.* (1) Generally, the sinfulness of the human heart. That man should so habitually neglect God is inexplicable except upon the hypothesis of a fall. But sin, having intervened to separate man from God, has caused man to turn his back upon God, and to contrive to live without any sort of acquaintance with him. (2) Particularly, man's neglect of God may be traced to three things: (*a*) a sense of guilt, which instinctively urges man to shun God's presence (Gen. iii. 8); (*b*) the dominion of the world, which over every sinful heart exercises an almost resistless fascination (1 John ii. 15); and (*c*) an absorption in self, which, by magnifying all its own little interests and concerns, its sorrows no less than its joys, prevents the human soul from seeking after God. 2. *The criminality of it.* (1) The character of God as Eloah, the all-sufficient and all-powerful One, demonstrates the wickedness of man in living so habitually in neglect of his service. (2) The relation of God to man as his Maker attests the sinfulness of such behaviour on the part of man. (3) The favour of God to man in first bestowing upon him a superior nature to that possessed by the animal creation, and secondly in making these lower creatures his instructors, gives additional evidence of man's heinous guilt in thus neglecting to inquire after God. (4) The power of God to assist man by giving "songs in the night" is a further proof of man's amazing criminality in not remembering God.

II. GOD'S REMEMBRANCE OF MAN. He "giveth songs in the night." 1. *In the night of natural day.* By spreading out the star-illumined canopy above man's head, he stirs, at least in thoughtful minds, such exalted ideas and holy emotions as frequently break out in anthems of praise: witness David (Ps. viii. 3, 4), Job (ix. 4—10), Isaiah (xl. 26), and the unknown Hebrew singer (Ps. cxlvii. 4). 2. *In the night of devout meditation.* "Let the saints sing aloud upon their beds" (Ps. cxlix. 5); and oftentimes when wrapt in heavenly contemplation, remembering God upon their beds, and meditating on him in the night-watches, the mouths of saints praise him with joyful lips (Ps. lxiii. 5, 6). 3. *In the night of spiritual conviction.* In such a night David sang some of his sweetest songs (Ps. li.). And as God put a new song into David's mouth when he was lifted out of the horrible pit and miry clay (Ps. xl. 3), so does he put a happy anthem of praise for forgiving mercy into the lips of every believing penitent: witness the jailor of Philippi (Acts xvi. 34). 4. *In the night of temporal affliction.* Israel, escaping from the land of Egypt in a night which at one period seemed dark enough (Exod. xiv. 10), sang a song of deliverance before the morning dawn had fully risen (Exod. xv. 1). A dark dismal night of adversity it was for David when he was driven forth from his palace, from his capital, from his people, from the temple (2 Sam. xv. 30); and yet then it was that David sang, "But thou, O Lord, art a Shield for me, and the Lifter-up of mine head" (Ps. iii. 3). Paul and Silas had their songs in the prison of Philippi (Acts xvi. 25); and there is not a saint, however feeble, that may not chant in the darkest night of trouble a psalm of holy confidence in God. 5. *In the night of approaching dissolution.* Job himself at times was not without his song, though he felt that he was standing on the verge of the tomb (ch. xix. 25—27). So did God give an anthem to Hezekiah, when he raised that weeping and praying monarch from what seemed a couch of death (Isa. xxxviii. 20). David, too, had a song ready for that dark sad night which he knew to be inevitable (Ps. xxiii. 4). It was a noble hymn which St. Paul sent forth from the Roman prison to his young son Timothy (2 Tim. iv. 6). And so does God give to all saints, who seek after him in humility, penitence, and faith, a song to cheer them in the dying hour (1 Cor. xv. 55); and when the dark night of death breaks away, puts into their mouths the never-ending song of Moses and the Lamb.

Learn: 1. The advantage of seeking after God. 2. The kindness of God in thinking upon man.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—16.—*Elihu's third speech: the profit of godliness.* I. FOLLY OF THE OPINION THAT THERE IS NO PROFIT IN GODLINESS. (Vers. 1—8.) A good man, says Elihu, would not speak as Job has done, questioning whether godliness is more profitable than sin. But what is the refutation of this dangerous notion? The speaker points to the blessed self-sufficiency of God, the exalted One in the heavens. In this light man must appear alone as one who draws advantage from his righteousness (comp. ch. vii. 20; xxii. 2, *sqq.*). Our evil deeds cannot injure God, neither can our good deeds add to his blessedness. To expect a return or recompense from God for obedience, as if we had given him a pleasure or conferred on him an advantage, is, according to Elihu, a sign that we have altogether forgotten the distance between ourselves and him, and the true relation in which we stand to him. A modern philosopher, indeed, says, using a bold expression, "Put God in your debt!" But this means only—Conform to God's laws, and expect that God will be true to those relations expressed by his laws. The misery of Job is that he cannot, for the present, see that God is true to those relations. He has sown righteousness, but *not*, as it seems, reaped mercy. He is half in the right, and so is his present instructor. It remains for these two halves of truth to be united into a whole. Meanwhile Elihu points to a great canon of conduct, a great motive of right. Piety is always beneficial, ungodliness always hurtful to our fellow-men, in a sense in which this, of course, cannot be said of God. And this should sustain us in suffering: the thought of the example we may be permitted to set, the light that may shine out of our darkness, the image of those who may be deterred from evil or allured to good by what they see in us.

II. REASONS FOR UNANSWERED PRAYERS. (Vers. 9—16.) 1. *Want of true reverence for God.* (Vers. 9—14.) The cry of the oppressed goes up to heaven, and it is long before an answer comes. Help is delayed or denied. Why? In most cases it is probably the fault of the sufferer himself. There is something defective in the substance or in the spirit of his prayers. He does not cry, "Where is the Almighty, my Creator?" (ver. 10). This is the complaint which Jehovah makes by the mouth of Jeremiah (ii. 6, 8). There is no injustice in him; but there is inconsistency in men. They do not trust him. They ungratefully forget his past providences. They disobey his laws, they meddle with forbidden things. There are conditions, moral conditions, under which alone it is possible for men to be heard, delivered, blessed. "Have I been a wilderness to Israel?" Behind these figures lies the truth that Divine blessing is conditioned by our own moral state and endeavour. Those grand relations of mercy in which God stands to men—their Deliverer, the Giver of songs in the night of natural distress and emergency, the Instructor of their spirits in that life above that of the brutes who "lead a blind life within the brain"—can only be realized by the faithful and the true. To know God as our Saviour, we must humbly and constantly trust him; to know him as our Teacher and Guide, we must diligently follow him. Pride, vain or evil desires in the heart, these, then, are the only *permanent* causes of unanswered prayers. And how much less are advantage and deliverance possible for Job, if he reproaches God with iniquity in being unwilling to regard his cause; if he waits as if that cause were not already laid before God (ver. 14)! For he knows all; and we must *commit* our way to him, in the assurance that he will in due time bring it to pass. 2. *Presumptuous language against God.* (Vers. 15, 16.) Though such folly has hitherto passed unpunished, it does not follow that God has not observed it. According to Job's way of thinking, Elihu says, in effect, this would follow. But he will soon see the contrary. The passage is instructive as giving us searching admonition on the subject of unanswered prayer, unrelieved distress. It is a time for heart-searching. The fault cannot be with God; if fault there be, it lies at our door. The Word comes with power in such moments, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners! Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Read Isa. i. But to the true and contrite heart, mercy and deliverance may be delayed, never denied. And the lesson, then, is—Be patient, wait, and hope.—J.

Vers. 9—11.—*The cry that is not unto God.* Elihu continues to press Job severely. His teachings run in the lines of truth, and they approach more nearly to the design of Job's suffering than those of Job's friends, but they fail actually to reach it. He makes many sagacious reflections on human conduct. This is one. There is a cry raised by the suffering ones under the heavy burden of their multiplied oppressions, and "by reason of the arm of the mighty." How often is it that these address not their cry to God! It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that relief does not come. Job seems to imply that God does not vindicate the sufferers. Here is a reason. They cry not to God. "None saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?"

I. THE ERROR OF SUCH A CRY. God only is able truly to respond to the cry of suffering. It is expending the breath in vain to invoke help from other sources. Man is often utterly powerless; and, even when able, is not always willing to help. If the cry is to a false god, it is a still greater error, and can only end in disappointment.

II. BUT THE CRY WHICH IS AN ERROR IS ALSO A FOLLY. Such a cry ends in vexation; the unheard cry aggravates the sorrow and makes the burden greater. Why should man in his feebleness appeal to his feeble fellow? and why forsake the Maker of all, who alone can give songs of joy in the night of mourning?

III. THIS CRY IS ALSO A WRONG. It is a moral wrong for man to turn his face away from God in the time of his trouble. It reflects upon the Divine goodness and upon the ability and willingness of God to help. It casts an unjust reproach upon a loving Creator, "who teacheth us" lessons by "the beasts of the earth," and "maketh us wise" by the very "fowls of heaven."

IV. BUT THIS IS ALTOGETHER A VAIN CRY. "None giveth answer." Evil men in their pride will not humble themselves to call upon Jehovah; they will not acknowledge their dependence upon him, will not submit to him. Their cry is as one made to the wind. Even if addressed to God, it is void of all truth and meaning. It is the cry of vanity. "God will not hear, neither will the Almighty regard it."

From all which comes the great lesson, Though God is hidden, and men see him not, "yet judgment is before him": therefore may men trust in him, and, believing "that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him," make their supplication unto God, their cry to the Almighty.—R. G.

Ver. 2.—*An unjust inference.* Elihu represents Job as saying that his righteousness is greater than God's, and he asks whether the patriarch thinks it right to use such language.

I. IT IS UNJUST TO ASCRIBE TO OUR FELLOW-MEN OPINIONS WHICH THEY HAVE NOT EXPRESSED. Job had not used such blasphemous language as Elihu attributed to him, and he would have repudiated the ideas that it conveyed. His young monitor was rudely asserting what he thought Job meant, what he took to be the underlying opinion of Job. But this was unjust. Half the controversies of the Church would have been avoided if people had not put into the mouths of others words that they never uttered. The only fair way is to listen to a man's own statement of his case. The common injustice is to charge an opponent with holding all the opinions which we think can be deduced from his confessed beliefs. Thus we make him responsible for our inferences. "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

II. WE SHOULD SEE THE NATURAL CONSEQUENCES OF OUR UTTERANCES. Although it was unjust to draw conclusions as Elihu was doing, it might be helpful for Job to see what conclusions were drawn from his hasty words. He would revolt from such ideas with horror. Then the question may well arise—Did he not provoke them? Though Elihu did wrong to make his assertion, Job may also have done wrong in speaking words that Elihu could use in such a way. We may learn from the false charges that are brought against us. Possibly these have been provoked by us. They are caricatures of our conduct. Therefore they show up the salient features of that conduct in a strong light. The very exaggeration calls attention to the points that have been unduly magnified. We need to consider the tendencies of what we say, and test the tendencies of our opinions by the inferences that are drawn from them.

III. MAN IS TEMPTED TO THINK HIMSELF MORE JUST THAN GOD. He would not own to such an idea openly, nor even in his own private thought. Nevertheless, in the

heat of excitement, he acts as though this were his belief. Otherwise, why does he murmur? Why does he rebel? Why is he cast down into despair? We magnify our own opinions and we justify our own actions when these are counter to the truth and will of God. Virtually this is making ourselves more just than God.

IV. THE JUSTICE OF GOD IS THE TYPE OF ALL JUSTICE. Evidently Elihu assumes that what is justice to man is in itself justice to God. This is assumed throughout the Bible, which makes no attempt to escape from the difficulties of providence by means of the "regulative ideas" advocated by Dean Mansel. Here we do not see that justice means one thing in God and another thing in man. But the perfection of justice may be applied to circumstances that are beyond our understanding. Then it may look unjust. Yet, if we knew all, we should see that it is the type and pattern of the very justice we are called to strive after.—W. F. A.

Vers. 3, 4.—*Is goodness profitable?* I. A NATURAL QUESTION. Job is driven to put this question; or, rather, Elihu concludes that Job's language shows that the patriarch is debating it within himself. Satan had sneered at the notion of disinterested goodness, and had asked, "Doth Job fear God for naught?" (ch. i. 9). Now Job is beginning to see that the profits of goodness, as they are commonly believed in, do not accrue, for good men suffer as much as other men, if not more. The utilitarian question crops up in practice, whatever ethical theory we may have adopted. People will ask—What is the advantage of religion? Why should they deny their passions? What will they be the better for refraining from evil? The inquiry is natural for two reasons. 1. *We naturally desire to see results.* Men wish to know that some good end is to be reached. They are not satisfied with a good road; they must know where it leads to. 2. *We naturally desire our own advantage.* The instincts implanted in us encourage such a desire. In itself it is not bad, but natural. Evil comes from the abuse or the supremacy of it.

II. A SUPERFLUOUS QUESTION. Although the question is natural, we ought to be able to rise above it. After all, our chief concern is not with results, but with duty. Our part is to do the right, whether it leads to failure or to success. Obedience is our sphere; results are with God. We sow and water; he it is who gives the increase. It is difficult to learn this lesson, for we all gravitate to selfish and material ends unless we are lifted out of ourselves. Still, the lesson must be learnt. If a man is only virtuous on account of the rewards of virtue, he is not really virtuous at all. He who does not steal simply because he is persuaded that "honesty is the best policy," is a thief at heart. Conscience is independent of advantage, and true goodness is only that which rests on conscience.

III. AN ANSWERABLE QUESTION. Elihu is ready with his reply. Perhaps it is not quite so simple a matter as he assumes, for he is one of those fearless talkers who handle the most difficult problems with jaunty confidence. Still, he helps us towards a reply. Goodness is not ignored by God. This Elihu show, in three ways. 1. *God is too great to unjustly deprive men of the rewards of their deeds.* These may not come at once; but God can have no conceivable motive for withholding them (vers. 5—8). 2. *The absence of immediate blessings is no proof of Divine negligence.* While complaining that their rewards are not given them, men may not be treating God aright, and so not deserving his blessing (vers. 9—13). 3. *God's watchfulness ensures his righteous treatment of his creatures.* (Vers. 14—16.) Thus according to Elihu goodness is ultimately for the advantage of its possessor. But may we not go further, and say that even if it brings no ultimate reward it is infinitely better than sin, for goodness is in itself a blessing? Few of us can be great, or rich, or very successful. But it is better to be good than to be great, or rich, or successful; for to be good is to be like Christ, like God.—W. F. A.

Vers. 5—8.—*God's independence of man.* I. GOD IS NOT DEPENDENT ON MAN'S CONDUCT. We must agree in the main with what Elihu here states. God is self-sufficient, and he owns all things. "The cattle upon a thousand hills are his." If he were hungry he would not need to tell us. Our most active service is not necessary to God, our most virulent malignity cannot really touch him. He dwells in the fulness and serenity of his own perfection.

II. GOD CANNOT BE BRIBED BY MAN'S GIFTS. The huge mistake of heathen worship is that it consists for the most part in attempts to buy off the anger and secure the favour of the gods by means of gifts and sacrifices. We meet with the same heathenish idea in all religious exercises that aim at being really profitable to God, not for his own sake, but to purchase his favour.

III. GOD IS UNDER NO INDUCEMENT TO BE UNJUST TO MAN. Between man and man injustice is common, because one man is much affected by the conduct of another. But if man can neither profit nor injure God, God can have no motive for dealing in any unequal way with man.

IV. GOD VOLUNTARILY CONCERNS HIMSELF WITH OUR CONDUCT BECAUSE HE LOVES US. Elihu's description of God is one-sided. True in regard to the nature of things, it is false as it concerns the action and sympathy of God. Elihu's God is too much like an Epicurean divinity. The love which is most characteristic of the Divine character, as it is revealed in the Bible, is here quite ignored. God may not be dependent on us. Yet his love leads him to be deeply concerned in what we do, and to entrust his designs to us as his servants. At the same time, seeing that love is his leading motive, there can be no need for us to try to bribe God, even if it were possible for us to do so; and we may be sure that, so far from dealing with harsh injustice, God will only desire our good.

V. GOD ACCEPTS MAN'S TREATMENT OF HIS BROTHER-MAN AS THOUGH THIS AFFECTED HIMSELF. Christ has taught us that what is done to one of the least of his brethren is done to our Lord himself (Matt. XXV. 40). God's love for his children makes him regard any injury done to them as though it were an injury to his own person. The Father feels in the sufferings of his children. Thus we may benefit or injure God by benefiting or injuring our fellow-men. At the same time, this only results from the position which God voluntarily assumes towards us.

VI. MAN IS DEPENDENT ON GOD, AND HIS CONDUCT SHOULD BE A RESPONSE TO GOD'S. Religion does not begin with our worship of God. Its commencement is earlier, in God's goodness to man. All true worship springs from gratitude. Thus, while we cannot be useful or hurtful to God, excepting in so far as his love and sympathy permit us, we are urged to consider how completely our lives are in his hands, and how essential it is for us to live so that we may enjoy his continued favour.—W. F. A.

Ver. 10.—"*Songs in the night.*" I. SONGS IN THE NIGHT ARE PECULIARLY HELPFUL. The thought is of a lonely and desolate night—a night of weary watching or painful suffering, when sleep cannot, or should not, be enjoyed. Travellers who dare not sleep in a perilous region infested by wild beasts, sing songs as they sit round their camp fire. Poor sufferers on beds of sickness welcome strains of well-known hymns in the long, wakeful night. The dreadful night of sorrow needs the cheering of some song of Zion. In the sunny day songs come readily enough; but then we could dispense with them. It is when darkness lies about our path that we need some uplifting and cheering influence.

II. SONGS IN THE NIGHT MAY BE ENJOYED. Elihu speaks in the present tense. Christian history tells of many a soul cheered by heavenly songs in darkest hours. Paul and Silas sang in prison with their feet in the stocks (Acts XVI. 25).

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage."

Sufferers have been cheerful with interior joy, even when their outer life has been hard and cruel. The joy of God is never so real as when it breaks out in the midst of the deepest earthly trouble. This is an actual experience that lies within the reach of benighted souls, if only they will seek its cheering helpfulness.

III. SONGS IN THE NIGHT DO NOT ARISE SPONTANEOUSLY. There is something paradoxical in the phrase, "songs in the night," for of course the context shows that it does not point to the noise of those who turn night into day with unseemly revelry. Elihu's night-songs are of holy thoughts and heavenly music, or at least of pure and refreshing gladness, as his indication of the Source of them proves. Now, sorrow is not the parent of gladness. If we are to enjoy deep harmonies of thought, or to soar into high heavens of emotion among the depressing influences of trouble, we must not

look for the trouble to produce the songs. We must turn elsewhere, and if we have no higher than earthly supplies, we shall have no songs such as Elihu spoke of.

IV. SONGS IN THE NIGHT ARE GIVEN BY GOD. In the still hours of darkness he draws near to the soul. When the desolation and misery are greatest, God is most compassionate. He is not dependent on external circumstances. Night and day are alike to him. Thus it is possible for him to inspire his sweetest songs when we are drinking the most bitter cup. We must not delude ourselves into the notion that we shall not feel suffering if God is with us, although martyrs have been known to lose consciousness of the devouring flames in the ecstasy of their spiritual joy. The song does not dispel the darkness of night. But it drives out the terror and the despair, and brings peace and a deep joy that is nearer the true heart of man than the waves of sorrow which sweep over the surface of his life. The lark that soars to heaven's high gate rises from a lowly nest on the ground. The sweetest songs of Zion that ascend to the gates of glory begin on the tearful earth.—W. F. A.

Ver. 11.—*The superiority of men to animals.* Man is naturally superior to animals—

I. IN INTELLIGENCE. We cannot but admire the intelligence of the horse, the dog, the elephant, the ant. There seems to be more than instinct in these creatures; we notice in them the germs of a reasoning power, because they can adapt means to ends, accommodate themselves to fresh circumstances, and overcome unexpected difficulties. Yet man's intelligence far exceeds that of the animal world. Two striking characteristics which are peculiar to it may be noted. 1. *The supremacy of man.* Man is one of the weakest and most defenceless creatures. He has not the hide of the rhinoceros, nor the horns of the bull, nor the fangs of the lion, nor the strength of any of these creatures. Yet he masters them and rules the world, simply by means of superior intelligence. 2. *The progress of man.* Only man among the animals advances in civilization. Ants build now as their ancestors built ages ago. Man only moves onward. The savage may seem to be as low as the baboon; but he is susceptible of an education that his humble cousin can never enjoy.

II. IN CONSCIENCE. There seems to be a trace of conscience in the shame of the dog when he has done what he knows has been forbidden him. But though the animal may know shame, he does not know sin. Purity is an idea quite foreign to his nature. He may be generous, and he may sacrifice his life in devotion to his master. Yet he cannot feel the hunger and thirst after righteousness. The deep sense of sin and the great desire for holiness are peculiar to man.

III. IN RELIGION. A dim religious feeling may be dawning in the dog when he raises adoring looks to his master, often to a very unworthy master—like poor Caliban worshipping drunken Stephano. But the animal cannot know God. Man alone of all God's creatures knows his Maker. All nature praises God unconsciously, only man blesses him consciously. To man it is given to feel the love of God, and to love God in return. Man is permitted to hold communion with God; he is God's child. Nature is the work of God; man his son. Nature is dependent on her Creator; man is sustained by his Father.

IV. IN DIVINE FAVOUR. This is implied by all that precedes. All the superiority of man is from God. Intelligence, conscience, and religion are Divine endowments. We could not raise ourselves above the animal world, for no creature could transcend its own nature. If our nature is superior to that of animals, this fact is wholly owing to the grace of God. But we may go further, and see that grace not only in our original creation and natural endowments, but also in our history. By his providence God has been adding to his favour. Not for the animals, but for man, and man alone, Christ came. The Incarnation was a fact of the human world, and in it man is supremely honoured by being united to God. Man is redeemed by the death of the Son of God.

V. IN OBLIGATION. Much is expected from him to whom much has been given. What is innocent in the animal may be sinful in man. It is a degradation for man to sink down to animalism. Brutal violence and bestial vice are utterly unworthy of a being exalted far above the animals by nature and the grace of God. When man sinks down to the level of the animals he really falls much lower. It is an insult to innocent brutes to associate them with the habits of corrupt men.—W. F. A.

Ver. 14.—*From despair to trust.* Job had often expressed a deep desire to meet with God. He had longed for an opportunity of making his case clear, and having it tried by his great Judge. He had felt like a prisoner languishing in gaol without a trial, greatly wishing for an *habeas corpus;* and he had despaired of ever being brought face to face with his Accuser, who, as he thought, was also his Judge. Now Elihu tells him that God is already attending to his case, and therefore that he should have faith.

I. THE SUFFERER'S DESPAIR. Job despairs of seeing God. He has indeed expressed a confident assurance that he will behold his Redeemer with his own eyes; he himself, and not another (ch. xix. 25—27). We need not be startled at the contradiction. In such darkness as that of Job's, faith ebbs and flows. For a moment the clouds break and a gleam of sunshine falls on the sufferer's path, and at the sight of it he leaps up triumphant; but soon the blackness closes in again, and then the despair is as deep as ever. 1. *God is not seen by the bodily eye.* We may sweep the heavens with the most powerful telescope, but we shall never discover their King seated on his throne among the stars. 2. *God does not give an immediate solution of our difficulties.* We ask him to decide our case, to justify the right, and to destroy the false. Yet he does not seem to be interfering; for the confusion and the injustice remain. Then the weary waiting leads us to think that he will never appear. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick," and in its sickness it loses its hope.

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO FAITH. 1. *God is not neglecting us.* Elihu assures Job that his case is already before his Judge. It is neither forgotten nor postponed. It is now being tried. Elihu was quite justified in making this statement, as we know from the prologue (ch. i. 8—12). Job was being tried before God throughout; and so also were his friends, as the conclusion of the book shows (ch. xlii. 7—9). Perhaps one lesson to be taught by this great poem is that God is watching man, and dealing justly with him, even when no indication of Divine interest or activity is vouchsafed to him. The verdict is not yet given nor the judgment pronounced; but the case is proceeding, and the Judge is carefully attending to it. That is what this book teaches concerning the great problem of life. 2. *We should learn to trust God.* We cannot see our Judge as yet. We must wait for the verdict. All is dark to the eye of sense. But if we know that God is watching over us and considering our condition, we ought to be assured that we cannot suffer from neglect. The special region for faith is this present scene of darkness, and we are to expect the darkness to continue as long as the faith is to be exercised. But this will not be for ever. Job was right when, in a moment of strange elation, he leaped to the assurance that his Redeemer lived, and that he would see him at the latter day.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Vers. 1—33.—The two chapters, ch. xxxvi. and xxxvii., form a single discourse, and ought not to have been separated; or, at any rate, not so unskilfully as they are, in the middle of a description of a thunderstorm. They constitute a final appeal to Job, who is exhorted to submission, resignation, and patience, in consideration of God's inscrutability, and of his perfect justice, wisdom, and strength. Ch. xxxvi. begins with a short preface (vers. 1—4), in which Elihu seeks to prove his right to offer counsel to Job, after which God's justice is demonstrated (vers. 5—16), and Job warned that his petulance may lead to his complete destruction (vers. 17—25). Finally, in illustration of God's might and unsearchableness, the description of a thunderstorm is commenced (vers. 26—33), which is carried on into the next chapter.

Vers. 1, 2.—**Elihu also proceeded, and said, Suffer me a little, and I will show thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf;** literally, *that there are yet words for God.* The controversy, *i.e.*, is not exhausted; there is yet much that may be urged on God's behalf, in respect of the charges thou hast made against him.

Ver. 3.—**I will fetch my knowledge from afar** (compare the declaration of Bildad, ch. viii. 8). In neither case does the performance justify the pretentious character of the preface. Elihu's arguments are, for the

most part, trite and commonplace. **And will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.** I will show, i.e., that God is righteous and just (comp. ch. xxxiv. 10, 12).

Ver. 4.—**For truly my words shall not be false:** he that is perfect in knowledge is with thee. The words sound arrogant; but perhaps Elihu does not mean any more than to pledge himself to speak truthfully, and to say only what he has perfect knowledge of. It is clear that he speaks of himself, not of God (Stanley Leathes), in the second clause of the verse, as in the first.

Ver. 5.—**Behold, God is mighty.** The preface over, the argument to prove God's justice begins. First, he "is mighty." How unlikely that any one who is mighty—nay, almighty—should be unjust! Next, he despiseth not any. Job has wrongly charged him with "despising the work of his own hands." In truth, he despises nothing that he has made. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. x. 29, 30). Much less, then, is any man despised. Moreover, God is mighty in strength and wisdom; or rather, *in strength of understanding*, and therefore above the weakness of being unjust.

Ver. 6.—**He preserveth not the life of the wicked.** There is no special providence over the life of the wicked, as Job had supposed, or pretended to suppose (ch. xxi. 7; comp. ch. xii. 6). On the contrary, God "overturneth" wicked men "in the night, so that they are destroyed; he striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others" (ch. xxxiv. 25, 26). **But giveth right to the poor.** The poor and afflicted, the meek and humble, God vindicates. They are his special charge. So far is he from favouring the ungodly.

Ver. 7.—**He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous.** Under no circumstances does God cease to keep an eye upon the righteous, as Job had seemed to imply when he exclaimed, "Oh that I were as in months of old, in the days when God preserved me!" or "watched me!" (ch. xxix. 2). "The eyes of the Lord are" always "upon the righteous, as his ears are open unto their cry" (Ps. xxxiv. 15). **With kings are they on the throne.** In some cases, God shows his care of the righteous by "setting them with princes, even with the princes of his people" (Ps. cxiii. 8), raising them, that is, to high station, and making them companions of the great of the earth. **Yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted.** They are permanently established in their high positions, like Joseph and Mordecai and Daniel; and they are exalted to the highest pitch of prosperity.

Ver. 8.—**And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction.** On the other hand, there are doubtless cases where the righteous suffer adversity—are even "bound in fetters," and "holden in cords of affliction" (Gen. xxxix. 20; Jer. xl. 1; Dan. iii. 21; Matt. xiv. 3; Acts xii. 6; xvi. 24; xxiv. 27, etc.). But even here God's vigilance is not relaxed. On the contrary, he watches with the utmost care over their afflictions, apportioning them according to the needs of each, and making every possible effort, by means of them, to work their reformation (see the two following verses).

Ver. 9.—**Then he showeth them their work.** God, by his chastisements, makes men see what has been faulty in their life's work, in what respects they have been negligent, where they have lapsed into actual sin. Signal afflictions are a call to men to "consider their ways," and search out the nature of their offences. Some afflictions, as sickness and imprisonment, by depriving men of active employment, almost force them to engage in such a retrospect. **And their transgressions that they have exceeded;** rather, *and their transgressions, wherein they have behaved themselves proudly* (compare the Revised Version). In all sin, as it is a contempt of God's Law, there is an element of pride. The temptation to pride especially besets those whose conduct is, in outward appearance, correct and virtuous.

Ver. 10.—**He openeth also their ear to discipline.** It is the especial merit of Elihu's theory of suffering that he views it as far less penal than disciplinary and restorative. Job's sufferings especially he views in this light. Instead of looking upon Job, like his other friends, as a heinous sinner, upon whom God is taking vengeance, he regards him as a person who is being chastised, *in love*, for some fault or faults that he has committed, to his ultimate advantage and improvement. This, though not exactly the truth, is far nearer the truth than the view taken by the other three "friends." **And commandeth that they return from iniquity.** God's chastisements are to be viewed as commands to men to "go and sin no more."

Ver. 11.—**If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures** (comp. ch. xii. 13—19; Jer. vii. 23; xxvi. 13). Under the old covenant, prosperity was promised to the righteous, and even to the repentant, frequently, and in the most definite terms. Under the new, when any such promise is made, it is carefully guarded (Mark x. 30); while in many passages the promise is of an opposite character—the righteous are told to expect tribulations and persecutions (John xvi. 33; Acts xiv. 22; 2 Tim. iii. 12; Heb. xii. 1—11; 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13, etc.).

Ver. 12.—**But if they obey not, they shall**

perish by the sword. Not, necessarily, by a material sword, but by the sword of God's vengeance, which slays in a thousand different manners, piercing through all obstacles, and reaching to the heart and spirit. **And they shall die without knowledge.** Either without knowing that they are about to die, or in their wilful ignorance of God's intentions in chastising them.

Ver. 13.—**But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath.** In his vindication of God's justice, Elihu here passes from the case of the righteous (ver. 7) to that of the "hypocrites," or rather the ungodly. They, he says, "heap up wrath," *i.e.* "treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath" (Rom. ii. 5), continually intensify God's anger against them, and, as it were, lay in a store of it, which will one day be outpoured upon them. **They cry not when he bindeth them.** They do not cry to him, they do not deprecate his anger, when they first find themselves bound with the "cords of affliction" (ver. 8), but allow his wrath to increase and accumulate.

Ver. 14.—**They die in youth;** literally, *their soul dieth in youth.* The result is that, while they are still young, the vital strength of their soul is sapped; they "come to a premature end, like youths who have destroyed the spring of life by licentiousness" (Cook). **And their life is among the unclean.** (On the particular "uncleanness" intended, see Deut. xxiii. 17.)

Ver. 15.—**He delivereth the poor in his affliction;** rather, *he delivereth the afflicted by his affliction* (see the Revised Version). Elihu recurs to what he had said in ver. 10 with respect to the discipline of affliction. The bulk of the afflictions sent by God are, according to him, intended to act medicinally. If the afflicted man receives them aright, they are the very means of his deliverance (comp. Ps. cxix. 67, 71; Heb. xii. 11). **And openeth their ears in oppression;** rather, *by suffering.* Their sufferings lead them to God, cause them to pay more attention to his Word, lead them to open their ears to his inward voice.

Ver. 16.—**Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where there is no straitness; and that which should be set on thy table should be full of fatness.** Another quite different interpretation has been proposed by Ewald, and adopted by Dillmann and Canon Cook, who suppose Elihu to speak, not of what would have happened to Job under certain circumstances, but of what had actually happened to him, and render, "Thee moreover hath thy unbounded prosperity seduced from listening to the voice of affliction, and the ease of thy table which was full of fatness." But the rendering of the Authorized Version, which is substantially that of Schultens and Rosenmüller, is still upheld by many scholars, and has been retained by our Revisers. If we adopt it, we must understand Elihu as assuring Job that he too would have been delivered and restored to his prosperity, if he had accepted his afflictions in a proper spirit, and learnt the lesson they were intended to teach him (see vers. 9, 10).

Ver. 17.—**But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked;** *i.e.* but, as thou hast not so acted, the result has been different. Thy hardness and impenitence have brought upon thee the judgments reserved by God for the wicked—**judgment and justice take hold on thee**—thou art suffering the just penalty of thy obstinacy.

Ver. 18.—**Because** there is **wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke.** The original is exceedingly obscure, and three or four quite distinct renderings have been proposed; but one of the latest critics (Professor Stanley Leathes) prefers to all the other translations that of the Authorized Version. Job is threatened by Elihu with a coming judgment which shall remove him from the earth altogether. **Then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.** Once let destruction fall, and there is no longer any place for ransom. *Nothing* can then deliver thee from thy just punishment.

Ver. 19.—**Will he esteem thy riches?** rather, *Will thy riches suffice?* (Revised Version); or *Will they stand the shock of battle?* (Schultens). Will they be a sufficient strength to thee in the time of trouble? No, **not gold.** This rendering is now generally given up, and the words, *lo betsar* (לֹא בְצַר), are taken in connection with the preceding sentence, thus: *Will thy riches suffice, that thou be not in distress?* or, in other words, *Will they keep thee out of trouble?* If not, will **all the forces of thy strength** suffice to do so? Assuredly, nothing will avail against the "stroke" of God (ver. 18).

Ver. 20.—**Desire not the night, when people** (rather, *peoples*) **are cut off in their place.** This is an allusion to Job's repeatedly expressed desire to be cut off at once, and laid in the grave (ch. vi. 9; vii. 15; xiv. 13, etc.). Elihu holds that such a desire is wrongful. It certainly implies a want of complete resignation to the Divine will.

Ver. 21.—**Take heed, regard not iniquity;** *i.e.* be on thy guard. Whilst thou art careful to preserve thy integrity and faith in God, do not fall into sin in other respects—as by impatient desires, or proud thoughts, or rash accusations of God. **For this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.** Rather than acquiesce in thy afflictions and bear them patiently, thou hast elected to murmur, to complain, to question the justice of God, and speak overboldly concerning him. There is some ground for Elihu's condemnation;

but it is excessive; it fails to make allowance for the extremity of Job's sufferings, and the disturbing influence of extreme suffering on the mind and judgment. It is, at any rate, more severe than God's judgment upon his servant (ch. xxxviii. 2; xlii. 7).

Ver. 22.—**Behold, God exalteth by his power**; rather, *behold, God doeth loftily in his power* (see the Revised Version). **Who teacheth like him?** This has been called "the key-note of Elihu's whole discourse" (Cook). The entire providential government of the world by God he views as didactic, as a series of moral lessons addressed to men by their Maker (see ch. xxxiii. 14, 16; xxxv. 11; xxxvi. 9, etc.). If the lessons intended are taken to heart, then all goes well with men; if they are rejected, then very sad and terrible results follow (ch. xxxvi. 12).

Ver. 23.—**Who hath enjoined him his way?** (comp. ch. xxxiv. 13). While God is thus the universal and all-perfect Teacher, there are some who would fain instruct him, dictate the course which he ought to pursue, improve and amend his universe. Something of this spirit has appeared in Job's remonstrances, which seem to insinuate that the Divine government of the world might be carried on better than it is (see ch. ix. 22—24; x. 3; xiii. 20—26; xvi. 11—17, etc.). Elihu's intention is to reprove Job for his presumption. **Or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?** Job has not said this; but he has gone near to saying it (ch. ix. 24; x. 3; xxi. 7—26; xxiv. 2—12, etc.); compare the comment on ch. xxxiv. 5—12.

Ver. 24.—**Remember that thou magnify his work.** Instead of murmuring, Job should "magnify God's work." He should recognize the mercy of God, even in his own afflictions, and praise him for it. **Which men behold.** Men are looking on, anxiously considering Job's sufferings; he is a spectacle to them, as the apostles were to men and angels (1 Cor. iv. 9), and the more reason therefore that he should, by patient endurance, by submission and confession, cause his sufferings to redound to the glory and honour of God.

Ver. 25.—**Every man may see it**; rather, *sees it*, or *has seen it*. **Man may behold it afar off**; rather, *beholds it*, or *has beheld it, from afar*. Job's afflictions have drawn all eyes upon them—not only those of his neighbours, but of many who look on "from afar."

Vers. 26—33.—Elihu passes now to a description, which must be allowed to be eloquent, of the power and providence of God, and especially of his power in the natural world. It is suggested that the storm, which ultimately broke at the theophania (ch. xxxviii. 1), was already beginning to gather, and turned the thoughts of Elihu in this direction. He begins with the consideration of how rain is generated, passes rapidly to the gathering of the clouds from all quarters, and thence to the loud crashing of the thunder, and the dazzling flashes of the lightning, which illumine even the lowest depths of the sea (ver. 30). The effects of the storm are then spoken of, in words the exact meaning of which is very obscure (vers. 31—33).

Ver. 26.—**Behold, God is great, and we know him not.** This is the final lesson which Elihu seeks to impress on his hearers. God is so great that fully to comprehend him transcends the power of the human understanding. However much we know of him, there is more that we do not know. His nature is unsearchable; his depths (1 Cor. ii. 10) are inscrutable; try as we may, we can never "find him out" (ch. xxxvii. 23). **Neither can the number of his years be searched out.** Even his duration, being eternal, is beyond us. We cannot realize the thought of pre- and post-eternity.

Ver. 27.—**For he maketh small the drops of water**; rather, *he draweth up the drops of water*; i.e. by the heat of his sun he causes exhalations to arise from the sea and the moist earth, and draws them up into the higher regions of the atmosphere, where they are condensed into clouds, that hang suspended in the air. **They pour down rain according to the vapour thereof**; literally, *they flow down as rain for his mist*. The water collected in the clouds flows down in the shape of rain for the purpose of watering the earth (see Gen. ii. 6, where the same word (אֵד) occurs).

Ver. 28.—**Which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly.** All is done *for man*, for his benefit and advantage.

Ver. 29.—**Also can any understand the spreadings of the clouds?** The rapid generation of clouds, their gathering together, seemingly, from all quarters, and the way they almost suddenly overspread the heavens (1 Kings xviii. 45), are among the most remarkable phenomena of nature, and are very difficult to "understand" and account for. **Or the noise of his tabernacle.** The awful crash of the thunder, which echoes along the sky—God's "tabernacle," or pavilion (Ps. xviii. 11)—is, if not as inexplicable, even more fearful and astounding. Man shrinks and quails before the terrible sound, and feels himself in the presence of a mighty and inscrutable power.

Ver. 30.—**Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it.** God flashes the weird brilliance of his lightning over the heaven—not over himself, as some translate (Rosenmüller, Cook). He lights up the whole sky at once with the electric splendour, and even **covereth with it the bottom** (literally, *the roots*) **of the sea.** This is, of course, hyperbole; but it seems to be Elihu's meaning.

Ver. 31.—**For by them judgeth he the people.** By his clouds God works two opposite effects. On the one hand, he executes judgment upon the peoples, destroying their crops, causing widespread ruin by inundations, smiting and slaying numbers with his thunderbolts; on the other, **he giveth meat in abundance,** restoring to the parched earth its fertility by means of copious and refreshing showers, stimulating vegetation, and so furthering the harvest.

Ver. 32.—**With clouds he covereth the light;** rather, *he covereth both his hands with light,* i.e. with the lightning. So Vul was represented in Assyrian and Zeus in Greek mythology, as filling their hands with thunderbolts, and hurling them upon their foes in their wrath. **And commandeth it** not to shine, etc. This rendering is wholly indefensible. Translate, *And layeth command upon it that it strike the mark* (compare the Revised Version).

Ver. 33.—**The noise thereof showeth concerning it;** or, *concerning him.* The loud crash proclaims the fierceness of God's anger. **The cattle also concerning the vapour;** rather, *it showeth the cattle also concerning him that goeth up;* i.e. the very cattle also feel that God is in the storm, rides upon it, and "goeth up" (comp. Ps. xlvii. 5). The rendering of the Revised Version, "(It showeth) the cattle also concerning the storm that cometh up," is very weak, and unworthy of such an orator as Elihu.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—21.—*Elihu to Job:* 3. *A sermon on the Divine administration.* I. THE PREACHER INTRODUCES HIMSELF. 1. *As having something further to say.* A man who has nothing to communicate should not emerge from the safe regions of obscurity which Providence designs he should adorn. But alas! of preachers, orators, lecturers, talkers, who babble on without contributing anything to elucidate their themes or enlighten their hearers, however much to gratify themselves, the number is legion. The first requirement in one who aspires to be a teacher of men, whether from the pulpit or from the platform, is that he have something to impart. When in Zechariah's vision the angel was directed to "run," and "speak to the young man" with the measuring-line, he was at the same time entrusted with a messsage (Zech. ii. 4). The preacher who habitually delivers sermons of the vacuous and windy order affords perfectly sufficient evidence of having mistaken his calling. Neither God nor Christ ever commissioned an ambassador without giving him a message. 2. *As proposing to speak in God's behalf.* Of the controversy which Job carried on with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, Elihu disposed by a simple expression of indignation (ch. xxxii. 3, 12). The full strength of his ability was directed to maintain the cause of God against Job, and to ascribe righteousness to One whom Job had charged with want of equity. So the mission of the Christian pulpit is not to plunge into the labyrinthine intricacies of theological discussion, in the hope of definitely pronouncing upon long-standing, world-famous controversies like those which engaged the attention of Milton's erudite devils ('Paradise Lost,' bk. ii. 559), but to speak with men on God's behalf—on the one hand, to ascribe right to God, *i.e.* to vindicate the Divine character, the Divine administration, the Divine redemption as being in perfect accord with right and truth; and on the other hand, to bring sinful men to a right state of mind and heart towards God. It is a profanation of the sacred office of the ministry when it is employed to diffuse philosophy, to propagate science, to advance politics, to promote what is called culture as distinguished from religion—in short, to do anything that does not directly contribute to either the vindication of God or the salvation of man. 3. *As offering a wide and comprehensive view of his subject.* The chief fault of controversialists, and one requiring to be guarded against even by the wisest and fairest, is that of one-sided presentation, commonly resulting in exaggerated statement, rash generalization, unwarranted deduction. Such a fault usually proceeds from incapacity to perceive that truth is many-sided, or inability to grasp more sides than one; from unwillingness to admit that aspects of truth may be presented to one which are denied to another,

or from overweening self-conceit which supposes nothing can be accurate which self does not see. Job and the three friends are good illustrations of men who look at the same object (*e.g.* the Divine administration) from different standpoints, and pronounce each other wrong. Elihu undertook to present views derived from an extensive induction of particulars, from a many-sided contemplation of truth, from long and deep reflection. So should preachers aim at setting forth only such expositions of Divine truth as have been gathered by patient industry and diligent research, of the widest and minutest sort, in the volume of the Scriptures, in the books of nature and history, in the records of experience; and even these only after they have been subjected to careful inspection and personally absorbed by deep meditation. 4. *As speaking with the utmost sincerity.* Elihu promised that his words should not be false as to matter, disingenuous as to aim, or beguiling as to form (ver. 4); and neither should the utterances of a preacher in any one of these respects deviate from the straight path of rectitude. What he offers to the acceptance of his audience should be the unmixed truth of God (1 Cor. ii. 2, 7; 2 Cor. iv. 2; 1 Thess. ii. 2), presented not "with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. ii. 4, 13), and exhibited with no ulterior motive of personal aggrandizement, but with honest endeavour to advance God's glory in man's salvation (2 Cor. iv. 2). Soundness of doctrine, simplicity of speech, singleness of aim, are qualifications indispensable for an efficient ministry. 5. *As possessed of an adequate acquaintance with his theme.* In claiming to be "perfect in knowledge" (ver. 4), Elihu may be only asserting his honesty of purpose (Umbreit, Carey, Cook), but the application of the same phrase to God (ch. xxxvii. 16) makes it probable that he here alludes to the "faultlessness and clearness of perception" (Delitzsch) with which he apprehends "the theodicy which he opposes to Job," and the intensity of that inward conviction which he holds as to its truth (Cook). So again should God's prophets and Christ's preachers, by prayerful study of the Divine Word, by prolonged cogitation on the themes they design to discuss, and in particular by humble dependence on that Spirit who instructed Elihu, labour to arrive at the veritable truth of God, and to have as complete an understanding thereof as possible, that so, in all their utterances, they may be able to say, like Christ, "We speak that we do know" (John iii. 11); like David, "I believed: therefore have I spoken" (Ps. cxvi. 10); and like St. Paul, "We also believe, and therefore speak" (2 Cor. iv. 13).

II. THE PREACHER ANNOUNCES HIS THEME. 1. *The character of the Divine Being.* Introduced by a "Behold!" to mark its worthiness of Job's attention and admiration. (1) Mighty. Meaning exalted in station, lofty in rank or quality of being, and resistless in power—a point frequently descanted on by Job himself (*e.g.* ch. ix. 4; xii. 13), as well as by the friends. (2) Condescending. Despising not any, acting not scornfully, as Job insinuated God did in turning a deaf ear to his entreaties, and regarding his misery without concern (ch. x. 3; xix. 7; xxiii. 13). But the Supreme Governor of the universe, according to Elihu, is too exalted a Being to act unjustly, or even unkindly, towards any, even the meanest, of his creatures. On the contrary, his very greatness is the best guarantee for his absolute impartiality and condescending kindness. That God despises nothing he has made, neither man nor beast, but watches with loving care over the least as well as the greatest of his works, was asserted by Christ (Matt. x. 29), and experienced by David (Ps. xl. 17), and may be confirmed by a reference to nature itself, in which the smallest objects (*e.g.* flowers and insects) have lavished on them the largest amount of skill in their construction, decoration, and preservation. This combination of strength and beauty, of power and gentleness, of dignity and condescension, which Elihu proclaims to be characteristic of God, was eminently exemplified in Christ, and lies at the foundation of all moral greatness in man. (3) Wise. "Mighty in strength of heart" (ver. 5.), the Divine Being can penetrate through all disguises, discovering right and wrong everywhere, at all times, and altogether. Besides being of infinite power and of great kindness, he is also of omniscient understanding. 2. *The character of the Divine administration.* (1) Punitive, or destructive towards the ungodly: "He preserveth not the life of the wicked"—the doctrine of the friends (ch. v. 2; viii. 12, 13; xi. 20), but here advanced with greater fairness of statement (*vide infra*); and (2) gracious, or preservative towards the pious: "He giveth right to the poor," or afflicted, *i.e.* he allotteth to them what

is just, what is in moral and spiritual harmony with their condition, viz. deliverance and salvation—also a tenet of the friends (ch. v. 17—27; viii. 5—7; xi. 13—19), though here again set forth with more precision and moderation than by them.

III. THE PREACHER DEVELOPS HIS ARGUMENT. 1. *The Divine treatment of the righteous.* (1) Watching over them while doing right. "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous"—a frequently stated doctrine of Scripture (2 Chron. xvi. 9; Ps. i. 6; xxxiv. 15; Prov. x. 3; Isa. xxvi. 7; xxvii. 3); illustrated by the cases of Noah (Gen. vii. 1), the Israelites (Exod. iii. 7), David (Ps. cxxxix. 1), and even Job himself (ch. xxiii. 10); and here declared to be of universal application, whether the objects of his observation are kings on the throne, like David, Solomon, Hezekiah, and Josiah, or prisoners in affliction, like Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, or St. Paul in Philippi. (2) Rewarding them for their piety. "With kings are they [*i.e.* the righteous] on the throne; yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted." Sooner or later, the righteous are advanced to a state of regal prosperity; sometimes literally, as with Joseph, David, Daniel; but always spiritually, like the chosen people, who were made "a kingdom of priests" (Exod. xix. 6), and like Christians, who are constituted "kings and priests unto God" (Rev. i. 6; v. 10; 1 Pet. ii. 9) and appointed to reign for ever and ever. (3) Instructing them when afflicted. Assuming that the cords and fetters which hold them have been imposed as an act of mercy by God (ch. v. 17; Ps. xciv. 12; Prov. iii. 11; Rev. iii. 12), Elihu directs attention to a richer benefaction than the affliction, viz. the special education they receive from God during its continuance—an education in its character (*a*) gracious, being imparted by God, chiefly through his Word and Spirit; (*b*) convincing, unfolding to them the sin of which they have been guilty; (*c*) humbling, pointing out the foolish pride and vainglory from which it has proceeded; (*d*) admonitory, warning them of the danger in which they continue while impenitent; (*e*) authoritative, enabling their awakened consciences to feel the urgent duty of departing from evil; and (*f*) efficacious, leading in the case of every genuine child of God to a hearty return to God's ways. (4) Restoring them when penitent. Defining that submission they accord to God as a hearing and serving (the essential ingredients of all true contrition), Elihu depicts them as finishing their days in the midst of "good," *i.e.* of every sort of pure enjoyment, and their years in the midst of pleasures, or things of loveliness and true delight. 2. *The Divine treatment of the unrighteous.* One principal aim of affliction is to sift the unrighteous from the righteous. As the latter are distinguished by their penitential return to God, so the former are recognized by opposite characteristics, neither hearing God's voice (ver. 12; cf. John xviii. 37) nor submitting to God's hand, but cherishing wrath and indignation against God's justice in afflicting them (ver. 13), nor praying for God's help (ver. 13) when he has bound them, but either enduring in sullen silence or howling in impatient anguish. Accordingly, God leaves them to their richly merited and naturally evolved doom, of dying (1) suddenly: "They shall pass away by the sword," the allusion being not so much to the violent manner of their departure, as to its being the result of a judicial visitation; (2) hopelessly: "They shall die without knowledge"—"without having attained to wisdom" (ch. iv. 21), having missed the true end of their existence, having failed to reach that knowledge of God in which alone lies salvation (John xvii. 2), like the Gentiles of whom Paul writes, "Having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12); (3) prematurely: "They [literally, 'their souls'], die in youth" (ver. 14), being cut down while as yet they are only standing on the threshold of life, their sun going down while it is yet noon (Amos viii. 9), like Ahaziah (2 Kings viii. 26), Alexander the Great, and others; (4) filthily: "Their life is among the unclean," *i.e.* having spent their days in sensuality and prematurely enervating incontinence, like the sodomites (margin), like the consecrated men who practised nameless lewdness in heathen temples (1 Kings xiv. 24; xv. 12; xxii. 47), like those whom St. Paul describes as "dishonouring their own bodies between themselves" (Rom. i. 24—27), they were permitted to die as they had lived, and to find a grave in the moral filthiness in which they had wallowed, thus "receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet."

IV. THE PREACHER APPLIES HIS DISCOURSE. Generally, to the whole body of the righteous (ver. 15), but more particularly to Job, by setting forth: 1. *The blessing he had missed.* If instead of murmuring and repining under God's chastisements, he had

yielded penitential submission, God would ere now have interposed for his deliverance, and rescued him from the mouth of distress, inciting him forward till he had reached a broad place where, literally, whose "beneath" (ground) would have been no straitness, and where the letting down of his table, *i.e.* the food set thereon, should have been full of fatness (ver. 16). So God engages to do for all who humbly trust his grace and power (1) to deliver them in time of trouble (2 Kings xx. 6; Ps. xxxiv. 19; xli. 1; xci. 14; xcvii. 10), as he snatched David from the jaws of the lion and the bear (1 Sam. xvii. 37; Ps. xviii. 16, 17); (2) to establish them in ease and comfort, setting them down in large places, as he did David (Ps. xviii. 19) and a later Hebrew bard (Ps. cxviii. 5), as he did with Israel when he brought her out of Egypt first into the wilderness and then into Canaan (Exod. iii. 8; Judg. xviii. 10), and as he does with believers when he frees them from condemnation and introduces them into the liberty of the children of God; and (3) to provide for them a table in the wilderness, as again he did for Israel (Ps. lxxviii. 19) and for David (Ps. xxiii. 5), as he has done for all the world in the gospel (Isa. xxv. 6; Matt. xxii. 1), and for Christ's people in the Holy Supper (1 Cor. x. 21; xi. 20). 2. *The sin he had committed.* Job had "fulfilled the judgment of the wicked" (ver. 17); *i.e.* like the wicked, he had pronounced a judicial sentence upon God and his dealings. Instead of humbly acquiescing in the Divine dispensations, he had, according to another rendering of the previous verse, suffered himself to be seduced from listening to the voice of affliction by his boundless prosperity and by the ease of his table, which was full of fatness (Ewald, Dillmann, Canon Cook), so that he had filled up the measure of his iniquity like a common evil-doer. It reveals a terrible declension on the part of a good man when he can behave no better under God's chastisements, and think no better of God because of them than an ordinary sinner. Yet good men, if left to themselves, may come to this. Therefore let us not be high-minded, but fear. 3. *The danger he had incurred.* In consequence of Job's insensate obstinacy and impenitent censoriousness towards God, "justice and judgment had taken hold *on him*;" he was now really undergoing such punishments as were due to wicked men from the even hand of justice. If good men by their ill behaviour place themselves amongst the wicked, it need not surprise them if God should beat them, *i.e.* judge and punish them, as the wicked. Such judging as Job had been guilty of bordered close upon, and was commonly followed hard by, the judgment of God. The only judging that a good man can with safety perform is upon himself (1 Cor. xi. 31, 32). 4. *The admonitions he required.* (1) Against declining into infidel scoffing. "Because there is anger [*sc.* in thy heart], let it not entice thee to scorning" (ver. 18). Of this he had indeed been accused by Zophar (ch. xi. 3), and not entirely acquitted by Elihu (ch. xxxiv. 37), who now, however, solemnly advertises him that that would be the certain issue of it if he yielded to his passionate feelings against God. The scorner's chair is the common terminus of such as begin by walking in the way of the ungodly. (2) Against undervaluing the Divine wrath. "Because there is wrath" (*sc.* with God), beware "lest he take thee away with a stroke." "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccles. viii. 11). But the wicked man has no guarantee that the Divine indignation against sin may not flame forth suddenly against him, as it did against Cain, the antediluvians, the cities of the plain, Pharaoh, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Haman, Herod, and others. (3) Against trusting to any self-provided ransom or atonement. "Then a great ransom cannot deliver thee" (ver. 18). Neither wealth (ver. 19) nor suffering (ver. 18) can avert the Divine wrath. Only one Ransom has sufficient merit to turn aside the sword of judgment. (4) Against thinking that either wealth or any personal efforts can secure salvation. "Shall thy riches place thee beyond distress, and all the efforts of thy strength?" (ver. 19). No; nothing will except repentance and faith. (5) Against longing for a speedy death. "Desire not the night, when people are cut off in their place" (ver. 20). Of this verse, of which a commentator (Schultens) gives fifteen different explanations, the sense clearly is that Job had better be careful of foolishly indulging in any such wish as that God should cut him off (ch. vi. 9; vii. 15), since God might take him at his word and remove him from his place below, *i.e.* from the earth (Delitzsch), or to a place below (Carey). Death removed whole peoples, and would have no difficulty in removing him. And Job might find his expectation disappointed. Instead of going up to an ameliorated condition, he might

rather at death descend into a worse (Umbreit). No man that knows what death is will desire it sooner than God is pleased to send it. (6) Against preferring wickedness to misery. "Take heed, regard not iniquity; for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction" (ver. 21). That is, rather than endure with meekness God's chastening hand, Job had sinfully desired to die, independently altogether of whether or not it was God's will. A common temptation to saints no less than to ordinary men, to choose sin rather than suffering. To elect to die rather than sin is the triumph of grace.

Learn: 1. The true dignity of a gospel minister as one who speaks for God and Christ. 2. The special business of a gospel minister, viz. to vindicate the ways of God with man. 3. The binding duty of a gospel minister, to give himself to reading and meditation. 4. The lofty aim of the gospel minister, always to speak from personal conviction. 5. The supreme glory of the Godhead, as combining infinite justice and infinite mercy, infinite greatness and infinite condescension. 6. The extreme anxiety God manifests to bring men to repentance and salvation. 7. The undoubted certainty that the impenitent and unrighteous will ultimately perish. 8. The absolute impossibility of salvation for those who despise the divinely provided ransom. 9. The great danger of indulging in wrath against either God or his dispensations. 10. The deep delusion of those who imagine death to be a blessing to any but God's people.

Vers. 22—33.—*Elihu to Job:* 4. *A sermon on the greatness of God.* I. ABSOLUTE IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY. 1. *Ruling by his own power.* "Behold, God exalteth" (*sc.* himself), *i.e.* showeth himself to be exalted, "acteth loftily" (Delitzsch) "in his strength" (ver. 22). The universal empire of God is based on his omnipotence. With him might and right are co-ordinate and coextensive. "He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves" (Ps. lxvi. 7). 2. *Holding dominion from no superior.* "Who hath enjoined him his way?" (ver. 23). Princes and potentates of earth derive their authority from him (Prov. viii. 16); the ever-blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, derives his from none. "Dominion and fear are with him" (ch. xxv. 2). Yea, saith Jehovah, "I am the Lord, and there is none else" (Isa. xlv. 18). 3. *Admitting of no inspection.* "Who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?" (ver. 23). As the Almighty brooks no superior or rival on his throne, so admits he of no opposition to his work. "Whatsoever his soul desireth, that he doeth" (ch. xxiii. 13). As none can interpose to say, "What doest thou?" (Dan. iv. 35), so none can claim a right to subject his work to critical inspection. To pass judgment on it is for a creature to be guilty of the highest arrogance. Substantially this was the sin of Job.

II. INCOMPARABLE IN HIS TEACHING. "Who teacheth like him?" (ver. 22). In the judgment of Elihu, one of the principal ends contemplated by God's providential government of the world was the education of men (ch. xxxiii. 14; xxxv. 11; xxxvi. 9). Hence by Elihu God is styled an Instructor or Teacher—*Moreh*, translated by the LXX. "Lord." So God represented himself to Moses (Exod. iv. 15), to Israel (Exod. xx. 1), to David (Ps. xxxii. 8). So is God to his people generally (Isa. liv. 13; Jer. xxxi. 33, 34; Micah iv. 2; John vi. 45). As a Teacher of men, God surpasses all other instructors, possessing qualifications never found, unitedly or severally, to perfectly exist except in himself. 1. *Ability.* Many undertake to instruct others who are wholly destitute of the capacity to understand either their subjects, their pupils, or themselves. But no such deficiency can be with God, who, besides knowing himself, comprehends all things and accurately gauges all men. This qualification was possessed in an eminent degree by Christ. 2. *Authority.* The Divine authority to teach and the authoritative character of the Divine teaching are based upon God's Lordship over man, and God's perfect knowledge of that which he teaches. So Christ, for exactly the same reasons, spake with authority, and not as the scribes (Matt. vii. 29). 3. *Variety.* Like every intelligent instructor, God employs different methods in teaching—his works (ch. xxxv. 11), his Word (Ps. xciv. 10), his providential dispensations (ch. xxxiii. 16), his Spirit (Neh. ix. 20; Prov. i. 23). So did Christ instruct his followers, by his works (Matt. vi. 26—31), by his Word (Luke xxiv. 27), by his providences (Luke xiii. 1—5), by his Spirit (Luke xii. 12; John xiv. 26). 4. *Suitability.* God's teaching is always adapted to the occasion (Ps. xxxii. 8; Isa. xlviii. 17); and to the capacities of his scholars (Isa. xxviii. 9, 10); and so likewise was Christ's (John xvi.

12; Mark x. 23). The Holy Spirit also proceeds in the same gradual fashion in the work of illuminating darkened minds. 5. *Simplicity.* Aiming at the good of those who hear, God always teaches in the plainest and directest manner possible, speaking so clearly, distinctly, and intelligibly, that he requires, as with Adam (Gen. iii. 9) and with Noah (Gen. vi. 13), with Abimelech (Gen. xx. 3) and with Laban (Gen. xxxi. 24), to speak only once; with such earnestness and eagerness that he often speaks twice, as he did with Abraham (Gen. xxii. 11), and as Christ did with Saul (Acts ix. 4); yea, with a patience and gentleness so admirable that he even condescends to speak thrice, as he did with Samuel (1 Sam. iii. 10). 6. *Desirability.* The teaching God gives is on subjects which it most behoves man to know, in particular on that which maketh wise unto salvation—the Being, character, and purpose of God; the original dignity, present condition, and future destiny of man; the nature, guilt, and penalty of sin; the Person, offices, and work of Christ; the source, means, and end of salvation; the law of life and the rule of duty; the way to die and the path to glory everlasting. 7. *Efficiency.* Desirable and complete as such a programme of instruction is, no one can learn it by his own unaided powers (1 Cor. ii. 14). But God can guide his people into the understanding of it in all its fulness (Ps. xxv. 9).

III. IMMACULATE IN HIS HOLINESS. "Who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?" (ver. 23). 1. *Holiness inseparable from the idea of God.* A Being who can be charged with iniquity cannot possibly be Divine. Hence God can, in no sense or degree, be the Author of sin. 2. *Men prone to connect sin with God.* The heathen do so when they worship deities like themselves—"gods fierce, rapacious, cruel, and unjust." Philosophers do so when they hold God responsible for everything that exists. Even good people do so when they charge God with inequality or injustice in his ways. 3. *God's holiness largely insisted on in Scripture.* The inveterate tendency of the fallen heart to forget the Divine purity demands that this be frequently held up for contemplation (Exod. xv. 11; Deut. xxxii. 4; 1 Sam. ii. 2; ch. iv. 17; xxxiv. 10; Ps. xcii. 15; cxi. 9; Isa. lvii. 15; Rev. iv. 8).

IV. UNSEARCHABLE IN HIS BEING. "Behold, God is great, and we know him not" (ver. 26). 1. *We know him not directly.* "No man hath seen God at any time," said Christ (John i. 18); with which agrees God's word to Moses (Exod. xxxiii. 20), and John's word to Christians (1 John iv. 12). God reveals himself to man in creation (Ps. xix. 1; Rom. i. 20), in providence (ch. ix. 11, *sqq.*), in Christ (John xiv. 9; 2 Cor. iv. 6; Col. i. 15), through the Spirit (Matt. xi. 27). 2. *We know him not completely.* It is certain that the infinite God will never be entirely comprehended by a finite creature. But of even such a measure and degree of knowledge as is possible to man, it is likewise true that we have not reached the full measure. "Now we know in part" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). Hereafter all that can be known of God by finite creatures will be realized. 3 *We know him not clearly.* Even what we do apprehend of the Divine Being is involved in much obscurity. "Now we see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). Hereafter his servants shall behold his face with open vision (Rev. xxii. 4). Yet for all that, notwithstanding these limitations: 4. *We know him not imaginarily, but really.* That is, our knowledge of the Divine Being, though neither direct, nor adequate, nor perfectly clear, is real, accurate, and reliable so far as it goes.

V. ETERNAL IN HIS EXISTENCE. "Neither can the number of his years be searched out" (ver. 26). The language which ascribes years to God is, of course, anthropomorphic (Ps. cii. 24). Both Elihu and the Hebrew bard intend to represent God as "without beginning of days or end of years," as existing "from everlasting to everlasting," as exalted high above all the permutations and vicissitudes of created life, and therefore as removed completely beyond the sphere of man's judgment or criticism.

VI. WONDERFUL IN HIS WORKING. To this thought Elihu recurs in detail in the ensuing chapter (*vide* homiletics). In the mean time he alludes to certain natural phenomena as indicative of God's excellent power in working. 1. *Rain.* "For he maketh small [literally, 'he draweth up,' *sc.* by evaporation] the small drops of water,' after which "they pour down rain [or, 'as rain'], according to the vapour thereof," or "for this mist" (Cook), or "in connection with its mist" (Delitzsch). It is not the understanding of how rain is formed that constitutes either the wonder or the difficulty of the phenomenon; it is the making of rain, the institution and maintenance of those material laws and forces which produce rain. It is here that Divine power is required

and seen. 2. *Clouds.* "Which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly" (ver. 28). Not the least interesting among those objects which attract the student of nature are the clouds of heaven, which receive the evaporated moisture of earth, and retain it floating in the atmosphere until it is again required by the parched soil. Objects of beauty in themselves, they strikingly attest the almighty power, matchless wisdom, and essential goodness of God. 3. *Thunder.* "Also can any understand the spreadings of the clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle?" (ver. 29). The appearance of the sky in a thunderstorm is what the poet aims at depicting, when the dark clouds spread across the firmament, and the first thunder-crash falls upon the ear (*vide* homiletics on next chapter). 4. *Lightning.* "Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it," or over himself (Hab. iii. 4), "and covereth the bottom [literally, 'the roots'] of the sea" (ver. 30); *i.e.* he lights up the whole heaven, and even illuminates the hidden depths of the ocean by the glare of his lightning.

VII. BENEFICENT IN HIS ADMINISTRATION. "The two ideas of power and goodness are associated closely in Elihu's mind; whereas the three friends dwell more upon the combination of power and justice, and Job upon that of power and wisdom. Goodness, righteousness, wisdom, are one in God; various aspects under which the essential principle of love is manifested" (Canon Cook). The beneficence of the Divine administration in nature is represented in a twofold form. 1 *Negatively, as judgment upon the nations.* "For by them judgeth he the people" (ver. 31). Seemingly severe in themselves, God's judgments upon the wicked men and nations are to righteous men and nations acts of grace and kindness. It is for the benefit of the world that sin should be chastised. Love no less than justice demands that the wicked should be overthrown. 2. *Positively, as kindness to his people.* "He giveth meat in abundance." In this aspect Elihu thinks of the rain, the clouds, the thunder, the lightning. The beneficent uses of these and other ordinary phenomena of nature are patent to the slightest reflection. The rain is the great fertilizer of the soil; the cloud, besides serving as a screen to moderate the warmth of the sun, operates to prevent the too speedy radiation of the earth's heat, while it also acts as the great rain-collector and distributor for the parched ground; the thunderstorm is the most effective of all atmospheric purifiers and rectifiers.

VIII. GLORIOUS IN HIS MANIFESTATIONS. Taking advantage, as usual, of the extreme obscurity of the last two verses (*vide* Exposition), and availing ourselves of the more probable of the offered interpretations, we find Elihu suggesting concerning the Divine manifestations that they are: 1 *Announced by the elements.* Elihu alludes, it is thought, to an approaching theophany, of which the thunderstorm was the herald. "With clouds he covereth the light," etc.; literally, "Upon both hands he spreadeth as a covering the light" (*i.e.* the lightning), "and commandeth it as one who hitteth the mark" (Delitzsch) against his enemy (Gesenius, Umbreit), in striking (Carey) whom it shall reach (Canon Cook). So was God's approach to Adam after he had fallen announced by a rush of wind through the garden (Gen. iii. 8); to Israel by thunders and lightnings and the noise of a trumpet (Exod. xx. 18); to Elijah by a wind, an earthquake, and a fire (1 Kings xix. 11). So was God's advent to the world at the Incarnation proclaimed by signs and wonders both in heaven and on earth. The descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost was accompanied by a rushing mighty wind. The return of God to judge the world will be attended with alarming prodigies. 2. *Recognized by the irrational creation.* To the herds the rumble of the thunder is pictured by Elihu as announcing the arrival of God. So when Christ the Son of God came to earth, not only did the winds and the seas obey him (Mark iv. 41), but the wild beasts gathered round him and forgot their ferocity (Mark i. 13). Among the signs that shall foretell his second coming will be the lying down of the wolf with the lamb, and of the leopard with the kid (Isa. xi. 6—9). 3. *Presented to man.* Neither the inanimate creation nor the irrational animals can consciously apprehend the glory of God. Hence the Divine manifestations, though heralded and unconsciously recognized by them, are not specifically meant for them, but for man, the head and crown of the material globe. To man alone of all God's creatures on the earth belongs the power of apprehending the Divine glory. Hence God's self-revelations are always for the sake of man. The one now approaching was for Job's sake. The Incarnation was for the sake of humanity. The second advent will be for the sake of the Church. 4. *Directed against unrighteousness.* "The sound thereof (*i.e.* the thunder-crash) announces concerning their fierceness of wrath

against unrighteousness" (Cook). Even so the first Divine manifestation in the Incarnation and cross was a revelation of the wrath of God against all unrighteousness of men (Rom. i. 18); though of this character much more will the next Divine apocalypse partake. 5. *Designed for the salvation of the righteous.* According to another rendering (Umbreit), Elihu is understood to say that, while God fills both his hands with light, in the one hand he holds the lightning-shaft wherewith to strike the wicked, but in the other the cheering light of the sun to reveal to his friend, and even unto cattle and to plants. It may remind us again of the double purpose of all God's manifestations. The pillar of cloud and fire meant destruction to Egypt, but emancipation to Israel. Even the gospel is a savour of life unto some, but of death unto others. When Christ next comes, it will be not alone to punish his foes, but also to save his friends.

Learn: 1. To magnify the work of God. 2. To celebrate the praise of God. 3. To reverence the Name of God. 4. To delight in the revelation of God. 5. To acquiesce in the purpose of God. 6. To listen to the teaching of God. 7. To accept the salvation of God.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1—ch. xxxvii. 24.—*Elihu's fourth speech: God the Loving, the Just, and the Holy.* In the preceding discourses of Elihu, he has dwelt chiefly upon the moral relations of man to God, and the view presented of God has been chiefly that obtained through the medium of human feelings and analogies. His present discourse rises to a sublime view of him as the infinitely mighty One, the wise and just Father of mankind. If we suppose that during this address the storm is brewing out of which Jehovah presently speaks, then all Elihu's references to the lightning, the thunder, the storm and rain receive, as he proceeds, their splendid illustration from the sublime scene around, and heighten the force of his appeals.

I. INTRODUCTION. (Vers. 1—4.) The speaker begins by announcing that he has something further of weight to say in justification of the ways of God to man. He has "words for God" to utter. Though God's works are his justification, and he needs no defence at the hands of man, yet it may be said that the free exercise of reason, in setting forth the glory of his goodness and justice, is an acceptable service to him. If he delights in the unconscious testimony of babes and sucklings (Ps. viii.), still more must he delight in the conscious spontaneous offerings of man's matured thought at his shrine. The great works of Christian theologians and apologists, such as Calvin's 'Institutes' or Butler's 'Analogy,' are the tributes of reason to the honour of God. But they are valueless unless they have that quality which Elihu so emphatically claims, sincerity, truth. He who ventures to speak for God must speak, not with the purpose of temporary expediency, but out of the consciousness of eternity.

II. THE JUSTICE OF GOD REVEALED IN THE HISTORY OF MAN. (Vers. 5—21.) The course of life, argues the speaker, shows that a chastening, a purifying, but at the same time a loving, Power is at work in the world. This is supported: 1. *By a general view of human life.* (Vers. 6—15.) God is revealed in the different courses of men's lives as Power, but not as arbitrary Power. His greatness is not associated with contempt for the lowliness of man. It is not reckless of right and wrong. It upholds the moral order—the godless sink unsupported into the ruin their own conduct has prepared for them; while those who suffer from the injustice of others are succoured and defended. God's watchful eye is upon all just men, from the king whose throne he establishes, whose dignity he guards, to the captive in his chains, to the beggar in his misery. This, as we have so often seen, is the firm foundation-truth which runs beneath the whole of this book, and through the whole of the Bible. And the seeming exceptions to these principles of the Divine administration are now explained as merely seeming; for they come under the principle of *chastisement*, which is but another illustration of love. According to this view—never more feelingly set forth than here—suffering may be, not the brand of guilt, but the silent token of love in the form of discipline. Without positive guilt there may be moral stagnation, in which the germs of future evil are discovered by the eye of the Divine Educator. Evil is forming in tendency or thought when it has not blossomed into deeds. Then comes the visit of God in suffering to

warn, to hint of danger, to "open the ear" to instructions that were thought unnecessary in the days of perfect peace and self-complacency. And if the mind yields to this gracious leading, and bends itself to docility to this new revelation of the holy will, all shall yet be well. The season of depression and disaster will be passed through, and the sheep who have heard the Shepherd's voice will find themselves led once more into the green pastures of content (vers. 6—11). But the God who is revealed to us in this tender and gracious aspect in the course of experience, under the condition of obedience, becomes clothed in sternness and severity to those who resist. Those who venture to war with law, to rebel against omnipotence and justice, can but meet an unhappy doom. In wondrous ways, unknown to man, God is able to bring men to their destined goal (vers. 12—14). The great lesson, then, is to betake one's self to self-examination (the opening of the ear) and to prayer when the visitants of God's chastening love are knocking at the door of our heart. The lesson is expressed by pointing to the sad examples of unsubmissive, prayerless lives! These, like spots where the dew falls not, cannot thrive. Hearts, like bare rocks, that will not melt in the sun, callous, impenitent, heedless, perish for want of knowledge, of faith, of God; but those whose whole nature has been broken up and laid open by suffering are prepared to receive the seed of eternal wisdom which the Divine Husbandman seeks in such times to implant (ver. 15). 2. *By reference to Job's vicissitudes.* (Vers. 16—21.) In these verses, which are so obscure in meaning in our version, a deduction is made from the foregoing principles in reference to the case of Job. In ver. 16 the verb should be taken in the present, "God *is* leading," or "is for leading" him out of his present straitened and distressed condition; but what if the conditions of submission, penitence, and docility are wanting in Job? Assuming that there is this want, solemn warnings are given—that he cannot, if in a state of sin, escape the judgment of God; that if he allows the fire of suffering to madden him into impiety instead of purifying his spirit, he will find himself in an evil plight, for no cries nor efforts can avail to extricate him from the fangs of doom. Let not Job, then, says the speaker (ver. 20), perhaps pointing to the dark warning of the sky, long after the night (of judgment); for whole peoples pass away in that terrible darkness when the wrath of God is outpoured! And to conclude the warnings, let Job beware of the turning of the heart to vanity—the natural thoughtlessness of mankind in presence of the judgments of God. The application is unfair as regards Job; still, we are reminded indirectly that it is not sufficient to hold a true theory of God's moral government in general, without applying it to the facts of our own lives. Men may harshly apply great principles to our character and condition in the world; this cannot absolve us from the duty of applying them truly and honestly for ourselves.

III. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN NATURE. (Ver. 22—ch. xxxvii. 24.) 1. *The wisdom and power of God as seen in nature's wonders.* (Ver. 22—ch. xxxvii. 13.) *Introduction.* (Vers. 22—25.) The sublime power of God fills every observer of Nature with awe. Who is a Ruler as he? Who can improve upon Nature? She is the great mechanist, artist, designer, executor. Man may produce new varieties of plants and, to some extent, of animals by the exercise of intelligence, but "o'er that art which men call nature is another art which nature makes." Art is the highest effort of human nature; and what nature can he honour who honours not the human? If, then, you have a quarrel with God, what is this but to dispute the beauty and the good of things, which all men delight to celebrate, on which no eyes are weary of looking with wonder? 2. *Look, then, at the grandeur of the phenomena of nature—the rain, the clouds, the storms.* (Ver. 26—ch. xxxvii. 5.) Read the words of the description, compare them with your own feelings. In the very vagueness and vastness of nature there is a power to impress the imagination. This array of beauty and of grandeur is not only far beyond, but totally unlike, anything that man can conceive or accomplish. No words can better set forth these profound and unutterable impressions than the words of great poets, "thrown out" as it were at a distant, illimitable object which cannot be defined. "God thunders with his voice wondrously, doth great things that we understand not:" this is the sum of all. The indefinite grandeur of images and sounds, which is so impressive in the highest poetry, represents the inarticulate but overwhelming voice of nature which tells of the Being and the goodness of God. Again, these effects point to causes; and the regularity of effects

to the regularity of causes; and the whole series of effects and causes resolves itself into the conception of law, high, unerring, unbroken. Even with a very imperfect knowledge of the structure of the cosmos, there is some dim perception of these truths: how much more should consummate science impress them upon the spirit! Every phenomenon that strikes with awe the senses, or that gently excites the wonder and curiosity of the mind, hints at an Intelligence which is ever at work. The snow, the rain-torrents, which give pause to the labours of man, and compel his gaze to the sky; the crouching of the wild beast in his lair before the fury of the storm; the rushing forth of the blasts as from some hidden repository (as the Greeks fabled, the cave of Æolus); the congelation of the waters; the clouds discharging their weight of moisture or flashing forth their lightnings;—all speak of superhuman power, all-controlling and still guiding the march of nature by a principle of right; now scourging men's folly, and now rewarding and blessing their obedience. In the fearful and beautiful scenes of the storm and of winter we indeed no longer see signs of the personal displeasure of God. We explain them by the "laws of nature." But none the less do these phenomena tell of the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God, and hint to us the duty and the need of prayer to him who gave to Nature her laws. 3. *Inferences; exhortations.* (Ch. xxxvii. 14—24.) If this be the view Nature gives us of her God and of our Creator, instead of murmuring at him or disputing his dealings, let Job and all sufferers draw the true conclusions amidst the dark enigmas of their lives. Let the preceding impressions be laid well to heart, and in quiet contemplation let the mystery of the Divine operations be reviewed. Can man explain the secrets of nature? If not, why should he expect to explain fully that which is a part of the same system, under the same rule, controlled by the same God, namely, his own life and its mingled web of weal and woe (ver. 14, *sqq.*)? "We have but faith; we cannot know." "If man is not called by God to his side in other matters of his daily doing, to be as a judge and counsellor, and this can be expected by none, and none presumes to murmur against that order, it is right that man should not demand that the method of God's government should be shown him in this world, but that he should acquiesce in it, whether he understands it or no; that he should believe his Word, and await his good in patience" (Cocceius).

CONCLUSION. And now the speaker—pointing to the rising storm which has been gathering during his discourse, brings his words, in solemn iteration and summing-up, to a close (vers. 21—24). The aspect of yonder heaven is a symbol of Job's position in relation to God. The light that flashes in its wonted splendour behind the clouds is not seen just now, but a wind rises and sweeps those clouds away; and so the God who is concealed for a time, and of whom we are in danger of entertaining wrong thoughts, may suddenly, to our surprise and shame, discover himself. Let us, then, humble ourselves in presence of the destiny that just now is full of darkness. From the gloom as of midnight there bursts forth the gleam as of gold—brilliant token of the sublime power of Jehovah. And God remains inaccessible to sense, to knowledge, dwelling in the unapproachable light. But, amidst all the terror and the mystery, the voice of conscience, the moral sense in man, tells him that, though God be incomprehensible, this much concerning him may be known—he is no Perverter of right and justice; he is the infallibly good and wise, just and holy One. This faith is the foundation of reverence, of piety; and as for the "self-wise," the men wise in their own conceits, God holds them in no regard. (On the dazzling light, the symbol of the majesty of God, compare the hymn of Binney, "Eternal Light! Eternal Light!")—J.

Vers. 5—17.—*The perfectness of the Divine ways.* Elihu continues to speak on God's behalf. He defends the Divine ways from what he esteems to be Job's reflections upon them. He will fain "ascribe righteousness" to his "Maker." The perfectness and justness of the ways of him who is "mighty in strength and wisdom" is traced by Elihu in many instances. Though greatly exalted, God does not look disdainfully upon man; nor doth he despise the work of his own hands. His perfect work is seen—

I. IN HIS JUDGMENTS UPON THE UNGODLY. "He preserveth not the life of the wicked."

II. IN HIS JUSTICE TO THE OPPRESSED. "He giveth right to the poor;" "He delivereth the poor in his affliction" (ver. 15).

III. IN HIS REGARD FOR THE OBEDIENT AND PURE. "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous." This is especially seen—

IV. IN HIS DISCIPLINE AND CORRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS. This topic Elihu expands. While the Almighty suffers the wicked to perish, he maintains the lot of the oppressed and righteous poor, keeping them ever in view, and ever working all things together for their good. 1. In leading them to an established honour. "With kings are they on the throne." He "doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted." 2. He sanctifies their sorrows as means of spiritual discipline and correction. "If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction, he showeth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded." 3. He imparts instruction, warning them away from the dangers of iniquity. 4. He crowns their obedience with ample reward. "If they obey and serve him," he makes them to spend their days in prosperity. How does this anticipate the final condition of Job! and in the process of this Divine poem, how is the unravelling of the mystery, the knot of human suffering, gradually promoted! Again, with another motive to urge Job to repentance, Elihu points out: 5. That even the righteous, if they are disobedient to the Divine instructions and correction, "shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge." He makes a direct application of the whole teaching to Job: "Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place;" but lays at Job's door the accusation of fulfilling the judgment of the evil-doer and suffering, as he does, for the severities of "judgment and justice." The principle of Elihu's teaching is just, if his application of it is faulty. All may learn (1) to acknowledge, (2) to bow to, (3) to harmonize their life with, the perfect work of God.—R. G.

Ver. 2.—*Speaking on God's behalf.* Elihu is not a little bold in roundly asserting that he is speaking on God's behalf. He may be right, but his assertion needs testing. Not all who claim to speak for God can be accredited as his ambassadors. We must examine the credentials of those who say that they speak on behalf of God.

I. THE FALSE CLAIM TO SPEAK ON GOD'S BEHALF. This claim is put forth repeatedly. 1. *By officialism.* Because certain people hold a high office, they assume that they have a right to represent God. But they may be true in their work and in discharging the proper functions of their office, and yet quite false in pretending to speak for God. God does not confine his heavenly communications to official channels. 2. *By authoritative orthodoxy.* No one can read the sad records of ecclesiastical history without seeing what ungodly passions have been engaged in the battles of theology. Dare we say that the issue of these miserable conflicts has always been a triumph for truth? 3. *By personal dogmatism.* Young men, such as Elihu, declare that they are speaking for God. They are very positive. But are they infallible? Would it not be well to see that God is not absolutely dependent on our advocacy? Vast mischief has accrued through bungling and even unrighteous attempts to vindicate God's truth and God's action. Can he not take care of his own cause? Shall we, like Uzzah, interfere at every crisis to save the ark of God from destruction? Much unbelief is simply due to unwise advocacy and defence of religion. Sometimes it is best to say nothing, but to trust God's cause to himself. "Be still, and know that I am God."

II. THE NECESSARY DUTY OF SPEAKING ON GOD'S BEHALF. There are times when God requires his people to speak for him, and we dare not be silent under all circumstances. Wrong must be denounced, error corrected, truth maintained, the gospel made known. How, then, can this advocacy be saved from the mischievous effects which follow from a wrong way of speaking for God? 1. *By a Divine commission.* They who speak for God must be called by God. Whatever be their human mission, they certainly need a Divine vocation. Let a man be well assured in his heart that God has called him before he opens his lips. The assurance may not come by any mystic voices, but by clear indications of providence, the prompting of conscience, the faculty to speak, the open door. 2. *By a hold of truth.* The teacher must be taught. The advocate must have his brief; the envoy his despatch. The Christian missionary must be clear in his own grasp of Christian truth. We have the best guide to truth in the Bible. If any one would speak for God, let him follow the teachings of this book. 3. *By sympathy with the Spirit of God.* We cannot even speak the truth we know wisely and well, unless we are guided by the present influence of the Holy

Spirit. It is not enough to study our Bibles. We must be much in prayer, we must live near to God, so that we may speak in the strength and spirit of God.—W. F. A.

Ver. 3.—*Knowledge fetched from afar.* I. KNOWLEDGE MUST BE FETCHED FROM AFAR. True to his character, the brilliant but pretentious young Elihu makes an ostentatious claim to having gone far for the knowledge that he is now about to declare. It might be said that many precious truths lie at our feet ready for us if only we would have the humility to stoop for them. Diamonds sparkle in the dust; we need not be for ever straining after the stars. Still, there is a knowledge that can only be got by far searching. 1. *Over a wide realm.* Elihu is about to launch forth into the great sea of nature. The infinite variety of facts and the grand harmony of laws there displayed are not perceived at a glance. Truth covers a large area. Many of our notions are erroneous just because our inductions are too narrow. We judge of the world by the parish. We estimate man by our private circle of acquaintances. We value life by our own experience. We must learn to break down the barriers, to master our shortness of sight, to take broad views, and look down long vistas of truth. 2. *By persevering thought.* A mere glance at truth is not enough. We must search for wisdom as for hidden treasure.

II. KNOWLEDGE FETCHED FROM AFAR VINDICATES THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. This is the conclusion to which Elihu has come. The three friends had declared for the same result, but they had started from much narrower premisses, and their cramped ideas could not satisfy Job. Elihu professes to take a wider view of the world, and so to establish his conclusion on a broader basis. We have only to know enough of God to be assured that all he does is good. The hard thoughts of God which we are tempted to entertain spring from partial and one-sided views of his works.

III. CHRIST HAS BROUGHT US KNOWLEDGE FROM AFAR WHICH REVEALS THE GOODNESS OF GOD. We are not left entirely to our own dim groping after truth in the great wilderness of existence. What we could never have discovered for ourselves has been brought to us by Jesus Christ. He has come from afar, from the distant heavens; and he has brought the knowledge of God and of eternity to earth. Now, if we would have the highest wisdom, our first course is, like Mary, to sit at the feet of Jesus. When we do this we shall learn that all that God does is good. Then we shall see that he is our Father, and that love is the principle that pervades all his government of the world. Some of us may yet be far from a perception of these glorious truths—because we are far from Christ. We have to know and trust him in order to reach the truest and best thoughts of God.—W. F. A.

Ver. 5.—*The might and mercy of God.* The remarkable thought here brought before us is the juxtaposition of God's might and mercy. He is both powerful and pitiful, majestic and condescending, infinite and sympathetic.

I. GOD'S MIGHT DOES NOT DESTROY HIS MERCY. It is only a very low and earthly view that could lead us to suppose that it might do so. When small men are lifted up they begin to display their littleness by despising those who are beneath them. But no such conduct can be ascribed to the great God. We must not suppose that any one of his creatures is so humble that he will not stoop to care for it. His is not the rude strength of the giant.

II. GOD'S MERCY IS CONFIRMED BY HIS MIGHT. The truth is the opposite to what we might fear if we judged by the small experience of earthly greatness. God has no temptation to despise any of his creatures. He does not wish to make a display of his greatness. 1. He does not despise *the small.* Feeble strength and slight capacity lead to contempt among men; but what is the greatest strength, what the highest capacity in the sight of God, in whose eyes all men are but as dust and ashes? If he despised any, he would despise all. 2. He does not despise *the wicked.* He knows their sin, folly, and helplessness. He seems to treat them with contempt, as psalmists and prophets describe his actions. But all that he really does is to frustrate their foolish designs and show that he cannot be touched by their vain rebellion. If God despised the wicked, he would despise all his children, because in the light of his holiness the best men are covered with the shame of guilt.

III. GOD'S MIGHT AND MERCY WORK TOGETHER. The might gives effect to the mercy.

If God is mighty, and if also he does not despise any, we may be sure that he will use his great power for the benefit of helpless creatures who are not beneath his notice. Sympathy is not enough for salvation, without strength. God has both.

IV. THE MIGHT AND MERCY OF GOD SHOULD LEAD US TO TRUST IN HIM. We have not to deal with an aristocratic Divinity who looks with contempt on the "dim multitude." Though high above us, God does not despise us; then we may venture to confide in him. No trouble is so foolish that he will not take account of it, if it really vexes one of his children. Those who are despised by their fellow-men may take comfort from the thought that they are not so regarded by their God. It is well to find a refuge from the contempt of the world in the sympathy of God.

V. WE SHOULD NOT DESPISE ANY OF OUR BRETHREN. If God has not despised them, dare we do so? Whatever feelings may be provoked by the baseness and meanness of men, contempt is never justifiable. God respects the dignity of the child whom he has made in his own image; and we should learn to treat with respect the lowest of our fellow-men. Contempt not only hurts the feelings of the most humble, it degrades the most vicious. We shall not save the sinner by despising him; the only method is Christ's method—loving him and treating him as a brother.—W. F. A.

Ver. 7.—*The kingship of righteousness.* Elihu assures Job that the righteous are to be with kings on the throne. In the New Testament we learn that Christians are "kings and priests unto God." Let us, then, inquire as to what the kingship of righteousness consists in.

I. ITS SOURCE. How does this kingly state come to be conferred on men? 1. *By Divine favour.* God favours righteousness. This is not apparent on earth, or, at all events, under circumstances of trouble and disappointment. Yet in the long run God sustains and exalts those who follow his will. No man can lift himself up to the high places of God. God, and God alone, raises up and casts down. God "withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous." 2. *On condition of righteousness.* This is not an arbitrary condition. (1) It is just. The right should prevail. Good men are best fitted to be in the exalted positions. (2) It is natural. If "the meek shall inherit the earth" by a silent law that gives them possession of it, the righteous shall rule it by force of a similar law in the very constitution of things. Right tends to prevail, for there is "a stream of tendencies that makes for righteousness." 3. *Through faith.* We must add this Christian thought to the teaching of Elihu, if we would have a complete view of the truth. Our own self-made righteousness will never exalt us to a kingly throne. There is no royalty about it. The kingly grace attaches to that righteousness of faith which is the gift of God.

II. ITS CHARACTER. In what sense is it said that righteous men are to be with kings on the throne? How can Christians be regarded as kings? 1. *In true glory.* Good men may not enjoy worldly glory; they may be poor, despised, obscure. Yet in the sight of God and the angels they may be sitting as kings with crowns on their heads. Royal dignity is not a matter of display. There is a glory which no eye of sense can see. 2. *In spiritual power.* Kings in the East, and in the olden time, were rulers who made their power felt; and in the Bible kingship involves ruling authority as well as reigning dignity. Now, there is influence in goodness. The man of character carries weight with his advice. In course of time he gains respect, and so acquires influence. 3. *In future possession.* These ideas of the kingship of the good point to a yet unseen future for their perfect realization. Righteousness is not yet by any means universally dominant. The future has in store for us a glorious kingdom of God, when all evil shall be suppressed, and when goodness shall take its rightful place. In that perfect Messianic age, with Christ reigning as King of kings, all his people will have the honour and power of royalty. In the mean time let us recollect that the kingdom must begin within. Until we can rule our own souls we are not fit to sit as kings. Kingly natures are those that have mastered themselves, and so are capable of ruling others. Righteousness implies self-mastery. When the self-mastery is complete it will be time to ask about the larger kingship.—W. F. A.

Ver. 10.—*The ear that is open to discipline.* I. SUFFERING IS FOR DISCIPLINE. This is Elihu's great thought, and he returns to it again and again. It is familiar to us,

but it seems to have been a new idea in the days of Job, and a fresh revelation for him and his friends. It is not the less important to us because we are well acquainted with it. Still, we have to enter into the meaning of it, and employ it as the key for unlocking the mysteries of our experience. Discipline is very different from punishment. 1. *It is for the good of the sufferer.* Punishment may be so; kind parents punish their children to benefit them. But this is not the sole object of punishment, which is also instituted to deter bad men from crime by the fear of its infliction, and to warn others by the wholesome lesson of its example. Discipline, on the other hand, is wholly schooling, entirely for the benefit of those who are subjected to it. 2. *It is not necessarily consequent upon sin.* Punishment is only for guilt; but discipline is for education. It may be the more needed on account of sin; but it is not confined to its effect on sin. Christ the Sinless was made perfect by the things which he suffered (Heb. v. 8, 9).

II. DISCIPLINE MUST BE RIGHTLY RECEIVED IF IT IS TO PROFIT. It is quite possible for it to be entirely thrown away upon the sufferer. Gold is purified by the fire because gold is but a dead metal. But souls are living, and the effects of the fires of affliction upon them are dependent on voluntary action. They may harden, they may consume, they may purify, they may strengthen. If they are to benefit as discipline they must be received in the right spirit. Now, this spirit is indicated by the open ear. The discipline brings a message from God. It does not only affect our feelings. It aims at reaching our thoughts. Probably it will do us no good at all if it does not lead us to think. An intelligent appreciation of God's dealings with us is valuable for discipline to work its right end. Then we need to think about our own way in life. Affliction arrests our attention and helps us to search our heart and see whether we have not been doing wrong; it encourages us to survey our whole life with a view to improving it for the future.

III. GOD HELPS HIS PEOPLE TO RECEIVE DISCIPLINE ARIGHT. We need to pray for grace to make the best use of affliction. When our hearts are right with God he will aid us to do this. 1. *He will incline the heart to learn.* When we are stubborn and self-willed, discipline is of little use. It may tend to break down the obstruction; but as long as that is standing it does little good. The disciple must be docile. Now, the inward influence of the Holy Spirit helps us to become docile under discipline. 2. *He will assist the understanding to comprehend.* We want to know what God is teaching us by his discipline. Our own wild, prejudiced ideas may lead us quite astray. Therefore it is well to fall upon our knees and pray that God will show us what he means by the special discipline he is putting us through—what he is teaching us, and whither he would lead us.—W. F. A.

Ver. 15.—*Affliction as a deliverer.* Elihu says that God delivers the afflicted by his affliction. We have been accustomed to look on affliction as an evil, from which some deliverer may set us free. Elihu startles us with a very different view of it. In his opinion the affliction is itself a deliverer.

I. AFFLICTION IS NOT THE GREATEST EVIL. In our selfish cowardice we look for some escape from pain, as though that were our supreme foe. But sin is worse than suffering—more hurtful, more objectionable in itself. Any escape from trouble that leaves wickedness untouched is no salvation; but any process, however painful, that frees us from the power of sin is salvation.

II. AFFLICTION MAY BE NO EVIL AT ALL. In itself, of course, it is undesirable. But its "peaceable fruits of righteousness" may be so wholesome and profitable that, on the whole, the affliction must be accounted a good thing. We should judge of any experience by its results, not by its passing phases. We have to learn that the pain that blesses is really itself a blessing. The black cloud that brings a refreshing shower is not a threatening storm. The spur that drives us from the desert where we would perish to the streams of living water is not a cruel instrument of torture. The heavy blow that awakens us when we are sleeping in the snow the sleep that would end in death is nothing less than an angel of mercy.

III. AFFLICTION MAY BE A REAL DELIVERER. We have now to ask how this paradox can be true. 1. *By humbling pride.* When all is well we are tempted to be self-sufficient and self-satisfied. But in suffering we are cast low, and then our lowliness

may be our salvation. 2. *By inducing thought.* We let the happy hours glide by in careless ease, dreaming life away. Trouble arouses us with a trumpet-blast. It cries, "Awake! Think!" 3. *By revealing sin.* In our humility and our reflectiveness we are led to a consciousness of sin. 4. *By driving us to God.* We need most of all to be delivered from ourselves and to be brought back to God. The utter helplessness of great trouble urges us in this direction.

IV. AFFLICTION DELIVERS FROM ITSELF. It is its own deliverer when it is rightly received. 1. *The right reception of it overcomes its bitterness.* There is no such victory over pain as the capacity to endure it with equanimity. We are more delivered from an evil when the thing we have regarded as evil ceases to hurt us than when we only escape from its clutches. 2. *The patient endurance of it brings it to an end.* When God sees that his scholar has learnt the desired lesson, he can close the book. No more of the scorching lines need be spelt out with tearful eyes. The student has graduated. Henceforth he is free from the old drudgery. Therefore the true way to escape from dreaded suffering which God sends as discipline is not to murmur against it, but to make the best use of it, in order that, being purified by fire, we may become vessels fit for the King's use.—W. F. A.

Ver. 16.—"*A broad place.*" Elihu tells Job that it is the work of affliction to "lure" him out of a strait into a broad place.

I. LIFE IS IN DANGER OF BECOMING NARROW. Various influences combine to narrow it. 1. *Selfishness.* The disposition to think much of ourselves dwarfs the world to us. But when we are thus living chiefly for our own ends, we are shut into a small circle of personal, private interests, and, the great world being ignored, we ourselves shrink into littleness. 2. *Worldliness.* When we are absorbed in things of this world, the other and larger world is lost to view. The consequence is that we become short-sighted, and thought and interest are shut in to the domain of the visible and temporal. 3. *Conventionality.* We lose the courage of personal conviction, and fall back on the ideas and practices of our neighbours. 4. *Routine.* Since all goes smoothly, the mill grinds on in a dreamy atmosphere of changeless indifference. Then our lives miss the stimulus of a rousing call to arduous service.

II. GOD DELIVERS FROM NARROWNESS BY MEANS OF AFFLICTION. 1. *A Divine work.* Seeing how hurtful the narrowness is, and desiring us to escape from it, he puts forth his hand to draw us out of the imprisonment it involves. It is difficult for one who has fallen into a mountain gorge, and who lies among the stones bruised and battered, to lift himself up and climb the steep and treacherous crags. He who has fallen into a strait in life needs the strong arm of God to draw him out. 2. *Accomplished through affliction.* God comes to the rescue of his straitened servant. But the method of deliverance is strange and unexpected. Affliction is itself a strait; it seems to press on the soul, to hamper and limit its activity. Yet this is the very instrument employed in delivering the victim of narrowness. Narrowness of circumstances may deliver from narrowness of soul. The very pressure of this new strait rouses us and bids us exert ourselves. Then, as it cures our errors, it leads us out of its own constraints.

III. GOD'S DELIVERANCE SETS US IN A BROAD PLACE. First there is a fresh strait, a hard pressure of trouble on the right hand and on the left, with no door of escape. But when the affliction has accomplished its work there is deliverance. 1. *Liberty of action.* "The truth shall make you free" (John viii. 32). God desires his people to serve willingly and lovingly, not with fetters on their ankles. The freedom is of a soul "at leisure from itself." There is a large place with great scope for work, which can only be enjoyed in unselfishness and unworldliness. 2. *Breadth of view.* It is wonderful how the vision is broadened by the experience of sorrow. Although at first it may be cramped and confined to the immediate present by the absorbing influence of pain, when deliverance comes, this is followed by a wonderful mental expansion. No one knows the depth and breadth of life who has not been through the waters of affliction. 3. *Largeness of joy.* The broad place is open to the fresh air and the bright sunshine. Delivered from dank and dreary narrow regions, we can rejoice in our God-given liberty. This bliss is partly enjoyed on earth; it will be perfect in heaven, the large place of life and liberty.—W. F. A.

Ver. 18.—*The uselessness of a great ransom.* Job had sinned, says Elihu, though not in the black and hypocritical way that his three friends attributed to him. His sin had been in judging God, and charging the Holy One with injustice; and this sin brought its own punishment; indeed, it was its own punishment, because to think that God, our Maker and our Judge, is unjust is to be in torment. Now Job is told that if he holds to this sin the greatness of a ransom will be of no avail; he cannot be saved.

I. MAN LOOKS FOR DELIVERANCE THROUGH A RANSOM. This is not only a Christian idea. It is found in the Old Testament, and it is to be traced through heathen systems of religion, though among these systems it appears in a degraded and corrupted state. 1. *Man has a sense of bondage.* This he feels. When conscience is aroused, he has the most intense consciousness of its galling fetters. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24). 2. *Man cannot escape from his bondage.* The old brigand, Satan, that great robber of souls, has too tight a hand on his victims to let them go free whenever they choose to escape from his clutches. Habit is a stronger bandage than the cords with which Samson was bound. The deliverance must come from without. 3. *This deliverance must be at a great cost.* We do not know what the cost must be, nor how it should be settled. It cannot be true, as some of the Fathers held, that a price must be paid to Satan that he may consent to liberate man. He never consents. He can have no compensation. The liberation is by the overthrow of Satan and the conquest of his domain. The Bastille must be stormed and hurled down if its prisoners are to escape. But this can only be done at great cost.

II. CHRIST IS THE RANSOM FOR THE DELIVERANCE OF MAN. This is his own statement (Matt. xx. 28). His advent with humiliation in a state of servitude was a Divine payment—a sacrifice on the part of God. His death was his own surrender of his life for the liberation of man from sin. We need not understand why the ransom had to be paid in order to see that it has been paid. A clear idea of the reason and necessity of the payment might help our faith. Still, the fact is the great thing to know. Christ has given himself for us, and through him we have liberty.

III. THE GREATEST RANSOM MAY BE UNAVAILING. 1. *If it is not rightly paid.* Men make great sacrifices in asceticism; yet there is no reason to think that they are of any adequate value, because they are not required by God, and they serve no good end. 2. *If there is no repentance.* The work of Christ is for the benefit of all who will avail themselves of it. But a first condition of profiting by it is repentance. While a man holds to his sin he cannot enjoy the benefits of Christ's sacrifice. For him Christ has died in vain. 3. *If it is not accompanied by faith.* This is the connecting link that joins the soul to Christ. All that he has done for us remains outside us, not touching our life and need, till we learn to confide in him.

CONCLUSION. It is worse for the ransom to be paid in vain than for it not to be paid at all. They who reject Christ are doubly without hope, for they are without excuse.—W. F. A.

Ver. 22.—*Exaltation and instruction.* Both of these are from God, and both of them exceed any human effort. It is his power that exalts; he is the incomparable Teacher. Let us look at both of these truths and then at their mutual relations.

I. DIVINE EXALTATION. 1. *The experience.* God's people are not kept in perpetual depression. Sometimes they are cast down to the dust. But this is not their continual state. Salvation is not attained by means of ceaseless humiliation. There is exaltation (1) in gladness, rejoicing over the love of God; (2) in strength, rising to achieve great service in the kingdom; (3) in victory, triumphing over failure and evil. 2. *Its source.* God exalts. Man cannot truly exalt himself, and when he tries to do so, pride and vanity give him an ugly fall. Success in this world even is dependent on God's providence; much more are true elevation of character and exaltation of energy dependent on his favour. 3. *Its accomplishment.* God exalts by his power. It is much to know that God is almighty as well as most merciful and gracious. To be favoured by one who had small resources would be pleasant, but it could not be very helpful. But God's power goes with his love to effect his good designs.

II. INCOMPARABLE INSTRUCTION. "Who teacheth like him?" 1. *How God teaches.*

(1) By experience. He puts us to a school of life; he makes us feel the reality of his lessons. The sorrows and joys, the humiliations and the exaltations are all parts of the Divine instruction. (2) In revelation. This Divine instruction carries us out of ourselves and opens to us visions of heavenly truth. God teaches partly through prophets and apostles in the Scriptures, but mainly through Christ in his great life, death, and resurrection. 2. *Why his teaching is incomparable.* (1) Because he knows the lesson. The Teacher is a master of his subject. God knows all truth. Who, then, can teach it as he will teach it? (2) Because he understands the pupils. This condition is necessary if the lesson is not to miss the mark. Great scholars are not always great teachers, because they cannot always enter into the difficulties of beginners and expound to the simple and ignorant what they are themselves most familiar with. (3) Because he spares no pains. He is in earnest in desiring to teach his children. He is not like the listless teacher who drones over his perfunctory task. God means to get his lessons into the dullest of his pupils, and, being in earnest and full of sympathy, he is unequalled.

III. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE EXALTATION AND THE INSTRUCTION. Each helps the other. 1. *The exaltation a method of instruction.* As we rise higher we leave the mists of the valley, and at the same time our horizon expands. Gladness and strength and victory open our eyes to the love of God and the glory of the kingdom. Adversity has its lessons, but so also has prosperity. 2. *The instruction an element of the exaltation.* We cannot become great in mind until we rise above the petty, narrow, ignorant conceptions that belong to our more backward state. Spiritual greatness implies enlarged knowledge as well as an increase in other graces. When Christ sets his people in places of joy and honour, they have to show appreciation of their privileges by opening their souls to receive the fuller truth that he reveals.—W. F. A.

Ver. 24.—*God praised for his works.* I. CONSIDER HOW WORTHY OF PRAISE ARE THE WORKS OF GOD. We do not prize them so much for their vast bulk and infinite number as for their character and the manner in which they are executed. A small statue is more admirable than a huge boulder, and a minute and finely cut gem more precious than a great sea crag. Wherein, then, shall we find the specially praiseworthy characteristics of the works of God? 1. *In thoroughness.* The infinitely little is as well wrought as the infinitely great. Thought and care are lavished on tiny insects. Exquisite workmanship is seen in humble weeds. The unseen parts of God's works are as perfect as those which are most prominent. The hosts of flowers that bloom on uninhabited prairies are as beautiful as those that smile at us from an English hedgerow. 2. *In harmony.* The various parts of God's works fit together and aid one another with mutual services. Not only is there a general peaceable arrangement of nature, but there is also a reciprocity that makes each part necessary to the whole. Plants live on the soil, animals on the plants, and these again on the perishing bodies of animals. 3. *In beauty.* The direct utility of nature might have been served in an ugly fashion. Clouds might all have been black, and leaves and flowers and earth of one dull hue. But God has breathed a spirit of beauty over his works. 4. *In joy.* God has made existence itself to be a gladness. Insects, birds, and beasts rejoice in the sunlight of a summer day. Man finds life a source of joy. 5. *In progress.* All nature is moving on in a grand progress to higher forms of life and more perfect types of organization. It is full of hope, and it looks forward to God's greater future works.

II. REMEMBER HOW WELL IT IS THAT WE SHOULD PRAISE GOD FOR HIS WORKS. 1. *In gratitude.* We are ourselves part of his works, and we have to thank him that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." Then other works of God minister to our welfare, and as we profit by their utility or enjoy their beauty, it is becoming that we should praise him who is the Maker and Giver of them all. 2. *In admiration.* It is a miserable thing to sink into that cynical pessimism that can only criticize adversely and can never see and enjoy merit. It passes for cleverness, but it is really a form of dulness, for it is the result of a want of capacity to perceive the good points of that which only arrests attention on account of its real or supposed defects. This habit of mind prevents us from rising to any true greatness ourselves, because men are drawn upwards by admiration. When, however, we have learnt to admire the works of God, it is only fitting that we should go on and adore their great Artificer. The praise of the picture is the praise of the artist. Yet there are lovers of nature who seem to

forget her Author. 3. *In aspiration.* The wings of praise carry the soul aloft. When we sing of the great and marvellous works of God with the heart and the understanding, we shall enter into the thoughts of God lovingly and with sympathy. We grow like what we adore. Following the angels in songs of praise, we shall grow like the angels in heavenly character, if we live in a spirit of worship, praising God not only by the hymns of the sanctuary, but by the grand psalm of a whole life of worship.—W. F. A.

Ver. 26.—"*God is great.*" This is the Mussulman creed, and a truth of great force in Mohammedanism. Christianity also contains it, and simple as may be the conception when set forth in bare words, there are depths and wide reaches of inferences flowing from it that can never be exhausted.

I. GOD IS IRRESISTIBLE. This is the Mohammedan inference, and of course a necessary and true one, although it does not describe all that we know of God. We know that it is simply foolish to run against the laws of nature. We cannot deflect one of them by a hair's breadth. But the laws of nature are the ways of God. Therefore there can be but one end to our opposition to God; it must fail. The sooner we own this obvious truth and act upon it the better for ourselves. If we cease to run madly against the will of God, we may repent and turn to the better way; if we still hurl ourselves headlong against it, we can but dash ourselves to pieces.

II. GOD IS UNFATHOMABLE. If we could measure God, he would cease to be God, for he would be no longer infinite. Therefore, instead of being surprised that we meet with mysteries in him, we should expect it, and take it as a sign that we are dealing with One who is vastly greater than we are. The child cannot understand all the actions of his earthly father. How, then, can any man think to understand God? This does not mean that we can know nothing of God. For God may be known as far as he has revealed himself to us, and as far as we are able to rise to a comprehension of some things in his nature. We may know God truly; but we cannot know him adequately. Before the awful mystery of his greatness we tremble, humbled and abashed. 1. *Therefore we are not in a position to judge of God's actions.* We see but a minute fraction of them. Their roots lie in dark depths beyond the reach of our inquiry; their purposes stretch far beyond the utmost rim of our horizon. 2. *Therefore we should learn to trust God.* We must walk by faith, for we cannot see all.

III. GOD IS ALMIGHTY TO SAVE. The Christian God is more than the Mussulman Allah. He is not like an inexorable Oriental despot. He is full of sympathy for his children, listening to their cry and coming to save them in their need. If he is great, that is the more reassuring for us when we put our trust in him. It is vain for us to resist him; but it is safe for us to trust him. Even the mysteriousness of God invites our confidence when once we are assured of his love. His almighty power is able to save unto the uttermost, and his great and wonderful thought invites us to repose in his wisdom. Henry Vaughan, in 'Silex Scintillans,' says—

> "There is a God, some say—
> A deep, but dazzling darkness;
> As men here
> Say it is late and dusky, because they
> See not all clear.
> Oh for that night! where I in him
> Might live invisible and dim!"

W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Vers. 1—24.—It has been already remarked that there is no natural division between ch. XXXVI. and ch. XXXVII.—the description of the thunderstorm and its effects runs on. From its effect on cattle, Elihu passes to its effect on man (vers. 1—5); and thence goes on to speak of other natural manifestations of God's power and marvellousness—snow, violent rain, whirlwind, frost, and the like (vers. 6—13). He then

makes a final appeal to Job to acknowledge his own weakness and God's perfection and unsearchableness, and to bow down in wonder and adoration before him (vers. 14—24).

Ver. 1.—**At this also**; *i.e.* at the thunderstorm or at the particular crash mentioned in ch. xxxvi. 33. **My heart trembleth.** A violent peal of thunder produces in almost all men a certain amount of nervous trepidation. Elihu seems to have been abnormally sensitive. His heart trembled so that it seemed to be **moved out of his place.**

Ver. 2.—**Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth**; or, *Hearken ye, hearken ye to the noise of his voice* (comp. Ps. lxxvii. 18; civ. 7; and below, vers. 4, 5). We need not suppose Elihu to speak otherwise than poetically. He does not, like the Indian of

"... untutored mind,
See God in clouds or hear him in the wind."

He does not mean that the thunder is actually God's voice, but that it tells of him, reminds of him, brings naturally to men's minds the thought of his marvellous greatness and power, and should therefore be listened to with awe and trembling, not passed over lightly, like any other sound.

Ver. 3.—**He directeth it under the whole heaven.** The reverberations of the thunderclap roll along the entire cloud-canopy, from one end of the heavens to the other, beginning often faint in the distance, then growing loud over our heads, finally sinking into low muttered rumblings on the far horizon. **And his lightning unto the ends of the earth.** Similarly, the lightning, though originating in a flash at some definite spot, sets the whole sky aglow, shining from side to side of the heavens, and, as it were, to the very "ends of the earth." Both have a character of universality which is marvellous, and which makes them fitting emblems of him of whom they are the messengers and ministers (see Matt. xxiv. 27).

Ver. 4.—**After it a voice roareth.** *After* the lightning-flash has been seen, the thunderclap comes. In their origin they are simultaneous; but, as light travels faster than sound, unless we are close to the flash, there is an interval, the thunder *following* on the lightning. **He thundereth with the voice of his excellency** (see the comment on ver. 2). **And he will not stay them when his voice is heard.** The words are plain, but the meaning is obscure. What will not God stay? His lightnings? His thunderings? His rain? His hail? There is no obvious antecedent. And in what sense will he not "stay" them? Some explain, "He will not slacken their speed;" others, "He will not cause them to cease."

Ver. 5.—**God thundereth marvellously with his voice.** In finishing off his description of the thunderstorm, Elihu dwells upon its marvellousness. Each step in the entire process is strange and wonderful, beyond man's comprehension; and the lesson to be drawn from the consideration of the whole series of phenomena is that **great things doeth he** (*i.e.* God), **which we cannot comprehend.** Even after all that has been done of late years to advance the science of meteorology, it cannot be said that the *rationale* of storms is fully grasped by the scientific intellect.

Ver. 6.—**For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth.** The phenomenon of snow is always full of marvel to an Oriental. It comes before him so seldom; it is in itself so strange; it involves things so inexplicable as the sudden solidification of a liquid, crystallization, a marked expansion of bulk, and the sudden assumption by what was colourless of a definite and dazzling colour. In Arabia and the countries bordering on Palestine snow very seldom falls; but in Palestine itself the mountain ranges of Lebanon and Hermon are never without it; and in the region occupied by Job and his friends there is reason to believe that ice and snow were not altogether infrequent (see ch. vi. 16, and the comment *ad loc.*). **Likewise to the small rain**; or, *to the light shower of rain*—"the spring rain," as the Chaldee paraphrast explains it. **And to the great rain of his strength**; or, "the heavy winter rain," according to the same authority. "The former and the latter rain"—the rain of winter, and the rain of spring—are often mentioned by the sacred writers (see Deut. xi. 14; Jer. v. 24; Hos. vi. 3; Joel ii. 23; Zech. x. 1; Jas. v. 7). God gave both, ordinarily, in due course.

Ver. 7.—**He sealeth up the hand of every man.** In the winter season, when the snow falls, and the heavy rains pour down (ver. 6), God "sealeth up the hand of every man;" *i.e.* puts an end to ordinary out-of-doors labour, and establishes a time of pause or rest (comp. Homer, 'Il.,' xvii. 549). He does this with the object **that all men may know his work**; *i.e.* that, during the time of their enforced idleness, men may have leisure for reflection, and may employ it in meditating upon him and his marvellous "work."

Ver. 8.—**Then** (*i.e.* in winter) **the beasts go into dens.** The very beasts shut themselves up, **and remain** hidden **in their places**, *i.e.* in their lairs, on account of the inclemency of the season.

Ver. 9.—**Out of the south cometh the whirlwind**; rather, *out of the secret chamber*—the storehouse where God keeps his

tempests. Nothing is said of "the south" here, though elsewhere, no doubt, whirlwinds are said to come especially from that quarter (see Isa. xxi. 1 and Zech. ix. 14). **And cold out of the north**; rather, *and cold from the scatterers*. "The scatterers" seem to be the violent winds which clear the heavens of clouds, and bring in a clear frosty atmosphere. Or the word used may designate a constellation (comp. ch. xxxviii. 32).

Ver. 10.—**By the breath of God frost is given** (comp. Ps. cxlvii. 16—18). "The breath of God," which is a metaphor for the will of God, causes alike both frost and thaw. **And the breadth of the waters is straitened**; or, *congealed*. A broad expanse of water is suddenly turned by frost into a stiff and solid mass.

Ver. 11.—**Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud**; rather, *also with moisture he ladeth the thick cloud*. Elihu returns from his description of the winter season to the more ordinary condition of things. Rain is the chief necessity of Eastern countries; and God is ever providing it, causing moisture to be drawn up from earth and sea, and safely lodged in the clouds, whence it descends, as needed, and as commanded by God, upon the fields and plains that man cultivates. **He scattereth his bright cloud**. Most commentators see a reference to lightning here; and it is possible, no doubt, that such a reference is intended. "His bright cloud"—literally, "the cloud of his light"—may mean "the cloud in which his lightning is stored." But perhaps no more is meant than that God spreads abroad over the earth the clouds on which his sunlight rests. The genial showers of spring fall generally from clouds that are, in part at any rate, steeped in the sun's rays.

Ver. 12.—**And it is turned round about by his counsels.** "It" (*i.e.* the cloud) is "turned round" (or directed in its course) "by his counsels," or under the guidance of his wisdom, and so conveys his rain whither he pleases. **That they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth.** There is no expressed antecedent to "they." Perhaps the showers are intended, or the atmospheric influences generally.

Ver. 13.—**He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy.** God has different purposes in directing the rain hither or thither. Sometimes his object is to punish by violent or excessive rainfall: sometimes it is to fertilize his own special land; sometimes it is out of kindness to men generally.

Vers. 14—24.—Elihu ends with a personal appeal to Job, based on the statements which he has made. Can Job imagine that he understands the workings of God in nature? If not, how can he venture to challenge God to a controversy? Would it not be better to recognize that his ways are inscrutable?

Ver. 14.—**Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.** Consider the marvels of God's works in nature, as I have set them forth to thee (ch. xxxvi. 27—33; xxxvii. 2—13); the mysteries of evaporation, of cloud formation and accumulation, of thunder, of lightning, of snow and frost, of genial showers and fierce downpours, of summer and winter, of the former rain and the latter, of the gentle breeze and the whirlwind; and then say if thou comprehendest the various processes, and canst explain them, and make others to understand them (ver. 19). If not, shouldest thou not own, as we do, that "we cannot find him out" (ver. 23), cannot reach to the depths of his nature, and therefore are unfit to pronounce judgment on his doings?

Ver. 15.—**Dost thou know when God disposed them**; rather, *disposes them*—gives them their orders, arranges for their course and sequence? Or dost thou know when he **caused** (or rather, *causes*) **the light of his cloud** (either the lightning, or perhaps the rainbow, as Schultens suggests) **to shine?** Thou canst not pretend to any such knowledge.

Ver. 16.—**Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds?** *i.e.* "how they are poised and suspended in the sky" (Stanley Leathes). **The wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge** (comp. ch. xxxvi. 5).

Ver. 17.—**How thy garments are warm, when he quieteth the earth by the south wind?** Dost thou even know how it is that, while the breeze from the north chills thee (vers. 9, 10), the breath from the south makes thee feel thy garments too warm? If thou canst not explain a physical matter, wherein thine own comfort is concerned, how much less canst thou comprehend the workings of God in his moral universe!

Ver. 18.—**Hast thou with him spread out the sky?** Didst thou assist in the spreading out of the sky, that great and magnificent work of the Creator, transcending almost all others (see the comment on ch. ix. 8)? Or did not God effect this work *alone*, without even a counsellor (Isa. xl. 13, 14), so that thou hadst no part in it? Which is **strong**, and **as a molten looking-glass.** The sky is "strong" or "firm;" *i.e.* enduring or permanent, though not really hard like a mirror. Elihu, however, seems to have regarded it, like many of the ancients, as a

solid mass, resembling a concave mirror of metal. The translation, "looking-glass," is wrong, both here and in Exod. xxxviii. 8, since glass was not used for mirrors until the period of the early Roman empire. The earlier mirrors were of polished metal (see Smith's 'Dict. of Antiquities,' vol. iii. pp. 1052, 1212).

Ver. 19.—**Teach us what we shall say unto him.** Elihu indulges in irony. If thou art so wise as thou pretendest to be, then be pleased to "teach us." We acknowledge our ignorance—**we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.** Enlighten us, if thou canst.

Ver. 20.—**Shall it be told him that I speak?** rather, *that I would speak* (comp. ch. xxxi. 35). Job had expressed the wish that God would "hear him, and answer him." Elihu, intending to rebuke this presumption, yet shrinking from doing so directly, puts himself in Job's place, and asks, "Would it be fitting that I should demand to speak with God?" If not, it cannot be fitting that Job should do so. **If a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up.** This is probably the true meaning, though another has been suggested by some commentators, who prefer to render, "Or should a man wish that he were destroyed?" (So Ewald, Dillmann, Canon Cook, and our Revisers.) If we adopt this rendering, we must understand Elihu as appending to his first rebuke a second, levelled against Job's desire to have his life ended.

Ver. 21.—**And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds;** rather, *and now men cannot behold the light which is bright in the skies.* Now, *i.e.*, here in this world, men cannot look straight at the sun, since he dazzles them. How much less, then, would they be able to face God on his throne in heaven! Yet this is what Job had proposed to do (ch. ix. 32—35; xiii. 18—22; xxii. 3—7, etc.). **But the wind passeth, and cleanseth them;** rather, *when the wind passeth and cleareth them;* i.e. when, the wind having swept away the clouds and cleared the sky, the sun shines forth in all its splendour.

Ver. 22.—**Fair weather cometh out of the north;** literally, *out of the north cometh gold.* The bearing of this is very obscure, whether we suppose actual gold to be meant, or the golden splendours of the sun, or any other bright radiance. No commentator has hit on a satisfactory explanation. **With God is terrible majesty.** This is sufficiently plain, and it is the point whereto all Elihu's later argument has been directed (see ch. xxxvi. 22—33; xxxvii. 1—18). God's majesty is so great that men can only tremble before him.

Ver. 23.—Touching **the Almighty, we cannot find him out.** This is the "conclusion of the whole matter." God is inscrutable, and man must hide his face before him, and not presume to judge him. He is also **excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice.** His moral perfection is on a par with his might and majesty. **He will not afflict;** rather, *he will not answer;* i.e. he will not account to men for his doings, or condescend to justify himself in their eyes. His acts cannot but be righteous.

Ver. 24.—**Men do therefore fear him;** or, *let men therefore fear him.* Let them see in his unsearchableness, his almighty power, his absolute moral perfection, and his superiority to all human questioning, ample grounds for the profoundest reverence and fear. And let them remember that **he respecteth not any that are wise of heart.** However "wise of heart" men may be, God does not "respect" them, at any rate to the extent of submitting his conduct to their judgment, and answering their questionings (see ver. 20).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—24.—*Elihu to Job: 5. The wonderful works of God.* I. WONDERFUL IN RESPECT OF THEIR VARIETY. Beginning with the thunderstorm (ver. 2), with its quickly spreading clouds (ch. xxxvi. 29), its sharp, gleaming bolts (ver. 3), its crashing and reverberating peals (ver. 4), Elihu passes on to descant upon other natural phenomena—such as the falling of the snow and the rain upon the earth (ver. 6); the sweeping of the whirlwind, or hot simoom, from the remote regions of the southern desert, alternately with the rushing of the cold blasts from "the scatterers," or north winds (ver. 9); the congelation of the water-drops by the breath of winter, and the straitening of the rivers by thick blocks of ice (ver. 10); the replenishing of the emptied rain-cloud with fresh loads of water, and the distribution far and wide of the cloud of his light, *i.e.* of the cloud that is pregnant with lightning (ver. 11). And yet such phenomena are only an infinitesimally small portion of that endless variety which Nature in her movements and manifestations affords. This variety, too, besides being an eminent enhancement of nature's beauty, contributes in a high degree to nature's usefulness, and is a testimony by no means unimportant in favour of nature having been the

production of an all-wise Artificer, since the suggestion is little short of inconceivable that a world so wondrously fair, so exquisitely diversified, so harmoniously adjusted in all its parts, could have been the work of blind, unintelligent force, directed in its operations by purposeless chance, or could have emanated from any other source than that of an infinite mind.

II. WONDERFUL IN RESPECT OF THEIR ORIGIN. The presumption above created is explicitly confirmed by Elihu, who commends to Job's attention the entire circle of nature's interesting phenomena as "the wondrous works of God" (ver. 14), "the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge" (ver. 16), and "his work" (ver. 7), *i.e.* as the productions of his almighty finger. Does the thunder cannonade along the sky? It is God who roareth with the voice of his excellency (ver. 4). Do the heavens shake their snowflakes, distil their gentle showers, or pour their copious floods upon the earth? It is God who saith to the snow and rain, "Be thou on the earth" (ver. 6). Does the frost arrest the flowing river, congeal the water-drop, lie like crisp white beads upon the ground, or trace its fairy pictures on the window-pane? It is God's breath that sends the frost into the air (ver. 10). Do the rain-clouds fill and empty themselves upon the earth? It is God who loadeth them with liquid burdens (ver. 11). Does the lightning-shaft, leaping from the dark bosom of the storm-cloud, career through the murky sky? It is God who directeth it under the whole heaven (ver. 3). Nor is this simply superstition, like that which caused the untutored savage and the cultured Greek alike to transform every mountain and stream into the abode of a divinity. And just as little is it merely poetry which, personifying dead things, deals with them as beings endued with life and intelligence. It is piety which, with a keener and truer discernment than is sometimes evinced by modern scientists, overleaping every intermediate cause, takes its station with adoring wonder beside the throne of him who is the absolute and uncreated Author of this universal frame. The characteristic here ascribed to Elihu, the youthful prophet of Arabia, was one which in an eminent degree pertained to the Hebrew mind. The psalms of David, in particular, are distinguished by the boldness with which they recognize the hand of God in the ever-varying phenomena of this terrestrial sphere (cf. Ps. viii.; xix.; xxix.; lxv.; lxviii.). Nor was this peculiarity awanting to the later poets of the period of the exile (cf. Ps. civ.). Even New Testament writers (*e.g.* St. Paul, Acts xiv. 17; xvii. 28) are not strangers to this devout practice. Above all, it was habitual with Christ (Matt. vi. 30; John v. 17). It is much to be regretted that modern scientists should so frequently overlook the fact that in investigating nature's laws they are merely informing themselves as to the specific methods in which the supreme Creator has been pleased to work.

III. WONDERFUL IN RESPECT OF THEIR EXECUTION. If the phenomena of nature are in themselves such as to demand an infinite mind for their conception, much more does their production call for a supreme Artificer of unlimited resources as to wisdom and power. Elihu declares them to be "doings" positively incomprehensible by the finite mind (ver. 5); and, notwithstanding all the results of scientific observation, it is still true that the chief secrets of nature continue to baffle man's intelligence. Take the thunderstorm, for instance, to which Elihu alludes. Almost any scientific treatise touching on the subject will explain how the dark masses of cloud that pile themselves above the horizon and gradually spread along the sky are filled with water and charged with electricity, how the lightning is produced by the meeting of positive with negative electricity, and how the thunderclap results from the explosion of the overcharged clouds. But, after all, this does not impart a great deal of information to the mind. It leaves unresolved the deepest mysteries connected with the problem, such as the way in which the storm-cloud is formed, and the structure of the particles of which it is composed, the mode in which the earth and the air have been charged with different kinds or degrees of electricity, what electricity itself is, and what are the laws of its production and distribution. And even though all these matters were explored by the patient intellect of science, there would still remain the question how the phenomena themselves can be made, clearly showing that the utmost that is attainable by man is to understand the works of God (at least in part) when they are made, not to arrive at the wisdom by which they might be reproduced. The meteorologist can observe how God makes his thunder, but he cannot himself thunder with a voice like God's. He can descant upon the cause of snow, can expatiate upon the beauty of the snowflakes,

and can tell that their crystals assume five leading forms; but with all his learning and amid all his researches he has never laid his finger on the art of making snow, or of saying to a single flake, "Be thou on the earth."

IV. WONDERFUL IN RESPECT OF THEIR CONTROL. If nature is not a vast machine from which God has departed, still less is it an engine which he has suffered to escape from his hand. Conceived by infinite wisdom and fashioned by almighty power, it has by the same combination of qualities been kept in complete subordination. Elihu instances the lightning-cloud as a work of God that is "turned round about by his counsels, and that doeth whatsoever he commandeth upon the face of the wide earth" (ver. 12). But it is the same with the snow and the rain, the frost and the wind. These are as submissive to his command as the thunder when it roars, or the lightning when it gleams. So, according to the concurrent testimony of Scripture, are all his works in all places of his dominion (ch. xxiii. 13; Ps. xxxiii. 9; cxix. 90, 91; Isa. xl. 26; Dan. iv. 35; Eph. i. 11).

V. WONDERFUL IN RESPECT OF THEIR IMPRESSIVENESS. More especially is this the case with the grander and sublimer phenomena. The thunderstorm, with its ominous gloom, its lurid fires, its terrific detonations, carries a sense of awe to every sentient creature. At its first approach the cattle manifest their fear by herding together in the most sheltered spots that they can find. The birds, as they fly with eager haste to screen themselves among the boughs, give evidence that they are smitten with an unknown dread. Even the wild beasts that roam through the forest or scour the plain, the shaggy lion and the ferocious tiger, slink away to hide themselves within their dens. Nay, man, whether civilized or barbarian, religious or unbelieving, cannot witness the dread commotion of the elements, cannot look upon "the sulphurous and thought-executing fires, vaunt couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts" as they flash across the murky vault of heaven, or listen to the "all-shaking thunder" as it crashes, rolls, and roars across the pavement of the skies, without instinctively holding his breath and feeling solemnized, as if he stood in presence of the supernatural. Even the heart of Elihu trembled and tottered from its place before the awe-inspiring manifestation of Divine power which was then taking place (ver. 1), very much as Moses did in the presence of Mount Sinai, when it shook beneath the feet of the God of Israel (Ps. lxviii. 8), and he gave expression to his horror, saying, "I exceedingly fear and quake" (Heb. xii. 21). But scarcely less impressive to a thoughtful and devout mind is Nature in her quieter moods.

> "The meanest floweret of the vale,
> The simplest note that swells the gale,
> The common sun, the air, the skies,
> To him are opening Paradise."

Elihu speaks of God sealing up the hand of every man by the terrors of his thunder or the rigours of his winter (ver. 7); that is, arresting man's customary occupations, and compelling man, by a period of enforced leisure, to meditate upon his work, so as to know and recognize it to be his. One reason why men fail to trace God's presence in his own creation is the want of a religious contemplation of his works. The supreme Creator has so constructed every portion of nature that, if rightly interpreted, it will speak of him.

IV. WONDERFUL IN RESPECT OF THEIR DESIGN. It is a fundamental article in biblical theology that the supreme Artificer never acts without a purpose (Acts xv. 18; Eph. i. 11). The universe was not summoned into existence without a specific end in view (Rev. iv. 11). The earth was not created in vain, but formed to be inhabited (Isa. xlv. 18). So every single work of God has its particular aim. Elihu again recurs for an example to the thunder-cloud. When God causes a thunderstorm to burst upon a land, it is not an accident, or a haphazard operation, but an event with a well-defined object in contemplation. It is either as a punishment for sin, or as an act of mercy towards man, or as a means of fertilizing the land and thus conferring benefit on an entire population. That is to say, it is employed as an instrument in the execution of God's prearranged design, whether that be specific in its destination or general, *i.e.* for the benefit of an individual or the good of a country, and whether it be punitive or merciful. And every other phenomenon of nature is in like manner connected with the silver line of God's eternal purpose. Science may not be able to see how the two are linked

together. But, if faith can, it is enough. It is not unscientific to affirm that God sends the thunderstorm and the whirlwind, the earthquake and the pestilence, since the hand of God confessedly is outside the cognizance of science; it is not required by religion to deny that all these phenomena are due to immediately preceding causes. Science traces back the links of the chain to the verge of its material domain. When science falters and becomes blind, faith, catching up the quest, penetrates the regions beyond, and discovers the last link of the chain to be the hand of God.

VII. WONDERFUL IN RESPECT OF THEIR TEACHINGS. These may be summed up in one word, "ignorance." Whatever else they attest, they emphatically proclaim man to be destitute of true knowledge. 1. *Concerning the phenomena of nature.* Elihu asks Job with a touch of irony if he could explain what to men in general was incomprehensible—how God had imposed laws upon the cloud and the lightning, and by what means he caused "the light of his cloud" to shine—if he knew so much about meteorology as to be able to comprehend "the balancings of clouds"—nay, if he could tell how the action of the south wind, or hot simoom, made him warm (vers. 15—17). Doubtless on every one of these points science has laid open to us much that was concealed from the mind of Job and even of Elihu; but still it is relatively true that in comparison with what remains to be explored man is as yet profoundly ignorant of the great secrets of nature. 2. *Concerning the position of himself.* Man, Elihu reminds Job, was not distinguished from nature's phenomena as God was, being not the creator as God, but only himself a creature like nature. "Hast thou with him spread out the sky, strong and as a molten mirror?" (ver. 18). Consequently, it was sheer presumption to imagine that man was competent to enter into judgment or controversy with God. If Job knew how to address God, Elihu would be glad to be instructed; as for himself, he would as soon think of saying that he wanted to be swallowed up as that he wished to speak with God (vers. 19, 20). It is ever precisely in proportion as we understand the feebleness, insignificance, and sinfulness of our position before God that we are withheld from the offences of presumption and irreverence. 3. *Concerning the administration of providence.* Exactly as the clear firmament overhead with its shining sun is obscured from view by the storm-clouds that intervene, so the principles on which God governs the world, allotting suffering to one and happiness to another, cannot be distinctly perceived by man. By-and-by they will be made to shine forth with resplendent lustre, as soon the darkened heavens will be swept of clouds, and the bright light, beaming down from the ethereal heights, will in all its radiant glory be disclosed. Meantime man stands beneath the clouds, where all is dark, though above, *i.e.* to the mind of God, everything is clear (1 John i. 5). 4. *Concerning the character of God.* Elihu means to say either that fair weather, effulgent as gold (or disclosing the golden sun), cometh out of the northern quarters of the sky, or that men out of the northern regions of the earth extract gold; but that neither can the Divine Being, with whom is terrible majesty, be steadily looked upon by man, as man can contemplate the orb of day, nor can the nature of God be fathomed as men dig out gold from the mine. "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out." Not that this implies an utter ignorance of the attributes pertaining to the Supreme. On the contrary, man may gather from his wondrous works in creation and providence that God is "excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice;" nay, that he is compassionate and merciful also, being indisposed to afflict either willingly or severely, and never except as a means to an end. 5. *Concerning the rule of duty.* "Men do therefore fear him." Such homage rests on the three pillars of God's power, God's justice, and God's mercy. Yet man, like Job, is prone to forget the reverence due to God. Hence it is ever needful to enforce attention to duty by reminders of God's supremacy and majesty. "He respecteth not any that are wise of heart." Self-righteousness and pride are wholly inconsistent with a right fulfilment of human duty towards the Supreme. "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off" (Ps. cxxxviii. 6).

Learn: 1. That nature is the handiwork of God. 2. That nature contains revelations of beauty, power, wisdom, goodness, justice, to the soul of man. 3. That it is man's duty to study that which God has revealed. 4. That the best preparation for a study of nature, as of any other revelation, is a deep conviction of personal ignorance.

5. That the more we learn of the works of God, the less shall we think of ourselves. 6. That rightly prosecuted, the study of nature leads to God. 7. That the glory of God is ever greater than the grandeur of his works, or of Nature in her sublimest moods. 8. That the sum of human duty, as expounded by nature, is to fear God and keep his commandments. 9. That the discoveries of nature have been eclipsed by the revelations of the gospel. 10. That if it behoves man to study God in nature, much more does it behove him to study God in Christ.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 14.—*On considering the works of God.* Elihu in his continued address would teach Job to hearken to the Lord rather than reply to him, to learn rather than teach, and more especially to consider his wonderful works. The greatness of the Divine works causeth Job's teacher's heart to tremble; so he would it were with Job. To the greatness of the Divine voice, to the wonder of the Divine works, he directs him. The works of God may be considered—

I. As a revelation of the Divine greatness. This is one of the purposes in Elihu's mind. He would lead Job to "fear." It is only by a contemplation of the works of God that we can rise as by successive steps to any adequate conception of the greatness of the Divine power or the grandeur of the Divine Name. They are beyond our comprehension, and so give us a notion of the infinite; they are multiplied, and great and wonderful. In them is hidden the parable of the Divine greatness. They may be considered—

II. As a revelation of the Divine goodness. With great beauty the Divine goodness is traced in this book. A goodness extended not only to man, but also to the beasts of the field, to the fish of the sea, to the bird of the air. It is from this contemplation that man may return to himself, and learn that the goodness everywhere displayed around him may be truly at work within and for him, though its processes are not made known. So the Divine works may be considered—

III. As a revelation of the hidden purpose of God. In all the wonderful works around, much as men know, there is much that is hidden. To this Elihu calls Job's attention. "Dost thou know when God disposed them?" "Dost thou know the balancing of the clouds?" Dost thou know "the wondrous works of him that is perfect in knowledge"?

IV. Hence is revealed (1) the ignorance of man; (2) his littleness; (3) his consequent inability to contend with God. This is the process of Elihu's argument. "With God is terrible majesty." His work is deep. He is "the Almighty," whom we cannot find out. His purposes we cannot fathom. Therefore—so the argument terminates—therefore *bow* and *wait* and *trust*. God "is excellent in power, and in judgment and in justice." These he perverts not. Therefore may men reverence him with lowly fear and with silent mouth, and the wise will wait on him for the unfolding of his own wise ways.—R. G.

Vers. 1—5.—*The voice of the thunder.* I. A voice of terror. The deep roar, the wide volume of sound, the mystery and the majesty of the thunder, combine to make it strike us with awe. Thunder accompanied the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai (Exod. xix. 16). Men are naturally alarmed at any voice from heaven. God sometimes speaks to us in thunderous notes, *i.e.* through great calamities. Then we tremble as before an irresistible majesty.

II. A voice of nature. The thunder is part of the economy of nature—as much a part of it as the whisper of the wind or the hum of the insect. It struck the ancient world with the greater alarm because it was wholly inexplicable. Now that we know its connection with the electric currents of the atmosphere, we do not think of it as so fearful. The artillery of the heavens is all obedient to fixed laws of nature. Yet it is not the less fired by the hand of God, who is the Spirit of nature as well as its Maker. The reduction of the thunder to a place among natural phenomena suggests a lesson in faith. We may be reassured when we see that what looks lawless is part of the Divine order. We often alarm ourselves with needless fears; but all must be well when God rules over all.

III. A POWERLESS VOICE. The silent lightning is deadly. On the other hand, there are no thunderbolts; it was ignorance that attributed the effects of the electric flash to the thunder that followed it. But this was in accordance with a common way of thinking. We pay most attention to that which makes most noise. Yet when the noise is heard the power is past. Men are always undervaluing the lightning and overvaluing the thunder. Sin is ignored, its consequences are made much of. Goodness is forgotten, fame is worshipped. Fidelity is not seen, success makes the welkin ring with applause.

IV. A VOICE OF MERCY. The thunder cannot *do* anything directly, with all its noise and fury. The deeds are done by the swift, subtle electricity; and the boasting thunder is nothing but noise. Still, there is a message in the thunder. The noise of the thunder tells us that the lightning has come *and gone!* The fearful flash has passed, and still we live untouched, unhurt. Moreover the storm, of which the thunder is one element, is a most refreshing influence, clearing the atmosphere, cooling the temperature, bringing rain to thirsty fields and gardens. Thus the voice that seems only to roar in rage is to be associated with grateful thoughts. The same may be said of other thunderous voices. Calamities burst over our heads like thunderstorms. At first they stun us; but by degrees we begin to see that they have brought showers of blessing, and that they have not crushed us as we expected. Here we stand, in spite of the storm, still living and still enjoying the loving-kindness of God.—W. F. A.

Vers. 11—13.—*The rainstorm.* I. ITS SOURCE. It is produced by God, and it is directed by God. He brings it about, and he guides it. 1. *It comes from God.* Now, this is most certainly an integral part of nature. We have seen that the thunder belongs to nature. That was not always apparent to men; there seemed to be something so weird and awful about it that men attributed it to supernatural agencies. But the rain is manifestly in the order of natural phenomena. Yet this is as Divine as the thunder. God is in all nature, and as much in its quiet, normal occurrences as in what is startling and exceptional. 2. *It is piloted by God.* The clouds seem to pass over the heavens in wild confusion. We can see no reins to hold them in, nor any whip to drive them on. The science of meteorology is about the most backward of all the sciences, because it is so difficult to reduce the phenomena of the weather to their place in an orderly scheme, on account of their ceaseless variations and apparently boundless irregularities. But we are already seeing that there are laws behind the weather, and some of them are already known. Hence our weather prognostications in the newspapers. Now, the Scripture view of the weather, as much as that of the most orderly and changless phenomena, attributes all its movements to the will of God. God is in what looks to us most conflicting and purposeless. If he is steering it, we can trust to him to bring it to a happy end.

II. ITS PURPOSE. 1. *This is determined by God.* The march of the clouds is commanded by their great Captain. In nature as well as in human life God works with a purpose, and the end is with him. 2. *It is obscure.* We cannot tell whether the rain is for one particular purpose which we have in mind, or for another that has never occurred to us. In all life God works out many purposes quite beyond the reach of our thoughts. 3. *It may be "for a scourge."* God sends what we regard as untimely rain—rain in harvest; or too much rain—floods that devastate fields, drown crops, and invade houses. For God sometimes looks very stern in his actions, whatever his thoughts may be. In other ways God chastises his people by natural calamities. Let us not be amazed when these things happen to us. They are predicted, and therefore they should be expected. 4. *It may be in mercy.* "For the good of his land." The dry soil needs rain. Thirsty crops are refreshed by the downpour that is distressing to the traveller. What looks like a calamity may be a blessing. Instead of complaining of the inconvenience of what happens to us, let us look round us and see if it is bringing good in some other direction. 5. *In any case it is for a blessing.* The scourge is a blessing in disguise. Though various results may issue from God's various actions, in so far as they are designed by God they all make for righteousness and the welfare of his children. Thunder and rain bless even by their calamities. Sorrow and loss, pain and tears, scourges and thorns, are instruments of discipline that bless when they hurt.—W. F. A.

Ver. 14.—"*The wondrous works of God.*" I. THE NATURE OF THESE WORKS. 1. *Material things.* We cannot live for ever in a realm of ideas. It is well to come down to the solid earth and look at physical facts. There are lessons to be learnt from the stones and trees and living creatures of nature. Mountain and stream, forest and flower, speak to the soul of man. 2. *Created things.* "Works." These things were made. They are not eternal; they are manufactured articles. They are not chance products of chaos; they have been designedly made. 3. *Divine things.* The glory of them is their Maker. God has condescended to put his hand to this earth of ours, and the result has been all the life and beauty with which it abounds. The character of the Maker is impressed on his work. God owns what he has made. Therefore his works belong to him. They are but lent to us. We are stewards who will have to give an account of all that we use and of how we use it. 4. *Wonderful things.* God's works are "wondrous." They are stamped with the impress of thought. The most advanced science is but man's blundering attempt to spell out God's hieroglyphics written in the great book of nature. The very difficulties of nature spring from its vast complexity. The Architect of the universe is an infinite Artist, Mathematician, Physiologist.

II. HOW THESE WONDROUS WORKS SHOULD BE REGARDED. 1. *With attention.* "Hearken unto this." The sin of the world distracts our thoughts, so that we fail to perceive what God is saying to us through the many voices of nature. We miss the voices of God in nature and life through heedless indifference. 2. *With patience.* "Stand still." We hurry to and fro, and so fail to gather the treasures that come to him who waits. The life of rushing haste is superficial. The best things do not come at a call, nor can they be snatched up in a moment. We must "wait on the Lord" if we would have his blessing, and "be still" if we would know that he is God (Ps. xlvi. 10). Thus hearkening and standing still, we are to wait for God to speak to us through his works. We talk too much about the works of God; it would be better if we would be silent and let them speak to us. 3. *With thought.* "And consider." Note the "and." Attention and patience should precede and prepare the way for the consideration. But then this must follow and be joined on to the earlier passive conditions. We must not be still in mental indolence. When God speaks to us through his wondrous works, our part is to receive his message intelligently and think over it. The study of nature in science is commended to us. But we need to rise above this, to meditate over the Divine voices in nature and in all the works of God. —W. F. A.

Ver. 19.—*The prayer for prayer.* Seeing Jesus in prayer, and noticing how different his prayer was from theirs, the disciples besought him to teach them to pray (Luke xi. 1). Their request implied a high estimation of true prayer, and at the same time a deep sense of their own inability to pray aright. The same feelings are expressed to us by Elihu.

I. WHAT IS REQUIRED IN TRUE PRAYER. The greatness of God suggests to Elihu the importance of speaking to God in the right way. The vastness and splendour of the heavens, as well as the majesty of the thunder and the government of the cloud, impress us with the majesty of God; and yet his greatest glory is not seen in these phenomena, but it is revealed in his moral rule and his fatherly goodness. It would be a foolish thing for us to shrink from approaching God on account of his majesty in the physical universe. He is not like a stately monarch who surrounds himself with the ceremony of a court. Formal manners are an abomination in prayer. God does not look for the courtier's obsequiousness; he seeks the child's confidence. At the same time, his kingly state is crowned by holiness. We have to approach him in awe of his purity. He dwells in light eternal. This fact, much more than his power and wide sway over the physical universe, calls for a deeply reverent spirit in prayer. Then the spiritual nature of God requires spiritual worship, and we must be true in heart if we would pray acceptably.

II. THE DIFFICULTY OF ATTAINING TO TRUE PRAYER. Elihu and the disciples of Christ both felt this difficulty. Job's friend gives the cause of it—"for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness." 1. *Ignorance.* We do not know what God wills; nor do we know our own hearts. Not only is the spiritual realm strange to us;

we even need to know what are our needs. 2. *Sin.* This is the darkness that really hinders and ruins prayer. The father is not vexed at his child's helpless prattle when the child is loving and obedient. He does not look for pompous phrases; he prefers the natural, simple outpouring of the child's heart. But he is grieved at duplicity, insincerity, unreality. When our hearts are far from God we cannot pray acceptably to him. The great difficulty is want of sympathy with God; want of sympathy is the one hindrance to all human intercourse, and it is the one thing that prevents us from praying acceptably.

III. THE WAY TO REACH TRUE PRAYER. This is by prayer. We must pray to be taught to pray. The confession of our inability to pray is the first step towards doing so acceptably. Pride and self-sufficiency keep us back from the right spirit of prayer. We have to learn to bow our wills as well as to bend our knees. But the prayer to be taught this lesson may be answered in unexpected ways. We may learn what we should say to God in a school of adversity. Humbled and subdued by sorrow, we may be brought down to the right spirit of prayer in the experience from which we shrink with dismay. Or perhaps the lesson may come through more directly spiritual influences. We need to contemplate the character of God in order to pray to him aright. The revelation of God in Christ shows us how we should approach God. When we see Jesus we learn how to pray.—W. F. A.

Ver. 21.—*Unbearable light.* When clouds are cleared from the face of the sun we cannot bear to look up at the splendour of unveiled light. This is the case even in our thick and humid atmosphere; but it is much more so in the East, where the sun shines in its terrible strength. The unbearable light is a type of the majesty of God.

I. GOD VEILS HIS GLORY IN CLOUDS. The day often begins with clouds about the sun. Then we can look at the splendour of the dawn, because the ever-shifting panorama of crimson and gold that heralds in the day is visible to us in colours that our eyes can endure to look at. God begins the education of his children in a light that is tempered to suit their feeble vision. But a common mistake is to forget that God is condescending to our weakness, and to limit our conception of God to the measured revelation. Thus we form partial and human ideas of God. If his cloud is thick and dark we do not see his glorious light, and then we accuse him of the darkness, and narrow and unjust thoughts of God spring up in our hearts. Difficulties in nature and providence trouble us. Vexatious thoughts about the apparent imperfection of God's works fill our minds with doubt. And all the while the simple truth is that God is merciful and considerate, veiling himself in clouds for the very purpose of sparing us.

II. GOD'S UNVEILED GLORY WOULD BE AN UNBEARABLE LIGHT. This we commonly say and instinctively feel. Let us now ask how it should be so. 1. *Ignorance is dazzled by absolute knowledge.* The beginner is not helped, he is only perplexed, when he is favoured with the most advanced thoughts of the ripe scholar. If all God's truth were suddenly flashed out to us it would be incomprehensible and overwhelming. 2. *Sin shrinks from perfect holiness.* The centre of God's eternal light is his purity. In our sin we cannot bear to look upon this. 3. *Finite life cannot endure the fulness of infinite life.* Our sympathies endeavour to respond to the appeals that draw them out. But when those appeals are infinite, our own life is swallowed up in the response. If we entered fully into the life of God, our life would be extinguished as the light of the stars is quenched in that of the sun.

III. GOD EDUCATES US BY GRADUALLY UNVEILING HIS GLORY. The clouds are rolled back by degrees. Twilight is a merciful gift of providence, tempering the first approach of the light, and saving us from the shock of the sudden exchange of night for day. God's education of his people is gradual. 1. *Revelation is progressive.* Adam could not endure the light which Christ brought. Early ages were trained by degrees to fit them for the growing light of God's truth. We have not reached all knowledge. Christ has many things to tell us, but we cannot bear them now (John xvi. 12). "God has yet more light and truth to break forth from his Word." 2. *Individual lives are prepared for growing light.* We cannot endure on earth the glory that shall be revealed in heaven. Our early Christian experience is not capable of receiving all that God wishes to reveal to us; therefore he rolls back the clouds by slow degrees,

preparing for the great apocalypse. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 12).—W. F. A.

Ver. 28.—*The mystery of God.* We cannot find out God. In his great strength and perfect equity he will render an account to no man. Here is a mystery, but one that is saved from terror by a sufficient revelation to reassure us of the true righteousness of God.

I. THE MYSTERY IS IN THE ACTION OF GOD. His nature is mysterious. But we are not distressed by the difficulty of comprehending it, for we know it must be beyond our grasp, and we may be content to live in peace without solving the most abstruse problems of theology. It is very different with the action of God. This affects us closely. We see it in our common life in the world. Yet here too is mystery. 1. *Nature* is a mystery. Not only cannot we understand its origin, but we cannot see whither it is tending. The great machine rolls on to a future beyond our imagination. What is God doing with it? How is he using all the pain and failure of it? 2. *Providence* is a mystery. We cannot see why God acts as he does, giving prosperity to one and adversity to another without reasons that we can discover. Why does he permit the simple, honest man to fail, and the clever rogue to succeed? 3. *Religion* is a mystery. There are mysterious doctrines in it; these we can endure. But there are also mysterious experiences. We cannot understand the dark days of strange thoughts and sad feelings, the weariness and failure, through which we have to pass.

II. THE CHARACTER OF GOD IS REVEALED TO US. Let us be fair and see what is known before we sit down and despair over the mystery of God. It is better to fix our eyes on the light we have than to brood in helpless melancholy over the darkness that surrounds it on every side. Now we know what it most concerns us to know about God. We need not understand the exact process if we can see the end. But if the character of God is revealed, we may be sure that the end of God's actions will agree with it. God has made himself known to us as perfect righteousness. That is enough. Then all he does must be righteous—"in plenty of justice." We can trust God for what he is, even when we do not understand what he does.

III. THE MYSTERY OF GOD IS IN HARMONY WITH THE REVELATION OF GOD. There is a close connection between the two. They do not contradict one another. On the contrary, the revelation leads up to the mystery. That revelation shows equity. Now, equity implies a fair treatment of all things. It is not a simple notion like love or anger. If God is just, he must take into account others besides the one person he is dealing with, and more than the pleasure or pain of the present moment. Large issues are at stake, wide interests are involved. These must go beyond our small world of observation. Therefore, because we believe in the equity of God, we must expect him to act in mystery. It is not for us to call him to account. The idea of doing so suggests an unworthy doubt. We should trust his righteousness without asking him to solve the mystery of his action.—W. F. A.

SECTION VI. CH. XXXVIII.—XLI. CLOSE OF THE CONTROVERSY BY THE INTERFERENCE OF THE ALMIGHTY.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The discourse, by which the Almighty answers Job and rebukes his "friends," occupies four chapters (ch. xxxviii.—xli.). It is broken into two parts by the interposition of a short confession on Job's part (ch. xl. 3—5). Ch. xxxviii. and xxxix. are closely connected, and form a single appeal —a sort of *argumentum ad verecundiam*—to Job's profound ignorance of God's natural government, which incapacitates him from passing judgment upon what is far more incomprehensible and mysterious, God's moral government. The points adduced, in which Job is challenged to claim that he has knowledge, or confess that he is ignorant, are: (1) The creation of the

material world (ch. xxxviii. 4—7). (2) The control and government of the sea (vers. 8—11). (3) The bringing forth of the dawn (vers. 12—15). (4) The formation of Shoôl, of light and darkness, of snow, hail, floods, rain, lightning, thunder, ice, dew, hoarfrost (vers. 17—30). (5) The government of the stars and of the clouds (vers. 31—38). (6) The creation, endowment with instincts, and general direction of the animal world—wild goats, hinds, wild asses, wild cattle, ostriches, horses, hawks, eagles (ch. xxxix. 1—30.) The tone of the appeal is sustained at a high pitch, and the entire passage is one of extraordinary force and eloquence.

Ver. 1.—**Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind.** It is remarked, with reason, that the special mention of Job as the person answered "implies that another speaker had intervened" (Wordsworth); while the attachment of the article to the word "whirlwind" implies some previous mention of that phenomenon, which is only to be found in the discourse of Elihu (ch. xxxvii. 9). Both points have an important bearing on the genuineness of the disputed section, ch. xxxii.—xxxvii. **And said.** The question whether there was an objective utterance of human words out of the whirlwind, or only a subjective impression of the thoughts recorded on the minds of those present, is unimportant. In any case, there was a revelation direct from God, which furnished an authoritative solution of the questions debated to all who had been engaged in the debate.

Ver. 2.—**Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?** It is very noticeable that God entirely ignores the reasonings of Elihu, and addresses himself, in the first instance, wholly to Job, with whom he begins by remonstrating. Job has not been without fault. He has spoken many "words without knowledge" or with insufficient knowledge, and has thus trenched on irreverence, and given the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme. Moreover, he has "darkened counsel." Instead of making the ways of God clear to his friends and companions, he has cast doubts upon God's moral government (ch. xxi. 7—26), upon his mercy and loving-kindness (ch. xvi. 7—14), almost upon his justice (ch. xix. 7; xxxi. 1—35). He is thus open to censure, and receives censure, and owns himself "vile" (ch. xl. 4), before peace and reconciliation can be established.

Ver. 3.—**Gird up now thy loins like a man.** Job had desired to contend with God, to plead with him, and argue out his case (ch. ix. 32—35; xiii. 3, 18—22; xxiii. 4—7; xxxi. 35). God now offers to grant his request, and bids him stand forth "as a man," and "gird himself" for the contest, which he has challenged. **For I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.** He will begin with interrogatories which Job must answer; then Job will be entitled to put questions to him. Job, however, on the opportunity being given him, shrinks back, and says. "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further" (ch. xl. 4, 5). The confident boldness which he felt when God seemed far off disappears in his presence, and is replaced by diffidence and distrust.

Ver. 4.—**Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?** Wast thou present? Didst thou witness it? If not, what canst thou know concerning it? And if thou knowest nothing of creation, what canst thou know of deeper things? The metaphor, by which the creation of the earth is compared to the foundation of an edifice, is a common one (Ps. cii. 25; civ. 5; Prov. viii. 29; Isa. xlviii. 13; li. 13, 16; Zech. xii. 1; Heb. i. 10, etc.), and is to be viewed as a concession to human weakness, creation itself, as it actually took place, being inconceivable. **Declare, if thou hast understanding.** That is, if thou hast any knowledge on the subject (comp. ver. 18).

Ver. 5.—**Who determined the measures thereof?** Everything in creation is orderly, measured, predetermined, governed by law and will. The actual weight of the planets is fixed by Divine wisdom, with a view to the stability and enduringness of the solar system (comp. Isa. xl. 12). **If thou knowest;** literally, *for thou knowest*—an anticipation of the lofty irony which comes out so remarkably in ver. 21. **Or who hath stretched the line upon it?** Human builders determine the dimensions of their constructions by means of a measuring-line (Ezek. xl. 3—49, etc.). The writer carries out his metaphor of a building by supposing a measuring-rod to have been used at the creation of the earth also. Some find a trace of the idea in Gen. i. 9, where they translate יִקָּווּ הַמַּיִם, "Let the waters be *marked out with a line.*"

Ver. 6.—**Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened?** These details follow naturally upon the adoption of the particular metaphor of a house or building. They are not to be pressed. The object is to impress on Job his utter ignorance of God's ways in creation. **Or who laid the corner-stone thereof?** Who gave the last finishing touch to the work (see Ps. cxviii. 22; Zech. iv. 7)?

Canst thou tell? If not, why enter into controversy with the Creator?

Ver. 7.—**When the morning stars sang together.** The stars generally, or the actual stars visible on the morn of creation, are probably meant. They, as it were, sang a song of loud acclaim on witnessing the new marvel. Their priority to the earth is implied, since they witness its birth. Their song is, of course, that silent song of sympathy, whereof Shakespeare speaks when he says, "Each in its motion like an angel sings" ('Merchant of Venice,' act v. sc. 1). **And all the sons of God shouted for joy.** "The sons of God" here must necessarily be the angels (see ch. i. 6; ii. 1), since there were no men as yet in existence. They too joined in the chorus of sympathy and admiration, perhaps lifting up their voices (Rev. v. 11, 12), perhaps their hearts only, praising the Creator, who had done such marvellous things.

Ver. 8.—**Or who shut up the sea with doors?** From the earth a transition is made to the sea, as the second great wonder in creation (comp. Gen. i. 9, 10; Exod. xx. 11; Ps. civ. 24, 25). God's might is especially shown in his power to control and confine the sea, which rages so terribly and seems so utterly uncontrollable. God has blocked it in "with doors"—*i.e.* with "bounds that it cannot pass, neither turn again to cover the earth" (Ps. civ. 9). Sometimes the barrier is one of lofty and solid rock, which seems well suited to confine and restrain; but sometimes it is no more than a thin streak of silver sand or a bank of loose, shifting pebbles. Yet, in both cases alike, the restraint suffices. "The sand is placed for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it" (Jer. v. 22); the beach of shifting pebbles remains as firm as the rock itself, and never recedes or advances more than a few feet. **When it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb;** *i.e.* at its birth, when it was first formed, by the gathering together of the waters into one place (see Gen. i. 9).

Ver. 9.—**When I made the cloud the garment thereof.** The account of creation here given is certainly not drawn wholly from Genesis. It is to be viewed as a second, independent, account of the occurrences, in fuller detail, but vaguer, by reason of the poetical phraseology. **And thick darkness a swaddling-band for it.** The infant sea, just come from the womb (ver. 8), is represented as clothed with a cloud, and swaddled in thick darkness, to mark its complete subjection to its Creator from the first.

Ver. 10.—**And brake up for it my decreed place;** rather, as in the margin, *and established my decree upon it;* or, as in the Revised Version, *and prescribed for it my decree.* The decree itself is given in ver. 11. **And set bars and doors** (see above, ver. 8, where the imagery of "doors" has been already introduced). As Professor Lee observes, "The term דְּלָתַיִם contains a metaphor taken from the large folding-doors of a city, which are usually set up for the purpose of stopping the progress of an invading enemy, and are hence supplied with bolts and bars" ('Book of Job,' p. 490). Representations of such folding-doors are common in the Assyrian sculptures; and in one instance the doors themselves, or, to speak more exactly, their outer bronze casing, has been recovered (see a paper in the 'Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archæology,' on the Bronze Gates discovered by Mr. Rassam at Balawat, vol. vii. pp. 85—118). These gates were twenty-two feet high and six feet broad each.

Ver. 11.—**And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.** The law is not quite absolute. Wherever the sea washes a coast-line, there is a continual erosive action, whereby the land is, little by little, eaten away, and the line of the coast thrust back. But the action is so slow that millennia pass without any considerable effect being produced, and encroachments in some places are generally counterbalanced by retrenchment in others, so that the general contour of land and water, with the proportion of the one to the other, remain probably very much the same at the present day as when the earth first became the habitation of man. **And here shall thy proud waves be stayed.** The waves of the sea "rage horribly," and every now and then topple down a rock or undermine a cliff, and seem proud of their achievements; but how little do they effect, even in thousands of years! The little islet of Psyttaleia still blocks the eastern end of the straits of Salamis. The Pharos island lies off the westernmost mouth of the Nile. Even the low, flat Aradus, on the Syrian coast, has not been swept away. Everywhere the waves are practically "stayed," and all the menaces of the sea against the land come to nought.

Ver. 12.—**Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days?** rather, *by reason of thy length of days*—a similar irony to that observable in vers. 5, 21, etc. The third marvel of creation brought before us is the dawn, or daybreak—that standing miracle of combined utility and beauty. Has Job authority to issue his orders to the dawn, and tell it when to make its appearance? **Has he caused the dayspring to know his place?** Job cannot possibly pretend to any such power.

Ver. 13.—**That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be**

shaken out of it? The idea seems to be that the dawn, suddenly appearing, seizes hold of all the ends of the earth "at one rush" (Canon Cook), and lights up the whole terrestrial region. The wicked, lovers of darkness, are taken by surprise, and receive a shock from which they recover with difficulty (comp. ch. xxiv. 16, 17). That they are "shaken from the earth" must be regarded as Oriental hyperbole.

Ver. 14.—**It is turned as clay to the seal**; rather, *it changes as the clay of a seal.* The seals of the Babylonians, Assyrians, and others were commonly impressed upon clay, and not upon wax (Layard, 'Nineveh and Babylon,' pp. 153—156). As the seal changed the clay from a dull, shapeless lump to a figured surface, so the coming of the dawn changes the earth from an indistinct mass to one diversified with form and colour. As M. Renan explains, "L'aurore fait sur la terre l'effet d'un sceau sur la terre sigillée, en donnant de la forme, et du relief, à la surface de l'univers, qui pendant la nuit est comme un chaos indistinct." **And they stand as a garment**; rather, *and things stand out as a garment*, or *as on a garment*—a richly embroidered dress is intended, on which the pattern stands out in relief.

Ver. 15.—**And from the wicked their light is withholden.** Then, when the dawn bursts forth, "from the wicked, their light"—which is darkness (ch. xxiv. 13—17)—"is withholden," and the consequence is that **the high arm**—the arm that is proud and lifted up—**shall be broken.** Detection and punishment fall upon the wicked doers who are surprised by the daylight.

Ver. 16.—**Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea?** The emphasis is on the word "springs," which means sources, origin, or deepest depths (see the Septuagint, which has πηγή, and the Vulgate, which has *profunda*). Canst thou go to the bottom of anything, explore its secrets, explain its cause and origin? **Or hast thou walked in the search** (rather, *the deep places*) **of the depth?** Art thou not as ignorant as other men of all these remote and secret things? Physical science is now attempting the material exploration of the ocean-depths, but "deep-sea dredgings" bring us no nearer to the origin, cause, or mode of creation of the great watery mass.

Ver. 17.—**Have the gates of death been opened unto thee?** By "the gates of death," Sheôl, the abode of the dead, seems to be intended (comp. ch. x. 21, 22; xvii. 16). Has Job explored this region, and penetrated its secrets? Or is it as unknown to him as to the rest of mankind? The second hemistich—**Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?**—is a mere echo of the first, adding no new idea.

Ver. 18.—**Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth?** literally, *the breadths*; i.e. the dimensions generally. The *exact* dimensions are probably not even yet known. Job can scarcely have had any conception of them. To him the earth was probably a vast plain, extended, he knew not how far, in all directions. **Declare if thou knowest it all** (comp. vers. 4, 5, and 21).

Ver. 19.—**Where is the way where light dwelleth?** or, *Which is the way to the dwelling-place of light?* Where, *i.e.*, does light dwell? What is its original and true home? Light is a thing quite distinct from the sun and moon and planets (Gen. i. 3, 16). Where and what is it? Dost thou know the way to its dwelling-place? If not, why, once more, dost thou pretend to search out the deep things of God? **And as for darkness, where is the place thereof?** Darkness, too, light's antithesis, must not that have a home—a "place" of abode, as Job himself had postulated, when he spoke of "a land of darkness and the shadow of death, a land of darkness as darkness itself . . . where the light is as darkness" (ch. x. 21, 22)? If so, can Job point out the locality?

Ver. 20.—**That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof.** Can Job "take" light and darkness, and lead them to their proper places, and make them observe their proper "bounds," as God can (Gen. i. 4)? **And that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof** (comp. ver. 19).

Ver. 21.—**Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born?** The irony that has underlain the whole address comes here to the surface, and shows itself palpably. Job, of course, is as old as the Almighty, or, at any rate, coeval with creation; otherwise he could not presume to take the tone which he has taken, and arraign the moral government of the Creator. **Or because the number of thy days is great?** Compare the sarcasm of Eliphaz (ch. xv. 7).

Ver. 22.—**Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?** The "treasures of the snow" are the storehouses, wherein the snow is, poetically, supposed to be laid up. Vast accumulations of snow actually exist in various portions of the earth's surface, but the fresh snow that falls is not taken from these treasuries, but newly generated by the crystallization of floating vapours in the atmosphere. **Or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail?** This expression is to be explained similarly, as *poetical.* Hail is nowhere kept in store. It is generated by the passage of rain-drops through a layer of freezing air.

Ver. 23.—**Which I have reserved against the time of trouble.** Hail is reckoned throughout Scripture as one of the ministers

of the Divine vengeance (see Exod. ix. 18—29; x. 5—15; Josh. x. 11; Ps. xviii. 12, 13; lxxviii. 47, 48; cv. 32; Isa. xxx. 30; xxxii. 19; Ezek. xiii. 11, 13; xxxvi. 22; Hag. ii. 17; Rev. viii. 7; xi. 19; xvi. 21). Its destructive effect upon crops, even in temperate latitudes, is indicated by the insurances against damage from hail, which, even in our own country, so many farmers think it worth their while to pay. In tropical and semi-tropical regions the injury caused by hailstorms is far greater. **Against the day of battle and war.** Compare especially Josh. x. 11, which, however, we need not suppose to have been in the mind of the writer. In ancient times, when the bow held the place in war which is now occupied by the rifle or the musket, a heavy hailstorm, striking full in the face of the combatants on one side, while it only fell on the backs of their adversaries, must often have decided a battle.

Ver. 24.—**By what way is the light parted?** or, *distributed*, so as to be enjoyed by all the inhabitants of the earth (Stanley Leathes). Which scattereth, etc.; rather, *or by what way is the east wind scattered over the earth?* (see the Revised Version). Job is asked to explain God's *modus operandi* in nature, which, of course, he cannot do. Hence his answer in ch. xl. 5.

Ver. 25.—**Who hath divided a water-course for the overflowing of waters?** rather, as in the Revised Version, *Who hath cleft a channel for the water-flood?* i.e. Who has furrowed and seamed the ground (in Western Asia) with deep gullies, or "water-courses," for the rapid carrying off of the violent rains to which those regions are subject? The wadies of Syria and Arabia seem to be alluded to. They too are God's work, not Job's. **Or a way for the lightning of thunder?** The "way" for the passage of the electric current is not marked out beforehand, like the way for the escape of the superfluous waters; but it is equally determined on and arranged previously by God, who has laid down the laws which it is bound to follow.

Ver. 26.—**To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man.** God not only causes his rain to fall equally on the just and on the unjust (Matt. v. 45), but equally, or almost equally, on inhabited lands and uninhabited. His providence does not limit itself to supplying the wants of man, but has tender regard to the beasts, and birds, and reptiles, and insects which possess the lands whereon man has not yet set his foot.

Ver. 27.—**To satisfy the desolate and waste ground.** Parched ground seems to cry aloud for water, and so to make a piteous appeal to Heaven. Perhaps rain is not wholly wasted, even on the bare sands of the Sahara, or the rugged rocks of Tierra del Fuego. It may have uses which are beyond our cognizance. **And to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth.** Where the rain produces herbage, it is certainly of use, for wherever there is herbage there are always insects, whose enjoyment of life has every appearance of being intense.

Ver. 28.—**Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew?** How do rain and dew come into existence? Can Job make them, or any other man? Can man even conceive of the process by which they were made? If not, must not their Maker, who is God, be wholly inscrutable?

Ver. 29.—**Out of whose womb came the ice?** Modern scientists admit that the process by which a liquid is metamorphosed into a solid transcends their utmost power of thought. They know nothing more than the fact that at the temperature of 32° Fahr. water, and at other temperatures other liquids, are solidified (see an article by Professor Tyndall on the generation of a snowflake in the *Contemporary Review* of 1880). It is thus not only creation itself, but the transformations of created things, that transcend the scientific intellect and are inexplicable. **And the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?** This is the same question as that of the previous clause, expressed in different words.

Ver. 30.—**The waters are hid as with a stone;** rather, *the waters are hardened, like unto stone.* When the frost comes, the waters are congealed and rendered as hard as stone. (So Dillmann and Canon Cook.) **And the face of the deep is frozen.** By "the deep" (תְּהוֹם) is certainly not meant here either the open ocean, which, in the latitudes known to the dwellers in South-Western Asia, never freezes, or the Mediterranean. Some of the lakes which abound in the regions inhabited by Job and his friends are probably meant. These may occasionally have been thinly coated with ice in the times when the Book of Job was written (see the comment on ch. vi. 16).

Ver. 31.—**Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?** (On the almost certain identification of the Hebrew *Kimah* with the Pleiades, see the comment on ch. ix. 9.) Whether the "sweet influences" of the constellation are here spoken of is very doubtful. Schultens and Professor Lee support the rendering; but most critics prefer to translate the word employed (מַעֲדִנּוֹת) by "chains" or "fastenings" (Rashi, Kimchi, Rosenmüller, Dillmann, Canon Cook). If we adopt this view, we must suppose the invisible links which unite the stars into a constellation to be intended. Job is asked whether he can draw the links nearer to-

gether, and bind the stars closer to one another. **Or loose the bands of Orion?** The identity of *Kĕsil* with Orion is generally allowed. Job is asked if he can loosen the tie which unites the several members of this constellation together. Of course, he can pretend to no such powers.

Ver. 32.—**Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season?** The context implies that "Mazzaroth" is a constellation on a par with the Pleiades, Orion, and the Bear (*Kimah*, *Kĕsil*, and *'Aish*). This makes it impossible to accept the meaning, so generally assigned, of "the twelve signs of the Zodiac." Again, the plural form is fatal to the conjecture that "Mazzaroth" designates a single star or planet, as Jupiter, Venus, or Sirius (Cook). The word is derived probably from the root *zahar*, "to shine," "to be bright," and should designate some especially brilliant cluster of stars. Whether it is to be regarded as a variant of *Mazzaloth* (2 Kings xxiii. 5) is uncertain. **Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?** (On the identity of *'Ash* or *'Aish* with the Great Bear, see the comment on ch. ix. 9.) The "sons" of *'Aish* are conjectured to be the three large stars in the tail of Ursa Major (Stanley Leathes); but the grounds on which the conjecture rests are very slight.

Ver. 33.—**Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven?** *i.e.* the physical laws by which the course of nature is governed (comp. Ps. cxix. 90, 91; cxlviii. 6). The general prevalence of law in the material world is quite as strongly asserted by the sacred writers as by modern science. The difference is that modern science regards the laws as physical necessities, self-subsisting, while Scripture looks upon them as the ordinances of the Divine will. This latter view involves, of course, the further result that the Divine will can at any time suspend or reverse any of its enactments. **Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?** If Job does not even know the laws whereby the world is governed, much less can he establish such laws himself, and make them work.

Ver. 34.—**Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of water may cover thee?** Will the clouds take their orders from thee, listen to thee, obey thy voice? None but the "medicine-men" of savage tribes profess to have any such power. Elijah, indeed, "prayed, and the heaven gave rain" (Jas. v. 18); but this was a very different thing from "commanding the clouds of heaven." His prayer was addressed to God, and God gave the rain for which he made his petition.

Ver. 35.—**Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?** If Job cannot command the clouds, much less can he send (or rather, *send forth*) lightnings—those marvellous and terrible evidences of almighty power. Even now, with all our command of electricity, our savants would, from the best electrical machine, find it difficult to produce the effects which often result from a single flash of lightning.

Ver. 36.—**Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts?** Some refer this to human wisdom, and understand the Almighty as asking—Who has put man's wisdom into his inward parts? literally, *into his kidneys*, or, as our idiom would express it, "into his heart." But there is great difficulty in supposing a sudden transition from clouds and lightning in vers. 34, 35 to the human understanding in ver. 36, *with a return to clouds and rain* in ver. 37. Hence many of the best critics understand ver. 36 of the purpose and intelligence that may be regarded as existing in the clouds and rain and lightning themselves, which are God's ministers, and run to and fro at his command, and execute his pleasure. (So Schultens, Rosenmüller, Professor Lee, and Professor Stanley Leathes.) To obtain this result, we must translate the word מחוה by "tempest" or "thunder-bolts," and the word שכוי, in the next clause, by "storm" or something similar (see the Revised Version, where "dark clouds" is suggested as an alternative for "inward parts," and "meteor" as an alternative for "heart"). The whole passage will then run thus: *Who hath put wisdom in the thunderbolts? or who hath given understanding to the tempest?*

Ver. 37.—**Who can number the clouds in wisdom?** *i.e.* Who is wise enough to number the clouds, and say how many they are? **Or who can stay the bottles of heaven?** rather, *Who can pour out?* (see the Revised Version). The "bottles," or "water-skins," of heaven are the dense clouds heavy with rain, which alternately hold the moisture like a reservoir, and pour it out upon the earth. God alone can determine when the rain shall fall.

Ver. 38.—**When the dust groweth into hardness.** *'Aphar* (עפר) here, as often, means "earth," or "soil," rather than "dust." When by the heat of the sun's rays the ground grows into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together, baked into a compact mass, then is the time when rain is most needed, and when the Almighty in his mercy commonly sends it. The consideration of inanimate nature here ends, with the result that its mysteries altogether transcend the human intellect, and render speculation on the still deeper mysteries of the moral world wholly vain and futile.

Ver. 39.—**Wilt thou hunt the prey for the**

lion? A new departure. Ch. xxxix. should commence from this point. What does Job know of the habits and instincts of animals? Can he arrange so that the lion (rather, *lioness*) shall obtain its proper prey, and thus **fill the appetite**—or, *satisfy the appetite* (Revised Version)—**of the young lions**, which depend on their dam? Certainly not. "The lions, roaring after their prey, do seek their meat *from God*" (Ps. civ. 21).

Ver. 40.—**When they couch in their dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait** (comp. Ps. x. 9, 10; xvii. 12).

Ver. 41.—**Who provideth for the raven his food?** (comp. Luke xii. 24, "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and *God feedeth them*"). God's mercy is "over all his works," not only over those whereof man sees the utility; but also over beasts of prey, and birds thought to be of ill omen. Especially he cares for the young of each kind, which most need protection. **When his young ones cry unto God.** So Ps. cxlvii. 9, "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the *young ravens which cry*." The young ravens are driven to cry out, when they, *i.e.* the parent birds, **wander for lack of meat, and have a difficulty in finding it.**

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Jehovah to Job: the first answer—the theophany.* I. THE LORD'S APPEARANCE TO JOB. 1. *The time of this appearance.* At the close of Elihu's address. Not too soon, when neither had Elihu finished his expositions nor had Job's heart been suitably prepared for such an interview as he was on the eve of obtaining, but precisely at the moment when the purpose of his coming was most likely to be effected. God never mistimes any of his visits to his people, whether he comes for judgment or for mercy. In this case the preaching of Elihu had begun to tell upon the turbulent spirit of the patriarch. The thunderstorm had helped to solemnize his mind, and lay him prostrate before the majesty of that Worker who had hitherto remained invisible. Then, amid the crashing of the thunder and the lurid gleams of the lightning, while the fierce whirlwind swept up from the southern desert—then was the moment God selected for making his presence known to his afflicted servant. 2. *The mode of this appearance.* Whether there was a visible form presented to the patriarch's eye it is impossible to say. Probably there was only a voice, like that which spoke to Adam in the garden (Gen. iii. 9, 10), to Abraham on Moriah (Gen. xxii. 11), to Israel at Sinai (Exod. xix. 19; xx. 1; Deut. iv. 12), and to Elijah at Horeb (1 Kings xix. 12); like that which spoke to Christ at the Jordan (Matt. iii. 17), on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 5), and in the city of Jerusalem (John xii. 30); like that which arrested Saul (Acts ix. 4), and afterwards St. John (Rev. i. 10). That this voice should have issued from the midst of a whirlwind (by the way, an indirect confirmation of the authenticity of the Elihu section) was doubtless designed (1) to arrest Job's attention, (2) to convey some impression of the majesty of God, and (3) to indicate the weighty character of the truth about to be communicated. 3. *The reality of this appearance.* It has been suggested that there was no objective appearance presented to any of Job's senses except what was afforded by the phenomena of the thunderstorm; that the voice was purely subjective—the inner voice of Job's own spirit, as it were, rising up within him to proclaim the overpowering sense of the Divine majesty under which it lay. "As the storm passes away with a vehement wind, clearing the heavens and presenting a lively symbol of the terrible majesty of God, Job feels the near presence of his Maker; the word rings through his heart, it brings back all that he had ever learned of his works; creation arises before him to witness for its Maker, the Spirit of God moulds his thoughts and completes his knowledge," and leads him to pour forth the sentiments here recorded in that "methodical and artistic form which pertains to the highest order of Hebrew poetry" (Canon Cook). To such an interpretation of the dramatist's language there is no very serious objection; but, on the other hand, it is permissible to hold that the entire phenomenon was objective. 4. *The object of this appearance.* (1) To meet Job's desires. Repeatedly and earnestly had the patriarch expressed a wish, at first dubiously, but afterwards with something like defiance, that God would admit him to an interview, that he might have an opportunity of stating his case and pleading his cause (ch. ix. 34, 35; xiii. 3, 22; xxiii. 3; xxxi. 37). Well, in amazing condescension to this almost impious

demand, Jehovah, "who giveth not an account of his matters" (ch. xxxiii. 13), comes down from the serene altitudes of his eternal palace, riding on a whirlwind, thundering with his voice, sending forth his lightnings, causing the solid globe to tremble beneath the tread of his glowing feet (Ps. xviii. 9—14). (2) To complete Job's instruction. Elihu had been sent to begin the work of educating God's ill-informed servant. That work had been performed with some considerable measure of success. Accordingly, to deepen the impressions made upon the mind of Job, Jehovah takes up the line of argument pursued by his ambassador, thus in a manner confirming all that had been by him advanced, and opening up before the mind of Job the full import of that teaching in a way that was impossible to Elihu. (3) To humble Job's pride. Although the Lord had expressly come to afford Job an opportunity to vindicate himself, if he could, he begins by aiming at the reduction of Job's self-righteous vanity. With a creature filled as Job was at the moment with such intolerable haughtiness and presumption, it was impossible that God could treat. The first thing to be attempted was to bring Job down from the lofty pedestal of self-complacent dignity on which he had established himself; and this was aimed at partly by the sublime character of the Divine manifestation, and partly (perhaps chiefly) by the elevated tenor of the Divine teaching. (4) To effect Job's restoration. That in the terrible ordeal through which Job had passed his integrity had not been to some extent shaken, no candid reader will affirm. Satan at the outset alleged that it would wholly fail. Jehovah maintained that it would stand. When the last trial (the preaching of the friends) had ended, Job was far from being in a state of stable equilibrium as to his integrity. Accordingly, Elihu, in perfect harmony with the original conditions of the problem, was sent to his assistance; and now, when all things had been prepared for his coming, God himself arrives upon the scene. "Who can teach like him?" said Elihu; and so discerning the approach of the great King, the faithful ambassador withdraws, leaving Job to get his last lesson from him who alone teacheth to profit (Isa. xlviii. 17). If after this Job still continues unhumbled, then Satan will have proved victorious; but if God shall be able to restore his servant to a proper frame of mind, then the final verdict will go with him, and not only the devil, but the intelligent universe, be forced to own that

> "A good man, in the darkness and dismay
> Of powers that fail, and purposes o'erthrown,
> May still be conscious of the proper way;"
> (Goethe's 'Faust,' Prologue.)

that a man through the grace of God may become possessor of a piety against which even the gates of hell shall not prevail.

II. THE LORD'S REPROOF OF JOB. 1. *Sin charged.* Jehovah begins the interview by distinctly specifying Job's offence. He had "darkened counsel" (ver. 2); that is, he had obscured and misrepresented the prearranged plan and underlying principles of the Divine administration. The language reminds us: (1) That there is a well-defined plan in accordance with which everything on earth comes to pass. As the primordial atoms of matter did not fortuitously fashion themselves into that brilliant host of suns and systems which we name the universe, or even into this wondrous globe which in comparison with the whole is but as a drop in the ocean, so neither do the events of time which compose human history occur by chance, but each one falls into the place prepared for it in the universal scheme. (2) That this plan, or creation-programme, has been arranged in accordance with the highest wisdom. It is not a random plan that God has selected for his universe, or even for the earth, as an architect might build a house agreeable to the first idea or sketch that came into his mind; it is the best possible plan that omniscient wisdom could devise. (3) That this creation-programme or world-plan in all its details has been constructed in accordance with the fundamental principles of truth and equity. Otherwise it could not have been the production of the highest wisdom. Hence it is deducible that the existence neither of sin nor of suffering is incompatible with eternal right. (4) That the harmonious accordance of this Divine plan with law and justice shines forth in God's administration with sufficient clearness to convince every one who studies that administration with fairness and impartiality. (5) That if in any case the luminous radiance of God's counsel is obscured, it must be owing to the shadow cast thereon by the

intellectual and moral darkness of those by whom it is beheld. 2. *Ignorance affirmed.* Exactly this was the case with Job, for the challenge is not addressed to the friends, and still less to Elihu. Job had asserted more than once that the Divine government of the world was not in accordance (at any rate, not in visible accordance) with the eternal principles of equity, adducing instances, as he supposed, which no amount of ingenuity could harmonize with absolutely impartial justice. "But God pronounces that these words were 'without knowledge.' The instances that Job had appealed to as being obvious to the sight of all men of God's giving prosperity to the wicked, and causing the innocent to suffer wrongfully, and without redress, are pronounced to be untrue" (Fry). 3. *Astonishment expressed.* "Who is this?" The words carry in them (1) "a rebuke or reprehension," "as if God, pointing at Job, had said, Is it you? I could not have believed that my servant Job would have so much forgotten himself;" and (2) "a slight or diminution," as though Job, otherwise a man of an excellent spirit, "had been too bold with God, and therefore no wonder if God spake contemningly to him" (Caryl).

III. THE LORD'S DEMAND FROM JOB. 1. *To display the courage he had previously vaunted.* "Gird up thy loins now like a man," *i.e.* like a valiant hero (a *geber*), as you frequently affected to be. Job had formerly professed to be ready for an interview with God (ch. xiii. 18, 22); had complained that God acted towards him like an invisible assailant (ch. xix. 7), whom he knew not how to meet or where to find (ch. xxiii. 3, 8, 9); nay, had declared that nothing would rejoice him more than to hear that his unseen adversary had opened a tribunal for the hearing of his case and prepared an indictment for the exposition of his guilt—that such an indictment he would wind around his brow like a regal crown, and march into God's presence with the stately steps of a prince (ch. xxxi. 35—37). Brave words, O Job! But most men, like Falstaff, are valiant in the absence of the foe. Jehovah had now come to ask Job to evince the sincerity of his boast. So will God one day come, upon the clouds of heaven, with great power and glory, to afford all the presumptuous ungodly an opportunity of showing whether they can meet without fear him whom they now despise without shame. 2. *To recite the answers he had formerly professed to have prepared.* Job had declared his perfect indifference as to whether the Almighty when he came should assume the position of assailant or defendant. If he preferred that Job should open the case, Job was ready; if he elected to assume the initiative, Job had his defences at hand. "Well," exclaims Jehovah, "as you gave me the choice, I decide upon the latter. I am ready to begin the hearing of your cause. Therefore stand forth. I will demand of thee, and answer thou me!" "I will come shortly," wrote Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. iv. 19), "if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power." In the like spirit had Jehovah come to Job, to see whether the reality corresponded in any degree with the loud-sounding profession he had made.

Learn: 1. That God keeps the times and seasons of all things connected with his kingdom in his own hand. 2. That nature with all its phenomena is under service to God. 3. That God's voice in nature, much more in the Word, and most of all in the conscience, is full of majesty. 4. That for God to answer any of his creatures, much more sinful dust and ashes, is an act of amazing condescension. 5. That God will not hide the faults of any of his people when he enters into judgment with them. 6. That ignorance lies at the root of much, if not all, of man's misunderstanding of, and murmuring against, God's ways.

Vers. 4—15.—*Jehovah to Job: the first answer—the examination:* 1. *Concerning the creation.* I. THE CREATION OF THE EARTH THE HANDIWORK OF GOD. 1. *An exclusively Divine work.* Jehovah claims not simply to have been the Framer of the mighty fabric of the globe, but to have shared the honour of that stupendous achievement with no co-worker. Hence certainly not with Job. "Where wast thou when I established the earth?" Not taking part or even looking on, since thou wast not then in existence. That this terrestrial world, and indeed the vast universe of which it forms a part almost infinitesimally small, has not existed from eternity, and did not spring into being fortuitously and without adequate cause, but was summoned from the womb of nothingness by the fiat of Omnipotence, besides according with the

plainest declarations of Scripture (Gen. i. 1), harmonizes more exactly than any other theory with the dictates of reason. 2. *A perfectly finished work.* As in the Mosaic cosmogony Elohim is represented as beginning, carrying forward through successive stages, and completing the preparation of the newly made earth as man's abode, so here Jehovah advances a like claim in behalf of himself. Under the image of a building he describes the earth, in its construction, as having been planned by him: "Who," i.e. but me, "hath determined its measure?" founded by him: "Where wast thou when I established the earth?" erected by him: "Whereupon are the foundations," i.e. the bases of its pillars, "fastened?" finished by him: "Who hath laid the corner-stone thereof?" 3. *A firmly secured work.* Not, however, in the sense of standing still and without motion (Caryl), but in that of being permanently established. The constitution and course of nature, though not unalterable at the will of him by whom it hath been decreed, is yet so definitely settled that man can reckon on its uniformity. It can be overthrown by neither accident nor design. The properties and laws of matter are so certain in their operation, that some reasoners have falsely concluded them to be immutable.

II. THE CREATION OF THE EARTH WAS THE SONG OF THE ANGELS. 1. *The singers: the angels.* The race of spiritual intelligences who inhabit the heavenly world (Ps. lxviii. 17; Matt. xviii. 10; John i. 51), who are here described by: (1) Their place in creation; being styled (according to one exposition of the passage) "morning stars," as having been first created, the first beings summoned into the broad expanse of dependent existence (Gen. iii. 24; Ps. viii. 5), as the morning stars appear to swim out first into the vault of heaven; as being possessed of incomparable excellence of nature (Ps. ciii. 20), as the morning stars outshine all other stars in brilliance; or as being the harbingers or heralds of succeeding and perhaps higher creatures than themselves (John i. 51), as the morning star serves to usher in through the portals of the dawn the golden chariot of the sun. (2) Their relation to God; being designated his "sons," not as Christ is, who is the Father's Only Begotten (Ps. ii. 7; John i. 18; Acts xiii. 33)—an honour never conferred upon the angels (Heb. i. 5); or as saints are, by regeneration and adoption (John i. 12)—an experience which the unfallen angels do not need, and the fallen ones do not get; but probably as Adam was (Luke iii. 38), and as men in general are (Acts xvii. 28)[1] to indicate their dependence upon, and constitutional likeness to, God their Creator. 2. *Their song: an anthem of creation.* Which also is characterized in a twofold way: (1) By its outward expression, as vocal, "they sang," giving utterance to their emotions in the tongue of immortals; as choral, "they sang together," preserving harmony in their singing, maintaining a delightful concord of sweet sounds; as universal, "all the sons of God shonted," there was not a voice in the innumerable throng that was silent (cf. 'Merchant of Venice,' act v. sc. 1); as cordial, "they shouted," expressive of the hearty vehemence and exuberant gladness with which they poured forth their heavenly melodies. (2) By its inward inspiration, as proceeding from the full tide of joy which rose and swelled within their breasts, which joy was occasioned by admiration of the great Creator's power, contemplation of the Divine Artificer's wisdom, appreciation of the Infinite Father's goodness, anticipation of the supreme God's purpose, in calling forth from the wide womb of non-existence, by a single fiat of omnipotence, a world so wondrously fair, for an end of which it may have been given to their angelic minds to form some by no means dim conception, viz. to be the future home of man.

III. THE CREATION OF THE EARTH A STUDY FOR MAN. As such it was propounded to Job, who was asked to receive lessons from it as to three points. 1. *The brevity of man's life as compared with the existence of God.* "Where wast thou when I founded the earth? Thou wast not then born! Thy days on earth are as a shadow. A few years ago thou hadst no existence. But I, thy Creator, whom thou dost foolishly arraign, had a being before the world was!" Nothing is more fitted to impress man with a sense of the utter vanity and insignificance of this terrestrial existence of which he partakes than a contemplation of the eternity of God. 2. *The ignorance of man's mind as compared with the omniscience of God.* Jehovah asks the patriarch if he could tell how the pillars of the globe were fastened in their sockets, or how either the foundation or corner stones of the stupendous fabric were laid in their places, and fixed so as to continue permanent and immovable. "Declare, if thou hast understanding,"

But all these were comprehended by eternal wisdom. How immeasurably foolish, then, must it be for man to presume that he either can, or ought to be able to, understand the moral administration of a world of whose original construction he is entirely ignorant! Nothing is better calculated to humble the pride of human wisdom than to reflect both how small is the circle of knowledge surveyed by the wisest in comparison with the vast sphere of ignorance by which he is still encompassed, and in particular how infinitesimal is the largest quantity of science collected by man when weighed against the immeasurable omniscience of God. 3. *The impotence of man's arm as compared with the omnipotence of God.* Vast in contrivance and execution as are many of the works of man, the building of the pyramids, the exploration of mines, the construction of locomotives, the tunnelling of mountains, and other mighty achievements of human genius, it is certain that man himself must regard these as puny and insignificant beside the gigantic works of nature, the piling up of Himalayas, the formation of oceans, the establishment of those mysterious influences which men in their ignorance denominate physical forces, the peopling of earth, air, and sea with their myriad forms of life. And yet these are all the handiwork of God, effected by his power with infinite ease and with such consummate skill that man cannot hope to improve them, cannot even imitate them, yea, can hardly succeed in making a perfect copy of them. Nay, modern astronomy, by enlarging our conceptions of the stellar world, reminds us that stupendous a work as is the formation of this material globe, it is in reality one of the smallest of the productions that have come from his creative hand, being in fact but as a drop in a bucket, or as the small dust of a balance, in comparison with the boundless universe to which it belongs.

Learn: 1. That the first of all beings is God. 2. That the primal cause of all things is the power of God. 3. That only the mind which planned the world can perfectly understand its government. 4. That all God's works, in the moral world no less than in the material, are characterized by wisdom. 5. That God's works should never fail to excite the admiration and rejoicing of God's children. 6. That, though man cannot be saved, he may yet be instructed, by the angels. 7. That if the old or material creation required the power of God, much more does the new or spiritual creation.

Ver. 7.—*The songs of the angels.* I. AT THE CREATION OF THE WORLD.
II. AT THE INCARNATION OF THE SAVIOUR.
III. AT THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS.
IV. AT THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH.

Vers. 8—11.—*Jehovah to Job: the first answer—the examination: 2. Concerning the sea.* I. THE PRODUCTION OF THE SEA. 1. *The place whence it issued.* The sea, by a bold metaphor, is represented as a child proceeding from its mother's womb. The allusion apparently is to the third day's creative work, when the terrestrial waters were collected into seas by "the upheaval of the land through the action of subterranean fires, or the subsidence of the earth's crust in consequence of the cooling and shrinking of the interior mass" ('Pulpit Commentary: Genesis,' i. 9). The hitherto quiet surface of the deep being thrown into violent commotion, on the one hand the upward rush of waters occasioned by the sinking of the solid particles would seem like an irruption from the interior of the earth, while on the other hand the backward sweep produced by the sudden upheaval of mountain-peaks would appear as if effected by the superior restraint of some mighty hand. Hence, the whole is depicted as the birth of a young giant, who is no sooner ushered into life than he requires to be restrained and confined. 2. *The violence of its irruption.* The word employed by Jehovah to describe its evolution from the still chaotic mass of the globe is the same which Scripture writers use to represent the bursting forth of a river from its source (ch. xl. 23), the emerging of a child from its mother's womb (Ps. xxii. 10), the rushing of a soldier into battle (Ezek. xxxii. 2), the springing of a warrior from ambush (Judg. xx. 33). The language conveys a vivid picture of the vehement and sudden manner in which the land and water of our globe were separated, which, according to both revelation (Ps. civ. 7) and science, was most probably effected by volcanic agency. 3. *The appearance it presented.* Still adhering to the metaphor of a new-born infant, which the nurse wraps in swaddling-bands and baby-clothes, Jehovah tells the patriarch that he too had provided suitable apparel for

the new-born sea, giving it clouds for a garment and darkness for a band, meaning that at its first separation from the solid earth it was overhung by heavy vapours and thick mists which served to enshroud it like a pall.

II. THE DISPOSITION OF THE SEA. 1. *The preparation of its place.* The received translation, which is clearly inspired by Gen. i. 9 and Ps. civ. 8, understands God to say that the newly formed sea was not left to roll its waters at will across the surface of the globe, but was withdrawn into the ocean beds in which at the present time it rests, and that these beds, besides being constructed by Divine agency, acting, no doubt, through natural means, had also been definitely prearranged by Divine wisdom, which had "broken up for it my decreed *place*," and were permanently fixed by Divine power, which had "strictly measured its boundary" (Umbreit), or broken over it a Divine decree (Delitzsch), i.e. imposing upon it a statute of limitation. 2. *The restraining of its waters.* This again is represented as the imprisoning within strongly built walls and firmly barred doors of the aforesaid young and vigorous giant, who cannot be permitted unchecked liberty, but must be kept within bounds, being afforded so much freedom and no more—freedom, that is to say, within the precincts of his prison, but not beyond. In the case of the sea, the imprisoning walls and doors are the rocks and sands and beaches which line the coasts of the great ocean waters. And yet it is not these that repel the sea from overflowing its banks, but the voice of God who says, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed;" as it is not the prison walls that really confine the young giant, but the sovereign will of him, the Parent or Nurse, by whom they have been constructed and the infant monster has been immured.

Learn: 1. That God is the Maker of the sea as well as of the dry land. 2. That God can control the sea even in its fiercest moods. 3. That the sea, no less than other creatures, cannot overstep the bounds assigned it by its Maker. 4. That God's hand upon the sea, and God's voice to the sea, are all that keep its waters from overflowing the earth.

Vers. 12—15.—*Jehovah to Job: the first answer—the examination:* 3. *Concerning the light.* I. THE LIGHT OF THE MORNING THE SERVANT OF GOD. 1. *The light of the morning is a servant to some one.* It is under the commandment of a Superior. Every movement that it makes proclaims it to be under law. Modern science is even able with much precision to formulate the laws to which it renders obedience. And these operate with such unfailing regularity and such irresistible potency, that even this subtlest, nimblest, and most powerful of creatures is unable to elude their grasp or repel their sway. Morning after morning does the dawn appear like a sentinel returning to his place. Day after day does the golden sun push his disc above the horizon, never mistaking the time when or the exact spot where he should first begin to tip the mountain-tops with roseate hues. From whatever source the laws emanate it is clear that the sun yields them submission. 2. *The light of the morning is not the servant of man.* "Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days? hast thou caused the day-spring to know its place?" inquires Jehovah of Job, as if he meant ironically to suggest that, although Job could have had no hand in either the first formation of the globe or the production of the sea, inasmuch as he was not then in existence, perhaps since he had arrived on earth he had been the lord paramount, to whom the powerful king of day did obeisance, and from whom the roseate dawn received its daily charge. At the same time, the interrogation is so phrased as to point to the appropriate reply that not only was Job not the director-general of the solar movements, but throughout the entire course of his career he had not been able to impose his authority on the morning light for so much as a single day. And, of course, what was true of Job is likewise true of all. The student of the heavens may contemplate the beauty and investigate the laws of the solar beam; but he cannot hinder it on its mission or turn it aside from its path. He can neither instruct nor direct it as to when, where, or how it is to shine. It may serve him in obedience to the Divine command which has made all creatures wait on man; but man cannot make of it his servant in the sense of subjecting it to his ordinances. Hence the inference that follows is inevitable. 3. *The light of the morning is exclusively the servant of God.* The voice it obeys is that which addressed Job from the whirlwind. The rule it follows is that prescribed for it by him who at the first said,

"Let light be," and light was. The law it recognizes and fulfils is that of him who set the sun in the heavens to give light upon the earth.

II. THE LIGHT OF THE MORNING THE ENEMY OF EVIL-DOERS. 1. *The expressive metaphor.* The light, personified as a powerful servant or minister of God, is represented as coming forth every morning from the chambers of the dawn, as seizing the broad and beautifully variegated carpet of the earth by the edges, as forcibly lifting it up, and as effectively shaking from it the evil-doers who, under cover of darkness, had laid themselves down to rest, or had gone forth on errands of wickedness, upon its surface. 2. *The authorized interpretation.* So completely does the dawn of day surprise the night-birds, or workers of inquity, who prey upon society that their outstretched arms are broken, *i.e.* are arrested in the very act of perpetrating their nefarious deeds. When the darkness vanishes, the light in which they work is removed from them; and, shunning the dawn of day as if it were the shadow of death (ch. xxiv. 17), they slink away into their dens, disappearing as effectually from the world of light as if they had been shaken violently from the surface of the earth.

III. THE LIGHT OF THE MORNING THE BEAUTIFIER OF THE EARTH. 1. *The imprinting seal.* Analyzing the Divine metaphor, one may say that the spreading of the dawn is compared to the rolling of a cylindrical seal across the surface of a prepared sheet of clay. The figure indicates the gradual and progressive opening of the dawn, the silent and onward march of the light, the continually widening diffusion of day, the uprising of objects on the earth's surface into clearness and distinctness of outline. 2. *The printed clay.* As the seal when it passes over the smooth clay leaves behind it an impression which seems to start up from the clay, so the sweeping of the dawn across the plains of earth causes object after object, mountain, rock, tree, grass, flower, everything that earth supports on its bosom, to start up in succession into prominence of vision. 3. *The radiant garment.* The result is expressed by a change of figure. The illuminated earth is compared to a richly embroidered garment, whose variegated hues and deftly woven figures, concealed by the preceding darkness, are now brought to light by the effulgent day.

Learn: 1. That the constitution and course of nature in all its parts and details rest upon the command of God. 2. That apart from this Divine commandment the sons of men could not enjoy so much as a single day. 3. That the power of man can interfere with little things no more than with great things in nature. 4. That man has many servants who obey not his command. 5. That light plays an important part in the moral administration of earth. 6. That the main source of beauty in material things is the light of day. 7. That evil-doers generally and instinctively hate the light.

Vers. 16—30.—*Jehovah to Job: the first answer—the examination:* 4. *Concerning the mysteries of creation.* I. THE MYSTERIES OF CREATION ARE MANIFOLD IN THEIR VARIETY. Jehovah directs Job's attention to some examples of these hidden things, or secrets, of nature. 1. *The depths of the ocean.* The sea, perhaps more than any other object in nature, the universal emblem of the mysterious, in respect of its immensity, inconstancy, potency, harmony, is specially invested with a veil of wonder when the mind reflects upon its unfathomable profundity. Ever sounding and singing on its surface, now chanting weird melodies as its tiny wavelets break upon the shore, now bellowing and roaring with discordant fury when the raging winds catching the ruffian billows by the top bid them clash in mortal conflict, underneath all is still, silent, solemn, voiceless, and, except where there are currents, motionless as the grave. Above inviting man's approach and investigation, below it has deep and dark recesses, untraversed by human foot, unscanned by mortal eye. Continually sending forth its treasures to the upper air in magic trains of mist, doing homage to the golden sun, it has "springs" or "fountains" underneath (Gen. vii. 11), whence its waste is supplied. 2. *The realms of the unseen world.* The grim and gloomy subterranean regions so eloquently described by Job (ch. x. 22; xxvi. 5) as the abodes of disembodied spirits, are here similarly represented as the habitations of the dead, who are shut within the sunless receptacles by means of doors and bars. Without expressly asserting that the two places, "the interior parts of the earth" and "the realm of shades," were identical, the language of Jehovah imports that both alike were among the secret things as yet unveiled to man. And this witness is true. To saint and sinner equally the manner of existence, when the now embodied spirit shall have shuffled off this mortal coil, is an unfathomable mystery. A

terra incognita is the country beyond the tomb. Nor has man yet been able to explore the innermost recesses of the earth. His investigations and researches have been confined to the earth's crust, possessing a thickness of only a few thousand feet. Whether the central substance of the globe is a solid mass or a glowing fire is yet with physicists a *quæstio vexata*. 3. *The extent of the earth.* That the earth was in patriarchal times popularly believed to be a plain is no proof that even then its sphericity was not guessed at, though perhaps not definitely ascertained by geographers and astronomers (*vide* ch. xxvi. 7, homiletics). Still, with all the appliances of modern science for observing the transit of Venus, upon which calculations for the earth's dimensions depend, the most that can be thus obtained is only an approximation towards the truth—an approximation no doubt sufficiently accurate for working purposes, but still an approximation as distinguished from the absolute truth. 4. *The origin of light and darkness.* Among the discoveries of modern science few surpass in interest those relating to the composition and the laws of light. The prism by untwisting a solar beam, and the spectrum by analyzing its very substance, have widened man's knowledge in this department of physics to an astonishing extent. Yet what light itself is, what are its physical causes, and how it produces its particular effects, are still among the unascertained facts of nature. 5. *The sources of snow and hail.* Here again it is not the physical power or force which causes snow or hail which constitutes the mystery; but the fact that they seem to descend upon earth in inexhaustible supplies at the moments when they are most required, viz. when God has some time of trouble in store for man or some terrible judgment to inflict on earth. Scripture speaks of hail as having been employed by God for the destruction of his enemies (Exod. ix. 18; Josh. x. 11; Isa. xxx. 10). 6. *The distribution of light and wind.* Jehovah alludes to the laws in accordance with which the beams of light and the air-currents spread themselves across the surface of the globe, and exercise their respective influences upon the earth and its inhabitants. 7. *The inner principles of rain, dew, ice, and frost.* The causes that immediately produce these phenomena were probably to a large extent unknown in the days of Job, though they are now understood by persons of a moderate degree of culture. But it is the power behind the immediately operating material causes after which Jehovah inquires.

II. THE MYSTERIES OF CREATION ARE UNDISCOVERABLE BY MAN. 1. *The oldest man was not present at their formation.* "Knowest thou it [*i.e.* where the light dwelleth] because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy months is great?" Jehovah means that neither Job nor any other human intelligence was cognizant by personal observation of the institution of this or any other of the above-named mysteries. The establishment of nature's laws took place before the birth or creation of man. Each individual as he opens his eyes upon the theatre of existence witnesses their operation. When they first began to operate no man was there. 2. *The wisest man does not know them through intuition.* "Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth?" Has the knowledge of this or of any of these mysteries flashed in upon thee, or risen up within thee by a kind of scientific intuition? The human understanding we believe to be sent into the world with a definite amount of mental furniture in the shape of mental and moral intuitions, which gradually assert their presence in and power over the soul; but among these innate ideas are not to be discovered solutions of the physical problems of the universe. 3. *The most diligent man cannot reach them by personal investigation.* "Hast thou come in thy walkings upon the fountains of the sea?" Have thy researches conducted thee to the secrets of creation? At the best man's knowledge of the material universe is comparatively superficial. It is doubtful if his powers of investigation can conduct him to the first principles of natural phenomena; and, even if they were sufficient in themselves, the limited extent of time during which man can apply them to the task renders ultimate success well-nigh impossible.

III. THE MYSTERIES OF CREATION ARE ALL UNDERSTOOD BY GOD. 1. *They are all of his making.* The sea with all its springs and caves is of his production. The dark underworld of spirits has been constructed by him. His was the voice that summoned the light into being. Snow, hail, wind, rain, frost, and dew, are each and all his creatures. 2. *They are all of his hiding.* If man knows so much and no more about natural phenomena, that is traceable solely to the Divine will. God could have endowed man with a deeper insight into the final causes of things had he chosen. If,

therefore, God has power to hide, he must likewise know what he hides. 3. *They are all of his directing.* It is God who bids the fountains of the ocean spring, who says to the light, "Be distributed across the face of the earth," who charges the snow to fall upon the ground, who causes it to rain upon the wilderness where no man is. Hence the entire secret of their working must be known to him.

Learn: 1. In the presence of nature's mysteries, a lesson concerning our own ignorance. 2. In presence of our ignorance, a lesson of humility. 3. In presence of the God of nature, lessons of reverence, trust, and submission.

Vers. 31—41.—*Jehovah to Job: the first answer—the examination: 5. Concerning four worlds.* I. THE WORLD OF STARS. Jehovah invites Job to reflect upon his own impotence, and therefore also inferentially upon his (*i.e.* Jehovah's) omnipotence, as regards the phenomena of the heavens, over which the power of God is exhibited in a fourfold degree. 1. *In creating the orbs of heaven.* The constellations (Orion, Arcturus, the Pleiades, Mazzaroth) and the planets that adorn the nocturnal sky, the nebulæ that fill the depths of space, the wandering comets that flash along their eccentric paths, are all the work of his almighty fingers; cf. ch. ix. 9, homiletics; and consult Exposition for the import of the names Orion ("Giant" or "Fool"), the Pleiades ("A Heap" or "Group"), Arcturus (the Great Bear). Mazzaroth is commonly understood to signify the twelve signs of the zodiac (Gesenius, Umbreit, Delitzsch, Carey), though its introduction between Orion and Arcturus, conjoined with its obvious connection with the root *zahar*, "to shine," seems to point to a constellation or star of peculiar brightness (Canon Cook), as *e.g.* Jupiter or Venus (LXX., Lucifer). 2. *In instituting the ordinances of heaven.* The laws in accordance with which the celestial luminaries have been formed and established in their respective places in the sky, and in obedience to which they move through the depths of space and shine upon the face of earth, have been patiently investigated, and are now in some degree understood by man; but in the sense of comprehending how they have been ordained, the wisest astronomer, no less than the dullest peasant, is completely ignorant. Kepler ascertained that planets move in elliptical orbits, but why, was beyond his power to tell. Newton discovered the law of gravitation; but what gravitation itself was, the philosopher could no more explain than a schoolboy. 3. *In regulating the movements of heaven.* Whether the image is that of a chariot to which its snorting steeds are fastened by means of bands (Carey), or of a bouquet of jewels bound or twisted together (Delitzsch), the binding of the sweet influences of the Pleiades refers to God's power in bringing that constellation above the horizon at certain seasons of the year, and in calling it forth every night during the season upon the dark vault of heaven. So the loosening of the bands of Orion may point to the disappearance of that constellation from the firmament, the bringing forth of Mazzaroth and the guiding of Arcturus to the directing of their movements in the sky. 4. *In determining the influences of heaven.* That the stellar world exercised an influence upon the earth, the course of its events and the fortunes of its inhabitants, was a dream of astrological superstition, and cannot be admitted as the subject to which Jehovah here alludes. The explanation must be sought, and with sufficient fulness will be found, by recurring to the words of Moses in connection with the work of the fourth creative day (Gen. i. 14—19).

II. THE WORLD OF METEORS. Descending from the upper circle of the stars, Jehovah pauses at the next beneath it, the circle of the aerial firmament, directing Job to two phenomena that lie beyond the range of his ability, but quite within the sphere of God's, thereby demonstrating on the one hand the feebleness of man, and on the other hand the omnipotence of God. 1. *The bringing of rain.* "Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee?" God speaks to the clouds when his voice thunders through the sky, and immediately the clouds reply by deluging the earth with a flood. But man may shout himself hoarse in the vain endeavour to make the clouds obedient to his will. Yet the power of faith wielded by a weak man has accomplished what is here denied to man in himself (1 Kings xviii. 42; Jas. v. 17). 2. *The sending of lightning.* "Canst thou send forth lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?" No! It is a special mercy that no Job can thus exercise unlimited control over the powers of nature.

"Could great men thunder
As Jove himself does, Jove would ne'er be quiet,
For every pelting, petty officer
Would use his heaven for thunder!"
('Measure for Measure,' act ii. sc. 2.)

But the thunderbolts of the sky, the electric currents of the air, the innumerable forces of the globe, are all obedient to the word of command which God gives (cf. Matt. viii. 9).

III. THE WORLD OF INTELLIGENCE. Descending yet a third step, Jehovah reaches the realm of men. Interrogating Job, he: 1. *Makes a frank recognition.* Man is possessed of wisdom in the inward parts, and retains understanding in his heart; *i.e.* he has a certain power of inquiring into the names and causes of terrestrial phenomena. God delights to acknowledge the essential dignity of man, even though sin has largely defaced his beauty and impaired his powers. Man's intelligence is a noble gift which man should not despise, but cultivate with assiduity. 2. *Asks an important question.* Whence did man receive his wisdom? Was it from himself? Did it spring up within his heart as a spontaneous growth or development? Or was the doctrine of Elihu (ch. xxxii. 8) correct that it is the Spirit of the Almighty which gives man understanding? Many modern scientists would affirm the former, which shows that they still require to ponder Jehovah's question to the patriarch.

IV. THE WORLD OF ANIMALS. Leaving man, the last stage is arrived at in the domain of the lower creatures, in which Job is invited to behold an evidence of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. 1. *Of God's power.* Had the problem been proposed to Job to provide food for the lioness and her whelps, Jehovah asks him if he could have done it: "Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lioness? or fill the appetite of the young lions?" (ver. 39). No; Job could not have so much as approached these ferocious creatures without trembling; but God did it every day, silently, regularly, effectively, by the operation of a divinely implanted instinct which impelled every particular creature to seek and find its own particular food. That God was able thus to move even the most untamable of beasts was sufficient demonstration of the completeness of that control which he wielded over the entire animal creation. 2. *Of God's wisdom.* There are few more striking illustrations of the wisdom of God than those afforded by the instincts of the lower creatures, and in particular by that which guides them to the special food which each requires, to the place where it is to be found, and the manner in which it is to be appropriated. What this mysterious force is which controls every sentient creature neither science nor philosophy can explain. Resembling intelligence, it yet differs from intelligence by obvious characteristics. 3. *Of God's goodness.* Manifested in catering for any of his creatures, it is conspicuously seen in providing food for the unclean raven and her hateful brood. It is even revealed by those predatory instincts which lead the stronger animals to prey upon the weaker, thus serving among other purposes to limit the increase of the inferior orders of existence, and even shadowing forth to man truths of a lofty spiritual significance, had he only the opened eye to understand them.

Learn: 1. That there is no part of God's universe over which his sway is not sovereign and complete. 2. That man may admire God's great power and wisdom, but he can neither equal the one nor improve the other. 3. That man is even dependent upon God for the capacity to understand and appreciate the Divine wisdom and power. 4. That nothing exists in God's world that does not serve some divinely ordained purpose. 5. That God's goodness extends to the meanest and most repulsive of creatures. 6. That that God who is kind to lionesses and ravens will not likely be forgetful of his own children. 7. That men should imitate their Maker in being kind to the lower animals.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1—ch. xlii. 6.—*The discourses of Jehovah.* At length, in answer to the repeated appeals of Job, the Almighty appears, not to crush and overwhelm, as fear had often suggested, but to reason with his servant; to appeal to his spiritual intelligence, rather than to smite him into lower prostration by some thunderbolt of rebuke. "Come now,

and let us reason together," is the gracious invitation of him who is Eternal Reason, amidst the wild clamours of our passion and despondency. At the same time, this revelation of the majesty of God humiliates and purifies the recipient of it, teaching him his own littleness and limitation in presence of this fulness of might and of wisdom. God, as the Almighty and only Wise, with whom no mortal may contend in judgment, may appoint the sufferings of the righteous for their probation and purification. And thus the great problem of the book, the enigma of life, receives from the highest Source its long-delayed solution.—J.

Ver. 1—ch. xxxix. 30.—*First discourse of Jehovah: God the Almighty and the All-wise: man may not contend with him.* I. INTRODUCTION. APPEARANCE OF GOD; SUMMONS TO JOB. (Vers. 1—3.) Out of the storm, in all its grandeur and beauty, which had been gathering while Elihu was speaking, the voice of the Creator is heard, calling upon Job, as one who has been obscuring the Divine counsel by ignorant words, to gird up his loins and prepare for the contest he has so often invoked.

II. GOD'S QUESTIONS TO MAN'S REASON AND CONSCIENCE. (Ver. 4—ch. xxxix. 30.) These questions all appeal to man's wonder and curiosity, which impel him to seek the causes of things, and are therefore indirect reminders of his ignorance which can find no last answer to the questions he cannot but ask. 1. *Questions on the mode of creation.* (Vers. 4—15.) (1) How was *the earth* founded? Who prescribed its limits? How shall the solid pillars, on which in the fancy of the ancient world it was conceived as resting, be themselves conceived as supported? Where is the corner-stone of this world-building, and who laid it? How can that great epoch of creation be realized in imagination when all the celestial beings held jubilee over the new-born world? We conceive of the existence of the earth in space under different notions than these; but is the wonder of a world rolling in space, and bound by the principle of gravitation to other bodies, a less wondrous conception, or one more easy to explain? (2) So with *the great sea.* Who gave it its limits, who shut in as with gates the vast flood of waters? Breaking forth, as it seemed, from the womb of earth with impetuous force, yet governed and kept within bounds, so that its proud waves cannot transcend the limits fixed by Omnipotence, clothed with the raiment of clouds, the great ocean awakes in all minds the sense of sublimity, the emotion of awe.

> "Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
> Glasses itself in tempests; in all time,—
> Calm or convulsed, in breeze, or gale, or storm,
> Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
> Dark-heaving—boundless, endless, and sublime,
> The image of eternity, the throne
> Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime
> The monsters of the deep are made; each zone
> Obeys thee: thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone."

(3) Or look again at *the dawn* in its splendid beauty, which men worshipped as Eôs, Ushas, Aurora; consider the regularity of its appearance, gladdening the hearts of all creatures. Who bade the dawn arise and gild the summits of the mountain, causing the earth to flash with all her brilliant variety of colours? Who bade the sun clothe the torrent with rainbows? Nay, who made yonder sun a symbol of righteousness, instinctively perceived by the human conscience, so that ill-doers flee before its revealing beams, for their stronghold of darkness is broken open and their power is overthrown? 2. *Question continued: earth's depths and heights, and the forces that thence proceed.* (Vers. 16—27.) (1) *The depths under the earth.* (Vers. 16—18.) God calls man to reflect upon the immeasurable, the inaccessible; to cause his thought to plunge into the abysses of the sea, to pass in imagination those gloomy portals where the sun goes down, and which lead to Hades, the realm of shadows and of darkness; or with extensive view to survey the broad earth in all its vastness from east to west. "Cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd" to one spot by the conditions of the bodily life, our mind has spiritual capacities and organs by which we may have notions of the Infinite, and these fill us with the sense of the unsearchableness of God. (2) Again, from the depths let fancy soar to *the bright heights above* (vers. 19—21), let it seek to explore the unapproachable fount of light or the seat of darkness. Still our ignorance blushes and hides her face before

the Divine secrets of existence. With what keen irony does Jehovah rebuke the sciolists of every age in ver. 21? Shall short-lived man presume to know the beginning and source of anything? What though we may have cleared up some childlike confusions of thought, have introduced some method and system into our conceptions of the universe, have reduced heat and light to modes of motion, traced the correlation of forces, and perhaps are on our way to the conception of a oneness of force in all its various manifestations: what then? Whence force? Whence and what is motion? Approach as indefinitely near as we may to the last generalization, to the ultimate germ-principle of the genesis of the universe, there will still remain the unknown and the unknowable; there will be need and room still for wonder, worship, reverence, religion. (3) Or turn to *the wonders of the atmosphere:* snow and hail, light and wind (vers. 22—27). The questions here asked again are those of childlike wonder and ignorance. We do not put them in the same way. Science restates these questions for us; but only to give our wonder a new direction, a wider scope, a more intelligent quality. 3. *The wonders of the air and starry heavens.* (Vers. 28—38.) (1) Here *a number of natural phenomena and processes* are mentioned, and the explanation of them in like manner demanded. The generation of rain, of dew, of ice, of frost,—science *mediately* explains these, i.e. traces them to their secondary causes, and brings these causes under certain general laws. But thus the interest deepens in the phenomena; the wonder is not less, but more. (2) The *guidance of the stars*, and their influence upon the earth (vers. 32, 33). The Pleiades, or seven stars, appear as if threaded upon a skein, as a necklace of jewels. Who formed that wondrous thread? Or who can loose the fetters of Orion, so that that splendid figure of the heavens should fall to pieces or descend from the sky? Can man lead forth the splendid stars (Mazzaroth) in their season?—Jupiter, Venus, Mars, and the Bear along with its little ones? Knowest thou the laws of the heaven, by which the course of the planets, the changes of the day and of the year, are brought about? Or canst thou determine its influence upon the earth? Modern science has answered these ancient questions with a clearness and fulness inconceivable in the days of the patriarch. But the field of contemplation and of wonder it thus opens to us is infinitely vaster (see Proctor's 'Other Worlds than Ours'). And the sentence holds good, "An undevout astronomer is mad." Perhaps there is no science which more assists the mind to the sense of the sublimity of God than astronomy. And besides the revelation of the infinitely great above our heads, microscopic science has brought to light the infinitely small beneath our feet. The longer Job stands gazing, musing, the more do the Divine questions thicken upon him. From every star, from every cloud amidst the innumerable host spread out in the welkin, from every flash of lightning and from every drop of rain, the same voice speaks, the same challenge comes. Man cannot create by all his science the least of these things, and how shall he presume to penetrate the mysteries of the counsel of the Almighty, or question the wisdom and the rightness of his doings? 4. *The animal world.* (Ver. 39—ch. xxxix. 30.) A rich field of study is opened here in the evidences of natural history to the creative power and the loving providence of God for all his creatures. We cannot turn our sermons into lectures on natural history; to descend into details would be to lose sight of those grand elementary truths of which nature's every page furnishes such abundant illustrations. For purposes of teaching, religion and science must to some extent be kept apart in their consideration. That is, we must not burden religious teaching with natural details, however interesting; nor interrupt at every step a scientific lesson, in order to pronounce a homily, or thrust forward a moral application. But viewed in a general way for the purpose of stimulating intelligent religious feeling, the animal world presents: (1) *Variety*, rich and boundless, of form, of structure, of mode, and existence. How different the powers of the animals here enumerated—the lion, the raven, the goat, the wild ass, the horse! The limbs that spring and bound, that climb or fly, provided with that muscular apparatus which no human art can rival; the internal organs fitting the creature for its particular food and scene of existence;—these and all the variety of facts that come to light under this head bespeak a power and skill that can adapt the instrument to every set of circumstances, can be daunted by no difficulty, can find means for all necessary ends (see the illustrations in McCosh and Dickie's 'Typical Forms and Special Ends'). Whatever may be the scientific theory in fashion, whether

teleological or evolutionary, in so far as it is a true theory, *i.e.* correctly represents the facts of observation, it can and must lend itself to natural piety, to the confirmation of the great truths of religion. Separate the wild guesses of some scientific men from the sober theories of an accurate science, the latter must ever remain, side by side with the Bible, a witness for God. (2) Consider again the *marvellous force* that we call instinct. Instinct may possibly be defined as unconscious reason. We see traces of it in plants, and more strikingly marked ones in animals. It is a power by which these lower creatures arrive at ends, execute designs of marvellous skill and beauty, penetrate immediately to natural truth. Man, plodding his way slowly by the light of reason to his ends, stands in amazement before the effects and results of this mysterious mind-force. Well he may; for what is this force, so constant, so unerring, so matchless, but a direct emanation and impartation from the Creator himself? (3) And again our *sense of the beautiful and the sublime* is awakened by the study of animal life. The description of the war-horse in ch. XXXIX. has always been reckoned among the most striking examples of the sublime. His strength, his vibrating mane and trembling neck, all quivering with emotion, his fiery spirit breathing, as it were, fire through his nostrils, pawing the ground in his impatience, rushing to the charge at the battle-signal, —the whole is a living expression of Divine force, awful and beautiful to behold. The analytic habits of scientific thought may hinder, if we do not guard against it, our simple and intense appreciation of nature and nature's individual objects as appealing to our sense of wonder, awe, and beauty. These feelings were given to lead us upward to the Fountain of all existence, to adore the beauty and the might of God. Thus "the book of animal life, that God here writes down for us, may be to us a true book of training for all virtues" (Cramer). If God cares so closely and so providently for the life of the lower animals, how much more are we, his children, his care? This wondrous life in body, soul, and mind; these capacities of moral improvement, of increasing knowledge of eternal life in communion with himself;—will he not care for them? Let the cry of the dumb creatures remind us of our need of prayer, and of him who delights to hear; let the contemplation of the beauty and order of their divinely created life fill us with disgust at the disorder of sin in our own heart and life, and let us seek, in the new redeemed mode of existence, to use and improve all our powers, and consecrate them to the service of our faithful Creator, our compassionate Father and Redeemer.—J.

Vers. 4, 19, 32, 33.—*Human impotence and ignorance exposed.* Job's affliction is a mystery—a mystery that needs to be revealed. Job has not given the explanation of it. He has not known it. His friends have failed. It has been attributed to his sin; but he is confident in his honest integrity, and cannot be persuaded that he is suffering punishment, for he has not a consciousness of guilt. Elihu has indicated the hidden nature of the Divine works, and has not made the mystery clearer. But he has closed the lips of them who would accuse God of wrong and unjust dealing. Job is being led, perhaps blindfold, to a final exposition of the whole. By imperfect knowledge of the purpose of God, Job may be led to wrong conclusions. But God will not forsake his faithful servant, of whom the Divine testimony at the beginning was that he "sinned not with his tongue;" and at the end that he had "spoken the thing which is right." It is still night with Job; he is in the dark as to the purpose of his affliction, but the morning breaketh. And whilst God has appeared hitherto as the Punisher of Job, he will ere long declare himself his Friend, and when he has well tried his faithful servant will amply reward him. But there are processes in the Divine method. Job has to be humbled to the very dust, and the present stage in that process is to reveal the littleness of man in presence of the Most High. Human impotence and ignorance are displayed in presence of the wonderful creation of God.

I. GOD'S WORK INDEPENDENT OF MAN. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" "Hast thou commanded the morning," and "caused the day-spring to know his place?" "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea?" etc.

II. GOD'S WORK ABOVE MAN. "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?" etc.

III. GOD'S WORK UNKNOWN TO MAN. "Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven?" "Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts?" etc. Thus is Job taught amidst the

wonders of God's creation how great is the Creator. If his works are past finding out by puny man, surely his purpose which he hath hidden is beyond the reach of human research. It is another step in the valley of humiliation for him who is finally found biting the dust.—R. G.

Ver. 1.—*A theophany.* At length Job has his wish. He has been longing to meet with God and praying for God to reveal himself. The time has now come for God to hear his prayer and make his will known. This is far more important than man's speculations.

I. THE COMING OF GOD. 1. *The time of his coming.* God comes last. The three friends have had their say, reiterating till they weary us. Job has been free to vent his grief and his despair. Elihu, more enlightened, yet not quite attaining to the full light, has uttered his long harangue. All have said all they had to say, and throughout God has been silent. Now it is his time to appear. God will have the last word in every controversy, in every life's story, in the great world's history. "In the beginning God——" In the end, too, there is God. Christ is the Alpha and also the Omega. We have but to wait in patience. The end is not yet; when it comes God reveals himself. 2. *The manner of his coming.* "Out of the whirlwind." When Elijah met God the Lord was not in the whirlwind. God uses various vehicles of revelation—the "still small voice" for Elijah, the whirlwind for Job. He is not tied down to any routine. He has no rigid ceremonies. He adapts his methods to circumstances and requirements. Anything God has made may be a chariot in which he will come to visit his people. Sometimes it is best for him to come in storm and tempest, to hush our vain babble and subdue our wayward spirit. The noisy debate of men is drowned in the whirlwind of God.

II. THE ACTION OF GOD. When he comes it is to answer Job. 1. *For Job's sake.* Then the first thought is of the patriarch. He is the central figure in the whole drama. But we might have thought that the three friends would have been rebuked first. Yet their condemnation is postponed. It is more necessary for Job to be relieved of his perplexity and led into a right state of mind. 2. *An answer.* Then God had heard what preceded. He may not make his presence manifest, but yet he is a silent Auditor at all our conferences, debates, quarrels. He hears our hasty words. He perceives our foolish doubts. God's treatment of us is not irrespective of our action. He takes account of all we do and say, and his action is adjusted accordingly. Thus God answers man. He meets the doubt, takes up the difficulty, handles the complaint, deals with the prayer, replies to the question. We may have to wait long for the answer. It may not come in this life. But as it came to Job, so at last, in God's time, it will assuredly come to us, and when it has come no more need be said. It will certainly be full, sufficient, satisfying. 3. *In words.* The Lord spoke out of the whirlwind. God usually answers us on earth by deeds of providence, or by the voiceless pleading of his Spirit in our hearts. But he has given us words in the messages that prophets have brought to us and that are recorded in the Bible. For us, however, God's great answer to every question and every prayer is the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. The gospel shows that God has not left us to work out our problems in the dark. It reveals God speaking to us, and his message in Christ is one to give light and peace.—W. F. A.

Vers. 2, 3.—*God's answer.* This is perplexing. When after long delays God has at length appeared, we expect him to clear up all doubts and to fully vindicate his providence to Job, while he also vindicates Job in the presence of the three friends. But God acts in a very different way, and rather seems to defend darkness and mystery than to shed light. Yet if we look into the matter carefully we shall see that all the light that could be given with profit comes through the new impression of awe and mystery that the language of God's reply produces.

I. IGNORANCE MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED AND HUMBLED. If anything had been most painfully apparent to Job throughout the whole debate, rousing his scorn as well as his anger, it was the fact that his three friends had "darkened counsel by words without knowledge." Now God will have Job see that even he has been making the same mistake. The perplexed patriarch has been throwing out a cloud of indignant words,

but he has not really understood what he has been talking about. Such words have not helped to the explanation of things; on the contrary, they have been misleading, darkening counsel instead of throwing light upon it. Now, until Job perceives this, he cannot be led to a vision of reassuring truth. While we think we know, our ignorance is invincible. So long as we are satisfied with ourselves, we cannot receive the deliverance of God. The first lesson must reveal our ignorance and humble our pride.

II. MYSTERY MUST BE MANFULLY FACED. Job had lain groaning on his ash-heap. Let him now gird up his loins like a man. Humility should not be thought to exclude courage. We are most brave when we think least of ourselves. Now, a courageous facing of difficulty is necessary if we would conquer it. It is useless to rave against the mystery of life. Let us go up to it and confront it calmly. This is the second step to the conquest of moral and intellectual difficulties. But there may be a touch of irony in God's words to Job—merciful and not bitter, kindly meant, to complete his lesson of humility. Can the patriarch face the mystery? Let him try. If he fails in the honest attempt, he will be in the very condition for receiving the help of a Divine revelation.

III. THOUGHT MUST BE ROUSED AND STIMULATED. Job had been questioning God; God will now question Job. God's first answer to Job is to request an answer from the patriarch. It is easy to put questions. We should be wiser if we listened to those that are addressed to us. The method of the reply to Job out of the whirlwind was fitted to awaken the thinking of the patriarch. We must learn to approach the mysteries of God with an open and an active mind. No help can come to us so long as we remain inert. Perhaps one effect of the awakening of thought will be to reveal our own littleness by the side of the awful greatness of God. This is what God's answer to Job seems designed to produce in his hearer. Then we can be no longer perplexed at mystery. We see we must expect it. At the same time, the greatness and goodness of God in his works teach us to trust him and not despair at the mystery. —W. F. A.

Ver. 7.—*The song of creation.* I. A GLAD SONG. This highly poetic picture describes the joy of creation. When the world was made God saw that it was good (Gen. i. 10). There is no Manichæan pessimism in the Bible. Nature is full of gladness. This we should expect when we know the character of God, for he whose name is love must take pleasure in the joy of his creatures. We may see the same truth in the construction of the world. It is beautiful, and made to minister to the happiness of the myriads of living creatures that inhabit it. We may find it hard to catch the echoes of the song of creation, yet even amid the toils and cares of life it is cheering to be reminded of its rare and ravishing melody.

II. A SONG OF PRAISE. This was more than gladness. The Creator's glory is celebrated in the joyful recognition of the greatness and beauty of his works. Nature-worship always tends to grovel in the mire, twining itself most closely about the lowest thing in nature. Wordsworth was a prophet of nature of the highest order, because he saw more than nature, and because he took nature as a mirror of the spiritual world. The glad praises of the sons of the morning begin the history of the world with a hymn to God.

III. A HOPEFUL SONG. It was sung by morning stars, in view of the new day of creation. It sprang out of the fresh youth of the world. We praise God for what he has done since that first psalm was sung. Yet we too can sing in hope, for God still lights up the future with glory. There is always something melancholy in a song of memory. The right attitude of the sons of God is the forward gaze.

IV. A HARMONIOUS SONG. The morning stars sang together. Plato discovered the music of the spheres in their rhythmic movements. There is no music in war, confusion, or selfishness. The joy of heaven is the gladness of love. Sympathy tunes the sweetest music the heart can utter. If we would emulate the joyous praises of the angels, we must follow their willing obedience, and live in that heavenly atmosphere of love which is their home.

V. AN ANCIENT SONG. Vastly more ancient than any one imagined in the days of Job. The brain grows dizzy in the vain attempt to form some idea of the immeasurable

antiquity that is opened up to us by the wonderful story of geology. Before all that came the first song of creation. This thought dwarfs the life of man. Job had considered of the brevity of life from another point of view, and with regard to the melancholy prospect of its termination. Now he is to look back and see how recent was his origin. This was to check dogmatic assumptions. How can the creature of a day enter into the age-long counsels of God?

VI. AN ETERNAL SONG. The far-off antiquity was joyous in the light and love of God. But the Divine light and love have not faded out of the world. God is still creating. Every fresh spring is a new birth from God, every day has its dawning, every child its gladsome youth. The theory of evolution suggests even more joyous creations in the future. But better than them all is the second creation, the regeneration of souls, for which there is joy in the presence of the angels of God (Luke xv. 10). The joy of creation is the angels' joy; that of redemption is "*in the presence* of the angels." For this greater joy does not first arise in them; it springs from the very heart of God.—W. F. A.

Vers. 8—11.—*Lessons of the sea.* Passing from the thought of the joy of creation, when the morning stars sang together, we find our thoughts directed to the sea in its power and pride, first formed by the hand of God, and ever reined in by his commanding voice.

I. GOD'S POWER OVER WHAT IS MOST GREAT. The sea strikes our imagination chiefly because of its vastness. It only consists of water, which, when we see it in the trickling rill or hold it in the cup, is one of the most simple and seemingly harmless things in nature. But in gathering volume it gains strength. The little rill swells into the roaring torrent. The water of the sea grows into a tumult of awful forces before which the strongest man is helpless. To the ocean Byron says—

> "Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
> Stops with the shore; upon the watery plain
> The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
> A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
> When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
> He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
> Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown."

Yet the sea is under God's complete control. Nothing is too strong for God. No might can escape his authority. Kings and emperors, men of genius and men of vast resources, are all subject to the present rule, and must all answer to the final call of God.

II. GOD'S ORDER IN WHAT IS MOST TURBULENT. Nothing looks so wild and lawless as the sea in a storm. In the mixing of the elements, when the wind shrieks among the waves, and the waters leap up madly to the sky, we seem to be back in the confusion of Old Chaos. Yet we know that the raging sea is as truly under the laws of nature as the fields with their growing crops. Every drop of water is as absolutely obedient to law as the stars in their orderly courses. God rides upon the storm. He rules over the unruly. Wild tempests of human passion, the fury of the despot and the rage of the people, are all watched and controlled by God. When black clouds gather and angry waves rise on the sea of human life, let us remember that there is One who rules over nations and cities as well as over the wild forces of nature.

III. GOD'S RESTRAINT OF WHAT IS MOST CHANGEFUL. The waters threaten to invade the land. But there is a limit to their progress. Each wave that tries most eagerly to outrun its predecessor is compelled to break and fall back in confusion, hissing with vexation as it is dragged down among the pebbles. The tide rises, higher and yet higher; but it has its limit. God gives man a certain scope for freedom. He can rise and fall like the wave, and ebb and flow like the tide. Sometimes he seems to have a very long leash. But it is not endless, and God has hold of it. At the right moment he will draw it in, and then all man's pride will be of no use. Our life is like the shifting tide, like the restless wave. We are wearied with its incessant changefulness. It is like the sea crawling up on the beach, and creeping back again, moaning on the shore night and day without intermission. There is monotony even in the changes. That is just the point to be noted. They are all limited and under restraint.

So is it with those of life; they are limited and restrained by the providential care of our Father.—W. F. A.

Vers. 31, 32.—*Astrology and astronomy.* The earliest science was that which concerned itself with the movements of the heavenly bodies; until recent times this science was universally associated with the fortunes of men, and it is still thus associated by the greater part of the world. What is our relation to the heavenly bodies?

I. IN COMMON WITH THE STARS, WE ARE PART OF ONE DIVINE UNIVERSE. The study of the heavens is the study of God's works. He dwells in the most distant systems, and equally in this familiar world. All parts of the universe obey the fixed laws of God; all move in harmony under his directing hand. Thus all the worlds are linked together. We are members of a very large "household of God."

II. WE ARE SUBJECT TO INFLUENCES FROM THE HEAVENLY BODIES. We have given up astrology as a delusion. But we are entirely dependent for life itself upon one heavenly body, the sun. This earth is not self-sufficient. It would be frozen to death if the sun were to cease to pour into it his streams of heat. Some have connected sun-spots with social and financial crises! Although this may be but a survival of an ancient superstition, perhaps it is not wise to affirm that it must be nothing more. Now, the physical heavens have always been to us a type of the spiritual heavens. Spiritually our life is not self-contained. Astrology had this in its favour, that it taught a certain largeness of view. It did not permit a person to confine his attention to his own parish. It compelled him to look up and to look to distant things. It is our duty to "do the next thing," and not to waste our time in star-gazing. Nevertheless, we need to be lifted in thought out of the petty round of interests that immediately concern us, even in order that we may best discharge our duty in connection with those interests. Astronomy is an elevating and enlarging science; much more so is a true theology.

III. WE CANNOT AFFECT THE HEAVENLY BODIES. They roll on their age-long courses in sublime indifference to our greatest achievements and strongest desires. Job is asked whether he can bind up the cluster of Pleiades, as he would bind up a bunch of jewels. Can he unclasp the belt of great Orion? Here man is nothing. This is a lesson in humility. Yet have we not a grand encouragement in knowing that the Lord of the starry universe is our Father who cares for us, listens to our cry, and helps our need?

IV. WE CANNOT RULE THE SEASONS. As summer came on, Job would see the brilliant little group of the Pleiades rising before the sun and the giant Orion sinking out of sight; and this would be a sign that the fruitful season was approaching. But Job could not hasten it. The farmer cannot bring about the seasons he would choose. It is useless to murmur at their apparent inopportuneness. It is wiser to learn the lesson they teach us of our absolute dependence on God. Before these great phenomena of nature we are as nothing. Yet in the sight of God we are more than all of them; for they are material, we spiritual; they his works, we his children.—W. F. A.

Ver. 41.—*The raven.* Job is asked to think of the raven, and consider how it is provided for. Christ answers the question: "Consider the ravens; that they sow not, neither reap; which have no store-chamber nor barn; and God feedeth them: of how much more value are ye than the birds!" (Luke xii. 24). But the lessons are not the same in both cases. While Job is to see the greatness of God in providence, Christ directs attention to his care and kindness in providing for his creatures. There are some characteristics of the raven that accentuate the ideas of providential power and kindness.

I. ONE OF THE LOWER CREATURES. God is not only concerned with spiritual beings. He makes his power felt, and he shows his kindness in the animal world. Nothing is so insignificant as to be beneath his notice. Material wants are thought of and supplied by God. But if he supplies these wants of the lower creatures, much more will he satisfy the deeper hunger of spiritual beings.

II. A WILD BIRD. Man cares for his domestic pets, and leaves the wild creatures to shift for themselves. But these animals are not neglected by God. Though building its nest in the depths of the forest or in some remote mountain recess among desolate

cliffs and crags, the raven is watched over and cared for by God. Though no meek caged bird, but a free denizen of the wilderness, it is not beyond his control. God cares for his wandering children. Wild races, savage tribes, forgotten peoples, forlorn souls, are all under the notice and care of God.

III. A REPULSIVE BIRD. The raven has no gorgeous plumage; there is no music in its croak; it feeds on carrion. Yet God provides for it. God is very wide in his sympathies. We are narrow, partial, selective. While we favour one person and slight another, the large bounty of God is extended to all his creatures. God provides for the insignificant sparrow and the croaking raven. He cares for both insignificant and objectionable men and women. We must remember, however, that the repulsiveness of the raven is not moral. Sin is worse than feeding on carrion. God provides for sinners, sending rain and sunshine alike on the good and on the evil. Nevertheless, his best blessings are reserved for those of his children who know and love him.

IV. A NATURAL CREATURE. The raven is a part of nature. It simply follows its unconscious instincts, and in doing so it finds that its wants are provided for. God who implanted instincts satisfies them. We are to follow our whole nature, not the animal part only, but also the spiritual, which in us is as natural as the animal, and more important. Then, just in proportion as we keep to the laws of our being as God has constituted us, shall we find that our real wants are provided for. But if God has given to us reason and conscience, and only instinct to the raven, we must use our higher faculties in obtaining what is needful, just as the raven uses what is highest in its nature. The raven is not fed if it lives idly like the lily, which God still cares for in its own sphere; and man will not be satisfied if he lives only like the raven. Each creature must follow its full nature.

V. A PARENT. God implants parental love. When the young ravens cry, God feeds them by leading their parents to food. God uses natural affections for the good of his creatures. He blesses children through their parents.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Vers. 1—30.—This chapter completes the survey of animate nature begun at ch. xxxviii. 39. The habits and instincts of the wild goat, the wild ass, and wild cattle are first noticed (vers. 1—12); then a transition is made to the most remarkable of birds, the ostrich (vers. 13—18). Next, the horse is described, and, as it were, depicted, in a passage of extraordinary fire and brilliancy (vers. 19—25). Finally, a return is made to remarkable birds, and the habits of the hawk and eagle obtain mention (vers. 26—30). Throughout, the object is to show the infinite wisdom of God, and the utter incompetence of man to explain the mysteries of nature.

Ver. 1.—**Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth?** The wild goats of Western Asia are of two kinds, the *Capra ægagrus*, and the Asiatic ibex, or *Capra Sinaïtica*. The latter is probably the animal here intended, which is called *yā'ēl sela'*, "the wild goat of the rocks," and was known to the Assyrians as *ya-e-li*. It is an animal with large rough horns curving backwards, closely allied to the steinbock, or bouquetin, of the Swiss and Tyrolian Alps. It is very shy and wild, difficult of approach, and inhabiting only the most rocky and desolate tracts of Syria and Arabia. Representations of the animal, which was hunted by the Assyrian kings, are common upon the Ninevite monuments (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 141). **Or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve?** "The hinds" here are probably the females of the species of ibex intended. The clause is therefore a mere repetition, in other words, of the preceding one.

Ver. 2.—**Canst thou number the months that they fulfil?** With an animal so wild as the ibex, these secrets of nature would be difficult to observe and note down. In Job's time probably no one had made such subjects an object of inquiry. **Or knowest thou the time when they bring forth?** This would be less difficult to observe. The breeding-time of most wild animals is known in the country which produces them.

Ver. 3.—**They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows.** Parturition is a pain, even to the brute creation, though, comparatively speaking, a light one. (For the figure of speech by which that which causes pain is called pain, see Æschyl., 'Agam.,' l. 1427; Eurip., 'Ion,' l. 45; Herod., v. 18.)

Ver. 4.—**Their young ones are in good liking**; *i.e.* healthy and strong (comp. Dan. i. 10). **They grow up with corn**; rather, *they grow up out of doors*, or *in the open air* (see Professor Lee, *ad loc.*; and Buxtorf, 'Lex. Hebr. et Chald.,' p. 87). **They go forth, and return not unto them.** They quit their dams early, and "go forth" to provide for themselves—an indication of health and strength.

Ver. 5.—**Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass?** Two kinds of *onager*, or wild ass, seem to be intended—the one called *pere'* (פֶּרֶא), and the other *'ârôd* (עָרוֹד). These correspond probably to the *Asinus hemippus* and the *Asinus onager* of modern naturalists, the former of which is still found in the deserts of Syria, Mesopotamia, and Northern Arabia, while the latter inhabits Western Asia from 48° N. lat. southward to Persia, Beloochistan, and Western India. Sir H. A. Layard describes the former, which he saw, as a "beautiful animal, in fleetness equalling the gazelle, very wild, and of a rich fawn colour, almost pink" ('Nineveh and its Remains,' vol. i. p. 324). The latter (*Asinus onager*) was seen by Sir R. K. Porter in Persia ('Travels,' vol. i. p. 460), and is described in very similar terms. The two, however, appear to be distinct species (see Dr. Smith's 'Dict. of the Bible,' vol. iii. pp. xix., xx., Appendix). Both animals are remarkable for extreme wildness; and all attempts to domesticate the young of either have hitherto failed.

Ver. 6.—**Whose house I have made the wilderness.** The Mesopotamian regions inhabited by the *Asinus hemippus* are those vast stretches of rolling plain, treeless, producing a few aromatic shrubs and much wormwood, which intervene between the Sinjar mountain-range and the Babylonian alluvium. Here the wild ass was seen by Xenophon and the Ten Thousand, in company with ostriches, gazelles, and bustards (Xen., 'Anab.,' i. 5); and here Sir Austin Layard also made its acquaintance ('Nineveh and Babylon,' p. 270). The *Asinus onager* frequents the deserts of Khorassan and Beloochistan, which are even more barren than the Mesopotamian. **And the barren land his dwellings**; rather, *the salt land* (see the Revised Version). The great desert of Khorassan is largely impregnated with salt, and in places encrusted with it. The wild ass licks salt with avidity.

Ver. 7.—**He scorneth the multitude of the city.** Avoids, that is, the haunts of men, and is never seen near them. **Neither regardeth he the crying of the driver.** Nothing will induce the wild ass to submit to domestication.

Ver. 8.—**The range of the mountains is his pasture.** By "mountains" we must here understand rocky ranges like the Sinjar and the mountains of Beloochistan, or again those of the Sinaitic peninsula. Wild asses do not frequent the regions which we commonly call mountainous. **And he searcheth after every green thing**; *i.e.* he seeks out the small patches of pasture which are to be found in such rocky regions.

Ver. 9.—**Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib?** This is an unfortunate translation, since there is no word etymologically correspondent to "unicorn" in the original. The word used is *rêm* or *reym*; and the *rêm* is distinctly said in Deut. xxxiii. 17 to have "horns." All that is said of the *rêm* in Scripture points to some species of wild cattle, and recent critics are almost universally agreed thus far at any rate. Assyrian investigation carries us a step further. It is found that the wild bull so often represented on the monuments as hunted by the Ninevite monarchs was known to the Assyrians by the name of *rimu* or *rim*. Careful examination of the sculptures has resulted in the identification of this animal with *Bos primigenius*, an extinct species, probably identical with the *urus* of the Romans, which Cæsar saw in Gaul, and of which he has left a description. "These uri," he says, "are scarcely less than elephants in size, but in their nature, colour, and form are bulls. Great is their strength, and great their speed; nor do they spare man nor beast, when once they have caught sight of him. . . . Even when they are young, they cannot be habituated to man and made tractable. The size and shape of their horns are very different from those of our own oxen" ('De Bell. Gall.,' vi. 28).

Ver. 10.—**Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow?** That is, "as thou bindest the ox?" **Canst thou make him plough for thee? Or will he harrow the valleys after thee?** Another common employment of oxen.

Ver. 11.—**Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great?** If a man could bind the urus to his plough or to his harrow, still he could not "trust" him. The huge brute would be sure to prove unmanageable, and would only cause damage to his owner. **Or wilt thou leave thy labour to him?** As thou leavest many labours to thy oxen, confiding in their docility.

Ver. 12.—**Wilt thou believe him**—rather, *Wilt thou confide in him* (see the Revised Version)—**that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?** *i.e.* convey the harvest from the field to the homestead, that it may be safely lodged in thy barn. The "strength" of the urus (ver. 11) would make all such labours light to

him, but his savage nature would render it impossible to use him for them.

Ver. 13.—**Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks?** rather, *the wing of the ostrich* (literally, *of ostriches*) *is exultant*; i.e. a thing that it glories in. The allusion is, perhaps, to the flapping of its wings by the ostrich, as it hurries over the ground, which is something like that of a cock before crowing or after beating an antagonist. **Or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?** This clause is very obscure, but may perhaps mean, *Are her feathers and plumage kindly?* (see the Revised Version); *i.e.* does she use them for the same kindly purpose as other birds—to warm her eggs, and forward the process of hatching them?

Ver. 14.—**Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust.** The best authorities tell us that in tropical countries ostriches, having scratched a hole in the sand, and deposited their eggs in it, cover the eggs over with a layer of sand, sometimes as much as a foot in thickness, and, leaving them during the daytime to be kept warm by the heat of the sun, only incubate at night. It is evidently this habit of the bird that is here alluded to. That in cooler countries ostriches do not do this is not to the point. The habit was known in Job's time, and was so noticeable as to characterize the bird to a large extent.

Ver. 15.—**And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them.** Where the eggs are covered by a layer of sand a foot thick, this danger is not incurred. But when the eggs are numerous—and they are sometimes as many as thirty—they are apt to be very poorly covered, and the results follow which are described in the text.

Ver. 16.—**She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers.** This is a deduction from what has preceded, and discloses no new fact. Recent careful observation of the habits of the ostrich indicates that the parental instinct is not wanting, though it may be weaker than in most birds. Both the male and the female incubate at night, and, when the nest is approached by the hunter, the parent bird or birds will leave it, and try to draw him away from it by running on in front of him, or feigning to attack him, much as peewits do in our own country. **Her labour is in vain without fear**; or, *though her labour is in vain, she is without fear* (see the Revised Version); *i.e.* though she is often disappointed of her immediate hope of offspring, through her eggs being crushed and destroyed, yet she grows no wiser, she does not fear for the future.

Ver. 17.—**Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding.** There is an Arab proverb—"As stupid as an ostrich"—which the Arabs justify on five grounds: (1) The ostrich, they say, will swallow iron, stones, leaden bullets, and other things, which injure and sometimes prove fatal to it. (2) When hunted, it thrusts its head into a bush, and imagines that the hunter does not see it. (3) It allows itself to be captured by transparent devices. (4) It neglects its eggs. (5) Its head is small, and contains but a small quantity of brains. To these grounds I may add that in the South-African ostrich-farms, the birds allow themselves to be confined within a certain space by a fence of sticks and string raised about a foot from the ground. They seem to think that they cannot step over it.

Ver. 18.—**What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider.** The ostrich sometimes tries to elude pursuit by crouching and hiding behind hillocks or in hollows, making itself as little conspicuous as possible; but, when these attempts fail, and it starts off to run in the open, then it "lifts itself up" to its full elevation, beats the air with its wings, and scours along at a pace that no horse can equal. The Greeks with Xenophon, though well mounted, failed to catch a single ostrich ('Anab.,' i. 5. § 3).

Ver. 19.—**Hast thou given the horse strength?** (comp. Ps. cxlvii. 10). *Gebûrah* means, however, more than "strength." It includes courage and all martial excellence. **Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?** Many objections have been taken to this expression; and endeavours have been made to show that the word used (רַעְמָה) does not mean "thunder," but "a tremulous motion," "quivering muscles and a tossing mane," or else "scorn," "indignation." But as רַעַם *always* means "thunder" (ch. xxvi. 14; xxxix. 25; Ps. lxxvii. 19; lxxxi. 8; civ. 7; Isa. xxix. 6), it seems unlikely that רַעְמָה means anything else. To the objection that the metaphor is "incongruous" (Professor Lee), it would appear to be enough to reply that one of our greatest prose-poets has seen in it peculiar fitness. "So *true every way*," says Carlyle, on the passage: "true eyesight and vision for all things; material things, not less than spiritual; 'the horse—Hast thou clothed his neck with *thunder*?'" ('Lectures on Heroes,' p. 78).

Ver. 20.—**Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper?** rather, *Canst thou make him leap forward as a grasshopper?* The bound with which a war-horse rushes to battle seems intended. **The glory of his nostrils is terrible.** When the war-horse snorts, men tremble (see Jer. viii. 16, "The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole

land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones").

Ver. 21.—**He paweth in the valley.** Canon Cook appositely compares Virgil's "cavat tellurem" ('Georg.,' iii. 87, 88), and Professor Lee Pope's expression, that "ere they start a thousand steps are lost." The verb is in the plural, because a line of cavalry, all pawing and eager to be off, is intended to be represented. **And rejoiceth in his strength.** Nothing is more remarkable than the eagerness and joy which war-horses show when the battle approaches. They are generally more excited than their riders. **He goeth on to meet the armed men;** literally, *he rusheth upon the weapons.* Equally true in ancient and in modern warfare. The main use of cavalry is in the charge (see Denison's 'Hist. of Cavalry,' pp. 507—512).

Ver. 22.—**He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword.** "The cavalry of modern times will rush undismayed upon the line of opposing bayonets" (Professor Lee). "We do not believe that a body of infantry ever existed that, with the bayonet alone, unsupported by fire, could have checked the determined charge of good horsemen" (Denison, p. 510).

Ver. 23.—**The quiver rattleth against him.** In the Assyrian sculptures the quiver of mounted archers is often hung at the side, instead of at the back. In this position it would rattle against the neck of the war-horse (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 25). **The glittering spear and the shield** would occasionally strike against his neck or his shoulders.

Ver. 24.—**He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage.** This is a common metaphor to denote the rapidity with which the horse covers the space that lies before him. Virgil has, "Corripiunt spatia" ('Æneid,' v. 316); Silius Italicus, "Campum volatu rapuere" (iii. 308); Shakespeare, "He seemed in running to devour the way." Arab poets have similar expressions (see Bochart, 'Hieroz.,' pt. i. bk. ii. c. 8). **Neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.** (So Schultens, Canon Cook, and our Revisers.) But most recent critics prefer to render, "He standeth not still when the trumpet soundeth," and compare Virgil's "Stare loco nescit" ('Georg.,' iii. 84).

Ver. 25.—**He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha!** literally, *at the trumpet;* i.e. at the sound of the trumpet. The utterance, "Ha, ha!" (*heâkh*), is an imitation of the horse's snort or neigh. **And he smelleth the battle afar off.** Not merely presages it, as Pliny says ("Equi præsagiunt pugnam," 'Hist. Nat.,' viii. 42), or perceives it, but seems to *scent* it. The open and quivering nostrils raise this idea. **The thunder of the captains, and the shouting.** On the great noise made by advancing armies in ancient times, see 2 Kings vii. 6; Isa. v. 28—30; Jer. viii. 16, etc.

Ver. 26.—**Doth the hawk fly** (or, *soar*) **by thy wisdom?** The hawk's strength of wing is extraordinary, and one of the greatest of natural marvels. Can Job claim to have contrived it? Many as have been the attempts made, human ingenuity has not yet devised anything that can fly. And **stretch her wings toward the south?** Migrate, *i.e.*, when winter approaches, to the warmer southern regions. Few things in nature are more remarkable than the instinct of migratory birds.

Ver. 27.—**Doth the eagle mount up at thy command?** The enumeration of natural marvels ends with the eagle, the monarch of birds, as it began with the lion, the king of beasts (ch. xxxviii. 39). The power of the eagle to "mount up," notwithstanding its great size and weight, is very surprising. The species intended in this place is probably the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaëtos*) or else the imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), which are both of them common in Syria and Mesopotamia. **And make her nest on high?** The nests of eagles are almost always built on lofty, generally on inaccessible, rocks. Aristotle says, Ποιοῦνται δὲ αὐτὰς (*sc.* τὰς νεοττίας), οὐκ ἐν πεδινοῖς τόποις, ἀλλ' ἐν ὑψηλοῖς μάλιστα μὲν, καὶ ἐν πέτραις ἀποκρήμνοις (comp. Jer. xlix. 16).

Ver. 28.—**She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place;** literally, *the tooth of the rock.* The craggy summits of rocks bear a resemblance to the fangs of a tooth. Hence we have in France the Dent du Chat, and in Switzerland the Dent de Jaman and the Dent du Midi.

Ver. 29.—**From thence she seeketh the prey,** and **her eyes behold afar off.** Aristotle gives this as a reason for the lofty flight of the eagle, Ὑψοῦ δὲ πέταται, ὅπως ἐπὶ πλεῖστον τόπον καθορᾷ. The keen sight of the eagle is recognized by modern savants: "Aquila, genre d'oiseaux de proie . . . caractérisé par un bec sans dentelure et droit à sa base jusqu'auprès de l'extrémité, où il se courbe beaucoup; par des pieds robustes armés d'ongles aigus et tranchants, *par leur vue perçante* et leur grande envergure" ('Dictionnaire Universelle des Sciences,' p. 25).

Ver. 30.—**Her young ones also suck up blood.** It has been asserted that this is not the case, since they are fed on carrion (Merx). But, as eagles are known to seize fawns, hares, lambs, and other small animals, and transport them to their eyries, their young must certainly be nourished, in part,

on the flesh of animals newly killed. And where the slain are, there is she (comp. Deut. xxi. 18; Matt. xxiv. 28; Luke xvii. 37). Eagles, or at any rate birds "more resembling eagles than vultures," are commonly represented on the Assyrian monuments, especially in battle-scenes, where they either feed on the dead bodies of the slain, or tear out their entrails, or sometimes carry up aloft the decapitated head of some unfortunate soldier (see the 'Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archæology,' vol. viii. p. 59, and pls. ii. and iii.).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—30.—*Jehovah to Job: the first answer—the examination: 6. Concerning certain wild animals.* I. THE MOUNTAIN GOAT AND THE HIND. (Vers. 1—4.) 1. *The creatures intended.* It is generally agreed that these are the steinbock, or ibex, and the stag. The former, inhabiting exclusively the more rocky and desolate parts of the country, possesses fore legs considerably shorter than its hinder, which enable it to ascend with more facility than to descend, and lead it, when pursued, to attempt to gain the summits of the mountains. In accordance with this peculiarity, it is interesting to note that Jehovah describes the animals as "rock-climbers." 2. *The circumstance alluded to.* This is not so much the secrecy of their gestation as the ease and facility with which they bring forth. "They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows," *i.e.* those things which cause their labour-pains, viz. their offspring; and these young animals thus easily born, though not without pain, "are in good liking," *i.e.* grow up lusty and strong, not by feeding upon corn, as the Authorized Version seems to imply, but in the open country, away from their dams, whom they early forsake, going forth and not returning unto them. 3. *The question thereanent.* Jehovah asks Job if he knows the time when these mountain goats, or rock-climbers, bear, or can number the months that the hinds fulfil. Clearly not designed to test the amount or accuracy of Job's information concerning natural history, this interrogation seems as little meant to affirm that everything connected with the pregnancy of these creatures was a mystery. Its intention rather is to emphasize the fact that the whole process of conception and parturition is carried on with such admirable regularity, ease, and success, as to suggest the thought that it must be owing to the wise guidance and watchful care of some presiding mind. "Well," asks Jehovah, "whose is it? Is it thine, O Job? or is it not rather mine?"

II. THE WILD ASS. (Vers. 5—8.) 1. *Its swiftness of foot.* This characteristic is alluded to in the name *pere*. Consul Wetstein (quoted by Delitzsch) describes the wild ass as a dirty yellow creature with a white belly, single-hoofed and long-eared, its hornless head somewhat resembling that of a gazelle, though much larger, and its hair having the dryness of the hair of the deer. Like the wild ox, a large soft-eyed creature, horned and double-hoofed, it is remarkable for its swift running, which enables it to out-distance the fleetest rider. 2. *Its love of freedom.* This feature is referred to in the second name, *'arōd*, which denotes its shyness and untamableness, and is further represented by depicting it as scorning the tumult of the city, *i.e.* as fleeing from the haunts of men, and regarding not the crying of the driver, *i.e.* refusing to be subjected to the yoke, as scouring the desert in its boundless independence, and finding for itself a home in the barren land or salt places, *i.e.* uncultivated and uncultivable regions. 3. *Its means of support.* The wild ass licks the natron of the desert, as "all wild animals that feed on plants have a partiality for licking salt" (Delitzsch); and in quest of herbage it roams to the uttermost limit of the mountains, "sniffing after every green thing." 4. *Its possession of a Master.* This thought is suggested by Jehovah's interrogations. "The wild ass loves liberty; but who made him free? Who loosed his bands? Who sent him forth to scour the plain and range the hills? Was it thou, O Job? or was it I? The wild ass scorns the yoke of the driver; but who inspired him with this indomitable instinct? Who taught him to lick the salt and crop the herb? Are not these my doings, O my censurer? Canst thou bind this ass that I have loosed? Canst thou set a yoke upon him as I do? Art thou able to give him food as I am, or to build for him a stall as I have done in the vast steppe? It is clear, then, that thou art not the master of a wild ass, much less of a world."

III. THE UNICORN. (Vers. 9—12.) 1. *The name of the animal explained.* The *rêm*, which our translators have erroneously supposed to be a one-horned beast, was undoubtedly two-horned—a wild, fierce, untamable brute, "resembling an ox as a wild ass resembles an ass" (Gesenius). Regarded by some commentators as the buffalo (Schultens, De Wette, Umbreit, Gesenius), though this animal "only came from India to Western Asia and Europe at a more recent date," and is besides "tamable" (Delitzsch), it is more probably to be identified with the *Bos primigenius*. Tristram affirms that the rêm was the urus of Cæsar, the aueroch, of which "the nearest extant representative is the bison, which still lingers in the forests of Lithuania and the Caucasus" (Cox). 2. *The strength of the animal described.* This, with inimitable irony, Jehovah depicts by asking Job if he thought he could master this prodigious brute—first drive him home like a peaceful ox to be shut up and fed within the narrow precincts of a stall, then take him out, as a farmer now does his horses, or then did his oxen, and yoke him to his wains or carts, setting him to plough his fields or draw home his harvest-sheaves.

IV. THE OSTRICH. (Vers. 13—18.) 1. *The description of the bird.* In this are noted three points: (1) Its want of parental affection. "The wing of the ostrich [female] exulteth," *i.e.* vibrates briskly; "is she pious, wing and feather?"—the allusion being to the pious bird, the stork, which the ostrich resembles in its stilt-like structure, the beauty of its plumage, the quivering of its wings, and the gregarious habit of its life, but from which it differs in its lack of maternal affection. Depositing her eggs in the sand, where the foot of any passer-by may crush them, or they may fall a prey to jackals, wild cats, and other animals, although she does not entirely abandon the work of hatching them to the sun or her male companion, but also really incubates herself, at least during the night, yet, so easily is she startled from her nest, and so readily induced to forsake it, that she may be truthfully described as "hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers," and as being quite indifferent to the fact that her labour is without result. In consequence of this peculiarity, the hen ostrich is called by the Arabs "the wicked bird." (2) Its remarkably defective intelligence. This is emphasized as the cause of the above-described unnatural behaviour of the bird. "God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding;" and yet that the above-described are not the only stupidities of which the creature is guilty may be reasonably inferred from the circumstance that the foolishness of the ostrich is quite proverbial throughout the East, as the Arab proverb indicates, "More stupid than an ostrich." (3) Its power of speedy flight. This also is certified by an Arab proverb, "Swifter than an ostrich," and is here poetically set forth with much beauty. Starting from her nest in alarm, and lifting up herself on high, *i.e.*, as the language probably imports, flapping the air with her wings, "she scorneth the horse and his rider," leaving them behind her with perfect ease. 2. *The reason of its introduction.* Job's attention appears to be directed to the ostrich to suggest the thought that here, too, in the world of birds, there are mysteries and seeming anomalies which he cannot understand. Why should the ostrich be so differently constituted from the stork? Why should it be devoid of intelligence and parental affection, while excelling most birds in speed of foot and beauty of wing? When Job can answer that, he will have a title to challenge God for making enigmas in human life, and dark problems in the moral history of earth.

V. THE WAR-HORSE. (Vers. 19—25.) 1. *The poetical representation.* The oldest description of the war-horse, it is also the most beautiful, the most brilliant, the most impressive that has in any language been penned. As Carlyle says, "Such a living likeness has never since been drawn." "It deserves the praise of majestic simplicity, which is the first feature of classic superiority" (Delitzsch). Ancient authors supply occasional touches which remind one of the language here employed (*vide* Exposition). In respect of fulness and accuracy of details, the present sketch stands unrivalled. So intensely vivid is the picturing, that the splendid beast appears to the imagination as a living, breathing reality, a richly caparisoned steed, a perfect model of physical strength and beauty, curveting and caracoling in the very exuberance of its animal spirits, pawing the ground in its impatience, snorting through its dilated nostrils, sniffing the battle from afar, bounding as with conscious exultation when the trumpet soundeth, at every blast thereof making known by a joyous neigh, as if it cried, "Ha,

ha!" the fierceness of its lust for battle, advancing without a fear to meet an armed host, dashing in among the glancing spears, and shaking from its sides the rattling quiver. 2. *The Divine meaning.* It is easy enough to find sermonic uses for this piece of brilliant word-painting about the war-horse, as *e.g.* to derive from it lessons of courage in confronting difficulties, and enthusiasm in defying opposition; but the first question needing answer is—For what specific object is it here introduced? and this was obviously to impress the mind of Job with a sense of his (and also man's) weakness in comparison with God. Whence had such a noble creature as this war-horse sprung? Job had not produced its resistless strength, its heroic beauty, its visible terror, its indomitable courage, its fierce enthusiasm? Nay, what could Job or any other man do as against such a powerful animal? Well, if Job cannot contend with the war-horse, how unreasonable it must be to suppose that he can strive with him whose handiwork the war-horse is!

VI. THE HAWK. (Ver. 26.) 1. *Its power of flight.* The name *netz* denotes "the soaring one," the high-flyer, and "includes, besides the hawk proper, all raptorial birds" (Cox), "which, even including the shortest-winged, have great powers of flight, are remarkably enterprising, live to a great age, are migratory, or followers upon birds of passage" (Kitto's 'Cyclopædia,' art. "Netz"). "The rapidity with which the hawk and many other birds fly is probably not less than at the rate of a hundred and fifty miles an hour" (Robinson). The adaptation of a bird's wing for flying is a singular instance of the Creator's skill. 2. *Its instinct of migration.* Moved by a secret impulse, not received from or understood by man, the hawk stretches her wing, and seeks a sunny clime at every approach of winter. This also a striking evidence of creative intelligence.

VII. THE EAGLE. (Vers. 27—30.) 1. *Its lofty flight.* The king of birds, which closes the Divine picture-gallery of animals, as the king of quadrupeds opened it, "soareth aloft," its great strength of body and breadth of wing giving it power to sustain itself at a high elevation in the air. 2. *Its inaccessible eyrie.* Mounting upwards, "she buildeth her nest in the height, upon the crag or tooth of the rock" and fastness, and there, by reason of its remoteness, "she dwelleth and abideth" securely. 3. *Its keen vision.* From the cliff's edge she can scan the depths below, looking far across the plain in search of food for herself and young ones (cf. ch. xxviii. 7, 21). 4. *Its sanguinary appetite.* "Her young ones also suck up blood; and where the slain are, there is she." In the East eagles follow armies in order to feed upon the corpses of the slain (cf. Matt. xxiv. 28).

Learn: 1. That he can best describe the creatures who knows all about them, because he made them. 2. That every creature on the face of the earth has its peculiar nature, instincts, habitat, by Divine appointment. 3. That wherever God assigns dwelling to a creature, there also he provides means of subsistence. 4. That a large portion of the world's beauty consists in the variety of animal life which it supports. 5. That the study of zoology is fitted to convey important lessons concerning the power, wisdom, goodness, and sovereignty of God.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—30.—*The creatures not dependent upon man.* We truly know that of man it is written, "Thou hast put all things under his feet;" and "We see not yet all things put under him." The creatures over whom dominion was given to man are not wholly submissive. And man must learn his littleness in presence of the great creatures of God whom he fails to subdue. "The wild goats" and "the hinds" and "the wild ass," "the unicorn," even "the ostrich," "the horse" and the birds of the air, "the hawk" and "the eagle," are all alike independent of man. They have neither their beauty nor their strength, their flight nor their instinct, from him. With all his knowledge, his skill, his inventiveness, his cunning, still the creatures are independent of him, though he is not independent of them. They can do without him, but not he without them. It is another step in the course of the humiliation through which the Lord is leading Job. Man may sling with the stone, or shoot with the arrow, or entrap with his skill, or train and conquer by his superior wisdom, yet

is he miserably impotent in their presence. And most certainly they derive neither their life nor any of their powers from him. Shall vain man, then, contend with the Creator of all? Shall he whose are all things find him to whom none belong entering the lists with him? Shall he contend? shall he instruct? shall he reprove? and answer? Nay, verily. His place is the dust, and to the dust God will humble him; and in doing so, he brings man into the presence of his many and beautiful and powerful creatures, and shows him how independent they are of him. This is the teaching of the entire chapter. Humility, therefore, is due—

I. BECAUSE MAN CANNOT CREATE ANY ONE OF THEM.

II. BECAUSE THEY ARE INDEPENDENT OF MAN FOR THEIR CONTINUANCE AND SUSTENANCE.

III. BECAUSE IN MANY OF THEIR POWERS THEY EXCEED THE MIGHT OF MAN, who cannot give them their speed, their strength, or their great beauty. How little is man amidst the wonders of the Divine hands! and how truly wise is he who, in presence of the divinely wrought creatures, bows down confessing, "How wonderful are all thy works, O Lord!"—R. G.

Vers. 5—8.—*The wild ass.* The special characteristic of the wild ass is said to be untractability. While no animal is more tame than the poor, ill-treated donkey of the London street, no animal is more essentially untamable than the Syrian ass of the desert. It is said that though one of these creatures had been captured when young and kept for three years in confinement, it remained "as untractable as when it was first caught, biting and kicking furiously at every one who approached it." It is the type of the untamable.

I. GOD RULES OVER THE WILDEST CREATURES. When we look at the wild ass we see a creature that is quite beyond the range of man's dominion. The "lord of creation" has no authority here. His dominion ceases at the border of the wilderness. His will is scorned by the free animals of the desert. Yet they are under the rule of God, who has implanted in them their instincts; they live only according to the laws of the nature that he has made. Men break from God's laws in self-will and thus they fall into sin. Untractable as the wild ass is to man, it is absolutely obedient to the will of God, like the sea that obeys the laws of waves and tides.

II. GOD IS THE AUTHOR OF LIBERTY. The very wildness of the creature is a gift of God. He has given it its high spirits, its fleet running, its love of the wilderness. God does not keep his creatures like cowed and tamed beasts in a menagerie. He gives them a wide field, and he permits them to enjoy a large freedom. To beings of a spiritual nature he also gives liberty, and that of a higher order. Men are set free from external constraints. God treats us not as slaves, but as children. Further, God gives the highest liberty—liberty of soul. He sets men free from the chains of ignorance and the crushing burden of sin. In his glorious grace he deals most liberally with his children. Not like the despot who fears a whisper of the word "liberty," God grieves over the self-made slavery of souls, and sends his gospel for the very purpose of giving "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isa. lxi. 1). Surely liberty is a prize to be eagerly sought and jealously guarded in government, in thought, and in spiritual life. Dryden writes—

> "The love of liberty with life is given,
> And life itself th' inferior gift of Heaven."

III. GOD INTENDS US TO USE OUR LIBERTY IN OBEDIENCE. We must combine the two previous thoughts to see how the wild ass is provided for by God. It follows the laws of its nature, and so obeys God absolutely, albeit unconsciously, while it enjoys the largest liberty. Thus it cannot be said to abuse its liberty, but only to use it. Roaming over the desert on its swift feet, it espies the green oasis and revels in the fresh pasturage. God expects us to use our liberty in obedience to his will. He does not pour food into our mouths; we must seek it. He does not force his grace upon us; we have to follow the method he has laid down, and turn to him in faith. But in doing this we are to use the utmost freedom of thought, and to be absolutely independent of the constraints of man on our religion, while we ask for help to be free from the bondage of evil, in obedience to the will of God.—W. F. A.

Ver. 11.—*Trusting in mere strength.* This chapter of natural history carries us on from one graphic picture to another, in which we see the glorious strength and freedom of God's creatures, altogether outside the domain of man's rule. Now we are to look at the urus. In bodily form he is very like the docile ox; yet how different in habit and temper! Will he serve us, lodge in our stall, plough our field and drag our harrow like his homely cousin, the drudge of the farm? Yet he is immensely strong. We cannot trust mere strength.

I. PHYSICAL STRENGTH IS NOT THE GREATEST GIFT OF NATURE. There is energy in nature. But before we can use it we must apply mind to nature. A Samson may do good work in hard, rough times, but he cannot be the Redeemer of man. The worship of muscle has grown to enormous proportions in this age of athletics. Good as it is to be in health and to be strong, and natural as the reaction is from extreme ascetic views, our modern glorying in health and strength does not touch what is highest in man, and it may lead to a neglect of this. It may humble the idolizer of strength for him to consider how enormously his greatest power is outdone by that of the urus. At best he is creeping up far behind one of the most senseless of animals.

II. STRENGTH IS FRUITLESS UNLESS IT IS TURNED TO USEFUL SERVICE. The urus may be stronger than the domestic ox, yet he wastes his powers in blundering about in the wilderness. He cannot be put to any good service, because he will not be controlled. There are men of great power who fritter away their energies aimlessly and fruitlessly, because their minds and wills have never been subdued and bent into some worthy service. They have ability, but they do nothing effectively. It is as important to train the will as it is to cultivate the faculties. The most useful service of God and man is not always performed by those who have the greatest gifts. The disposition to serve will enable the less gifted to do more in life than their brilliant companions who will not stoop to wear the yoke.

III. STRENGTH CAN ONLY BE OF SERVICE WHEN IT IS WISELY DIRECTED. The urus is wild, senseless, untamable, and not susceptible to educative influences; therefore he cannot use his strength for profitable work. Human strength needs Divine guidance. So long as the soul is wild and self-willed, the powers of mind and body cannot be spent fruitfully. The humble ox looks a less noble beast than the wild and daring bison, with his shaggy mane, his flashing eye, his powerful neck, his thunderous charge; yet the former is useful because it is obedient. The first lesson we have to learn in life is to obey; this, too, is the last lesson. As the ox looks to its master, we have to look to our Master; and when we follow his guidance, whether our strength be great or small, it will not be fruitless.—W. F. A.

Vers. 13—18.—*The careless ostrich.* Each creature has its own distinctive features, determined for it by the wisdom and conferred on it by the power of God. Some of these features are not attractive, nor what we should have selected if we had had the ordering of creation. They are the more significant on this account, because they show us the more clearly that nature is not ordered according to our thought, and yet the whole description shows that it is ordered well, and for a grand total result of life far beyond anything we could have imagined. Now, we have the special characteristics of the ostrich sketched with a master-hand in view of these considerations.

I. EXCELLENCES. Here is no caricature, exaggerating eccentricities. Though what look like the defects of the ostrich are to be referred to, its goodly wings are first mentioned. Let us see merit wherever we can. In giving blame, let us not condemn wholesale. Although all may not be as we should wish, let us generously acknowledge that all is not bad. It is better to admire the good in the world than to be only on the look out for the evil. We shall be more helpful friends if we rejoice to lay hold of what is admirable in others, and seek this first, instead of pouncing upon the ugly faults, like vultures who have eyes for nothing but carrion.

II. DEFECTS. The ostrich is not perfect, according to man's idea of perfection. There are defects in nature, and these defects are not ignored in the natural theology of "Job." It is wiser to admit them frankly than to gloss them over. Although they may not be the principal characteristics, they startle us by their very existence. The ostrich appears to be lacking in maternal care; it is a foolish creature, leaving its eggs without imagining the danger they are in of being trampled on by the wild animals of

the desert. God is leading nature on *to* perfection, but it is not yet perfect. The law of nature, like that of man, is progress, not stationary completeness.

III. COMPENSATIONS. Things are not so bad with the ostrich as they appear to us at first sight. Although the ostrich-eggs are left in the sand, they do not perish as the eggs of most birds under ordinary circumstances would do. Beneath the tropical heat of the sun they can be deserted during the day, the bird returning to sit on them at night. Thus by the wonderful balancing of influences in nature the careless maternity of the ostrich does not seriously endanger its offspring. If God has not given the bird wisdom, it does not need it. So long as we keep to the lines that God has laid down, we shall see that most defects have ample compensation in other directions. The culpable carelessness is that which goes against the laws of God; the fatal folly is that which departs from his ways. This carelessness and this folly are not found in the ostrich; they are only seen in man.—W. F. A.

Vers. 19—25.—*The war-horse.* This magnificent picture of the horse shows him to us as he is about to rush into battle. Whilst asses, oxen, and camels were employed for peaceable work on the farm and as beasts of burden, the horse was almost confined to war. He was rarely used excepting to dash with the charioteer into the thick of the fight. In the poet's picture he is scenting the battle from afar. Let us look at his striking features.

I. STRENGTH. There are two kinds of strength—mere brute strength of muscle, and the strength that is vitalized by nervous and mental influences. The urus is an instance of the former. In simple contractility of muscle he may exceed the horse. But the strength of the horse is nervous strength. It cannot well be measured, for it is continually fluctuating. It varies in degree according to the extent to which the sensitive animal is excited. We meet with the two kinds of strength in men, and especially in women. When the mind fires the body, unheard-of feats are performed. In moments of heroism naturally feeble people seem to have the strength of a giant. God gives strength through spiritual influences.

II. COURAGE. We may be surprised to meet with this characteristic in a description of the horse. Is he not a timid creature, shying at any unusual object by the wayside? This is true when he is dull and subdued. But our picture shows him to us as the war-horse rushing in to battle. Then he is brave as a lion. His courage is not the dull indifference to danger that is a trait of stupidity, but the fiery courage of intense excitement. It is difficult to be brave in cold blood. It is not easy to face the troubles and dangers of life without some inspiring influence. The Spirit of God in him makes the most timid brave.

III. ENTHUSIASM. The life of the picture is its enthusiasm. The horse is impatient for the rage of the battle, excited by the distant sound of it to a strong desire to rush into it. That is the spirit which will give him strength and courage to go right into the midst of the danger. Nothing succeeds like enthusiasm. Nothing is so beautiful, so inspiriting, so full of life and hope. It needs guidance or it may plunge into disaster; it is not enough without the direction of wisdom. But wisdom is vain without enthusiasm. In the Christian life men are uplifted and borne onward when they are reached by a wave of enthusiasm. Christ inspires the "enthusiasm of humanity," because he first inspires an enthusiasm for himself. Now, the first essential in a worthy enthusiasm is the perception of a worthy object. The horse scents the battle, and the horse knows its master. We see the great battle of sin and misery, and we have a glorious Captain of salvation. The need of the world calls us to the fight; the presence of our Lord gives us strength and courage, and ensures the victory.—W. F. A.

Vers. 26—30.—*The hawk and the eagle.* I. NATURE'S INDEPENDENCE OF MAN. This is the leading lesson of the whole chapter, impressed upon us by means of a series of most graphic illustrations; and it reaches its climax at the concluding paragraph, in which the high-flying birds of prey, the hawk and the eagle, are described. These above all other creatures are independent of man. Denizens of the air, they soar far above his reach. No human hand could give that might of pinion, that keenness of vision, that rush of life, which we see in the two birds—the one the terror of all small creatures, the other the dangerous foe of the young of larger animals. But nature throughout is

quite beyond the skill and power of man. By the intelligence God has given us we may employ many of the great natural forces, and subdue fierce and powerful animals. But this is a small thing compared with the thought that planned and the energy that wrought in the making of those creatures. Surpassing us in many enviable qualities, the kings of the wilderness teach us our littleness in the presence of the wonderful Creator.

II. THE TRIUMPH OF MOVEMENT. Birds illustrate this most conspicuously. Cleaving the air with swift, strong strokes, rising and falling at will, floating like atmospheric fishes, darting hither and thither with the speed of an express train, birds are the very opposite of creatures that spend a merely vegetative existence. Their lively energy is seen in dazzling movements. Now, the movements of nature are typical of those that take place in spiritual regions. Stagnation is death. It is not enough to have been set right once for all. The bird will droop and fail if it is always moping on the perch. Souls must be in movement, seeking fresh enterprises, pressing on to new fields of service, or at least diligently pursuing the line of duty. Souls want wings. We can only live our fullest life when we rise. It is not easy to soar into the higher regions. The hawk mounts in a spiral. We cannot reach the altitude of spiritual experience at a bound; and we too may have to work our way up laboriously. But rise we must, if we would not fail in our Christian calling.

III. THE VICTORY OF VISION. The eyes of the hawk and the eagle are proverbial for strength and keenness. These birds can see their prey from afar. They would perish if they were blind, nay, even if they became dim-sighted. Souls must have eyes, strong to gaze at the light, keen to detect what is valuable. We blunder through the world in spiritual blindness, seeing neither the glory of God nor the best blessings he has given us. With clipped wings and hooded eyes, how can we enter into the large heritage that God has provided for us? Our souls need a purging of their vision from the sin that blinds and maims. Then regenerated by the Spirit of God, they have before them a glory of sight and life that leave the struggling attempts of hawk and eagle far beneath.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XL.

Vers. 1—5.—Between the first and the second part of the Divine discourse, at the end of which Job wholly humbles himself (ch. xlii. 1—6), is interposed a short appeal on the part of the Almighty, and a short reply on Job's part, which, however, is insufficient. God calls upon Job to make good his charges (vers. 1, 2). Job declines, acknowledges himself to be of no account, and promises silence and submission for the future (vers. 3—5). But something more is needed; and therefore the discourse is further prolonged.

Vers. 1, 2.—**Moreover the Lord.** *Jehovah*, as in ch. xxxviii. 1 and in the opening chapters (see the comment on ch. xii. 9). **Answered Job, and said, Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him?** rather, *Can he that reproveth contend with the Almighty?* (see the Revised Version). Does Job, the reprover, think that he can really contend with the Almighty? If so, then **he that reproveth God, let him answer it;** or, *let him answer this;* let him answer, that is, what has been urged in ch. xxxviii. and xxxix.

Vers. 3, 4.—**Then Job answered the Lord, and said, Behold, I am vile;** literally, *I am light;* i.e. I am of small account (see the Revised Version). It would be absurd for one so weak and contemptible to attempt to argue with the Almighty. **What shall I answer thee?** or, *What should I answer thee?* What should I say, if I were to attempt a reply? **I will lay mine hand upon my mouth** (see the comment on ch. xxi. 5).

Ver. 5.—**Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.** The meaning is, "I have already spoken, not once, but more than once. Now I will be silent; I will say no more." There is a sort of recognition that the arguments used were futile, but not a full and complete confession, as in ch. xlii. 3.

Vers. 6—24.—Job's confession not having been sufficiently ample, the Divine discourse is continued through the remainder of this chapter, and through the whole of the next,

the object being to break down the last remnants of pride and self-trust in the soul of the patriarch, and to bring him to complete submission and dependence on the Divine will. The argument falls under three heads—Can Job cope with God in his general providence (vers. 6—14)? can he even cope with two of God's creatures—with *behemoth*, or the hippopotamus (vers 15—24); with *leviathan*, or the crocodile (ch. xli. 1—34)?

Ver. 6.—**Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said** (comp. ch. xxxviii. 1). The storm still continued, or, after a lull, had returned.

Ver. 7.—**Gird up thy loins now like a man** (see the comment on ch. xxxviii. 3): **I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.** Job is given every opportunity of making good his pleas before God. If he has anything to say that he really wishes to urge, God is ready, nay, anxious, to hear him.

Ver. 8.—**Wilt thou also** (rather, *even*) **disannul my judgment?** *i.e.* maintain that my judgment towards thee has not been just and equitable, and therefore, so far as it lies in thy power, disannul it? **Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?** Dost thou think it necessary to accuse me of injustice, and condemn me, in order to establish thine own innocence? But there is no such necessity. The two things—my justice and thy innocence—are quite compatible. Only lay aside the notion that afflictions must be punitive.

Ver. 9.—**Hast thou an arm like God?** The might of God's arm is often dwelt upon in Scripture. He brought Israel out of Egypt "with a mighty hand and stretched-out arm" (Deut. v. 15; vii. 19, etc.). "Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand," says one of the psalmists (Ps. lxxxix. 13). "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord!" says Isaiah (li. 9). No human strength, not the strength of all men put together, can compare with it. **Or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?** (comp. ch. xxxviii. 34, 35; and for the idea of thunder being the actual "voice of God," see ch. xxxvii. 4, 5; Ps. lxviii. 33; lxxvii. 18, etc.).

Ver. 10.—**Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty.** God is at all times "clothed with majesty and strength" (Ps. xciii. 1), "with glory and beauty" (Ps. civ. 1). He "decks himself with light as with a garment" (Ps. civ. 2). Job is challenged to array himself similarly.

Ver. 11.—**Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath.** "Give vent," *i.e.*, "to thy anger against the wicked, and let it be seen what thou canst do in the way of restraining evil and punishing transgressors." **Behold every one that is proud, and abase him.** If my moral government does not satisfy thee, improve upon it. Put down those wicked ones whom thou sayest that I allow to prosper (ch. xxiv. 2—23); "abase" them in the dust; do what thou accusest me of not doing. Then wilt thou have established something of a claim to enter into controversy with me.

Vers. 12, 13.—**Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret.** The idea of ver. 11 is still further insisted on. Let Job manifest himself as a power among men, if he cannot rival God in nature. Let him set the world to rights. Then he may claim to be heard with respect to the moral government of God.

Ver. 14.—**Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee.** When he has done what he has been challenged to do in vers. 9—13, then Job may venture to contend with God. He will have established his own independence, and God will acknowledge him as an antagonist entitled to argue with him.

Vers. 15—24.—This passage, together with the whole of ch. xli., has been regarded by some critics as an interpolation. Its omission would certainly not affect the argument; and it is thought, in some respects, to contain traces of a later age than that which most commentators assign to the remainder of the book, or, at any rate, to the greater portion of it. The recurrence to the animal creation, when the subject seemed to have been completed (ch. xxxix. 30), is also a difficulty. But, on the other hand, as there is no variation, either in the manuscripts or in the versions, and no marked difference either of style or tone of thought between the rest of the book and this controverted passage, it is best regarded as an integral portion of the work, proceeding from the same author, although perhaps at a later period. No one denies that the style is that of the best Hebrew poetry, or that the book would be weakened by the excision of the passage. "Le style," says M. Renan, "est celui des meilleurs endroits du poème. Nulle part la coupe n'est plus vigoreuse, le parallélisme plus sonore."

Ver. 15.—**Behold now behemoth.** "Behemoth" is ordinarily the plural of *behêmah*,

"a beast;" but it is scarcely possible to understand the word in this sense in the present passage, where it seems to be a noun singular, being followed by singular verbs, and represented by singular pronouns. Hence modern critics almost unanimously regard the word here as designating "some particular animal." The mammoth, the rhinoceros, the hippopotamus, and the elephant have been suggested. Of these the mammoth is precluded by the want of any evidence that it existed in Job's day, and the rhinoceros by the absence of any allusion to its peculiar feature. Authorities are divided almost equally between the elephant and the hippopotamus; but the best recent Hebraists and naturalists incline rather to the latter. **Which I made with thee**; *i.e.* "which I created at the same time as I created thee" (Gen. i. 24—26). **He eateth grass as an ox**; *i.e.* he is graminivorous, not carnivorous. This is admitted to be true of the hippopotamus, which lives in the Nile during the day, and at night emerges from the river, and devastates the crops of sugar-cane, rice, and millet.

Ver. 16.—**Lo now, his strength is in his loins.** The strength of the hippopotamus is its principal characteristic. Weighing often two thousand kilogrammes, and of a short thick make, when roused to anger it has a force which is irresistible. In the water it upsets large boats; on land it forces its way through dense thickets and fences of all kinds. The loins are especially strong, being deep, broad, and immensely muscular. **And his force is in the navel of his belly**; rather, *in the muscles of his belly*. The word used (שׁרירים) occurs only in this place. It is a plural form, and therefore cannot designate a single object, like the navel. The root seems to be the Syriac *sĕrir*, "firm," whence Schultens proposes to translate שׁרירים by *firmitates*.

Ver. 17.—**He moveth his tail like a cedar.** The tail of the hippopotamus is remarkably short and thick. It only bends slightly, being stiff and unyielding, like the stem of a cedar. **The sinews of his stones** (rather, *of his thighs*) **are wrapped together**; or, *interwoven one with another* (so Professor Lee and Mr. Houghton).

Ver. 18.—**His bones are as strong pieces of brass**; rather, *as tubes of bronze*. The great thigh-bones—*μηρία* of the Greeks—are probably intended. These are hollow, being filled with marrow, and are so strong that they may be well compared to "tubes of bronze." (On the identity of *nĕkhushah* or *nĕkhosheth* with "bronze" rather than "brass," see the article on "Brass," in Dr. W. Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. i. p. 225.) **His bones** (rather, *his ribs*) **are like bars of iron.** Either the ribs, or the solid bones of the lower leg, forearm, etc., are intended.

Ver. 19.—**He is the chief of the ways of God. This is the main argument in favour of the elephant, rather than the hippopotamus, being intended (see Schultens, *ad loc.*). It has, indeed, been argued that some specimens of the hippopotamus exceed the elephant in height and bulk (Canon Cook, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 19); but no modern naturalist certainly would place the former animal above the latter in any *catalogue raisonnée* of animals arranged according to their size and importance. The elephant, however, may not have been known to the author of Job, or, at any rate, the Asiatic species, which seems not to have been imported into Assyria before the middle of the ninth century B.C. In this case, the hippopotamus might well seem to him the grandest of the works of God. **He that made him can make his sword to approach unto him.** This is explained to mean, "*Only* God can attack behemoth with success and slay him; man is powerless to do so" (Canon Cook, Stanley Leathes, Revised Version). But the Egyptians, from very early times, used to attack the hippopotamus and slay him (Wilkinson, in the author's 'Herodotus,' vol. ii. p. 100). It is better, therefore, to translate the passage, with Schultens, "He that made him hath furnished him with his sword," and to understand by "his sword" those sharp teeth with which the hippopotamus is said to "cut the grass *as neatly as if it were mown*, and to sever, *as if with shears*, a tolerably stout and thick stem" (Wood, 'Natural History,' vol. i. p. 762). Compare the 'Theriaca' of Nicander, ll. 566, 567—

Ἦ ἵππου, τὸν Νεῖλος ὑπὲρ Σάϊν αἰθαλόεσσαν
Βόσκει, ἀρούρησιν δὲ κακὴν ἐπιβάλλεται ἅρπην.

Ver. 20.—**Surely the mountains bring him forth food.** Neither the hippopotamus nor the elephant is an inhabitant of "mountains," according to our use of the word. But the *harîm* (הרים) of the original is used of very moderate eminences. In the highly poetical language of Job, and especially of this passage, the term may well be applied to the hills on either side of the Nile, which approach closely to the river, and to this day furnish the hippopotamus with a portion of its food (see Hasselquist, 'Travels,' p. 188). **Where all the beasts of the field play.** By "the beasts of the *field*" seem to be meant the cattle and other domestic animals which are not driven from their pasture-grounds by the "river-horse" (Tristram, 'Nat. Hist. of the Bible,' p. 52).

Ver. 21.—**He lieth under the shady trees;**

or, *under the lotus trees* (Revised Version). The *Lotus sylvestris*, or *Lotus Cyrenaica*, "grows abundantly on the hot banks of the Upper Nile" (Cook), and is thought to be the tree here intended (Schultens, Cook, Houghton, and others). But the identification is very doubtful. The dense shade of trees is sought alike by the hippopotamus and the elephant. **In the covert of the reed, and fens.** This is exactly descriptive of the hippopotamus; far less so of the elephant. Gordon Cumming says, "At every turn there occurred deep, still pools, and occasional sandy islands, densely clad with lofty reeds. Above and beyond these reeds stood trees of immense age, beneath which grew a rank kind of grass, on which the sea-cow (hippopotamus) delights to pasture" ('Lion-Hunter of South Africa,' p. 297).

Ver. 22.—**The shady trees** (or, *the lotus trees*) **cover him with their shadow** (see the comment on ver. 21); **the willows of the brook compass him round about.** The "willow of the brook" (Lev. xxiii. 40) is probably the *Salix Ægyptiaca*, or *safsâf*, which grows plentifully in the Nile valley, fringing the course both of the Nile itself and of the many streams derived from it. The *Salix Babylonica*, or "weeping willow," is less likely.

Ver. 23.—**Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not**; rather, *behold, let a river overflow, he trembleth not* (ἐὰν πλημμύρα γένηται, οὐ μὴ αἰσθηθῇ, LXX.). As an amphibious animal, the overflowing of a river has no terrors for the hippopotamus. But it would have some terrors for an elephant. **He trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth.** It is better to translate, *he is steadfast* (or, *confident*), *though Jordan swell even to his mouth.* "Jordan" probably stands for any large and strong-flowing river. The conjecture that יַרְדֵּן is a corruption of יְאֹר, which often stands for "the Nile," is ingenious, but unnecessary.

Ver. 24.—**He taketh it with his eyes**; rather, *Shall one take him when he is looking on?* "Can he be captured," *i.e.*, "when his eyes are open, and when he sees what is intended? No. If captured at all, it must be by subtlety, when he is not on the watch." **His nose pierceth through snares**; rather, *Or can one bore his nostril with cords?* i.e. can we lead him away captive, with a ring or hook passed through his nose, and a cord attached (compare the next chapter, ver. 2)?

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Jehovah to Job: the first answer—the application.* I. JEHOVAH'S CONDESCENSION TOWARDS JOB. 1. *In listening with patient silence to Job's censures and complaints.* "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him?" literally, "Shall the reprover [*i.e.* of God] contend in contending with the Almighty?" This is the first formal notice taken by Jehovah of the fact that Job had indulged in censorious reflections against the Divine character and administration. They had all been heard by that ever-listening ear which no sound can escape. But no sign or indication had been given that the Deity was cognizant of the reflections cast upon him by his angry servant. Patiently he had suffered Job to proceed against him as far as he thought good. And the like meek, uncomplaining attitude does he still preserve towards them, whether ungodly unbelievers or backsliding professors, who cast reproaches on his Name (Ps. l. 21). The Divine patience in the face of man's provocations to wrath is a sublime miracle of condescension. 2. *In seeking rather to remove Job's censures by instruction than to silence them by chastisement.* When at length Job had ended his long arraignment of the Divine government of the world, it would not have been surprising had God descended on him by way of punishment, calling him to account for his over-bold behaviour. Instead of that, the Almighty causes an ambassador, Elihu, to deal with him by way of education, imparting to him such views of God's character and ways as might serve to correct his misapprehensions. Nay, himself, the supreme Jehovah, stoops to become his own Ambassador for the selfsame purpose, that he might set before the mind of his servant such an image and presentment of himself that the misconceptions which gave rise to his censures might be removed. What God gave to Job out of the whirlwind he has in the Person of Jesus Christ given to the world—a manifestation of himself—and for a like purpose, not condemnation, but salvation (John iii. 17), through the removal of those erroneous ideas which hinder men from giving him their confidence and love (2 Cor. iv. 6). 3. *In submitting to discuss the question of his own character with his creature.* "He that reproveth God, let him answer it;" *i.e.* if Job had anything to urge in reply to the representation which God had given of himself, God was ready to attend to it. Surely

here was a depth of self-abasement to which only a God of love and grace could stoop! A prefigurement, may it not be said, of the stupendous condescension of the Incarnation, when God, not arrayed in majesty, but clothed in the lowly garb of humanity, stooped to talk with sinful man, as a man talketh with his friend!

II. JOB'S SUBMISSION TO JEHOVAH. 1. *An acknowledgment of insignificance.* "Behold, I am vile;" literally, "I am mean, small, of no account, a being to be despised in comparison with thee." It is not yet a sense of moral imperfection that fills the breast of Job, as afterwards, when the second Divine remonstrance ends (ch. xlii. 6), but simply a vivid realization of his utter feebleness and contemptibleness before a God of such incomparable majesty as Jehovah, of such far-reaching power and wide-ranging wisdom. Man never knows his real littleness until he understands the greatness of God. 2. *A confession of ignorance.* "What shall I answer thee?" Job meant that he felt utterly unable to reply to the arguments which God had adduced in support of his right to govern the world on principles of his own without taking Job or any other creature into his confidence. Hence the resolution, "I will lay my hand upon my mouth," was designed to intimate both his resolution to be silent and his inability to reply. The less men attempt to answer God the better. When God brings his heavenly teachings home to the spirit, the proper attitude is silent admiration and submission. "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." 3. *An admission of error.* "Once have I spoken; but I will not answer [literally, 'and I will not answer,' *i.e.* I will not reply again]; yea, twice; but [literally, 'and'] I will proceed no further." Whether Job intended to say that he had twice, or only once, answered God, he certainly meant that he had spoken wrongly in his previous utterances. It was much that he had now arrived at a clear perception of his error. It was a good preparation for his ultimate complete withdrawal from the false position which all throughout the controversy with God he had maintained. 4. *A profession of amendment.* He had done wrong in the past; he would do so no more—at least in this respect. This becoming resolution was "a fruit meet for repentance," a promise of the final soul-surrender which was drawing nigh.

Learn: 1. That God deals with men on the principles of grace, even when they richly deserve to receive only justice. 2. That for a puny creature to find fault with God is an amazing act of presumption. 3. That the first sign of goodness in a human soul is a perception, however faint, of its own insignificance. 4. That they who have fallen into sin once should, like Job, endeavour to do so no more.

Vers. 6—14.—*Jehovah to Job: the second answer:* 1. *A sublime challenge.* I. A SUMMONS ISSUED. "Gird up thy loins like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me." Here again appears a series of gracious wonders. 1. *That Jehovah should propose to continue further the instruction of his servant.* But so God deals with all whom he undertakes to educate, teaching them with patience, perseverance, minuteness, giving them line upon line, and desisting not until their spiritual enlightenment is complete. 2. *That Jehovah should advise his servant of the searching character of the examination to which he was about to be subjected.* He had done so on the first occasion. But after Job's partial submission it might have been expected that the second ordeal would be easier than the first. In order to prevent the rise of any such misunderstanding, Job is a second time advised that the forthcoming interview, like the first, will require on his part the most strenuous resolution and endeavour. God seldom takes his people unawares except with mercy. 3. *That Jehovah should a second time invite his servant to become his instructor.* This is practically what he does in giving Job another opportunity to reply to his interrogations. But there is no limit to God's grace in stooping to help his creature man.

II. A QUESTION ASKED. "Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" Jehovah means by this to say that Job's conduct, in maintaining as he had done his own righteousness, really involved two tremendous assumptions. 1. *That he (Job) could govern the world better* (i.e. *more justly*) *than God.* Hence Jehovah inquires if Job proposed to disannul the Divine judgment, and take upon himself the task of administering mundane affairs. Even good men do not always understand how much is involved in the statements they rashly utter. Nor can any interpreter so clearly tell them as God. 2. *That he (Job)*

was a more righteous being than his Maker. No doubt Job would have shrunk from any such deification of himself, had he clearly foreseen how much his utterances meant. Job's example should teach saints to keep the door of their lips. That Jehovah still urged these interrogations on his servant was a proof that the work of reducing him to complete subjection was not yet accomplished.

III. A PROPOSAL MADE. That Job should for once take God's place, and show what he could do in the way of governing the world. "Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" On the supposition that Job is competent to exchange places with the Supreme, he is invited: 1. *To array himself in the royal robes of Deity.* "Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty." Whatever glory man possesses is not inherent, but derived, and is really as no glory by the reason of the glory that excelleth, viz. the glory of the supreme Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." God "covereth himself with light as with a garment," and is "clothed with honour and with majesty." Jehovah means that Job should similarly array himself in splendours like those of the material creation, or that he should occupy the throne of which these constituted, as it were, the external trappings and visible decorations. 2. *To display the righteous wrath of Deity.* "Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath;" literally, "Let the overflowings of thy wrath pour themselves forth." A characteristic attribute of Deity to manifest holy indignation against evil-doers (Isa. ii. 10—21), it is here suggested to Job for imitation. This, however, does not warrant good men to usurp the place and function of him who says, "Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord." God's people may pour forth their righteous indignation against iniquity; upon the evil-doer they are only warranted to pour forth pity. 3. *To exercise the judicial functions of Deity.* "Behold every one that is proud, and abase him;" or, "Behold all pride and abase it; behold all pride and bring it low; and tread," or cast down, "the wicked in their place." The language sets forth (1) the principle of the Divine administration, which is to humble pride (Lev. xxvi. 19; Ps. xviii. 27; Prov. viii. 13; Isa. ii. 11; Matt. xxiii. 12); (2) the certainty of its operation, indicated by the repetition of the challenge, "Behold all pride, and abase it," *i.e.* as I do without failing; (3) the ease with which it is carried into execution, "Behold pride, and abase it," cast it down with a look, as I do; (4) the efficiency with which it is performed, "Hide them in the dust together, and bind their faces in secret," the allusion being either to the shutting up of prisoners (Umbreit, Delitzsch), or perhaps to the bandaging of mummies or shrouding of corpses (Carey).

IV. A RESULT STIPULATED. "Then will I also confess unto thee [or, 'extol thee'] that thine own hand can save thee [or, 'bring to thee help']." The words imply: 1. *That man cannot save, or even effectually help, himself.* The human heart is prone to think it can effect its own deliverance from misery and sin; but the utter helplessness of man to escape condemnation and free himself from the moral pollution in which he naturally lies, or even to surmount the calamities of life, is not only declared by Scripture, but confirmed by all experience. "Without me," said Christ, "ye can do nothing." 2. *That nothing short of Divine power is required to accomplish man's salvation.* Only on the hypothesis that Job was possessed of powers and attributes that were Divine does Jehovah admit that he might achieve his own emancipation from either the afflictions that assailed his body or the fears that disturbed his mind. This thought lays the axe to the root of the doctrine of the self-regenerative power of human nature. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." 3. *That such power belongs exclusively to Jehovah.* Hence he alone is a God of salvation. "I am a just God and a Saviour, and there is none beside me." Hence also he alone is the quarter to which man should look for succour. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help." 4. *That, as a consequence, to God alone belongs the praise of man's salvation.* Jehovah admits that to save a man like Job would be a creditable achievement, an extremely praiseworthy deed, and offers, moreover, to extol him if he can perform it. But to God alone pertains the power that is able to redeem. Hence also to God alone pertains the glory (1 Chron. xxix. 11; Rev. iv. 11; v. 9, 12).

Learn: 1. That the proper subject of man's judgment is not God, but himself. 2. That he who thinks to rival God is self-deceived. 3. That the visible part of God's glory is as nothing in comparison to what is yet to be revealed. 4. That God's

government of the world is always in the interests of meekness, truth, and righteousness. 5. That man should not stint the praise of him who hath brought salvation nigh to a fallen world.

VERS. 15—24. — *Jehovah to Job: the second answer*: 2. *Concerning behemoth.* I. THE RELATION OF BEHEMOTH TO OTHER ANIMALS. "He *is* the chief of the ways of God" (ver. 19). This huge monster, this giant among beasts, as perhaps the above-cited phrase indicates, is commonly supposed to have been the hippopotamus, or Nile-horse. It is here described by a variety of particulars. 1. *Its terrific strength.* Concerning this are noted: (1) its seat or source, the creature's inward parts—"Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel [literally, 'the cords,' *i.e.* the sinews or muscles] of his belly;" "the sinews of his stones," or legs, "are wrapped together," or firmly interwoven; "his bones are as strong pieces," tubes, "of brass; his bones are like bars of iron" (vers. 16—18); and (2) its exercise or manifestation—"he moveth his tail like a cedar," with as much ease "as the mighty tempest is able to drive hither and thither the loftiest trees" (Umbreit). 2. *Its herbivorous appetite.* "He eateth grass as an ox" (ver. 15); "Surely the mountains bring him forth food" (ver. 20). Though an animal of such gigantic proportions, the hippopotamus is not carnivorous as might have been anticipated. The quantity of food, however, which he does devour is enormous. "He makes sad havoc among the rice-fields and cultivated grounds, when he issues forth from the reedy fens" (Tristram). 3. *Its peaceful disposition.* Whereas one might naturally have expected to find him ferocious, "all the beasts of the field play around" (ver. 20) while he grazes. If unmolested, he is harmless. How much of the ferocity of even wild animals is the natural response to the cruelty of man! The creatures would seldom rise against man if he did not first tyrannize over them. 4. *Its amphibious nature.* While capable of living on the land, its peculiar habitation is under the lotus-bushes, and among the reeds and fens of the river. "The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about" (ver. 22). 5. *Its absolute fearlessness.* So much at home among the water is the brute that it matters nothing whether the river is in flood or not. "Behold, if the stream be strong, he doth not quake: he remaineth cheerful, though a Jordan burst upon his mouth" (ver. 23).

II. THE RELATION OF BEHEMOTH TO MAN. 1. *Created along with man.* "Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee" (ver. 15). The language might certainly mean that behemoth was one of those primeval animals which were called into existence with man on the sixth of the creative days (Carey), but probably it implies nothing more than that behemoth had been created to be with man (Bochart, Delitzsch), or as well as man (Umbreit). Though the firstling of the ways of God, a very masterpiece of the Divine Artificer's hand, he was still a creature like Job. 2. *Subordinated at first to man.* Though not stated in the passage, it is worthy of being here recalled, that man was by an original appointment of the Creator constituted lord of the creatures (Gen. i. 28). What is suggested by the passage is the loss of this divinely given supremacy over the animals. 3. *Untamable by man.* "He taketh it with his eyes: his nose pierceth through snares" (ver. 24). This may signify that the animal when swimming receiveth the water up to his eyes, and is able to drive right through any snares or nets that may be spread to catch him (Carey); but the rendering of the margin is commonly preferred, "Will any take him in his sight?" *i.e.* can one catch him while he is watching? "or bore his nose with a gin?" "Neither the open face, nor the stratagem, which one employs with effect with other animals, is sufficient to overpower this monster" (Delitzsch).

III. THE RELATION OF BEHEMOTH TO GOD. 1. *Behemoth was God's creature.* Job at the best was nothing more. Jehovah had made Job; Jehovah had also made behemoth. This was fitted to remind Job (1) of his dependence upon God; (2) of the humility he should cherish when reflecting on his origin; (3) of the relation he sustained to the animals; and (4) of the kindness he owed to the creatures. 2. *Behemoth was God's masterpiece.* "The chief of the ways of God" (ver. 19), as above hinted, points to superiority of nature rather than to priority of time. The behemoth was, in its sphere or world, one of the noblest productions of God. Was man also, in his sphere or world, a masterpiece of God? Here was food for reflection to the

patriarch, for self-examination, and doubtless also for self-humiliation. 3. *Behemoth was God's subject.* "He that made him can make his sword approach unto him" (ver. 19). Though this verse, when properly translated, points rather to the peculiar sword which God has bestowed on behemoth, viz. "the gigantic incisors ranged opposite one another, with which it grazes upon the meadow as with a sickle" (Delitzsch), yet the sentiment, as it stands, is correct, and was probably one Jehovah intended to suggest, viz. that though Job could not master behemoth, yet he, Jehovah, could.

Learn: 1. That he who made the world of creatures is best able to describe them. 2. That God rejoices in the strength and beauty of the lower creatures. 3. That in every sphere of creation there are gradations of excellence among the works of God. 4. That from the study of zoology we may learn much concerning the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator. 5. That when man can put a saddle on behemoth he may begin to cherish the hope of being able to rule the world.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Conclusion of Jehovah's address: reply of Job: lowliness in the presence of Jehovah.* The words of Jehovah express this—

I. THAT THE DIVINE WORKS PRESENT A TRIUMPHANT CHALLENGE TO HUMAN INTELLIGENCE. (Ver. 2.) Can man surpass them? Can he even imitate them? What can he do but silently admire them, and adore the Author of them? Therefore the serious contemplation of the works of God is well fitted to silence an ignorant criticism, and quell the idle murmurs of discontent. To trace his power, wisdom, and fatherly love through the various departments of the visible universe is to deepen in our minds faith in his order. We in some way are instruments for promoting that order, and shall be blessed in proportion to our active or resigned compliance with its laws.

II. THE STUDY OF THE DIVINE ORDER, THEN, IS FITTED, NOT ONLY TO SILENCE THE CAVILS OF A SHORT-SIGHTED CRITICISM, BUT TO PRODUCE BOTH FAITH AND HUMILITY. (Vers. 3—5.) This is the effect on the mind of Job. He feels his littleness in presence of the infinite Intelligence; and, laying his hand upon his mouth, makes the resolve of silence for the future from all questioning of his Maker. Thus silently, as the storms and frosts of winter give place to the genial warmth and gentle influences of spring, is this proud and passionate heart, which want of sympathy and injustice at the hands of man had stung into proud self-consciousness and presumptuous appeals to God, softened by the voice and revelation of God himself into the heart of a little child. When we see ourselves *as* we are, because seeing ourselves in relation to him; when we are convinced of our insignificance in ourselves, and of the greatness of that grace which alone sheds a true value and significance upon our lives, peace begins to be shed through the heart, and in the silence of a true submission we wait for that which God may further have to speak to us, instead of assailing him with the clamour of passion and ignorance.—J.

Ver. 6—ch. xli. 34.—*Second discourse of Jehovah: the righteous government of God.* In the previous discourse we have had especially the universal power and wisdom of God impressed upon us; in the present the thought of the justice of his rule is to be more fully brought into the light: in order thus to bring Job to full conviction, and expel the last remains of anger and pride from his heart; while Divine love triumphs in his repentance (ch. xlii. 6).

I. REBUKE OF THE PRESUMPTION WHICH DOUBTS OF THE JUSTICE OF GOD. (Vers. 6—14.) Once again is Job summoned to gird up his loins and prepare for the contest with Divine reason. Let, then, these questions receive an answer from the murmurer's and the doubter's lips. Will man "disannul" or bring to nought the justice of God? For this he seems to aim at who would place his own notions of what is right in the place of the Divine. Or, if man would enter on this competition, has he the means to carry out the strife? has he the arm, the power of God? can he wield the thunder of Omnipotence? Let the experiment be tried. Let man clothe himself with the Divine attributes, at least in fancy; let him put on glory and pride, splendour and pomp. Let his anger break forth in fiery floods, and let him overwhelm all the pinnacles of human

pride. Let him as just judge cast the wicked down; strew them in the dust before his righteous retribution. Let *man* do these things, and Jehovah will praise him, and there will be no need of self-praise and boasting, because his right hand helps him; because he actually possesses the power to carry out his ideas of justice and make them prevail on the earth (comp. Ps. xlv. 4; Isa. lix. 18; lxiii. 5). If man can do none of these things, how can he venture to challenge him who alone can and does execute judgment in the earth? God does ever punish and destroy the wicked, and is ever ready to help the faithful; can man excel or equal God in his ideas or practice of righteousness? "The Lord says to Job, Shall my judgment, by which I either afflict the godly or declare all men to be liars, be empty and vain in thy opinion? Doth it behove me to be unjust, that thy justice may stand? Thou art indeed just, and thou hast my testimony to this (ch. ii.), but it shall not therefore be lawful for thee to slander the judgments of God in affliction." "They who ascribe to themselves in their own strength righteousness before God, simply condemn God and make his judgment void, as if he had not the competence and power to judge and condemn them (Rom. iii. 4)" (Cramer).

II. REBUKE OF JOB'S PRIDE; DESCRIPTION OF THE GREAT BEASTS. (Ver. 15—ch. xli. 34.) These two vast monsters, behemoth and leviathan, are types of God's creative power. Their gigantic strength fills feeble man with wonder; and yet they are but as toys in the hand of the Almighty. They are subject to the Divine will; and in them we are to see an exemplification of the manner in which God subdues the pride of the creature. *The behemoth.* (Vers. 15—24.) This huge and terrible animal is a fellow-creature of Job, an effect of the same almighty power. Let Job consider him, and perceive how small and feeble in the presence of God are all created existences, and of how little avail is all haughty and proud confidence in external things before him. Then follows the striking description of the power of the hippopotamus, or horse of the Nile, uniting elasticity with firmness, so that he is "a firstling of the ways of God," or a masterpiece of the Creator. Everything about this creature is noteworthy; his sword-like, gigantic teeth; his fodder, which whole mountain tracts supply. As he lies among the reeds and lotus-plants, taking his noonday repose, he is the very image of living force. Were a river, a very Jordan, to force its way into his mouth, he could make light of it. Yet this huge beast is entirely in the power of God. His size and strength avail him nought, if God has determined to destroy him. How aptly says the Roman poet, "Force devoid of judgment sinks beneath its own weight; while that which is self-controlled Heaven advances in greatness. God hates the strength that sets in motion ill with the mind" (Hor., 'Od.,' 3. 4)! He, amidst the obscure notions of the pagan mythology, still sees clearly the truth here and in so many Scriptures set forth, that no might, bestial, human, or superhuman, can stand against that will which is of almighty power and absolute righteousness.—J.

Vers. 3—5.—*Humility.* Job, unconvicted of a lack of integrity or willing departure from the law of rectitude, is nevertheless capable of self-humiliation, and, like all sensitive spiritual persons, is quick to mark his own faults in presence of a purer model. He is now bowed to the very earth. The Lord had spoken and showed Job his littleness and insignificance, and yet Job had ventured to defend himself in presence of the dealings of Jehovah. Now he is humbled and subdued. The process of the Divine discipline of the righteous is being unfolded. Job knows that though he can reply to his companions and friends, if he would contend with God "he cannot answer him one of a thousand." The voice of the Lord has brought Job to the dust. He is convicted of his error in pretending to justify himself in presence of the Lord's dealings. He, not Jehovah, must have been in the wrong. Then, in the attitude of conscious sinfulness before the Holy One, he confesses himself "of no account." Henceforth he will "answer" no more, but lay his hand upon his mouth and keep silence. Job's attitude of lowly humility before the Lord is another instructive feature in the drama. The man who could stand up before his fellow-men may well bow down before the Lord. The attitude of humility before the Lord the true one for sinful man.

I. IT IS AN ATTITUDE BECOMING MAN IN PRESENCE OF THE HOLINESS AND MAJESTY OF THE DIVINE NAME.

II. IT IS AN ATTITUDE BECOMING TO THE SINFULNESS OF MAN. Where should the creature so full of imperfection be found but in the dust?

III. IT IS AN ATTITUDE BECOMING ONE WHO HAS A JUST ESTIMATE OF HIS RELATION OF DEPENDENCE UPON THE WISDOM AND POWER OF JEHOVAH. One so wholly frail and dependent—a poor worm—may well bow in lowly, humble prostration before the Lord of the whole earth.

IV. IT IS AN ATTITUDE BECOMING TO HIM WHO HAS RIGHTLY REFLECTED UPON THE GREATNESS, MAJESTY, AND GLORY OF GOD, AND HIS OWN LITTLENESS AND INSIGNIFICANCE IN PRESENCE THEREOF. This was precisely Job's case. And it is the precursor of that lifting up which is granted only to them who are truly bowed down.—R. G.

Ver. 15—ch. xli. 34.—*The creatures of his power.* Out of the storm and tempest, just symbols of the Divine power, the Lord answers Job in words calculated further and deeper to humble the prostrate one. The Divine hand is tempering the already yielding clay and preparing it for the impress of the Divine stamp. The Lord calls Job to compare himself with him. This Job cannot venture to do. The next process is to show how weak is man in presence of the creatures of the Divine power. In prolonged words the great might of "behemoth" and "leviathan" are set forth; but it is with a view to set forth the Divine might as illustrated in these the creatures of his hands. The process of reasoning is—If the creature of God is mighty, how much more so is the Creator himself! Thus the Divine works speak for God; and their voice every wise one will hear and heed. The greatness of nature, the marvellous works of the Divine hands; their unnumbered and innumerable hosts; their multiplied variety; their wonderful structure; their beauty; their continuous preservation; their mutual adaptation and service;—all declare the wonders of the Divine hand. In later days the eyes of men were directed to the insignificant sparrow, the mere bird on the house-top, and from the Divine care over it men were led to learn lessons of faith and trustful hope. So here, by reference to the greater creatures of the Divine power, frail man is led lower and lower into the depths of humiliation and self-abasement. The creatures display—

I. THE DEPTH OF THE CREATIVE WISDOM OF GOD.

II. THE ALMIGHTINESS OF THE DIVINE POWER.

III. THE INFINITUDE OF THE DIVINE BENEFICENCE. "All thy works praise thee, O God."

IV. THEY TEACH THE LESSON TO MAN OF HUMBLENESS AND LOWLY TRUST. He who cares for the birds of the air and for the beasts of the field will not neglect frail man. Happy is he who has learnt to trust in the Lord and do good, knowing that he shall dwell in the land, and verily he shall be fed.—R. G.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Contending with the Almighty.* Job has been contending with the Almighty, and now God confronts him with the fact. This is the practical point to which we have come after being led through the picture-gallery of nature which has revealed to us the greatness of God in contrast with the littleness of man.

I. WE ARE TEMPTED TO CONTEND WITH GOD. 1. *By our liberty.* We have freedom of thought as well as freedom of will. Thus we seem to be able to turn round and take up a position of our own in opposition to God. 2. *By our trouble.* It was great distress that drove Job into a contention with God. We do not find him attempting or desiring anything of the kind in the opening scene of the story. When trouble comes upon us we are displeased, and not seeing why it is sent we are tempted to murmur. 3. *By our sin.* Even Job, innocent as regards the gross charges of his three censors, was imperfect, as he is now brought to admit. Now, sin is opposition to God, and the attempt to justify it leads to contention with God. 4. *By God's forbearance.* Because he is long-suffering we presume upon his patience. We are like Jacob wrestling with the "Traveller unknown," who only maintained the conflict so long as his mysterious Antagonist refrained from putting forth his strength (Gen. xxxii. 24—32).

II. WE ARE WRONG IN CONTENDING WITH GOD. This contention shows faults in us. 1. *Ignorance.* If we knew all, we should see how foolish the whole contention was. But we stumble into it in our confusion and folly. 2. *Rebellion.* Our business is to submit and obey. When we dispute we are resisting, if only mentally. 3. *Distrust.* God is not trusted when we venture to oppose ourselves to him; for if he were

we should be silent, not perhaps understanding his action, but possessing our souls in patience, and waiting for the final disclosure that is to explain God's treatment of his children.

III. IT IS USELESS FOR US TO CONTEND WITH GOD. Our position in relation to God does not offer us a chance of success. 1. *Inequality.* This is a contest of feebleness with almightiness. How can the finite hope for a victory in wrestling with the Infinite? 2. *Incompetence.* We do not know how to put our case before God, and his action is not understood by us. Therefore our contention is confused and misleading. There is only one way of coming to terms with God, and that is to accept his terms.

IV. IT IS NEEDLESS FOR US TO CONTEND WITH GOD. We are not left with the doleful prospect of simply submitting to the inevitable. Although we cannot see the good in God's action, if only we have faith in him we may rest assured that he is doing just the very best thing for us and all his creatures. This assurance depends on his nature and character. He is a just God and a Saviour, and therefore he cannot be acting unjustly and injuriously. Our indictment of God's goodness is a huge blunder from beginning to end. Let us but trust his goodness in the dark and in the face of the most distressful events, and in the end we shall see that our safety lies in submission.—W. F. A.

Ver. 4.—*Humbled before God.* At length Job is brought near to the state of mind that God desires to see in him. Proud and defiant before the unwise and unjust attacks of his human accusers, he is humbled in the dust in presence of the revelation of God.

I. THE VISION OF GOD IN HIS WORKS HUMBLES US. Job has seen a succession of vivid pictures of the works of God in nature. They all transcend human efforts. Then how great must the Author of nature be! How small are we in his awful presence! Pride is always a form of godlessness. We forget God when we exalt ourselves. Our self-exaltation is only possible while we shut ourselves up in a little world. When we see God we are humbled. Now, this is not only because God is supremely powerful. There is some heroism in the weak maintaining their right in the presence of the strong. But God's greatness in nature is seen in intellectual and moral features. The wonderful thought of God impressed upon his works reveals a mind infinitely greater than the human mind; and the care with which God provides for all his creatures—wild asses, heedless ostriches, and repulsive ravens, as well as those creatures that seem more deserving of his providence—shows us how good God is. Thus the wisdom and goodness of God, added to the power that makes resistance useless, crown the revealed character of God with glory, and invite our humble adoration.

II. SILENCE BEFORE GOD IS THE TRUE EXPRESSION OF HUMILITY. It cannot be said that Job is as yet deeply conscious of sin. The "vileness" of which he makes confession is rather his mean estate, his poor, feeble, human helplessness, than moral guilt. Therefore it does not need to be made much of, or regarded as anything like a full confession. It is, however, the mark of humility to admit it, and then to relapse into silence. This is the condition to which the great argument of the drama is designed to bring its readers. We are too busy with our own performances in religion. In prayer we have too many words to speak to God. We are always telling him what he knows already, and often dictating to him what we think he should be doing, instead of patiently waiting for his voice and humbly submitting to his will. There is room for more silence in religion and in all life.

III. SILENT HUMILITY IS A PREPARATION FOR EXALTATION. At the end of the book we discover that God exalts Job and loads him with favour and prosperity. But he must be humbled first. The later honour is only possible after Job has abased himself. So long as he justified himself and arraigned the justice of God, he could not be restored and exalted. Thus the poem shows to us the way in which God disciplines his servants and prepares them to enjoy his goodness. Humility is the door to honour. This is a very Christian truth. It is taught by Christ: "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." It is gloriously illustrated in the life and death and exaltation of Christ (see Phil. ii. 5—11).—W. F. A.

Ver. 8.—*Impugning God's justice.* I. MURMURING AT PROVIDENCE IS IMPUGNING

GOD'S JUSTICE. This may not be clearly seen or admitted at once. The connection between the occurrences of human history and the Divine mind that controls them is not visible to the eye of sense. Thus we may complain freely of what God does without intending to charge God with wrong. And yet this is what the complaint leads to and involves. If we do not believe that things fall out by chance, and if we do not hold that the world is administered at present by a lower providence, we must be virtually impugning the justice of God when we object to what we cannot deny to be his actions. It may be desirable that complaints should be pushed to their ultimate results, for then we shall see whether they are reasonable or not. If we are persuaded that God is just, we shall see that it is unwise and wrong to murmur at what happens to us in the course of providence.

II. WE ARE TEMPTED TO IMPUGN GOD'S JUSTICE. God seemed to be acting unjustly to Job. The present aspect of the world is not that which we should expect from a fair and equitable ruler. Our own lives are subjected to rude shocks that strike us as perplexingly unjust. 1. *There is injustice arising from unjust men.* Job was unjustly treated, not by God, but by his three friends. We should not charge God with the sins of our own brethren. 2. *We cannot see the whole of God's plan.* The opening appears to be unfair. But wait for the end. God's justice is large and far-reaching. It will be revealed when the whole sweep of his dealings with us is comprehended. The arc ends in an acute angle. Only the complete circle is without a break and smooth throughout.

III. IT IS BOTH FOOLISH AND WRONG TO IMPUGN GOD'S JUSTICE. 1. *It is foolish.* We are not in a position to judge; we do not know all the facts, and our standard of judgment is perverted by our own prejudices and unjust claims. The tyro cannot wisely criticize the achievements of the master. 2. *It is wrong.* If we knew God we should not charge him foolishly. But we should know him if we drew near to him in the right spirit. Too often our doubt of God's justice is not so much the product of a purely intellectual difficulty as the result of a moral fault. It shows lack of faith in his goodness, and it springs from a miserable weakness that will not venture to trust God.

IV. CHRISTIAN FAITH FORBIDS US TO IMPUGN GOD'S JUSTICE. Even Christ does not clear up the mystery, and still we have to walk by faith. We cannot yet see that God is dealing justly with us. But we have good grounds for confidence in our Lord's revelation of the nature and character of God. Christ shows us the fatherly nature of God. He makes us see that God is good and full of love for his children. At the same time, he exalts the perfect rectitude of God. Such a knowledge of God as we have in Christ should fill our souls with faith and hope, because such a God as Christ has made known cannot act unjustly, although for a time he may appear to do so. He who knows God in Christ cannot fall into pessimism. He should be able to say with Browning—

"... This world's no blot,
Nor blank: it means intensely, and means good."

W. F. A.

Ver. 12.—*The humiliation of the proud.* The idea is something like this: If Job can sit as a judge over what God does, he ought to be able to take God's judgment-seat and execute justice among men. But can he do this? Can he humiliate the proud? If he is incapable of this act of justice, how small a creature he is before the great God who raises up and casts down!

I. THE HUMILIATION OF THE PROUD IS GREATLY NEEDED. This particular act of justice is singled out as though it were pre-eminent in importance. It is important on many accounts. 1. *For the sake of the proud.* Pride is ruinous to the heart in which it has taken up its abode, eating up the better feelings and preparing for the incoming of other sins. The only hope for a proud man is that he should be brought low, and so emptied of self. 2. *For the sake of others.* The proud spirit is domineering. Pride is at the root of tyranny. If men are to have their rights, the pride of the exalted must be brought down. 3. *For God's sake.* Pride is an insult to God, a usurpation of the Divine rights and honours. Before God man is small, weak, sinful. His only fitting condition is one of humility and complete self-abasement in the sight of Heaven.

II. THE HUMILIATION OF THE PROUD IS MOST DIFFICULT TO ACCOMPLISH. Can Job do

this? It is not to be supposed that he can. Pride is doubly strong. 1. *In its own character.* It is of the nature of pride to induce self-confidence. Even while the world is pointing the finger of scorn at the proud man, he wraps himself in the mantle of his own self-importance, and despises contempt. Here is a great difference between pride and vanity, for vanity is easily cast down, because it lives on the admiration of the world, while pride is self-contained, and may be most intense when it is least honoured. 2. *In its circumstances.* There are poor and unfortunate proud men. But, as a rule, success and power are the temptations to pride. Thus the proud man is entrenched behind his good fortune, and he uses all the means that prosperity has given him to defend his position.

III. THE HUMILIATION OF THE PROUD IS BROUGHT ABOUT BY GOD. This is most decidedly a Divine work. It is beyond the reach of Job or of any man. God humbles pride: 1. *By his power.* The proud man is helpless before his Maker. His resources are as poverty itself, and all his self-importance is but childish pretence. God lifts up the lowly, and sets down the mighty with a word. 2. *In his justice.* Man's pride is not attacked simply because God is jealous of it, but because it is an evil thing. An insult to God, an injury to man, it needs to be cast out in order that a right spirit of humility and obedience may take the place of it. 3. *For the sake of his love.* God humbles the proud man because he loves him. The abasement is not a vindictive act, but a merciful preparation for salvation. The goodness of God leads him to cast down all pretence and self-importance, so that he may raise up a new and more stable structure of solid merit in place of these empty shows. The proud but useless forest is cleared that the precious grain of wheat may be sown in its place. God cuts down man's pride to make room for Christ's grace.—W. F. A.

Ver. 14.—*Self-salvation.* When Job is strong enough to humble the proud he may be able to save himself; but as he cannot do the first work he is not equal to the second. Thus we are introduced to the impossibility of self-salvation.

I. THE VAIN ATTEMPT. Men are continually trying to save themselves. 1. *In danger.* We feel that we need deliverance. Job desired to be saved from disease, poverty, injustice, cruelty. We all wish to escape from trouble. Some of us may be more anxious to escape from sin, our greatest enemy. There are evils, then, and the perception of them urges us to save ourselves. 2. *In distrust.* We ought to look to the Almighty for strength, and to the All-merciful for deliverance. But if we forget God we are tempted to rely on the arm of flesh. If we had a due appreciation of God's ability and willingness to save, we should not dream of trying to save ourselves. 3. *In self-confidence.* We must think little of our sin, or much of ourselves, if we imagine that we can effect our own salvation. We have not yet discovered our own weakness, nor the depth of our fall, if we suppose that there is no greater mischief with us than what we can remedy.

II. THE CERTAIN FAILURE. No man has yet saved himself. Is it likely that the latest to try the experiment will succeed? We have not yet conquered our own hearts, although we have often determined to do so. Is it probable that our next attempt will be more successful? There are good grounds for being assured that it will not. 1. *The greatness and power of sin.* No one who has not tried to break its yoke knows how terrific this is. We simply cannot get away from our own sin. Not only does the sin harden into a habit and so become a second nature, but it weakens the moral fibre of the soul. The prisoner languishing in the dungeon is not only held in by stone walls and iron bars, but the unhealthy condition of his confinement weakens his body so that he has not strength to break away from even smaller constraints. 2. *The justice of God.* This does not hold us to our sin, but it binds us to its consequences. We cannot deny that we deserve the wrath of Heaven. We cannot atone for sin. All our subsequent service is no more than is due from us, and the old debt still remains uncancelled.

III. THE GLORIOUS ALTERNATIVE. We have to learn that we cannot save ourselves, not merely to discourage useless efforts, but to lead us to the true salvation of God. What we cannot do for ourselves God can and will do if we will let him. 1. *Through Jesus Christ.* He was called Jesus because he would save his people from their sins (Matt. i. 21). He is the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"

(John i. 29). Christ delivers from sin as well as from its result—death. His power to save springs from his atoning sacrifice; but he saves now as a living, present Redeemer. He is the hand of God put forth to deliver the helpless and ruined. 2. *In regeneration.* We need to be born again (John iii. 3). So great a change cannot be brought about by ourselves; Christ alone can effect it. He has not come so much to bestow on us gifts as to change our whole life, so that we may become new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. v. 17).—W. F. A.

Vers. 15—24.—*Behemoth the great.* Two monster animals, the hippopotamus and the crocodile, are set before us in typical characteristics, to idealize the great works of God in the animal kingdom.

I. GOD IS THE CREATOR OF THE ANIMAL WORLD. "God made the beast of the earth after his kind" (Gen. i. 25). We have not left the presence of God when we have come to study natural history. Here we may see indications of Divine thought. Even the coarsest wild animals are under the care of God. 1. Therefore let no one hurt them needlessly. 2. If God provides for behemoth, will he not much more provide for man?

II. MAGNITUDE AND STRENGTH HAVE A PLACE IN THE DIVINE ECONOMY. Behemoth is famous first for his size, and secondly for his physical strength. Now, these two qualities are among the lowest of good things. Still, they are good. God is glorified even by the physical greatness of his works. The chief glory of the stars is in their magnitude and in the vastness of the space which they occupy. A mere mass of flesh is the lowest excellence. Yet even this may be good if it is not abused. How much more may higher gifts?

III. EXCELLENCE IN LOWER QUALITIES IS NO GUARANTEE FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER QUALITIES. Behemoth is big and strong. But he is stupid and brutal. When he opens his cavernous jaws and his dull eyes appear over them, set in a mountain of black, shapeless flesh, he is positively hideous. The gravity of his unconscious attitudes of supreme ugliness has almost a touch of humour in it. We begin to wonder how the Divine Artist who shaped the graceful gazelle and gave the perfection of motion to the swallow could have fashioned the ugly and clumsy hippopotamus. Perhaps one object was to show what a poor thing bulk of body is in comparison with brains, with thought and soul. The young man who is more proud of his biceps than of anything else belonging to him may see his ideal humiliated in behemoth. For no man can attain to the strength of a hippopotamus.

IV. THERE IS A HARMONY IN ALL GOD'S WORKS. Behemoth is suited to his home among the coarse grasses of the Nile. There his voracious appetite can find ample sustenance. God provides for all his creatures, and he suits all his creatures for the spheres in which he has called them to live. Behemoth is naturally of a low and stupid nature, and he has all that his nature requires. Man is of a higher nature. He must not be content to dream his existence away in the sleepy land where soul-life is stifled. The true "lotus-eaters" are not refined Sybarites, but hippopotami.

V. GOD, WHO WORKS IN THE GREAT, WORKS ALSO IN THE LITTLE. He made the monsters of the deep. He also made the microscopic cell. From behemoth to the amœba all the living creatures of nature are "fearfully and wonderfully made." When we think of God behind the tiny cell, quickening its mysterious life,

"The small becomes dreadful and immense."

VI. BULK AND POWER ARE NOT THE MOST TERRIBLE THINGS. Behemoth is a vegetarian. He is not cruel, like his much smaller fellow-creature, the lion. The little asp that he tramples beneath his feet is far more deadly. Big troubles may not be so hurtful as troubles that we can scarcely see till they have bitten us.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLI.

Vers. 1—34.—The crowning description of a natural marvel—the "leviathan," or crocodile—is now given, and with an elaboration to which there is no parallel in the rest of Scripture. It forms, however, a fit climax to the gradually more and more

elaborate descriptions of ch. xxxviii. 39—41; xxxix. 1—30; and xl. 15—24.

Ver. 1.—**Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook?** The word *leviathan*, or more properly *livyathan*, which has previously occurred in ch. iii. 8, and is found also in Ps. lxxiv. 14; civ. 26; and Isa. xxvii. 1, seems to be derived from לוה, "twisting," and תן, "a monster," whence the תנין or תנים of the Pentateuch and also of Job (ch. vii. 12), Jeremiah (ix. 11), and Ezekiel (xxix. 3). It is thus a descriptive epithet rather than a name, and has not unnaturally been used to designate more than one kind of animal. The best modern critics regard it as applied sometimes to a python or large serpent, sometimes to a cetacean, a whale or grampus, and sometimes, as here, to the crocodile. This last application is now almost universally accepted. The crocodile was fished for by the Egyptians with a hook, and in the time of Herodotus was frequently caught and killed (Herod., ii. 70); but probably in Job's day no one had been so venturous as to attack him. **Or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?** rather, *or press down his tongue with a cord?* (see the Revised Version); *i.e.* "tie a rope round his lower jaw, and so press down his tongue." Many savage animals are represented in the Assyrian sculptures as led along by a rope attached to their mouths.

Ver. 2.—**Canst thou put an hook into his nose?** rather, *a reed*, or *a rope of reeds*. The exact meaning is doubtful. **Or bore his jaw through with a thorn?** A *hook* or *ring* is meant, rather than a "thorn"—such a "hook" or "ring" as was commonly used for keeping fish captive in the water, or for bringing prisoners of rank into the presence of the monarchs who had captured them (see 2 Kings xix. 28; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11; Amos iv. 2; 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. pp. 304, 367).

Ver. 3.—**Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee?** Ironical. Will he behave as human captives do, when they wish to curry favour with their captors?

Ver. 4.—**Will he make a covenant with thee?** As captive monarchs do. **Wilt thou take him as a servant for ever?** (comp. Exod. xxi. 6; Deut. xv. 17).

Ver. 5.—**Wilt thou play with him as with a bird?** The Egyptians were especially fond of pet animals, and Job's countrymen, it may be assumed, were the same. Besides dogs, we find the Egyptians keeping tame antelopes, leopards, and monkeys. A tame crocodile would certainly seem to be an extraordinary pet, but Herodotus says that the Egyptians tamed them (ii. 69), and Sir Gardner Wilkinson informed me that he had known some tame ones at Cairo. The Mesopotamian Arabs domesticate falcons to assist them in the chase of the bustard and the gazelle (Layard, 'Nineveh and Babylon,' pp. 481—483). And this usage, though not represented on the Assyrian monuments, is likely to have been ancient. **Or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?** *i.e.* Wilt thou so secure him that he may be delivered over to thy handmaidens, to be made their pet and playfellow?

Ver. 6.—**Shall the companions make a banquet of him?** rather, *Shall the companions make a traffic of him?* By "the companions" we may understand either the guilds or companies of fishermen, which might be regarded as engaged in making the capture, or the travelling bands of merchants, who might be supposed willing to purchase him and carry him away. As no one of these last could be imagined rich enough to make the purchase alone, a further question is asked, **Shall they part him among the merchants?** *i.e.* allow a number to club together, each taking a share.

Ver. 7.—**Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons?** The hippopotamus was captured in this way by the Egyptians at an early date, and hence the idea of trying the same mode of capture with the crocodile would naturally arise; but in the time of Job it would seem that no one had been bold enough to attempt it. The skin of the crocodile is penetrable in very few places, and his capture by a single man with a harpoon, though now sometimes practised (Wilkinson, in the author's 'Herodotus,' vol. ii. p. 99), is still a work of danger and difficulty. **Or his head with fish-spears?** Fish-spears would have small effect on the head of a crocodile, which is bony and covered by a very tough skin. There is a vulnerable place, however, at the point where the head joins the spine, at which the ancient Egyptians, when they ventured to attack the crocodile, were wont to strike (see the author's 'History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. p. 545).

Ver. 8.—**Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more.** This is again ironical, like vers. 3—6. "Only just put forth thy hand against him—bethink thee of war—do it once and no more." (comp. Rosenmüller, 'Scholia in Jobum,' p. 976). The idea is that once will be enough. A man will not live to do it a second time.

Ver. 9.—**Behold, the hope of him is in vain;** *i.e.* the hope of capturing or killing him. **Shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?** The very sight of the savage and invulnerable animal is enough to make a man fall to the ground with fear.

Ver. 10.—None is so fierce that dare stir him up. The crocodile is often seen asleep, or nearly asleep, upon sand-banks washed by the Nile. He would be a bold man who should creep near, and stir him up. **Who then is able to stand before me?** Here we reach the point whereto the whole argument has been working up. If man cannot cope with creatures, which are the work of God's hands, how much less can he presume to cope with him who is their Maker!

Ver. 11.—Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? *i.e.* "Who hath laid me under any obligation, so that I should be bound to fall in with his views, and take such a course as he might prescribe?" The allusion is to Job's persistent demand for a hearing—a controversy (ch. ix. 34, 35; x. 3; xiii. 3, 22; xxiii. 3—7, etc.)—a trial, in which he shall plead with God, and God with him, upon even terms as it were, and so the truth concerning him, his sins, his integrity, his sufferings, and their cause or causes, shall be made manifest. God resists any and every claim that is made on him to justify himself and his doings to a creature. He is not a debtor to any. If he explains himself to any extent, if he condescends to give an account of any of his doings, it is of pure grace and favour. It has been observed that we might have expected this to be the conclusion of the entire discourse begun in ch. xxxviii.; and that no doubt would have been, according to ordinary laws of human composition, its more proper place. But Hebrew poetry is erratic, and pays little regard to logical laws. If anything important has been omitted in its more proper place, it is inserted in one which is, humanly speaking, less proper. The details concerning the crocodile, which are calculated to deepen the general impression, having been passed over where we might have expected them, are here subjoined, as filling out the description of vers. 1—10.

Ver. 12.—I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion. The further description is introduced by this formal announcement, which is perhaps best rendered, *I will not keep silence concerning his limbs, nor concerning the matter of his might, or the comeliness of his proportion* (see the Revised Version); *i.e.* I will enter upon these points *seriatim*, and set them forth severally.

Ver. 13.—Who can discover the face of his garment? Some critics understand this in a general sense, "Who can lay him open to assault?" Others suggest a more definite meaning, "Who can strip off his outer covering?" the scaly coat, that is, which forms his special defence, and expose the comparatively tender skin below? If this were done, he would then be at the hunter's mercy; but who will undertake to do it? **Who, again, can come to him with his double bridle?** Come, *i.e.*, with a double bridle in his hand, and place it in the monster's jaws. (So Schultens and Professor Lee.) Others translate, "Who will come within [the range of] his double bridle?" and understand by "his double bridle" his two rows of teeth—Homer's ἕρκος ὀδόντων (Rosenmüller, Canon Cook, Professor Stanley Leathes, etc.).

Ver. 14.—Who can open the doors of his face? Who can make him open his huge, gaping jaws, if he chooses to keep them shut? Who would dare to do so? **His teeth are terrible round about.** The crocodile has "two rows of sharply pointed teeth, thirty or more on each side" (Russell's 'Ancient and Modern Egypt,' p. 460). They are "so formed and disposed as to tear their prey rather than masticate it" ('Dict. Universelle des Sciences,' p. 447). The voracity of the full-grown crocodile is great; and he will not scruple to attack and devour men, if they come in his way. The natives of Upper Egypt have a wholesome terror of him.

Ver. 15.—His scales are his pride; or, ***his pride is in the channeling of his scales*** (literally, *of his shields*). The scales of the crocodile are arranged in five rows along his entire back, with a depression between the rows which is like a "channel." Each individual scale resembles a shield. They **are shut up together as with a close seal;** each, *i.e.*, closely attached to its fellow, so that there is no space between them. "A rifle-ball," according to Canon Tristram, "glances off from them as from a rock" ('Natural History of the Bible,' p. 352).

Ver. 16.—One is so near to another, that no air can come between them (see the comment on the preceding verse).

Ver. 17.—They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered; literally, *they are soldered one to another* (comp. Isa. xli. 7).

Ver. 18.—By his neesings a light doth shine. "Neesings" is old English for "sneezings." According to Aristotle, the crocodile is in the habit of sneezing, but I do not find this fact noted by modern writers. Bochart asserts it very positively ('Hieroz.,' pp. 752—754), but he does not profess to speak from his own knowledge. **And his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning.** This probably does not mean more than that his eyes flash with light upon occasion, which is no doubt true, though the eyes, being small, have not generally attracted very much attention.

Ver. 19.—Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. The description now becomes highly poetical, and it would be a mistake to endeavour to substantiate it. The intention is to repre

sent the impression which the animal would make on an impressible but unscientific observer viewing it in its native haunts for the first time. Splashing, snorting, and throwing up spray all around, it would seem to be breathing out steam and smoke, from which the idea of fire is inseparable (see the next verse).

Ver. 20.—**Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron**; rather, *as from a seething pot and rushes*; i.e. as from a pot heated by burning rushes.

Ver. 21.—**His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth.** All the representations of dragons breathing smoke and flames, found in the myths and sagas of so many countries, probably rest upon the observed fact of steam or spray streaming forth from the mouth and widely opened nostrils of the crocodile. The steam has seemed to be smoke, and smoke has naturally suggested flame and fire.

Ver. 22.—**In his neck remaineth strength.** It has been well remarked that the whale has no neck, or at any rate none that is visible, while the crocodile has one that is of great strength, and that naturally attracts observation. "Le cou assez marqué," says the 'Dictionnaire des Sciences' (*l.s.c.*). It is nearly of the same diameter with the head at the point of junction, and where it adjoins the body is still larger. **And sorrow is turned into joy before him**; rather, *and terror danceth before him* (see the Revised Version). Whithersoever he proceeds, he causes terror; people tremble, take to flight, and disappear.

Ver. 23.—**The flakes of his flesh are joined together.** Even the softer muscles, and parts which in most animals are yielding and flabby, in the crocodile are bound up, and, as it were, soldered together (comp. ver. 17). **They are firm in themselves**; rather, *they are firm upon him*; literally, *fused upon him*, like detached pieces of metal, which are melted one into another. **They cannot be moved.** His whole body is so firmly compacted together that it is all one piece; the separate parts cannot be moved separately. One result is that the crocodile has great difficulty in turning.

Ver. 24.—**His heart is firm as a stone.** Some regard this as intended physically, and note that the great saurians, with their cold and sluggish circulation, have hearts which are comparatively torpid, not contracting or expanding readily. Others take the "stony heart" to mean a fierce and obstinate disposition. In either case, the description will well suit the crocodile. **Yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone.** A repetition and slight exaggeration of the preceding idea.

Ver. 25.—**When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid.** Egyptian historians said that one of their early kings had been slain by a crocodile (Manetho ap. Euseb., 'Chron. Can.,' pars i. 20, p. 98). The worship paid to crocodiles in some parts of Egypt, and the hatred felt towards them in others, were probably alike inspired by fear. Ælian says that, in the districts where crocodiles were worshipped, it was not safe for any one to wash his feet or to draw water at the river, and that in the vicinity of some towns people did not dare to walk along the bank of the stream ('Nat. An.,' x. 24). In modern times they have been known to precipitate men from the bank into the water by a sweep of their tail, and then to devour them at their leisure. **By reason of breakings they purify themselves**; rather, *they are confounded.* The "breakings" may be either the breakings forth of the animal from his lair among the Nile rushes, or his "breaking" of the weapons of his assailants.

Ver. 26.—**The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold.** It either makes no impression or it snaps in his hand. Equally vain are **the spear, the dart, and the** *javelin.* **Habergeon** is a mistranslation.

Ver. 27.—**He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass** (rather, *bronze*) **as rotten wood.** Even the hardest metals are useless against the crocodile. Moderns observe that even firearms are of little avail against him. The back and tail, at any rate, resist musketballs (Bochart); and a rifle-bullet will glance aside if it strikes one of the scales (Tristram); see ver. 15.

Ver. 28.—**The arrow cannot make him flee**; literally, *the son of the bow* (comp. Lam. iii. 13, where arrows are called "sons of the quiver"). **Sling-stones are turned with him into stubble.** (On the use of the sling as a weapon of war in early times, see the author's 'Hist. of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. p. 449; and comp. 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. pp. 35, 36; 1 Sam. xvii. 49, 50; 2 Kings iii. 25.) (On "stubble" as a metaphor for weakness, see above, ch. xxi. 18, and compare the next verse.)

Ver. 29.—**Darts are counted as stubble**; rather, *the club is counted as stubble.* Maces, either of hard wood or of metal, were used by the Assyrians ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 64). They had heavy heads, and were quite as effective weapons as either swords or spears. If a strong man could have succeeded in dealing a blow with one on the head of a crocodile, it would probably have proved fatal; but intending assailants were doubtless charged, and scattered "as stubble," before they could find opportunity to strike. **He laugheth at the shaking of a spear**; rather, *at the rushing of the javelin* (see the Revised Version).

Ver. 30.—**Sharp stones are under him**; rather, *jagged potsherds are under him*; i.e

'His belly is covered with jagged scales"—a thing which is true of the crocodile, but scarcely of any other beast. **He spreadeth sharp pointed things** (rather, *a threshing-wain*, or *a corn-drag*) **upon the mire.** He leaves on the mud on which he has lain, i.e., an impression as of an Oriental threshing-wain, or corn-drag, which is "a thick plank of timber, stuck full, on the under side, of flints or hard cutting stones arranged in the form of the palate or rough tongue of a cow" (Sir C. Follows, 'Asia Minor,' p. 70). The mud-banks on which crocodiles have been lying are said to be scored all over with such impressions.

Ver. 31.—**He maketh the deep to boil like a pot.** The rush of the crocodile through the water of the stream or pool in which he dwells causes a stir and a commotion which is forcibly compared to the boiling of water in a caldron. **He maketh the sea like a pot of ointment.** It is generally allowed that by "the sea" here is meant the Nile, as in Isa. xviii. 2; xix. 5; and Nah. iii. 8. The swirl of the Nile, as the crocodile makes his rush, is like the heaving of a pot of boiling oil or ointment.

Ver. 32.—**He maketh a path to shine after him**; one **would think the deep to be hoary.** He leaves a white trail behind him as he passes from sand-bank to sand-bank through the shallows. It is as if the Nile had grown old and put on hoar hairs.

Ver. 33.—**Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear** (comp. vers. 24—29).

Ver. 34.—**He beholdeth all high things.** He looks without fear on everything that is high and great. Nothing alarms him; nothing disturbs his equanimity. **He is a king over all the children** (literally, *sons*) **of pride** (comp. ch. xxviii. 8). He feels himself superior to all other animals that come within his ken. They may be "sons of pride," but he has more to be proud of than the proudest of them. Ordinarily, the lion poses as "the king of beasts;" but here he is, as it were, deposed, and relegated into the second position (ch. xxxviii. 39), the crocodile being exalted into his place. From different points of view, there are several great beasts which might be regarded as the lords of the animal creation.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—34.—*Jehovah to Job: the second answer:* 3. *Concerning leviathan.* I. THE ANIMAL INTENDED. 1. *A serpentine creature.* This implied in the name *leviathan*, which signifies "a wreathed or twisted animal," as distinguished from the *tannin*, or "long-extended monsters" (Gen. i. 21). 2. *An aquatic monster.* Though amphibious as to its habits, the behemoth was essentially a land animal; the entire description of leviathan points to a tenant of the deep (vers. 1, 2, 31, 32). 3. *A gigantic crocodile.* Believed by earlier interpreters to be the whale, it is now commonly accepted as the crocodile, which, equally with behemoth, frequented the Nile.

II. THE MONSTER DESCRIBED. 1. *Its untamable ferocity.* (Vers. 1—9.) The idea is presented in a variety of ways. (1) The impossibility of catching the animal is exhibited. "Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?" literally, "or with a cord pressest thou down his tongue," The meaning is that the crocodile cannot be caught like a fish; hence men cannot do with it as fishers do with fish, "put a hook [literally, 'a rope of rushes'] into his nose, or bore his jaw through with a thorn," rather "with a hook or ring"—the allusion being to the Egyptian mode of dealing with fish that have been caught. "They passed the stalk of a rush through the gills, and thus attached them together, in order more conveniently to carry them home" (Wilkinson's 'Ancient Egyptians,' vol. ii. p. 121). (2) The impossibility of utilizing the animal is next represented. "Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee?" in order to be spared when caught?—persuading thee, perhaps, that thou canst turn him to good and profitable account. Well, what canst thou make of him? A bond-servant like one of the domesticated animals? "Will he make a covenant with thee, to take him as a perpetual slave?"—a toy or plaything for thyself or children? "Wilt thou play with him as a little bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?"—an article of trade for the merchants? Wilt thou kill him and cut him up for the fish-market? "Shall the companions [literally, 'the partners,' *i.e.* of the fish-guild] banquet of him [or rather, as the parallel shows, 'trade upon or with him']? shall they part him among the merchants?" literally, "the Canaanite" or Phœnician merchants. (3) The impossibility of destroying him is further portrayed. "Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons?

or his head with fish-spears?" Nay, wert thou only to lay thine hand upon him, thou shouldst have speedy cause to repent thy rashness; "thou shouldest remember the battle" so decidedly that thou wouldst not care to repeat it. Nay, the hope of any assailant being able to prevail against the formidable creature is absolutely vain, the very sight of it being such as to fill one with dismay. Probably no one in Job's time had ever thought of attacking the monster, although crocodiles were caught in Egypt prior to the days of Herodotus. 2. *Its terrifying aspect.* (Vers. 12—24.) Jehovah invites attention to three points: the parts of the animal, *i.e.* the separate limbs or members; the power of the brute, *i.e.* the great strength of which it is possessed; and the comely proportion of the creature, *i.e.* the beauty of his armour, or hide. (1) The limbs of the animal. Its massive jaws set round with a twofold row of teeth: "Who can come to him with [or, 'within'] his double bridle?" *i.e.* who can enter within his double teeth, which "are terrible round about"? Its mouth emitting violent puffs of hot breath: "Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth." Its nostrils sneezing as it lies basking in the sun: "By his neesings a light doth shine." Its eyes flashing in the morning light as they rise above water. "His eyelids are like the eyelids of the morning;" *i.e.* they appear first above the water, intimating that the creature's body is about to rise as the first streaks of dawn announce the approach of day. Hence to describe the dawn the Egyptians depict two eyes of the crocodile. (2) The strength of the brute. "In his neck remaineth strength," so that "sorrow rejoiceth before him" (margin), which falls below the original—"On his neck strength dwells, and horror danceth before him," meaning that wherever the monster appears he spreads consternation before him, which is represented by a lively poetic fancy as if those who ran before the animal were dancing before him. The effect of his appearance is likewise vividly portrayed. "When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves," literally, "from (or by) breakings," *i.e.* the breakings forth of the creature from his lair, they miss the way, becoming utterly confounded in presence of the huge brute. (3) The comely proportion of the creature. The impenetrable hide of the crocodile is one of its most characteristic features. Jehovah describes its close-fitting scales, which, like strong shields soldered together (ver. 15), are so close that no air can come between (ver. 15), and so fast together that they cannot be sundered (ver. 17), and so impervious that "darts are counted as stubble, and he laugheth at the shaking of a spear" (vers. 26—29). Even the under parts of this creature's body, unlike those of other animals, are compact and firm (ver. 23), being furnished also with splinters of potsherd, *i.e.* sharp scales, so that on the mud-bank where it lies it leaves the impression of a threshing-sledge (ver. 30); while its "heart is firm as a stone; yea, as a piece of the nether millstone" (ver. 24). 3. *Its impetuous movement.* One who saw two alligators fighting says "that their rapid passage was marked by the surface of the water as if it were boiling" (ver. 23). The animal also moves with such velocity as to leave behind it a bright white trail of foam, as if the deep were hoary (ver. 32). 4. *Its incontestable supremacy.* "Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear." Hence all other creatures shrink before him. "He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride," *i.e.* over all other beasts of prey.

III. THE LESSON INDICATED. 1. *The impossibility of contending with God.* If no man can hope successfully to encounter a crocodile, how foolish must it be to think of striving against God (ver. 10)! 2. *The sovereignty of God's procedure in the world.* If God in fashioning so wonderful a beast had acted solely on his own irresponsible will, was it not probable that he might in the same manner act in connection with man (ver. 11)? 3. *The probability of God's works in providence being marked by wisdom.* If in the structure of a crocodile there was so much appearance (and reality) of design, it was not surely unreasonable to hope that the same characteristic of design would not be absent from the Creator's doings in the higher realm of intelligence. 4. *The likelihood of finding mysteries in God's dealings with men.* If Job had been asked to say why God had made so ferocious a beast, he could not have done so. It is doubtful if any one can satisfactorily explain the introduction of carnivorous animals among other peaceful creatures. Why, then, should there not be found enigmas in the higher world of human life?

Learn: 1. The great power of God, who can control the fiercest of creatures. 2. The

weakness of man, whom an unreasoning animal can affright. 3. The wisdom of faith, which always trusts where it cannot understand.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—34.—*Description of the leviathan, or crocodile.* The description is in two parts.

I. The first part shows THE DIFFICULTY OR WELL-NIGH IMPOSSIBILITY OF CIRCUMVENTING AND CAPTURING THIS HUGE AND SLIPPERY CREATURE. (Vers. 1—7.) In language of irony and almost of taunt this fact is set forth. Here, then, is a mere creature of God before which man must feel his helplessness. If man cannot overcome the creature, how much less shall he pretend to vie with the Creator, make his imperfect will the rule of the world, and bend the pride of the wicked beneath him?

II. The second part (vers. 8—34) is A DESCRIPTION IN DETAIL OF THE PARTS, THE ORGANS, THE TERRIBLE ASPECT, THE FURY, THE OBSTINATE POWER OF DEFENCE, AND THE PROUD DOMINION OF THIS TERRIBLE CREATURE OVER ALL OTHERS IN HIS RIVER-HAUNTS. Without at all straining the language or the sense, the crocodile may be regarded as the type or allegory of the wicked—in his destructive fierceness and passion, his callousness, his place of pride and worldly defences—the alarm and confusion which he spreads around him. So fearful and so real does wickedness seem in the high places of the earth. *Inwardly*, the good man may escape from its power and influence; *outwardly*, he seems exposed to its baneful sway, and seeks in vain for dominion over it. The leviathan is the symbol of those "kings of the children of pride." The conquest over the kingdoms of force and fraud is reserved for the Divine might of righteousness alone.

The great lesson of this chapter is, then, that almighty power and justice are inseparable. Separate in thought for a moment these principles, and imagine either without the other to be associated with the nature of God, and we have a world that is horrible to contemplate—a world where force without right is the only law, or a world where right is ever vainly struggling against force. Put these cases before the mind, and we at once see that they are not only dreadful but impossible alternatives. Neither is that human world, in which, with all its mysteries and seeming inconsequences, pious and dutiful souls are thankful and content to live, the world that is firmly and broadly based upon the eternal will of absolute power and justice. Thus, too, we are taught the truth concerning ourselves. Till we know both our weakness and our moral frailty, we know nothing truly about ourselves. To be conscious of impotence in presence of evil is to confess that we are unrighteous. And this leads to that humble conviction of dependence in which is the great root of piety. Dependence, in the natural and in the moral life, is the law of our being. In the recognition of it, in the acceptance of those relations and the fulfilment of those duties which the gospel builds upon this foundation, consists man's health and peace. The thought of a God who is mere arbitrary power, as the gods and fates of the heathen, can never inspire loving trust or holiness. The thought of a God who is just, but not all-powerful, so that he cannot carry out his righteous purposes (as in ancient Manichæism and in the strange theory, *e.g.*, of J. S. Mill), can never support the feeble soul in the midst of the temptations of the world, in its struggle against evil. The foundation laid in Zion is built of no such crumbling material; it is raised upon a truth on which to rest is to be secure from disturbance, for upon it all the history of time and the life of mankind are built.

> "Praise, everlasting praise, be paid
> To him that earth's foundations laid;
> Praise to the Lord whose strong decrees
> Sway the creation as he please."

J.

Vers. 1—34.—*Leviathan the terrible.* This terrible monster has a whole chapter to himself. His portrait is painted on a broad canvas, and it is as full of life and movement as it is of form and colour. Representing the crocodile, though enlarged and idealized, leviathan is a picture of the most terrible of the works of nature.

I. THERE ARE TERRIBLE THINGS IN NATURE. When we look at the cruel jaws of the crocodile, gaping in readiness for its prey, and the little snake-like eyes watching intently, in spite of an inert attitude of body that tempts us to despise the creature as no better than a log of wood, we have before us the mystery of natural terror. Could God have made this horrible monster? Is there something in the animal world like the tares in the field, that an enemy sowed in the night? The unity and harmony of nature forbid such a thought. Moreover, the crocodile has as much right to live as the fish or the calf that it feeds on. Even when it snaps at an innocent and beautiful young creature, it is but fulfilling that great natural instinct of hunger, without which the world would perish. Far more terrible than the crocodile is the old serpent, who brought into the world not natural death, but sin and the death of the soul.

II. NATURE IS ADVANCING IN BEAUTY AND JOY. Both behemoth and leviathan—the idealized hippopotamus and the idealized crocodile—are survivals of a more ancient order of creatures than those which now inhabit our globe. Geology teaches us that once such creatures, and greater ones, were the chief if not the sole inhabitants of the earth. They are really akin to the huge mastodon, a monster that would dwarf an elephant; and the dinosaurus and ichthyosaurus, in comparison with which the most tremendous reptile of our own day is an insignificant animal. While these monsters crashed through the forests or plunged in the rivers the world was no fit place for man. But since their time God has peopled the earth with a fairer and more docile fauna. At all events, with such animals as now inhabit it, he has made it possible for so weak a being as man to rule the world. The older ugly and fearful creatures remain to bear witness to the past. But by their contrast with the general life of the present they show how God is improving the earth.

III. THE MOST FEARFUL CREATURES HAVE THEIR LIVES ADJUSTED BY GOD. There is poetry in the magnificent description of leviathan, especially because the whole hangs together in harmony. There are no real "freaks of nature." The most eccentric creatures have their spheres. The terror and fury of the lower life of nature is all calmly provided for by God. We may, perhaps, think that something must have been wrong,

> "When dragons in their prime
> Tare each other in their slime."

To us this fury, this agony of nature, is fearful and mysterious. But in the sight of God it is innocence itself compared with fury of sin and the agony of remorse. The terrible things of nature may possibly prove to have come from some perversion of God's original plan by the influence of evil beings; this, however, is but a wild conjecture. But the terrible sin of man is a certain fact, and the evil of the heart from which it springs is worse than the cruel rage of leviathan, just because the human evil is quite out of harmony with the will of God and in direct antagonism to his law.—W. F. A.

Ver. 11.—*The universal rule of God.* This is witnessed to even by leviathan. The splendid terror of the water-master is depicted in order that we may be made to feel in some way how great God must be, who made him and who rules over him.

I. IT INCLUDES THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE. All nature is as much under the hand and power of God to-day as when it first appeared at the dawn of creation. Even the disorder and confusion that have entered into nature have not been able to tear it away from the rule of God. God rules through terror and confusion and death as truly as through beauty and life. God does not confine himself to what we call the spiritual. He is not only concerned with that which, in the narrow sense of the word, we understand as "the religious." He is the great Architect, Mechanic, Engineer, of the universe.

II. IT IS NOT ALWAYS VISIBLE TO MAN. The hand that guides is unseen. The reign of law seems to drive back the reign of God. Thus Matthew Arnold writes—

> "The sea of faith
> Was once, too, at the full and round earth's shore,
> Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled;
> But now I only hear
> Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
> Retreating, to the breath

Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world."

III. IT IS NOT THE LESS REAL BECAUSE IT IS UNSEEN. We cannot see the guiding hand, but often we can most thankfully detect its presence by the providential result. We may not be able to discern the steersman for the driving spray, but if we have come safely into port we may be sure that he is at the helm. The reign of law cannot dispense with the rule of God, if God is the great Lawgiver. The most wonderful scientific truth that has been brought home to recent generations is the fixed and uniform system of law in nature. How came this to be so? and how is it that the rigorous laws make for the well-being of God's creatures, as they obviously do? Surely law itself points to a ruling mind. The world is not left to itself, or it would be in chaos. The order of the world throughout, extending to the most distant galaxy of stars, proclaims the universal rule of its one Lord.

IV. IT WILL MAKE ITSELF FELT BY THOSE WHO DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE IT AT PRESENT. Our denial of God's universal rule does not destroy it. We do not abrogate God's laws by ignoring them. The existence of an atheist does not mean the non-existence of God. For the present God waits, giving us our trial, and opportunities for knowing him peaceably and happily. But some day we must behold his throne of glory, if that throne exists at all. Then it will be well for us to have acknowledged it first, and to approach it as his obedient servants coming home from their toil.—W. F. A.

Ver. 34.—"*A king over all the children of pride.*" This magniloquent title crowns the elaborate description of leviathan, which occupies the whole chapter. It gives us a vivid idea of the supremacy and kingship that are to be found in nature.

I. THERE ARE GRADATIONS OF RANK IN NATURE. Nature is not democratic or communistic. Among her various orders we observe ascending ranks of living creatures. There is a natural aristocracy; there is a natural kingship. All creatures are not endowed alike. Some are gifted with powers that lift them above their fellows. We see the same facts in the human world. All men are not endowed equally. Some have five talents, some two talents, some but one talent. There are men who seem born to rule; power is native to them. Now, these facts may seem to justify a rigid adherence to differences of rank and a repression of efforts to bring about a state of equality. But we must modify the application of them to men in two or three respects. 1. Men are all of *one species*, of one great family, and are therefore all brethren, whereas in the animal world we have been considering differences of species. 2. Men have *a moral nature*, and can discern a higher right than that of might. 3. Men have *a religion*, which teaches them that their own instincts and wills are to be subordinate to the will of God.

II. THE HIGHEST KINGSHIP IS MENTAL AND MORAL. It is only in a highly rhetorical description that the crocodile, even when idealized, can be described as "a king over all the children of pride," for he does not really rule over the beasts and birds and fishes of the Nile. It is his dragon-like size and form and power that suggest to us an idea of royalty. And what royalty! Here we have the *reductio ad absurdum* of the kingship of force. It is natural and right in the crocodile, who lives up to his nature. Yet with all his toughness and terror this animal is one of the most senseless of creatures. It is not much to be able to boast of physical supremacy. The born kings of men are the great leaders in the higher life—leaders of thought, as Plato, Augustine, Aquinas, Bacon, Newton, Kant; leaders of religious life and conduct, as St. Paul, Athanasius, Luther, Wesley.

III. GOD IS KING OF KINGS. It would be a fearful thing if the power and supremacy that are entrusted to the larger animals had been given to them without limits or restraints. But the kingly animals, the lion and the eagle, as well as leviathan himself, are all obedient subjects of the Lord who rules over all the works of nature. They could not rebel against their Suzerain if they would. Their kingdoms are but satrapies of the grand empire of nature which God rules absolutely. Hence the order of the world in spite of the power of these monstrous creatures. Man alone is able to rebel. Yet God overrules the rebellion even of the human world, and brings kings to do his will, although they may recognize him as little as leviathan recognizes his Lord and Maker. Thus God gives power within limits. Men of the largest liberty and the

highest privileges will be called to account before their supreme Master. Therefore it is for us to look up above all earthly greatness and rule to that perfect kingship and that one supreme authority which has been revealed to us in Christ for the guidance of our lives into the path of loyal obedience.—W. F. A.

SECTION VII. HISTORICAL SEQUEL TO THE DIALOGUE.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLII.

Vers. 1—17.—This concluding chapter divides into two parts. In the first part (vers. 1—6) Job makes his final submission, humbling himself in the dust before God. In the second (vers. 7—17) the historical framework, in which the general dialogue is set, is resumed and brought to a close. God's approval of Job is declared, and his anger denounced against the three friends, who are required to expiate their guilt by a sacrifice, and only promised forgiveness if Job will intercede on their behalf (ver. 8). The sacrifice takes place (ver. 9); and then a brief account is appended of Job's after-life—his prosperity, his reconciliation with his family and friends, his wealth, his sons and daughters, and his death in a good old age, when he was "full of days" (vers. 10—17). The poetic structure, begun in ch. iii. 3, is continued to the end of ver. 6, when the style changes into prose of the same character as that employed in ch. i., ii., and in ch. xxxii. 1—5.

Vers. 1, 2.—**Then Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that thou canst do every thing**; *i.e.* I know and acknowledge thy omnipotence, which thou hast set forth so magnificently before me in ch. xxxviii.—xli. It is brought home to me by the grand review of thy works which thou hast made, and the details into which thou hast condescended to enter. I know also and acknowledge that **no thought can be withholden from thee**; *i.e.* I confess also thy omniscience—that thou knowest even the thoughts of all created beings (comp. Ps. xliv. 21; cxxxix. 2; Heb. iv. 13, etc.).

Ver. 3.—**Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?** As these are nearly the words of God in ch. xxxviii. 2, some suppose that they must be his words again here, and imagine a short dialogue in this place between Job and the Almighty, assigning to Job ver. 2, the latter half of ver. 3, and the whole of vers. 5 and 6, while they assign to God ver. 4 and the first clause of ver. 3. But it is far more natural to regard Job as bringing up the words which God had spoken to him, to ponder on them and answer them, or at any rate to hang his reply upon them, than to imagine God twice interrupting Job in the humble confession that he was anxious to make. We must understand, then, after the word "knowledge," an ellipse of "thou sayest." **Therefore have I uttered that I understood not.** *Therefore*, because of that reproof of thine, I perceive that, in what I said to my friends, I "darkened counsel"—I "uttered that I understood not," words which did not clear the matter in controversy, but obscured it. I dealt, in fact, with things too wonderful for me—beyond my comprehension—which I knew not, of which I had no real knowledge, but only a semblance of knowledge, and on which, therefore, I had better have been silent.

Ver. 4.—**Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.** Job refers to God's words in ch. xxxviii. 3 and xl. 7, and realizes the humbling effect which they had had on him. They made him feel how little he knew on the subject of God's works and ways, and how little competent he was to judge them. Hence he bursts into the confession—

Ver. 5.—**I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear.** Hitherto, *i.e.*, I have had nothing but hearsay knowledge of thee; I have not known thee in any true sense; but now—now that thou hast revealed thyself—mine eye seeth thee; my spiritual eye is opened, and I begin to see thee in thy true might, thy true greatness, thy true inscrutableness. Now I recognize the distance which separates us, and feel how unreasonable it is that I should contend with thee, argue with thee, assume myself to be competent to pass judgment on thy doings. "Wherefore I abhor myself," etc.

Ver. 6.—**Wherefore I abhor myself**; or, *I loathe my words* (see the Revised Version). **And repent in dust and ashes.** Job was still sitting on the ash-heap on which he had thrown himself when his disease first smote him (ch. ii. 8). He had thrown himself on it in grief and despair; he will remain seated on it in compunction and penitence. His self-humiliation is now complete. He does not retract what he has

said concerning his essential integrity, but he admits that his words have been overbold, and his attitude towards God one unbefitting a creature. God accepts his submission, and proceeds to vindicate him to his "friends," and to visit them with condemnation.

Ver. 7.—**And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job.** The "words" intended seem to be those of ch. xxxviii.—xli., not any words in the earlier portion of this chapter. God heard Job's confession in silence, and, without further speech to him, addressed Eliphaz and his "friends." **The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends.** The superior position of Eliphaz is here very strongly recognized—he alone is mentioned by name, he alone addressed directly. The precedence thus given to him accords with that which he holds, both in the earlier historical narrative (ch. ii. 11) and in the dialogue (ch. iv. 1; xv. 1; xxii. 1). **For ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.** Job had, on the whole, spoken what was right and true of God, and is acknowledged by God as his true servant. The "comforters," consciously or unconsciously, had spoken what was false. Even if they said what they believed, they ought to have known better.

Ver. 8.—**Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams.** (On the early and widespread prevalence of the rite of sacrifice, see the comment upon ch. i. 5.) (On the preference, for sacrificial purposes, of the number seven, see Lev. xxiii. 18; Numb. xxiii. 1, 14, 29; xxviii. 11, 19, 27; xxix. 2, 8, 36; 1 Chron. xv. 26; 2 Chron. xxix. 21; Ezra viii. 35; Ezek. xlv. 23, etc.) It is noticeable that "seven bullocks and seven rams" was *exactly* the offering of the Moabite king Balak, and his prophet Balaam, contemporary with Moses. **And go to my servant Job.** Humble yourselves before the man whom you have striven to abase and bring low. *Go to him*—make application to him, that he will be pleased to come to your aid, joining and assisting in the offering which I require at your hands. **And offer up for yourselves a burnt offering.** Do as Job had done for his sons (ch. i. 5), "offer a burnt offering;" and then **my servant Job shall pray for you.** Present at your sacrifice, and sharing in it, he shall assume the highest priestly function, and intercede on your behalf. **For him will I accept;** literally, *his face*, or *his person, will I accept.* It is implied that, apart from Job, the three "comforters" would not have been listened to, much less have obtained pardon. **Lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me** the thing which is **right, like my servant Job** (see the comment on the preceding verse).

Ver. 9.—**So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them;** *i.e.* "went" to Job, and asked his aid and interposition, and obtained it. **The Lord also accepted Job;** *i.e.* looked favourably on Job's intercession, and for his sake pardoned those for whom he made his prayer. Job is thus a type of Christ, not merely in his sufferings, but also in his mediatorial character.

Ver. 10.—**And the Lord turned the captivity of Job.** The literal use of this phrase is common, the metaphorical use of it uncommon, in Scripture. Still, it is so simple a metaphor, and captivity so common a thing among ancient peoples, that it may well have been in general use among the nations of Western Asia from very primitive times. It signifies, as Professor Lee remarks, "a restoration to former happy circumstances." **When he prayed for his friends.** Perhaps his complete forgiveness by God was contingent on his own complete forgiveness of his "friends" (Matt. vi. 12, 14, 15; xviii. 32—35); at any rate, his restoration immediately followed his intercession. **Also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before;** literally, *added to all that had been Job's to the double* (comp. ver. 12).

Ver. 11.—**Then came there unto him all his brethren.** Job's "brethren," and his desertion by them in his misfortunes, had been mentioned in ch. xix. 13. Now these fair-weather friends flocked to him again, and professed affection and interest, ignoring probably, or excusing, their long absence and neglect. **And all his sisters.** One sex had behaved no better to him than the other. His nearest female relatives had failed to show themselves the "ministering angels" that they are commonly accounted, even when "pain and anguish" most "wrung his brow." **And all they that had been of his acquaintance before.** Job, like other wealthy and prosperous men, had during the time of his prosperity had "troops of friends" (see ch. xxix. 8—10, 21—25). When adversity swooped down they fell away. Now they had the effrontery to claim his acquaintance once more, and to come and be his guests; they did **eat bread with him in his house.** Nay, more, **they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him,** whereof the worst part was their own coldness and desertion (ch. xix. 13, 14, 19). Finally, to establish the renewed friendship, **every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold.** The money given is said to have been a *kĕsitah*,

which means probably a certain weight of silver, though whether a shekel or not is uncertain. The word belongs to the earlier Hebrew, being found only in Gen. xxxiii. 19; Josh. xxiv. 32, and in the present passage. Ear-rings were commonly worn in the East by men as well as women, as appears from the Egyptian, Assyrian, and Persian sculptures.

Ver. 12.—**So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning** (comp. above, ver. 10). The restoration of prosperity, prophesied by Eliphaz (ch. v. 18—26), Bildad (ch. viii. 20, 21), and Zophar (ch. xi. 13—19), but not expected by Job, came, not in consequence of any universal law, but by the will of God, and his pure grace and favour. It in no way pledged God to compensate worldly adversity by worldly prosperity in the case of any other sufferer; and certainly the general law seems to be that such earthly compensation is withheld. But, in combination with the instinct which demands that retributive justice shall prevail universally, it may be taken as an earnest of God's ultimate dealings with men, and a sure indication that, if not on earth, at least in the future state, each man shall receive "the deeds done in the body," according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil. **For he had** (rather, *and he had*) **fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses.** In every case the exact *double* of his original possessions (see ch. i. 3; and comp. above, ver. 12). We need not suppose, however, that either the round numbers, or the *exact* duplicity, are historical.

Ver. 13.—**He had also seven sons and three daughters.** The same number as previously (ch. i. 2), neither more nor fewer.

Ver. 14.—**And he called the name of the first, Jemima.** The name "Jemima" is probably derived from *yôm* (יוֹם), "day," and means "Fair as the day." **And the name of the second, Kezia.** "Kezia" (rather, "Keziah") was the Hebrew name of the spice which the Greeks and Romans called "cassia," a spice closely allied to cinnamon, and much esteemed in the East (see Herod., iii. 110). **And the name of the third, Keren-happuch;** literally, *horn of stibium—stibium* being the dye (antimony) with which Oriental women have from a remote antiquity been in the habit of anointing the upper and lower eyelids in order to give lustre to the eye (compare the 'Pulpit Commentary' on the 'Second Book of Kings,' p. 194). The three names, according to Oriental notions, implied either sweetness or beauty.

Ver. 15.—**And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job.** Beauty has always been highly valued in the East; and Job would feel himself highly favoured in having *three* beautiful daughters. It may have been on account of their great beauty that **their father gave them inheritance among their brethren,** which was certainly an unusual practice in the East.

Ver. 16.—**After this lived Job an hundred and forty years.** It has been concluded from this statement, combined with that at the close of ver. 10, that Job was exactly seventy years of age when his calamities fell upon him ('Dict. of the Bible,' vol. i. p. 1087, note); but this is really only a conjecture, since the statement that "God added to all that had been Job's to the double," does not naturally apply to anything but his property. We may, however, fairly allow that (as Professor Lee says) he "could scarcely have been less than seventy" when his afflictions came, having then a family of ten children, who were all grown up (ch. i. 4). In this case, the whole duration of his life would have been 210 years, or a little more, which cannot be regarded as incredible by those who accept the ages of the patriarchs, from Peleg to Jacob, as respectively 239, 230, 148, 205, 175, 180, and 147 years. **And saw his sons, and his sons' sons;** *i.e.* his descendants—grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Even four generations. According to the Hebrew inclusive practice of reckoning, we may regard his own generation as included.

Ver. 17.—**So Job died,** being **old and full of days.** The lowest estimate places the occurrence of the afflictions of Job at the time when he was a little more than fifty ("Supponitur quinquagenario haud multo majorem fuisse Nostrum, quum conflictari cœpit," Schultens). Thus his age at his death would be *at least* a hundred and ninety.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—17.—*The conclusion of the drama.* I. THE SETTLEMENT OF THE THIRD CONTROVERSY BETWEEN JEHOVAH AND JOB. (Vers. 1—6.) This controversy, it will be remembered, arose out of the intensity of Job's sufferings and the perplexity of Job's spirit, which caused him on the one hand to form too favourable an opinion of his own, and on the other hand too unfavourable an opinion of God's, righteousness; to misinterpret the facts of providence almost as egregiously as, though in an opposite direction from, the friends; to misapprehend the fundamental principle of the Divine

administration, which, if it was not strictly retributive justice, as the friends alleged, was still less a heartless indifference to human happiness, as Job occasionally seemed to insinuate, but, as Elihu maintained, a principle of grace; to misconstrue the purpose at which God aimed in his affliction, and, as a consequence, to recklessly charge God with partiality, injustice, and enmity. Accordingly this, the last controversy to emerge, was the first which required to be disposed of; and this is done by Job's unconditional surrender to Jehovah. 1. *A clear recognition of the Divine supremacy.* "I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee." The conception of Jehovah's omnipotence and omniscience, of his infinite capability of elaborating plans and carrying them forward into execution, though not wholly unfamiliar to the mind of the patriarch, now stands out before his quickened imagination with a luminosity which was previously wanting. The contemplation of a wisdom that could fashion and a power that could govern such strange and wondrous monsters as behemoth (the hippopotamus, or Nile-horse) and leviathan (the crocodile or alligator), had enabled him to see that in the higher sphere of man also similarly elaborated thoughts, counsels, plans, might be formed by the Supreme, and even projected into actual realization. That Job's affliction was one such exquisitely fashioned thought of God had at last dawned upon the troubled soul of the patriarch. 2. *A humble acknowledgment of sin.* "Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?" So Jehovah at the opening of the theophany had charged the patriarch with doing (ch. xxxviii. 2); and to this at length the patriarch, with sorrow in his heart, assents. It is a sure sign that a man has entered on the path of penitence when he owns himself prepared not alone to admit his fault, but also to accept the rebukes of God (Lev. xxvi. 41). So David did when God reproved him for his great transgression in the matter of Uriah. And here Job with perfect frankness concedes that God's language concerning him, however severe, was not undeserved; that in speaking as he did about God and his transcendently glorious administration of mundane affairs he had simply been babbling in ignorance, talking about sublimities immeasurably beyond his conception. "Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." 3. *An earnest desire for Divine illumination.* A second time taking up the words of God (ch. xxxviii. 3), Job, as it seems to us, applies them to himself. Formerly he had deemed himself qualified to answer God, so confident did he feel as to the fulness of his knowledge and the clearness of his convictions. On this assumption God had challenged him to stand forth and submit to examination. Now, however, Job has been brought to see what every one must be brought to see before he can be either wise or good, viz. his native ignorance, his mental and moral darkness, his comparative blindness, especially as regards the things of God. Hence, with the true spirit of a penitent, he exclaims, "Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me." So did Asaph confess his ignorance and supplicate instruction (Ps. lxxiii. 22). So David (Ps. xxv. 4), and either he or a later Hebrew poet (Ps. cxix. 12, 18, 19, 27, 33). God instructs not the wise in their own conceits; or, if he does, the first lesson he imparts is to show them their folly. Hence the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. iii. 18). 4. *A penitential expression of self-abasement.* The insight Job had gained from the Divine teaching had completely revolutionized his soul. From being proud and self-confident, he had become humble and subdued. Prostrate in the dust of contrition, he was full of spiritual self-loathing. "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Job felt ashamed of his behaviour in condemning God; he was not less ashamed of his own moral weakness and imperfection. Thus practically he confessed that, in the controversy he had waged with God, the right lay with God, the wrong with him.

II. THE SETTLEMENT OF THE SECOND CONTROVERSY BETWEEN JOB AND THE THREE FRIENDS. (Vers. 7—9.) This controversy, as formerly explained (ch. ii. 11, homiletics), turned upon the relation existing between sin and suffering; the friends maintaining that suffering, in the Divine administration, was so invariably connected with sin by the principle of a strictly retributive justice, that it was always possible to estimate the amount of an individual's guilt by the depth of his calamity; while Job, on the other hand, not only resented the application of such a principle to himself, but contended that many facts existed which were wholly irreconcilable with such a principle. On this controversy also Jehovah pronounces an authoritative verdict, to

the effect that truth lay upon the side of Job rather than upon that of the friends, to whom accordingly he now, in turn, directs his address. 1. *The imputation made.* Eliphaz and his friends had not spoken concerning him that which was right, as Job had. They had erred in two ways—in presenting an erroneous view of the Divine dealings with mankind in general, and in maintaining it at the expense both of God and of Job. In order to make good their theory, they had alleged, in defiance of all evidence to the contrary, that Job was a wicked man, and that God was incensed against him with righteous indignation—both of which assertions were incorrect. Neither was God punishing Job, nor was Job a wicked man, but one whom all through the tremendous ordeal God recognized as his servant. And if Eliphaz and his friends had transgressed against God in misrepresenting the Divine character and ways, they had offended scarcely less by misjudging the character and ways of Job. If Job himself was not entirely free from blame in the views he was sometimes driven in anguish to express, it must still be remembered that he was nearer the truth than they were, and that occasionally he was able to recognize the Divine justice and love in his tribulation. 2. *The direction given.* "Therefore take unto you now seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering." Interesting as showing the antiquity of sacrificial worship beyond the bounds of the Holy Land, this statement is also valuable as pointing out the close correspondence as to fundamental ideas and prevailing forms between the worship observed in heathen countries and that subsequently practised in Israel. Here, as afterwards in the Mosaic cultus, the burnt offering is the appointed medium of pardon and acceptance, proclaiming to Job and his contemporaries, as later to Abraham's descendants, that without shedding of blood there is no remission, that reconciliation is impossible except upon the ground of an atoning sacrifice. Here, as afterwards, bullocks and rams are the animals selected for the sacrificial ritual, perhaps also for a like purpose, to typify the holy Lamb of God who should in the end of the ages become the world's Propitiation, while at the same time they suggested forcibly their own insufficiency (Heb. ix. 11—14; x. 1—5) to cleanse the conscience from sin. Here also, as afterwards, the offering is directed to be presented through an officiating priest (in this case Job), to signify that no man can come to God except through the intervention of a Mediator. Thus the rudiments of the gospel may be said to have existed in that early age—the work of Christ being clearly symbolized, his great propitiation by the sacrificial victims, his heavenly intercession by the prayer of Job. 3. *The encouragement offered.* "My servant Job shall pray for you: for him [literally, 'his face or person'] will I accept." Having graciously constituted Job a Mediator between himself and the friends, Jehovah guarantees that if they will avail themselves of his services, he will be accepted, and of course they also in him. Here, again, it is impossible not to descry another shadow of the gospel. God, having constituted Christ a High Priest for ever, distinctly engages to accept all who through him supplicate his favour. Hence Christ says, "I am the Way: . . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by me;" and the writer to the Hebrews declares that "he is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God through him." 4. *The warning appended.* "Lest I deal with you after your folly." That is to say, unless they fled for refuge to this hope set before them, they could not escape the punishment their folly merited. If they complied with the Divine instruction, they were safe; if they declined, they would suffer. So likewise has the gospel its warning. If sinful men flee to Christ, the one Mediator between God and man, they will certainly be delivered; if they do not, they shall just as certainly be destroyed. 5. *The obedience rendered.* "So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them." And in so doing they expressed their penitence—they tacitly acknowledged their offence; their faith—they acted precisely as the Lord had commanded; their humility—they sought the friendly offices of one whom they had regarded as an outcast; their submission—they acquiesced in the Divine verdict, though it had gone against them. In all this they show to sinful men a pattern of how the guilty should draw near to God.

III. THE SETTLEMENT OF THE FIRST OR FUNDAMENTAL CONTROVERSY BETWEEN JEHOVAH AND SATAN. (Vers. 9—17.) It has been repeatedly explained (ch. i. 9, homiletics) that controversy is here also ended by the action of God, who, by delivering his servant from the furnace of affliction and reinstating him in even more than his

former prosperity, virtually pronounces judgment against the devil. Job has not been a fair-weather professor of religion, but an earnest and sincere follower of Heaven, clinging to his piety amidst the severest reverses, and not only serving God for nought, but adhering to him even when it seemed that God had cast him off. It was, therefore, useless to continue the experiment a moment longer. Accordingly it is stated, "The Lord also accepted Job." Four things are mentioned as giving unmistakable evidence of Jehovah's acceptance of his servant. 1. *The cessation of his trial.* "And the Lord" —that marks the Author of Job's deliverance—"turned the captivity of Job;" that describes its joy, it was like the coming home from exile; "when he prayed for his friends;" that specifies its time, when Job was interceding with Heaven in behalf of others. 2. *The return of his prosperity.* "Also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before;" "fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses;" but only the same number of children as before—"seven sons and three daughters," perhaps because the former seven and three were not lost, but only gone before. They who lose all for God on earth will not be losers in the end. Job received twice as much as he had before. Christ's followers are promised "an hundredfold more in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting." 3. *The sympathy of his friends.* "Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before." During the time of his desolation they had deserted him, as he pathetically complained (ch. xix. 13—19), thinking him an object of Divine displeasure. Now they return with the first symptoms of returning prosperity. "And they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him." A little of this would have cheered him when in the depths; but, alas! then it was awanting. Let it not, however, be asserted that their display of sympathy was purely superficial, that in fact they were a company of hypocrites, since they at least offered a small token of their honesty in every one presenting him with gifts. "Every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold." 4. *The happiness of his old age.* Surrounded by a family of fair daughters and noble sons, as in the beginning of his days, and possessed of a constantly augmenting estate, the devout patriarch glided peacefully along the stream of life, till at length he reached the grave an old man and full of days, having lived after the cessation of his afflictions a hundred and forty years, and seen his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations.

Learn: 1. That only that piety is sincere which exalts God and abases self. 2. That no man can truly know himself until he has first known God. 3. That true repentance ever springs from a believing apprehension of God. 4. That God is deeply displeased with those who misrepresent either himself or his ways. 5. That a good man may commit many faults without forfeiting the Divine favour. 6. That the Law of Moses was not the first or the only shadow of the good things to come. 7. That from the first the sinful world possessed a way of salvation. 8. That the essential element in justifying faith is for all men the same, viz. obedience to the revealed will of God. 9. That God's people are commonly most blessed themselves when trying to promote the good of others. 10. That God will yet turn the captivity of all his suffering people, causing their night of sorrow to be followed by a morning of joy. 11. That God will not forsake his people who adhere to him. 12. That a peaceful old age in the bosom of a pious family is one of the choicest blessings a saint can enjoy on this side of heaven. 13. That notwithstanding God can give a saint on earth unspeakable felicity, it is better that the saint should ultimately die and go to heaven.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Hearsay and vision.* I. HEARSAY IS NOT VISION. Hearsay may be distinguished from vision two ways. 1. *In respect of its nature.* Hearsay, as the term signifies in common speech, is information received at second hand, by report, in contrast to that derived from personal observation and experience, which it is usual to describe as seeing. When applied to our knowledge of Divine things, the former may be understood as signifying all that instruction which comes to us from without, all that we receive from tradition, whatever is imparted to us by parents, teachers, ministers, that which we extract from catechisms, religious books, and even from our Bibles by our ordinary faculties of perception and reason—in short, everything commonly included in the phrase, "the letter of the truth;" the latter points to such a direct,

personal, intimate acquaintance with God and truth as the soul obtains when, breathed on by that heavenly breath which, according to Elihu, is the source of all spiritual illumination, it looks outward and upward through the opened window of faith. 2. *In respect of its effects.* "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear," exclaims the patriarch; but what then? This hearsay knowledge left me a prey to serious misconceptions both as to thyself and myself—permitted me to fancy thee an unjust Judge, an inequitable Sovereign, an arbitrary Ruler, an implacable Foe; and myself a harshly treated and cruelly oppressed saint. And so for the most part that knowledge of God which is purely external, intellectual, dogmatical, has little power to change the heart and life, or even to conduct the mind to just conceptions of the character of God. But, on the other hand, when this hearsay has been transmuted into vision, and the soul has arrived at a truthful idea of the character of God as a Being all-powerful, holy, wise, just, and loving, lo! immediately the self-righteous sinner is discovered prostrate in the dust, like Job, crying, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;" like Isaiah in the temple, "Woe is me!" like St. Peter in his boat upon the sea of Galilee, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

II. HEARSAY MAY BECOME VISION. This may be held as proved by the case of Job. 1. *The manner of its transmutation.* An experience similar to that of Job must take place in every instance in which a soul passes from a mere hearsay knowledge to a believing vision of God. (1) As Jehovah came to Job in the whirlwind, and made to him a personal revelation of his character as a Being of awful majesty, ineffable wisdom, and infinite power, so must God with a like disclosure of himself approach the human soul. This God has done; not, however, "in rainbow wreath and robe of storm," but in the meek and lowly form of a sinless, suffering humanity—in the Person of Jesus Christ. (2) As in Job's case there must have been a corresponding influence exerted on the mind of Job to enable him to apprehend the revelation given, so in that of all who attain to his position of spiritual perception, "the eyes of the understanding must be opened." 2. *The time of its transmutation.* The season in which Job was honoured to receive the sublime theophany which exerted such a marvellous, subduing influence upon his soul, was one of intense bodily affliction, and deep mental and spiritual anxiety; and so mostly it is found that such are the seasons God selects for discovering himself and his grace to the soul. As Christ came to his disciples on the sea of Galilee when they were toiling in rowing, and said to them, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid," so does he still come to souls when they are tossed upon the sea of doubt and fear.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Job's answer and confession.* It consists of—

I. THE HUMBLE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD'S POWER. (Ver. 2.) God can do everything; and no "beginning," no germinating or budding thought, is hidden from him; he sees it alike in its origin, development, and end. Both the fearful forms of force in the animal life of nature, and the striking destinies of individual men, are constant proofs of the presence of him who governs the world in power and in justice.

II. AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HIS OWN IGNORANCE AND WEAKNESS. (Ver. 3.) Justly did God rebuke him in the question, "Who darkeneth counsel without understanding?" He has been passing judgment on matters he did not understand, drawing conclusions from imperfect premisses, dealing with things that are and must remain to us mysterious, as if they could be explained by the rules of a limited experience. It is this haste, this childish impatience of suspense, which drives some into discontent and murmuring, others into unbelief and atheism. A haste to speak before our thought is ripe, a haste to judge before the materials of judgment are at hand,—these lead in human intercourse and in Divine relations to false positions, which must be sooner or later abandoned. But we see in Job—

III. THE EXPRESSION AND THE ACT OF PENITENCE. (Vers. 4—6.) Quoting (ver. 4) the summons of Jehovah at the beginning of his discourses (ch. xxxviii. 3 and xl. 7), he gives the answer alone befitting and required. He had before *heard* of God, *i.e.* had had an indirect and imperfect acquaintance with God. There is a knowledge of God at *second hand*, which is insufficient to bring us to the sense of our true relations to him

(comp. Ps. xlviii. 9). We hear *about* God from the sources of early instruction, parents, teachers, pulpits, and books, and yet may thus not be brought into personal communication with God. In contrast to this is the *personal vision* of God. Not with the eyes of the body, but with the deeper view of the mind—the intellectual intuition, the contemplation of the Invisible through his creative manifestations (Rom. i. 19, 20). This immediate view of God produces at once a new view of self. To see that God is infinite is to see that we are finite; to behold his perfection is to be sensible of our own imperfection; to acknowledge him to be in the right is to confess that our thoughts are wrong; to be amazed and enraptured with his glory is to loathe our own meanness. Yet these thoughts may exist in the mind, and yet be without result except that of conscious misery. But their tendency and their purpose are to produce repentance, as we see in the example of Job. And here we mark the traits of a true repentance. It is to "recall" the idle word, the impious thought; and it is to reverse the attitude of the mind from that of presumption and pride to that of submission and humility. So in dust and ashes, with pride abased, overcome by the Divine majesty, would Job offer those sacrifices which God does not despise (Ps. li.). In returning to God he returns to his true spirit and attitude of patience. Out of this, by the provocation of his friends, he had allowed himself to be roused. But now hearing the rod, and who hath appointed it, kissing the hand that hath smitten, he waits in silence until the blessing of the Most High anew exalts the sincere penitent.—J.

Vers. 7—17.—*Conclusion of the story.* I. THE DIVINE JUSTIFICATION OF JOB. (Vers. 7—10.) The cure of the inward sickness of the sufferer's spirit is followed here, as we often see in the course of life, by outward health and happiness. 1. *The reproof of the friends.* (Ver. 7.) Addressing Eliphaz, as their chief spokesman, Jehovah declares his displeasure that they have not spoken the truth concerning him. Not that they have spoken with wilful dishonesty, but that they have been in error. There has been a want of heart, and therefore a want of right thought. They have refused to receive the testimony of a brother's substantial innocence; have persistently tried to fix on him a guilt which did not exist. The habit of censoriousness, the habitual exclusion of charity from our feelings, vitiates and falsifies the whole course of our thought. The grave question arises, whether any intellectual error can in the end escape condemnation; whether the very definition of such error is not the thought arising from an evil state of heart. But Job, on the other hand, has spoken the substantial truth, and for the opposite reason. Again and again we have seen how his contention is for truth; and how, beneath all the irritation of his hasty words, there has been throbbing a heart true to God. And now comes the hour of recognition, as it ever will come for every faithful soul. What a blissful sound is there in those words of recognition and of pardon and of justification, "My servant Job"! What grace in the long-delayed, but now fully granted answer to the prayer (ch. xvi. 21) that right may be done before God and his friends! But let us clearly grasp and retain the principle and the contents of this Divine judgment. The friends spoke ill, and Job spoke well. This is the Divine judgment. On what ground is it based? *Their* one point was this: affliction is the evidence of God's wrath, and of the afflicted one's guilt. And they were wrong. Job's insistence is that afflictions are not always the sign of the sufferer's guilt nor of the anger of God. And Job is right. And there remains the grand principle illustrated by the discourses of Jehovah, and on which this judgment rests, that affliction comes from the will of supreme power and justice. And this is so, although the reasons of affliction cannot by our imperfect intelligence be fully known. At the same time, the judgment on this great point at issue does not exclude the elements of truth and beauty to be richly found in the discourses of the friends; nor does it excuse the passion and the hasty speeches of Job. 2. *Sacrifice for sin and intercessory prayer.* (Vers. 8, 9.) The friends are directed to perform an act of worship, the character of which appears to point back to early times (comp. Numb. xxiii. 1; Gen. vii. 2, 3; viii. 20, *et seq.*). All outward sacrifices were the visible expression of inward feelings, of thankfulness and joy, of reverence, and especially, as here, of the desire of the penitent to renounce his sin and be at one with his God. Blood was the most sacred symbol, because it was the expression of life. The life of the animal offered in sacrifice represents the life of the worshipper surrendered to God. Hence for us the deep significance

of the "blood of Christ;" and the highest act of worship is the presenting ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, to God through Christ and his sacrifice; that is, with his spiritual sacrifice present to the eye of the spirit, as the ancient animal sacrifice was present to the bodily eye of the early worshipper. Then, on the other hand, sacrifice as divinely ordained is a language from God to us, as well as one on our part to God. It bespeaks the willingness of God to enter into relations of peace with man. It therefore announces the possibility of repentance and of forgiveness conditional upon repentance; and so calls man to turn, to be converted and healed. Thus regarded and used, the great Christian sacrament is a powerful means of grace, and is most appropriately resorted to at such great epochs of spiritual history as that here set before us. Again, the passage brings to notice the privilege of intercession. "Pray for one another, that ye may be healed." As the intercession of Abraham for Abimelech is honoured, so now is Job appointed a mediator and intercessor for those who have forfeited a measure of Divine grace, and thus the prophecy of Eliphaz (ch. xxii. 30) is realized. We are encouraged in the New Testament to pray for one another. The great law of mediation runs through life (comp. Butler's 'Analogy'), and this is one of its illustrations. A value is justly attached to good men's prayers. How far this privilege extends, and what are its limits, we do not know. It belongs to spiritual laws, the operation of which cannot be fully verified in the field of experience. It is a truth revealed in the heart and for the heart; and the heart has reasons, as Pascal says, which reason knows not. Let us sacredly guard the oracles of the heart, and thankfully receive every ray of confirmatory light that actual experience affords. The song of a tiny bird by the wayside which brings us comfort, may be a messenger of God to the soul; and the prayer of our feebleness for those whom we know not otherwise how to assist may effect a far-working good, as may theirs for us. But what a beautiful touch is this in the narrative, "Jehovah turned the captivity of Job *while* he was praying for his friends"! For it points to the fact that amongst the best moments of our life are those in which we lose sight of self in thought for others; when we can forgive and forget the injuries we have received from others, and seek their good in deeds of kindness, in words of prayer.

II. RESTORATION OF OUTWARD PROSPERITY. (Vers. 11—17.) "Twice as much as he had before." God takes away only to enrich, never to ruin and destroy, the faithful heart. He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation; and as we have seen throughout the book the powers by which he leads souls to himself more nearly, so here we see his "end" (Jas. v. 7—11; 1 Cor. x. 13). The swallow-like friendship of men, vanishing as the winter of trouble draws on, returning when the sun of prosperity gains power once more, is contrasted with the enduring, never-changing friendship of the eternal, one God. The life, then, the sufferings, the triumph and happy end of Job, are a type for all ages of the lot of the Christian, of the child of God. A harmony of the inward spirit with the outward surroundings is necessary to the completeness of life. This restored possession of wealth and honour is a happier state than his life's beginning, because it is a state more truly in relation to God. All that he has and enjoys he now possesses for God's sake. God is revealed in his gifts, and from his presence and love they derive their savour. *Deus meus et omnia!* "My God and my all!" is the motto of the heart purified and humbled by affliction. The darkness and the mystery pass away from the life when the great secret is discovered that in all outward changes "God is God to me." Here is a type of him who was humbled to the death of the cross, and who, because he, though a Son, learned obedience by the things he suffered, received a name above every name. What, then, have *we* to do, as followers of him, but to commit ourselves to God as to a faithful Creator; to receive what he assigns us humbly, and enjoy it thankfully, knowing that by denying us many things on which our hearts are set, he is doing us the greatest kindness in the world, which is to "keep us from temptation," and by keeping us from temptation, to "deliver us from evil," and by delivering us from evil, to prepare and fit us for all the good that can be desired, and for himself, the endless inexhaustible Fountain of it, "in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore"? To whom be ascribed all praise, might, majesty, and dominion for ever. Amen.—J.

Vers. 1—6.—*Contrition.* Job, chastened with severe afflictions, harassed by the biting

words of incompetent teachers, and now by the Divine voice humbled into the very dust, makes his lowly confession unto Almighty God, and casts himself upon the Divine forbearance and mercy. The confession of this truly humble, lowly, contrite, and obedient heart embraces—

I. A JUST APPREHENSION OF THE DIVINE POWER. The ability of God to work all in all—to do whatsoever he pleaseth. "Now I know that thou canst do everything."

II. A LOWLY RECOGNITION OF THE DIVINE KNOWLEDGE. "No thought can be withholden from thee." Not only the visible works of the world are before the eye of the Almighty, but the very thoughts and intents of the mind (ver. 2).

III. A BECOMING ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PERSONAL IGNORANCE, ERROR, AND PRESUMPTION. (Ver. 3.) Before God Job confesses his faults, though in presence of man he maintained his untarnished integrity. But he who may feel himself able to answer to his fellow may fall silent before the infinitely Holy One. Job's confession reveals—

IV. A LOWLY PENITENCE, which finds its expression in fervent prayer (ver. 4). Job is willing to be taught of God. He abandons his own self-confident boasting. He is truly humbled. All this is produced by—

V. A VIVID PERCEPTION OF THE SUPREME NATURE OF GOD. He is not dependent for this upon the teachings of friends. "Now mine eye seeth thee." The true vision of God humbles the proudest heart. It is finally perfected—

VI. IN SELF-ABHORRENCE AND SINCERE REPENTANCE. This is the end of all. When man has reached his lowest estate he may be lifted up. The whole course of Job's affliction with the whole teaching of the poem brings the sufferer in penitent, contrite humiliation to the footstool of Divine mercy. "In dust and ashes" Job repents, renounces all his claim to self-righteousness, and casts himself upon that God who has declared himself to be just, to care for his creatures, and to wait as with open ear to listen to the voice of their cry. Job is truly broken before God. All his pride is crushed. He is a lowly suppliant. He justifies God in his own self-condemnation.—R. G.

Vers. 7—17.—*The Divine vindication of Job.* The poem ends in undimmed brightness. The great ends of suffering have been answered. Job has been put to the proof and tried, and he has been found faithful. God has permitted all the joy and light of his life to be wiped out. His faithful servant of whom it was said, "There is none like him in the earth," has been subjected to the severest tests; yet, according to the Divine assertion, he has spoken of God "the thing that is right." Now he who had appeared to be Job's enemy appears as his true Vindicator, and bears his witness and high testimony to Job's fidelity. The Divine vindication of Job embraces—

I. AN ASSERTION OF THE ERROR OF HIS ENEMIES. (Ver. 7.) They had not spoken of God the thing that was right, and their unjust accusations of Job are found to have had no foundation in truth.

II. A TESTIMONY TO JOB'S RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Vers. 7, 8.) As the heart is so the lips speak; and Job had spoken that which was right. To this Jehovah bears witness. But a higher testimony is forthcoming—

III. IN THE DECLARATION OF THE ACCEPTABILITY OF HIS PRIESTLY SERVICE. "Him will I accept." Even the self-assured teachers who could find so many faults with Job are now directed to bring their offering to him that he may intercede for them. It was the utmost humiliation of them (ver. 9) and the utmost elevation of him. "The Lord also accepted Job."

IV. A further vindication is given IN THE SPECIAL MARKS OF THE DIVINE FAVOUR SHOWN TO JOB. 1. His affliction was removed. "His captivity was turned." 2. He was enriched with abundant possessions. "The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (ver. 12). 3. His friendships were restored (ver. 11). 4. He was enriched by the tokens of sympathy and good will. "Every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold." 5. His family joys were restored to him (vers. 13—16). 6. His life was prolonged in honour and happiness (vers. 16, 17). "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning."—R. G.

Ver. 17.—*The gathered lessons.* This remarkable book we close with the persuasion that whilst its separate statements are full of teaching, the whole idea is to be summed up in a few plain and obvious lessons; such as the following:—

I. THE GOOD MAN MAY RECEIVE TOKENS OF THE DIVINE BLESSING IN THE FORM OF HEALTH, HONOUR, AND FAMILY JOY.

II. THE GOOD MAN, THOUGH MAINTAINING HIS INTEGRITY, MAY LOSE HIS POSSESSIONS, HIS HEALTH, AND HIS FAMILY JOY THROUGH THE TESTINGS AND TEMPTATIONS OF SATAN.

III. THAT THE HONOUR OF EVEN A GOOD MAN MAY BE TEMPORARILY OVERSHADOWED BY UNTOWARD CIRCUMSTANCES.

IV. THAT THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS, AND THE ENDURANCE OF SUFFERINGS BY THE FAITHFUL, ARE NOT ALWAYS TO BE INTERPRETED INTO TOKENS OF THE DIVINE DISPLEASURE.

V. THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR THE GOOD TO MAINTAIN THEIR INTEGRITY UNIMPAIRED AMIDST GREAT LOSS, PAIN, AND SORROW.

VI. THAT TO HIM WHO MAINTAINS HIS INTEGRITY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE TIME OF CALAMITY GOD WILL GIVE A FINAL TESTIMONY OF APPROVAL.

VII. THAT THE END OF AFFLICTION AND SORROW IS THE PURIFICATION OF THE CHARACTER, AND THE GLORY OF GOD.

VIII. THAT THE VINDICATION OF THE CHARACTER OF THE GOOD IS IN THE HANDS OF THE LORD.

So the Book of Job harmonizes with the general teaching of the entire Word of God. Its many beautiful, simple truths scattered in such profusion are as so many separate flowers; but the whole presents the appearance of a well-watered garden. The book has its place of high importance in that book which is for the education of the world. It has served its purpose as a medium for the revelation of important truths, and it has been made a means of blessing to thousands of afflicted ones who have "heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful" (Jas. v. 11).—R. G.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The confession of God's supremacy.* At last the end has come to the discipline of Job. He is brought to more than resignation—to a clear perception of the supremacy of God, and to a humble submission to it.

I. THE FACT OF GOD'S SUPREMACY. This is what Job has now come to see. God is supreme both in power and in wisdom. 1. *In power.* There is no resisting his might. He does as he will with the children of men. Even "the king of the children of pride" is one of his creatures, endowed with the might he has given, and subject to the laws he has imposed. All rebellion against God's will must be futile. It can be no better than dashing one's self against a granite cliff. But if God is so powerful when opposed to us, he is equally powerful as our Saviour. He uses his might to further what is good as well as to thwart what is evil. If he can cast the mighty down, he can lift the helpless up. 2. *In knowledge.* There is thought in all the work of God. But God's thought also penetrates to all that we do. No excuses or subterfuges can enable us to elude his searching glance. He knows the hidden sin. But he also knows the hidden sorrow; and the misjudged sufferer is quite understood by God. Friends may calumniate, as they calumniated Job; but God knows all.

II. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THIS FACT. Job is now brought to see that God is supreme in power and knowledge. He may have admitted the truth in words all along. But he did not appreciate it until the end of his long trial. In his very natural but very foolish complaints he was virtually ignoring the great truth which he is now confessing. How, then, has he come at length to perceive it as by the flash of a new revelation? 1. *Through suffering.* Many lessons are being taught by the strange experience of Job; among them some are for his own benefit. Suffering opens our eyes to our own littleness and to the greatness of God. 2. *By means of the works of nature.* The great theophany, wherein God called to Job out of the whirlwind, led to a display of some of the grandest works of God, first in the physical forces of the universe, and then in the most wonderful creatures of the animal world. A study of nature should lead us to perceive both the power and the wisdom of God.

III. THE CONFESSION. It is one thing for God to be supreme, and another thing for man to know that he is. Yet a third stage is reached when the truth is frankly admitted and openly confessed. It is our duty to confess the supremacy of God. 1. *For the glory of God.* We rob him of his own when we ignore his great power and wisdom.

Worship, which acknowledges the greatness of God, and adores him, not only for might and knowledge, but also for righteousness and love, is a right and fitting exercise for all spiritual beings. 2. *For our own guidance and assurance.* The confession will help us to obey God. It will also aid us in the attempt to bear the strange distresses of life. When the confession advances beyond what Job saw, surely submission should be more perfect. If we are to be patient when we see that God is almighty and all-wise, we should be confident when we go on to see that he is just and merciful.—W. F. A.

Ver. 5.—*The soul's experience of God.* This is a grand experience for Job to attain to. It is worth all the agony and mystery of his bitter affliction. Suddenly the black clouds break open and the glorious vision of God appears beyond them. Job now contrasts his new, direct seeing of God with his former hearsay knowledge.

I. A HEARSAY KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. This is what Job possessed in the old days. Not that he was without any religious experience in those prosperous times. But the shallowness of it in comparison with what he has now attained makes it look of little worth. Most of us begin in this way. We hear of God "by the hearing of the ear." This is especially true in a Christian country. Here we seem to breathe a Christian atmosphere, and Christian ideas float in upon us unsought. But the faint perception of God that is acquired in this way cannot be of very great value to us. Historical facts can only be known by testimony, and the facts of the gospel must reach us through "the hearing of the ear." But we have got a very little way when we have only come to understand and believe in the historical character of those facts. We are still only among the antiquarian relics at a museum. There is no life in such a knowledge, and it has little influence over us.

II. A PERSONAL VISION OF GOD. "Now mine eye seeth thee." Job had longed for a revelation of God; at length he has received one. But this was not in a vision like those of Jacob at Bethel or Moses at Horeb. It was not after the manner of the startling apparition that Eliphaz describes with so much pomp and self-importance (ch. iv. 12—21). It was the calm inward vision of spiritual experience, which is indeed an experience of God. 1. *This has been brought about through trouble.* In his great distress Job has been continually seeking God. His grief has strengthened his hold upon the unseen world by making him feel that world to be most real. 2. *God has spoken and manifested himself.* Religion is not a one-sided effort of man to reach after God. God descends to man, and the communion of God's Spirit with man's spirit is the deepest fact in religious experience. 3. *This interior vision of God is what all our souls need.* We have to go beyond the hearing of sermons to our own personal experience of God. Then we begin to understand him; then he becomes real to us; then we can say with Tauler, "I am more certain of the being of God than I am of my own existence."

III. THE EFFECT OF THE NEW EXPERIENCE. 1. *It leads to self-humiliation.* It is vain any longer to boast of our own rights and to make the most of ourselves. We cannot think of ourselves but with shame and confusion of face in the light of the new vision of God. When once he manifests himself to us, he is everything. 2. *It awakens repentance.* In the light of God we not only see our littleness, we perceive our sin. This vision had done for Job what all the harangues of his three friends had failed to effect. They had charged him falsely, and his pride had been hardened by their unjust accusations. God had not charged him at all, but the very vision of the Divine at once revealed his mistaken position to Job. He saw that he had been wrong in arraigning the justice of God. So it will ever be. We never know ourselves till we see ourselves in the light of God.—W. F. A.

Vers. 7—9.—*The accusers accused.* Job is first dealt with; when he has been brought to a right state of mind, God turns to the three friends. They have been permitted to play their part without any interference on the part of God, and perhaps they have regarded his silence as a mark of acquiescence. Now their time has come.

I. THEY WHO ACCUSE OTHERS LAY THEMSELVES OUT TO BE ACCUSED. Even when they act innocently this is the case. The censor should be above reproach. His action shows that he is awake to moral considerations, that he is not unable to per-

ceive them, that he sets a high value on them. Then he should apply them to himself. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Rom. ii. 1). Further, the habit of censoriousness provokes accusations. It shows an unkind and a proud spirit. There is not the motive of compassion to lead us to pass lightly over his faults in the case of a censorious person, which influences us when we have to do with one of a modest and kindly disposition (Matt. vii. 1—7).

II. GOD IS ANGRY WITH THOSE WHO ADVOCATE HIS CAUSE UNRIGHTEOUSLY. This was the great fault of the three friends. They represented themselves as God's champions, and professed to speak for God when they arraigned Job. Yet they spoke what was not right. God cannot but be angry when he is thus misrepresented. He does not seek the low-toned homage of the courtier who cares only to propitiate his Master, regardless of right and truth. Some of the people who think themselves God's best friends will have a great deal to answer for when their just and righteous Lord calls them to account. No falsehood can please God, and least of all can one please him that professes to be uttered for his benefit. This is not a case in which the end justifies the means. It is most grievous in the sight of God, because it dishonours his Name. We cannot depend on unjust actions by representing them as beneficial to the cause of religion. A false theology is not redeemed by the pretext that it glorifies God.

III. THE TRUE REVENGE IS TO "HEAP COALS OF FIRE" ON MEN BY DEEDS OF KINDNESS. Job is fully and gloriously avenged. Not only is his innocence of the gross charges brought against him by his friends made clear, not only are they condemned by God, but Job is called upon to intercede for their pardon. Thus in the first place they are thoroughly humiliated, as Haman was when he was condemned to lead the horse of Mordecai (Esth. vi. 9, 10). But Job is far too magnanimous to triumph over their defeat. Even when he is interceding for them, we may be sure that his action betrays no pride. For has he not been repenting himself in dust and ashes (ver. 6)? Assuredly Job's intercession was generous and heartfelt. He could afford to forgive when he had himself been graciously accepted by God. The best vengeance we can have on those who ill-treat us is to pray for them, not in hypocritical self-righteousness, but in true-hearted, unaffected kindness. This is Christ's method. He subdues his enemies by dying for them.—W. F. A.

Ver. 10.—*The captivity turned.* I. THE REVERSAL. 1. *A true reversal.* Job's troubles have come to an end. That was a long avenue of fire which he was made to pass through; but the terminus was reached at last. Man may be "born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward" (ch. v. 7); but he is not born to everlasting trouble. St. Paul writes of "our light affliction, which is but for a moment" (2 Cor. iv. 17). Present distress is not a presage of future evil. The very blackness of the clouds that gather about our heads in the dark hour prevents us from seeing the distant prospect where sunshine awaits those who are faithful in trial. There is room for hope, even if we see no light, for though trouble may be lengthy, love outlasts it; "the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever." 2. *A Divine reversal.* Satan inflicted the blows, though with the permission of God. It is God himself who brings back prosperity. Through whatever channels and instruments evil may come upon us, good comes from the hand of God. Satan simply disappears from the drama. His bold assertions are so absolutely refuted, and he is so completely discomfited, that he passes into oblivion. In the day of the Lord, God's action is everything.

II. ITS OCCASION. Why did the reversal come when it did? Why not earlier? Why not later? The note of time is significant. God reversed the fortune of Job "when he prayed for his friends." 1. *In humility.* Job was first brought very low. His fidelity had been severely tested, and it had stood the strain. Job did not "curse God and die." Satan's charge was abundantly refuted. Job was not serving God only for the profits accruing from religion. Disinterested devotion was proved to be possible. Yet Job was not faultless. At least there were advantages to be gained by discipline. It would have been cruel to have used him as an unconscious example for the settlement of a question with which he had no concern, like the victim of vivisection. This was

not the case. Elihu showed how God trained and educated his children in the school of affliction. Job had been to that school, and there he had learnt humility and a true appreciation of the greatness of God, whom man cannot judge. 2. *In kindness.* Job bears no grudge against his three friends. He intercedes for them in genuine concern for their condition under the wrath of God. When he shows a forgiving spirit God is most merciful to him. This is not the formal return of payment; but it is a gracious reward, and it is a favour shown to one who is fit to accept it. For we are never so fit to receive good fortune as when we are chiefly occupied in kindly concern for others. Selfish prayers do not bring a blessing. We are most blessed when we forget ourselves in praying for others.

III. ITS EFFECTS. Job's fortune is doubled. God never blesses imperfectly. He does not simply mend and patch up the broken life. He heals and renews and blesses with superabundant kindness. Job's fortune was but external. This was according to the ideas of primitive times. Christ has led us to look for higher blessings. The Christian Job may never recover his property or his health; and yet in his afflictions he may receive his greatest heritage of blessing from Heaven. But whatever be the form of God's blessing, it is great and wonderful. The Christian has more than a Paradise regained. The second Adam brings a kingdom of heaven that is more precious than the lost Eden. The soul that has been tried by fire has a richer inheritance in God than it ever had in the old days of peace. The discipline of sorrow is the key to wonderful treasures of heavenly joy.—W. F. A.

Vers. 11—17.—*The return of prosperity.* Job is now restored to the favour of God. The result is earthly prosperity. With our Christian light we know that this does not always follow, nor is it the best blessing. But as the portrait of Job is painted in the colours of his day, we must accept the lessons which it contains in sympathy with his age and circumstances. Let us, then, look at the ingredients of the new prosperity.

I. A REVIVAL OF OLD FRIENDSHIPS. We are horrified to have it brought distinctly before us on the last page of the book that Job had had brothers and sisters as well as other acquaintances during the whole time of his affliction; and yet they had discreetly retired from the unpleasant neighbourhood of the afflicted man. Now they reappear with his prosperity. This common experience of life is often commented on with some bitterness. But Job shows no bitterness. His grand soul forgets the previous unkindness. In his own humility he ignores the faults of his brethren. With princely magnanimity he accepts their presents when he does not need them, though they had not thought fit to offer them him in the time of his dire necessity. This is the Christ-spirit. There is no true happiness in selfish isolation. Even though our acquaintances may not deserve much attention, it is a miserably selfish thing to throw them off. Generosity is a mark of genuine health of soul. The Christian must learn to be brotherly and to cultivate social sympathies.

II. A RECOVERY OF GREAT POSSESSIONS. Job is now richer than ever, and he is now more than ever fitted to hold wealth. He will receive it back with double gratitude. He will recognize more clearly that it all comes from the hand of God. Having himself suffered from hardships and troubles, he will be the better able to succour the afflicted. Therefore he can well be trusted with great wealth. It is not every good man to whom wealth would be a blessing, or who would make a good use of it. But when God gives temporal prosperity to one of his true servants, this should be accepted not only as a token of his kindness, but also as a trust. The talents are increased; so is the responsibility.

III. THE GIFT OF A NEW FAMILY. Property is a poor recompense to offer to the bereaved and desolate man. A true father values his children above all flocks and herds. Job is to be restored in all respects. And yet we cannot but feel that to have more children, but other ones, could not make up for the loss of the first family. Job's fatherly heart could not have been thus easily satisfied. All we can say is that the picture of the return of prosperity is made as complete as it could be. But we have a brighter prospect through Christ in again meeting the blessed dead, who are not lost, but who have only gone on before us.

IV. THE ENJOYMENT OF FULNESS OF LIFE. Job lives to a green old age. In his

misery he had prayed for death; in his renewed prosperity life is a boon. The value of life depends on the use that is made of it. In Christ the poorest earthly life is rich; and the most unfortunate life is well worth living when it is given to God. But the Old Testament blessedness of long life is enlarged in the New Testament, and appears as the gift of eternal life—the greatest blessing enjoyed by God's redeemed children.—W. F. A.

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