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THE BOOK OF JOB.

I.—THE PROLOGUE. (*Chaps.* i. *and* ii.)

THE Book of Job has, as we have seen, a double purpose or intention. Its higher intention is to shew that God is capable of inspiring, by shewing that man is capable of cherishing, that genuine and disinterested affection which is the very soul of goodness: this is the fact which Satan challenges and which Jehovah undertakes to prove. Its second, but hardly secondary, intention is like unto the first, viz., to shew that, while the goodness of which man is capable has a natural tendency, under the rule and providence of a righteous God, to secure for him a full measure of temporal prosperity and happiness, it is nevertheless independent of such a reward, that it can dispense with it; or, in other words, that man is capable of loving right simply because it is right, and of hating wrong purely because it is wrong, even though he should not gain by it, but lose. In this aspect of it, the Poem is an emphatic condemnation of the "utilitarian" theory of morals, which assumes that men follow after that which is good only because they find goodness to be profitable for all the uses of this present world.

At the outset Job is placed before us as the model

of a perfect man,—"the very paragon of his age," "without his peer in all the earth." His outward conditions are large and prosperous: he has seven sons and three daughters, who seem to have been not unworthy of even such a father as he, and are united to each other, and to him, by a singularly close and cordial attachment. He is not a nomad, but a settled and wealthy landed proprietor, with a vast estate and immense possessions, and he is recognized as "the greatest of the Sons of the East," probably that is, as the wisest and noblest, as well as the wealthiest, man of his age. So far he presents that combination of personal goodness with happy outward conditions which the ancients regarded as the normal and invariable result of the righteous rule of God. Such a combination, however, was sure to give rise, sooner or later, to the suspicion that the goodness which had prosperity for its result might also have it for its motive; that the righteousness even of the best of men might prove to be only a subtle and refined selfishness. That this question might be raised in its most searching and crucial form, and answered in a manner the most complete, authoritative, final, it is carried up into heaven, where alone the profound mysteries of life can be adequately handled; and it is argued out —nay, fought out—there. A fallen angel, a "son of God," who has sunk from his first estate, challenges the reality of human goodness: "Is it *for nought* that Job fears God? Is not his piety simply a matter of profit and loss? Does he not do right only for the gain he may get thereby? Take away the gain, and what will become of his good-

ness?" Confident in the sincerity of his servant Job, assured that *he* at least is not one of those—

> "Who, trimm'd in forms and visages of duty,
> Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,"

Jehovah accepts the challenge. He consents that Job shall be stripped of all that he has; that all his gains shall be taken from him, and only his goodness left. Nor need any man question either the justice or the kindness of God in exposing him to what seems so cruel an experiment. The path of danger is the path of honour. Could Job have known, as Jehovah did know, that he was being put to the proof in order both that all the hierarchy of heaven might be convinced of man's capacity for a sincere and genuine piety, and that all subsequent generations of men, looking back on the trial of his faith, might find it pregnant with incentives to courage, and patience, and hope—could he have foreseen this "*end* of the Lord," we may be very sure he would have rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer for an end so large and so noble.

That, however, he did not, and could not, know. Nevertheless "he *endured*," and entered into the blessedness of the man who, when tried, is found constant. Deprived of flocks and herds, his faithful servants and his loving children, in a single day; deprived of them with a suddenness and in forms which would inevitably mark him out as a man "smitten of God and afflicted," he nevertheless retained his integrity, and possessed his soul in

patience. So far from renouncing God because his gains were gone,

> "and all
> That made him happy at one stroke was taken
> For ever from the world,"

he fell on his face before Him and worshipped Him. The Adversary has only one device left; for, among other features which distinguish the "Adversary" of this Poem from the "Satan" of later inspired authors is the fact that he is represented as using only outward means, that he has no recourse to those inward spiritual suggestions by which *we* are most keenly tempted; *these* are left to the wife of Job and his friends. Job has lost much, but not all: his health remains, and, with his health, the possibility of recovering what he has lost. Of this too, therefore, Satan seeks, and is permitted, to despoil him. He smites Job with the most loathsome and monstrous form of disease known among men, a form, too, which was universally regarded as the revenge taken by an insulted Heaven on some heinous and enormous sin. And now, in the fullest and extremest sense, Job is stripped of all that he had gained by loving and serving God; nay, and even to his own mind, he is stripped of it by the very hand of God Himself. Nevertheless, he submits without a murmur, as who should say,

> "Nay, I will be the pattern of all patience;
> I will say nothing,"

and shews himself as ready to accept evil from the hand of the Lord as good. His very wife turns upon him, and counsels him to utter the exact

words which Satan had flattered himself that *he* could wring from his lips (comp. Chap. i. 11, final clause, with final clause of Chap. ii. 9). And, still, Job sinned not with his lips. True, a curse does fly from them at last; the silent sympathy of the Friends evokes from him what no pressure of loss and misery could extort from his constant soul: but when he opens his lips he curses,—not God, but himself and the day which gave him birth.

Jehovah, then, has already gained the victory over the Adversary. Satan has exhausted his resources; he has nothing more that he can do; and he sullenly acknowledges his defeat by flight. His baneful figure vanishes from the Poem. We see him no more; no, not even at the end of the Drama, when the other persons of the Story come forward to receive the final sentence of Jehovah. For God and for us, to heaven and to earth, the patient Job has demonstrated that a genuine and unselfish goodness, a goodness which can not only dispense with reward but can also endure every form of loss, indignity, pain, is possible to man even here upon the earth and under the inauspicious conditions of time.

CHAPTER I.—*There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job. This man was perfect and upright, and one who feared God and eschewed evil.* 2. *And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.* 3. *His cattle also were seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and* [he had] *a very large household; so that this man was great before all the Sons of the East.*

4. *Now his sons were wont to make a banquet each of them at his house on his day; and they used to send and bid their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.* 5. *And so it was, when the days of the banquet had gone round, Job sent for them, and hallowed*

them; and he gat him up early in the morning, and offered up burnt offerings according to their number: for Job said, Haply, my sons have sinned and renounced God in their hearts. Thus did Job alway.

6. *Now it happened on a day, when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, that Satan also came among them.* 7. *And the Lord said to Satan, Whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord and said, From hurrying to and fro in the earth, and from going up and down in it.* 8. *Then said the Lord to Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him on the earth, a perfect man and an upright, one that feareth God and escheweth evil.* 9. *And Satan answered the Lord and said, Is it for nought that Job feareth God?* 10. *Thou, hast Thou not made a fence round him, and round his house, and round all that he hath? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his cattle spread themselves abroad over the land.* 11. *But only put forth Thine hand and touch all that he hath,*[1] [and then see] *if he will not renounce Thee to Thy face.* 12. *And the Lord said to Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thine hand; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.*

13. *Now it happened on a day, when his sons and his daughters were eating, and drinking wine, in the house of their brother the first born,* (14) *there came a messenger to Job and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses grazing close by,* (15) *when the Sabæans fell upon them, and carried them off; and they smote the young men with the edge of the sword; and I am escaped, even I alone, to tell thee.* 16. *While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, A fire of God fell from heaven, and burned the flocks and the young men, and consumed them; and I am escaped, even I alone, to tell thee.*

[1] The ellipsis of verse 11 requires to be filled up with some such words as "and see," or, "then see." Similar ellipses are not uncommon in Oriental literature. Thus in the Corân we read (Sura xxv. verses 9 and 22): "They say, What sort of apostle is this? He eateth food and walketh the streets. Unless an angel be sent down and take part in his warnings, or a treasure be thrown down to him, or he have a garden that supplieth him with food, . . . and these unjust persons say, Ye follow but a man enchanted." And again: "They who look not forward to meet us say, If the angels be not sent down to us, or unless we behold our Lord. . . . Ah, they are proud of heart, and exceed with great excess." In each of these cases we must supply the words "we will not believe," in order to complete the sense. Many such ellipses may be found in the Corân alone.

17. *While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, The Chasdim formed three bands, and rushed upon the camels, and carried them off, and smote the young men with the edge of the sword; and I am escaped, even I alone, to tell thee.* 18. *While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating, and drinking wine, in the house of their brother, the first born,* (19) *when, lo, there came a great wind from across the desert, and smote the four corners of the house, so that it fell on the young folk, and they are dead; and I am escaped, even I alone, to tell thee.*

20. *Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head; and he fell on the ground and worshipped,* (21) *saying: Naked came I from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken; blessed be the name of the Lord.*

22. *In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God with wrong.*

CHAPTER II.—*Again it happened on a day, when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, that Satan also came to present himself before the Lord. Then said the Lord to Satan, Whence comest thou?* 2. *And Satan answered the Lord and said, From hurrying to and fro in the earth, and from going up and down in it.* 3. *And the Lord said to Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on earth, a perfect man and an upright, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? And still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou didst move me against him, to swallow him up without cause.* 4. *And Satan answered the Lord and said, A skin for a skin, and all that a man hath, will he give up for his life:* (5) *but only put forth Thine hand, and touch his bone and his flesh,* [and then see] *if he will not renounce Thee to Thy face.* 6. *And the Lord said to Satan, Behold him in thine hand; only spare his life.*

7. *So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with a grievous ulcer from the sole of his foot even to his crown.* 8. *And he took him a sherd to scrape himself withal as he sat upon the ashes.* 9. *And his wife said to him, Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? Renounce God, and die.* 10. *But Job said to her, Thou speakest as one of the impious women speaketh. Shall we, then, accept the good from God, and shall we not accept the evil?*

In all this Job sinned not with his lips.

11. *Now three of Job's friends heard of all this evil that had*

befallen him; and they came each from his place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuchite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had concerted together to come and condole with, and to comfort him. 12. *But when they lifted up their eyes from afar and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept; and they rent their mantles, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven.* 13. *So they sat down with him upon the ground for seven days and seven nights; and none spake a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.*

CHAPTER I. *verse* 1.—The derivation of the word "Job" is still undetermined. Many assume it to mean *plagued*, or *afflicted;* some, to mean *penitent.* All we really know of it is that the name was borne by a son of Issachar (Gen. xlvi. 13), and that it is closely related to *Jobab*, a name borne by a descendant of Esau (Gen. xxxvi. 33), an Edomitish prince, with whom an early tradition identifies the hero of our Poem. Canon Cook suggests, with much reason, as I think, that "both forms (Job and Jobab) are probably derived from a word signifying jubilant exultation, and expressing the joy of a noble family at the birth of a heir."

"A man in the land of Uz," *i.e.* a Hauranite. The catholicity, or universalism, of the Poet comes out in the very selection of his hero. He saw, as Professor Davidson remarks, "that God was not confined to the Jew, but was and must be everywhere the Father of his children, however imperfectly they attained to the knowledge of Him; he saw that the human heart was the same, too, everywhere, that it everywhere proposed to itself the same problems, and rocked and tossed under the same uncertainties; that its intercourse with Heaven was alike, and alike awful, in all places; and away down

far in that great Desert, stretching into infinite expanse, where men's hearts draw in from the imposing silence deep still thoughts of God, he lays the scene of his great Poem. He knows, Jew though he be, that there is something deeper far than Judaism, or the mere outward forms of any Dispensation; that God and man are the great facts, and the great problem" their relation to each other.

The description of this verse gives a complete view of Job's character. The word translated "perfect" does not imply that he was absolutely without sin, but that he was simple, single-hearted; that his character was woven of one piece throughout, that there was no duplicity in it; that by confession and sacrifice he had been absolved from such offences as he had committed, so that he was free from conscious, wilful, habitual sin. In short, he was what Shakespeare calls a man of "a *clear* spirit." The epithet "perfect," as distinguished from and complemented by "upright," signifies that he was *inwardly* lacking in none of the qualities and attributes of a righteous man, and that this inward righteousness and completeness wrought itself out in a well-balanced and erect life.

The first two epithets of the verse depict him as he was in himself; the second two in his relation to Heaven. He walked in that "fear of the Lord" which is both the beginning and the end of wisdom, and necessarily, therefore, maintained a stedfast abhorrence of evil in every form. There can be no doubt that the four epithets taken together are intended to set Job before us as an ideally perfect man, a man not only morally blameless but also both sincerely and scrupulously religious; a man whose

virtue and piety are beyond suspicion: for this is the fundamental assumption of the Poem, the fact on which the whole Story turns and proceeds; moreover Jehovah Himself is introduced as attesting and confirming it (Chap. i. 8; and Chap. ii. 3). The best commentary on the whole verse is contained in Chapters xxix. and xxxi., in which Job depicts himself as he was in the happy days when "the Almighty was yet with him."

Verse 3 describes the possessions of Job. The word rendered "substance" in the Authorized Version, and here rendered "cattle," always means live stock. Ritter tells us that a Hauranite who now owns *five* yoke of oxen is held to be a man of station and opulence; "*five hundred* yoke" would make a prince of him. As these oxen are, and were, mainly used for ploughing, Job must have held a large landed estate. The "seven thousand sheep" imply, of course, that he was a wealthy sheep-master, as well as a farmer on a large scale. The "three thousand camels" imply, probably, that he was also a princely merchant, sending out large caravans to trade in the cities and among the tribes of the East,—as perhaps we might also infer from the frequent references to these travelling caravans in the body of the Poem. The "five hundred she-asses" confirm the impression of vast wealth,—the she-ass being esteemed to be far more valuable than the male, because of the milk she yielded; this milk, then as now, being greatly prized in the East. The word rendered "household," and in the margin of our English Bible "husbandry," is of somewhat dubious import; but probably indicates that, for the various uses of

trade and agriculture, Job possessed a vast retinue, a large clan, of ploughmen, shepherds, camel-drivers, with their guards, overseers, traffickers, and scribes. If we combine the several items of this enumeration we can well understand how Job may have been reckoned the greatest prince among the *beni-Kedem*, or "Sons of the East,"—a name given to the Arab tribes on the east of Palestine, all of whom claimed, as they still claim, to be Abrahamides, *i.e.* the sons of Abraham; the vast "motley race," as Jeremiah calls them, who haunted the wide tracts stretching from Egypt to the Euphrates. We should emphasize the fact, too, that Job, by the very catalogue of his possessions, is shewn to be not a mere nomad, like many of these Sons of the East. Obviously he had a large settled estate, cultivated by his slaves and the freemen of his clan. The Hauran is still covered with the ruins of ancient cities. And from the constant allusions in the Poem to "the city," the nobles of which did him reverence, and to "the gate" in which he sat and administered justice, gave counsel in emergencies, his lightest word or look being eagerly caught up and deferred to, we may be sure that his estate lay in the immediate vicinity of a populous city, if it did not include it.

Verse 4.—Job seems to have been singularly happy in his children. His seven sons each had "his day" for entertaining the rest, whether that day were his birthday, and so occurred only once in the year, or one of the seven days in the annual feasts held in spring and again in autumn, or whether, as seems most probable, it was a day in every week. In any case it is obvious that they

lived together in a frank brotherly way. That they invited their three sisters to their feasts implies that there was nothing riotous or excessive in their mirth. And the fact that, on the day on which they all perished while attending the banquet of the first-born, the sheep were out at pasture and the oxen ploughing in the fields, seems to indicate that the feasting was no interruption to the regular work of the estate; that the banquet, then as now, was given only toward the close of the day. The inference is confirmed by another fact, or, rather, by a reasonable deduction from it. It seems probable that the day on which, "early in the morning," Job assembled his sons for purification and worship, was also the day on the evening of which his eldest son entertained his brothers and sisters in his house; for he had seven sons, and if each of these "had his day" every week, as the best commentators think they had, clearly the whole week, or at least every evening in the week, would be occupied by the seven banquets; so that Job would be compelled to take the morning of one of those days for his solemn act of worship, and would probably take the first of the week, the day of the first-born. So much, indeed, seems implied in the phrases of the next verse,—"early in the morning," and, "when the days of the banquet had gone round." But if this be so, then the children of Job perished on the very day on which, by sacrifice and worship, they had been purged from all sin. When could they have died more happily?

It is notable, however, that Job himself did not attend these banquets; for it indicates that there

was real mirth at them—a mirth and gaiety more suitable to the young than to the aged. It is also notable that though he did not austerely frown on them, he watched these festivities with some anxiety, lest any sin should blend with and contaminate the mirth. We are not therefor to conceive of him, however, as fearing any grave outward sin, any immorality; for he knew what the training of his sons had been, and how well-disposed they were, and how truly they loved each other. But he does seem to have feared lest, even if they should escape

> "such wanton, wild, and usual slips
> As are companions noted and most known
> To youth and liberty,"

they might at times let their merriment run to excess, and that, in the gaiety of their hearts, they might forget the Giver of all good, or even cherish the persuasion that a life of self-enjoyment was better than a life of duty and obedience.

No doubt this incident of the constantly recurring banquets is inserted into the Story—from which so much is necessarily left out—not only, nor mainly, to pave the way for a subsequent incident, and to shew us how easily and naturally all Job's children might be carried off at one fell swoop; but also, and chiefly, to indicate how perfect and vigilant was the piety of Job, and to supply us with one of the many forms it assumed.

Verse 5. — When the week of banquets was ended, Job invited his sons to his own house that he might "hallow" or "sanctify" them, *i.e.* see and cause them to go through the ceremonial ablutions by which men in the earliest ages prepared

themselves for worship: for *Job's* day was a holy day, a day devoted to God, whether it were, as some suppose, the seventh day of the week, or, as others with more probability conjecture, the first day of the week. That no hint of "the sabbath" is given here is another indication of the non-Hebraic, the catholic, tone of the Book. And still another such indication is to be found in the form of Job's sacrifice. "Whole burnt offerings," offerings in which the whole victim was consumed in the fire, were as familiar in the patriarchal age to the non-Israelitish tribes of the East as to the Israelites themselves, as we may learn from the colloquy of Balak with Balaam recorded in Numbers xxiii. and in Micah vi. 5–8; so that there is no allusion even to the Hebrew ritual in this description of the sacrifice by which Job purified his sons. Strictly patriarchal and un-Jewish, moreover, is the fact that Job was his own priest, the priest of his family; that the right and power to offer sacrifice are here regarded as a function of mere fatherhood, that as yet we find no trace of a sacerdotal caste.

It should be observed, too, before we quit this verse—for it is very strange and curious—that the sin into which Job feared his children might have fallen is the very sin to which he himself was tempted and from which he escaped only by the skin of his teeth. "Haply, my sons have sinned *in renouncing God* in their hearts." What might have been a momentary and half-unconscious treason in them threatened to become a deliberate and fatal treason with him. And this very fear of Job for the fidelity of his sons indicates, I think, that even

before his trial he had been debating in his own heart whether human goodness was not very much a matter of habit, whether it was real and would bear a severe strain, and that he had felt there was much in the providence of God both to quicken and to feed such a doubt. Why should he have dreaded lest his children should fall into this special sin had he not felt that there were doubts in the air and temptations—speculations rife among the younger and more thoughtful men of the tribes perhaps—which laid them specially and perilously open to it?

Verses 6–12.—That this question of the genuineness, the reality and power, of human virtue may be determined once and for ever, the scene is changed, and we are admitted into the Cabinet of Heaven. It is a highday and holiday even there. Just as the sons of Job were gathered in their father's house below, so, above, the sons of God, the ministers who do his will, the thousands who

> "at his bidding speed,
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest,"

as well those who "serve" as those who only "stand and wait," are gathered round the Father of an infinite Majesty. And with, or among, them comes one who is here designated the "Adversary," or the "Accuser," *i.e.* the calumniator and detractor.[1] The Arabs call this strange hostile being the "busy one;" St. Peter calls him the "peripatetic" (1 Peter v. 8) —names which well accord with the description of him here put into his own mouth. In some respects

[1] The word "Satan" is not used in the Book of Job as a proper name, as an appellation, although in our Translation it is so used for the sake of clearness, but only as an epithet.

he is, no doubt, or seems to be, less malignant and less potent than the "devil" of later speakers and authors; but there can be no doubt, I think, that we are to identify the "Adversary" of Job with the "Satan" of subsequent Scriptures; with, for example, the Satan whom our Lord Himself charged with having bound an infirm woman, "lo, these eighteen years;" with the Satan who defeated, or hindered, St. Paul's friendly intention of visiting the Thessalonians "once and again," and whose "messenger, sent to buffet him," the same Apostle recognized in his "thorn," or "stake" rather, in the flesh. Nor can there be any doubt that throughout Scripture the existence of myriads of holy spirits, called into being before the creation of the physical universe, who delight to do the will of God, is either assumed or affirmed: or that the existence of an evil and malignant spirit, who seeks to thwart the kind and holy will of the God whom he once obeyed, is implied or even expressly asserted. How far the dramatic representation of this scene in heaven is to be taken as historical is an open question, though it should be remembered that similar scenes are described in other and later books of Scripture, even to the last. (1 Kings xxii. 19–22; Zech. iii. 1, 2; Rev. xii. 9.) But, as Professor Davidson has pointed out,[1] this noble passage will have been written in vain, at least for us, unless we gather from it some such general conceptions as these:—That all the powers of the universe, whether physical or spiritual,

[1] I am indebted for the substance of the rest of this paragraph to a fine passage in Professor A. B. Davidson's Commentary on Job, though I have ventured to condense and vary the expression.

whether good or evil, whether their intents be wicked or charitable, are in the hand of God, and subserve the good pleasure of his will: that there is no eternal dualism, no power capable of engaging the Maker and the Ruler of the universe in an endless conflict or of ultimately thwarting his designs. That there are pure and happy spirits who, sent by Him, conduct men through this scene of trial and education, ministering to their inward and deepest needs; and that there is an evil spirit, himself a son of God by nature and memory, though not by love and moral determination, who, while he seeks to thwart God and injure men, is compelled to work together with the other sons of God for the ultimate fulfilment of the Divine will, for the ultimate good of man even, and for the ultimate extermination of that sin which he himself perhaps originated. We shall fail to grasp the principles which underlie this dramatic picture unless we are taught by it that the fortunes of men possess an absorbing interest for the inhabitants of heaven; that moral problems are being wrought out here unlike any which have been solved there: and that, therefore, they follow the fluctuations of our fate with a divine curiosity and sympathy of which we have but a faint conception. As our struggles are of the profoundest interest to them, so their goodwill or their malevolence tell upon us, and further or delay the issue of the conflict. No, this little human world of ours does not float through space isolated and neglected, unrelated to the vast yet orderly system of the universe. It is attracted by the larger orbs around it and trembles under their perturbations. Good angels

and evil angels hold us full in view. We may suffer at times for their sake as well as for our own, even as also at times they bring us a spiritual force beyond our own. For a few brief years man passes across the face of the earth; but above him there bends a broad heaven, not cold and hard and careless, but full of tender love and eager ministries; and beneath him there yawns a hell, crowded with hostile and malignant spirits who would fain make him as selfish and as miserable as themselves: while above all, and through all, and in all, God reigns and works, compelling even the disasters and defeats of the conflict to minister to the completeness and glory of the final triumph.

Assuredly nothing in this Scene in Heaven is more noble and touching than the pride, so to speak, which God takes in the good man, the confidence He reposes in him. Whether with or without some purpose of mercy even for the Adversary himself, whether or not inviting him to consider Job, the perfect man, that he may also consider himself and "take a thought and mend," Jehovah challenges Satan to consider Job, and how good he is, and how happy in his goodness. The way has been opened for the challenge by Satan's report of himself. "Whence comest thou?" asks Jehovah. And Satan replies, "From hurrying to and fro in the earth, and from pacing up and down in it." According to the Hebrew idiom there is a certain pride and fidelity in the answer; it implies that he has come from a strict and vigilant discharge of his proper function,—which function has a double aspect, that of rapid and widely-extended inspection, and that of searching

and accurate examination. Much of his original glory still clings to him. Obviously, at least to the mind of the man who wrote this Poem,

> "his form had yet not lost
> All her original brightness, nor appeared
> Less than archangel ruined."

He mixes with the other "Sons of God" as their peer. He is evidently expected to present himself before the Lord when they do. No one questions his claim to a seat in the celestial Cabinet, not Jehovah Himself. He is addressed as one who has a right to be there. He speaks as one fully conscious of that right, fully conscious, too, that he has faithfully discharged the task assigned him. As we read these verses, we begin to suspect that there may be more in our Lord's words than meets the eye when He said, *as though describing an event which had just taken place*, "I saw Satan, as lightning, cast out of heaven."

And yet, when we read on, and learn that the function of the Adversary is to detect the sins and defects of men, that he has no faith in genuine goodness, that he is eager to do men harm and to rob them of the natural comfort and reward of their virtue, we cannot but believe that even now already he has said to himself and his compeers:

> "But of this be sure,—
> To do aught good never will be our task,
> But ever to do ill our sole delight,
> As being the contrary to his high will
> Whom we resist. If then his providence
> Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
> Our labour must be to pervert that end,
> And out of good still to find means of evil;
> Which ofttimes may succeed so as perhaps
> Shall grieve Him."

To find evil in good is the very task to which the Adversary of this Poem devotes himself with zest. He hurries up and down the earth, like a spiritual detective, ever on the watch for signs of guilt. He has scrutinized even the perfect man with eyes which cast the shadows they discover, and has arrived at the conclusion that, devout and pious as the man seems, he is no less guilty than others, no less self-centred and selfish than he himself. When Jehovah calls Job to his mind, and, as it were, defies him to find any blemish in one so sincere and pure, his response is ready. Job has but the show of piety, not piety itself: he has discovered that to fear God and eschew evil is the best policy. Let Jehovah but put forth his hand and *touch*, *i.e.* smite, him, and he will disown, or renounce, God *to his face*, *i.e.* openly, shamelessly, insolently. As yet God has set a hedge, or fence, round all that he has, warding off all hostile attack and harmful influence. Who would not serve so liberal and munificent a Lord, and observe even the austerest forms of piety, to become the greatest and richest of the Sons of the East?

Here, then, the true problem of the Book is fairly raised. Does Job serve God *for nought, without good reason?* is he capable of a disinterested goodness, an unselfish virtue? is the very question to be discussed and decided. In so far as it is a question between Jehovah and Satan it is speedily decided. "Job is good," affirms the Adversary, "only because of what he gains by it. Take away his gains, and he will fling his goodness after it." "Will he so?" replies Jehovah. "Take away his gains, then, and

let us see whether his goodness goes with or after them." Two sharp and decisive conflicts suffice to determine the issue of this brief but momentous campaign. In the first, Job's person is reserved from the power of the Enemy, and only his possessions are exposed to it. In the second, his life is reserved, but his person, his health, is exposed. And from this careful and exact limitation of the power of the Adversary we can hardly draw a lesser inference than this: That to the incursions of evil, as to the encroachments of the sea, God has set a bar and gates, and said, "Thus far mayest thou come, but no farther." It implies that good is before evil, and superior to it — at once more universal and more enduring; that "all things ill" are subservient to good, and will but swell the volume of its final triumph.

The first conflict and its issue are recorded in verses 13–22. It is impossible to read them without being struck by the immense range of power committed to the hands of the Adversary; or without suspecting that, by the permission of God, the prince of this world, who is also "the prince of the powers of the air," may have far more to do both with what seems to us the frequent cruelty of the great forces of Nature, and with the still deeper injuries which men often inflict on men, than we sometimes suppose. "A world so full of evils cannot be the work and domain of a Being at once good and almighty," says the modern sceptic, not discerning the good uses to which even evil may be put both here and hereafter. But our Poet is redeemed from such a misgiving by the conviction that evil may, and must, be compelled

to lead to greater good. Earth and heaven, man and nature, appear to conspire together against the perfect and upright patriarch the very moment God's "fence" round him, and round his house, and round all that he had, is removed; the lightning and the whirlwind are turned against him, no less than the cupidity of alien and freebooting tribes:

> "One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
> So fast they follow."

Nor can we well fail to note how the horror grows, how the successive strokes which fall on him gather weight, and break on him with accumulated force. First, the Sabæans fall on the oxen and carry them off; then fire flashes from heaven and consumes the sheep, at once more numerous and more widely spread than the oxen; then the still more costly and precious camels are "lifted" by the roving Chasdim; and, finally, the cruellest blow of all, rifling his heart of its most sacred treasures, his goodly sons and daughters are destroyed by "a great wind from beyond the desert." And all these blows are struck in a single day. Each messenger of evil enters on the scene while the previous messenger "was yet speaking;" and each concludes his tale with the pathetic words,—words rendered unspeakably more pathetic by so many repetitions,—"and I am escaped, even I alone, to tell thee." In the morning of one and the selfsame day Job stands before us the greatest, richest, happiest of men, with his children round him, offering his sacrifice and thanksgiving to the God who has loaded him with benefits; and in the evening he lies on the ground, with rent mantle and shaven head, stripped of all,

naked as when he came from his mother's womb. To *him*, with his pious habitudes of thought, tracing all events, and in especial all the changes of human life, to the immediate hand of God, it must have seemed that God Himself had turned to be his enemy. To him, indeed, we know it *was* the Lord who had "taken away" all that He had given. And, therefore, it would have been nothing wonderful had Satan prevailed against him, and wrung from his despairing heart an emphatic renunciation of all faith and trust in the Friend who, without cause, had become his Foe. But we must examine these verses more closely.

Verse 13.—The day on which this terrible and increasing series of calamities fell upon him was the day of the first-born; probably, as we have seen, the very day on the morning of which Job had "sanctified" his children: and hence the very last day on which he could anticipate that the God whom he had propitiated, and with whom he felt at peace, would so darkly frown upon him.

On *Verse* 14 Canon Cook remarks: "It is important to observe that the ploughing determines very precisely the season of the transaction. In the Hauran this takes place in January. This may account for the very frequent allusions to wintry weather,—cold, snow, ice, swollen streams, and violent storms—which occur throughout the Book, a coincidence which has strangely escaped the notice of commentators. It is also to be remarked that all the oxen were at the same time in one district: this too is curiously confirmed by the present custom of the Hauran: in order to protect themselves from

marauders the inhabitants plough the lands in succession, bringing all their oxen, with their guards, into the same district." An admirable and instructive note except at one main point. The curious "coincidence" which the commentators have so strangely overlooked is a very questionable one. It fails to make any allowance for the intervals which probably obtained—and these intervals are supposed to have been very considerable—between the first and second trial of Job, between the second trial and the arrival of the Friends, as also for the period consumed in their protracted argument with him. "The very frequent allusions to wintry weather" in the body of the Poem—and they are no more frequent than the similar allusions to summer and autumn—are to be accounted for, I think, not by the assumption that the whole drama was enacted in the month, or months, devoted to ploughing the land, but to the wish and intention of the Poet to paint a complete picture of life in the Hauran through all the changes of the year.

Verse 15.—The Sabæans were an Arabian tribe, of which the northern clans were nomadic, wandering through the whole district between Arabia and the Hauran, who lived mainly by plunder; while the southern clans dwelt in settled habitations, devoted themselves to commerce, and sent their caravans through the whole East. (Job vi. 18–20.) Strabo says that even the Sabæans of the south, although a rich mercantile people, made occasional raids for plunder in Petræa and Syria. And as it is likely that Job paid "blackmail" to the neighbouring tribes in order to save his lands from their incursions,

it is quite possible that his oxen were carried off and their guards slain by the more remote Sabæan clans. The fact that "the young men" of Job were "slain with the edge of the sword" implies that, then as now, the ploughmen of the Hauran were either armed, or protected by armed men, and that these "guards" of his incensed the freebooters by a desperate resistance.

Verse 16.—"A fire of God" (compare 2 Kings i. 10–14) can only mean lightning, I think; and although terrible storms are known in the Hauran, yet a thunder-storm which swept over the vast tracts on which seven thousand sheep found pasture, and which killed them *all*, and their shepherds, would inevitably be regarded as a portent, as the manifest "judgment" of an offended Heaven.

Verse 17.—The *Chasdim*, or Chaldeans, were originally robber hordes. They were probably the descendants of *Chezed*, who, like Uz, was descended from a nephew of Abraham named Nahor. They "retained their old seat and customs down to the time of Xenophon, and are now represented by the Curds." In forming themselves into "three bands" they simply followed the habit which a little experience and reflection has commended to most freebooting tribes, especially when much ground has to be passed over. Thus divided they would find forage and water more easily; the attack would be more of a surprise and be more likely to cut off all possibility of escape; and the driving away of the cattle they had lifted would be at once more convenient and safer from pursuit than if the whole troop rode together. That robbers from two oppo-

site quarters, the distant South and the distant North, should fall on Job's possessions in a single day deepens our sense of the wide sweep of the calamity which broke so suddenly and destructively upon him. But the mere distance traversed by the hostile tribes presents no difficulty. The Arabs, once mounted and with the prospect of booty before them, care little how far they ride. Even at the present day their incursions often take as wide a range as that of the Sabæans into the Hauran from Southern Arabia, or that of the "bitter and hasty" Chasdim from the northern plains beyond Babylon.

Verse 18.—It is by comparing this verse with verse 13 that we are made sure that the whole series of calamities occurred within the limits of a single day, the day on which Job's "sons and daughters were eating, and drinking wine, in the house of their brother, the first-born."

Verse 19.—The "great wind" was evidently a cyclone, or whirlwind, since it smote "the four corners of the house" at once. We are told that it came from across, or beyond, the desert, in order that we may feel how far it had travelled, and what a mighty and voluminous force it had gathered as it flew. And we may safely assume, I think, that it was part of the same great convulsion in the forces of nature by which the sheep and their shepherds had been destroyed.

With this last overwhelming blow the tragic series comes to an end, at least for the present. The ruin of Job was completed by the third calamity, the "capture" of his immense stud of camels. But no loss of mere outward possessions wrings a single

word of complaint, or apparently a word of any kind, from his lips. With a stoicism and dignity such as many a living Arab sheikh would shew, but also with a pious and cordial acquiescence in the Divine will which only a life of tried and habitual faith can breed, he lets all go without so much as a sigh. It is only when, by the loss of his children, his heart is smitten and torn with an intolerable pang, that he "gives sorrow words." And what words they are! how simple and strong, and how pathetic in their simplicity!

> "Naked came I from my mother's womb,
> And I shall return thither naked,
> The Lord gave and Lord hath taken;
> Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Under the impulse of deep emotion his words fall into metrical order and rhythm, as all impassioned speech is apt to do. Even the very gestures which express his grief have a certain stately order and self-restraint in them. He rends his mantle, tearing open his wide outer robe from the neck to the girdle —an act capable, of course, of being done passionately and impatiently; but he also "shaves his head," an act only to be done deliberately and with care: he does not run wild and deafen heaven with his bootless outcries, like Lear; but with a certain simple and stately dignity he hides his grief under the customary shows of mourning. Nay, more; he "falls on the ground and worships," prostrating himself in the deepest and most solemn form of adoration known to man: thus silently and unconsciously, and therefore all the more nobly, refuting the charge of the Adversary that, when his gains

were gone, he would renounce the God who had ceased to be gracious to him.

And yet how much there was even in this first trial of his constancy to shake and betray it. He knew and felt that this destructive avalanche of loss and misery had not been set in motion by any sin which clamoured against him. He felt, and thought he knew, that it had been hurled on him by God, whom he had done nothing to offend. Both his consciousness of innocence and his conviction that his calamity came from God would render the trial a dark and inexplicable mystery to him. As he reflected on it, the mere sense of loss and dishonour, even his profound and irremediable grief for his children causelessly and prematurely snatched away from him, would be less painful than the questions and doubts suggested by so sudden, entire, and causeless a reversal of the usual course of Providence. It must have seemed to him as if the whole world of his established principles and convictions had dropped from under his feet, and he were left floating, *falling*, in a drear and fathomless abyss. But, happily for us and for him, under the most novel and terrible experiences men get the benefit of their past; they reap what they have sown. A life of real trust in God, of real fellowship with Him, connects us with Him by attachments so numerous, and strong, and vital, that no shock of change, no rush of doubt or rebellious passion, can sever them all. Because Job had really lived and walked with God, he could not be wholly sundered from Him, could not altogether lose his trust in Him even when God seemed to be doing him an unmerited and unspeak-

able wrong. Though his reason, stunned and reeling under so many swift and heavy blows, lost hold of God, his heart clung to Him, and went groping after Him if haply it might so find Him as to vindicate Him even to the inquisitive and sceptical intellect. And so, for a time, he brushes his doubts and fears aside, and refuses to let his faith be darkened, or more than darkened, by questions he cannot answer. If his head says, "I cannot find God or justify Him," his heart replies, "I am still sure of Him, and *must* trust in Him." Nay, even now already his heart begins to plead for God, and to justify his ways with men. It can say, not only, "Blessed be the Lord, though I do not comprehend Him," but also, "God has a *right* to take away what He has given, even though I can see no reason for his taking it away; the right to give implies the right to withhold or to withdraw." This is not a very profound solution of the difficulty indeed; but it is the deepest and best that Job can reach as yet. It is good so far as it goes, though it does not go very far. But, for the moment, it brought peace to the afflicted patriarch, and the power of worshipping a God he did not understand. And, surely, his noble humility and resignation yield a forcible rebuke to the intellectual narrowness which prompts us to demand that we should comprehend all the ways of Him who has the whole universe on his hands, and to the impatience which prompts us to expect an immediate solution of any problem which painfully affects our life and fate.

There would be no need to add another sentence on the first trial of Job were not this a convenient

opportunity for explaining the most difficult word in the whole Prologue. The word translated "blessed" in "Blessed be the Lord," &c. (verse 21), is the very word which is rendered "renounce," or "curse," in verse 11. That is to say, it is the very word which Satan had pledged himself to extract from the lips of Job. Now, as Job does use the word, it might seem that the Adversary had triumphed in his conflict with the Almighty. That conclusion, however, is rendered impossible by all the other indications of the Story. And, therefore, we need to remark that the Hebrew verb (bârêk) is used in a double sense. Usually signifying "to bless," it sometimes means "to curse." How the same word came to be used in senses so diametrically opposed can only be explained as we recall some well-known facts and laws of human speech.

Now, in general, we may say that, in *many* languages, the word which signifies "bless" also modulates into the very opposite sense of "curse." Some traces of this strange linguistic habit may be found in our own familiar talk, as when we say, lightly or angrily, "Oh, *bless* you!" meaning the exact opposite of what we say. And, perhaps, the explanation of this fact may be that all men, and especially the Orientals, shrink a little superstitiously from soiling their lips with words of evil omen and import, words of direct cursing, and prefer to express their anger and ill-will in words capable of a double sense. Many among ourselves who very willingly equivocate with an euphemism would recoil with horror from breaking out into open imprecations. Charles Lamb has pointed out a cognate fact, or habit, in the

use of impassioned language, in the lively lines in which he speaks of the—

> "Irony and feign'd abuse
> Such as perplex'd lovers use,
> At a need, when in despair
> To paint forth their fairest fair,
> Or in part but to express
> That exceeding comeliness
> Which their fancies doth so strike,
> They borrow language of dislike;
> And, instead of Dearest Miss,
> Jewel, Honey, Sweetheart, Bliss,
> And those forms of old admiring,
> Call her Cockatrice and Siren,
> Basilisk, and all that's evil,
> Witch, Hyena, Mermaid, Devil,
> Ethiop, Wench, and Blackamoor,
> Monkey, Ape, and twenty more;
> Friendly Traitress, loving Foe,—
> Not that she is truly so,
> But no other way they know
> A contentment to express,
> Borders so upon excess,
> That they do not rightly wot
> Whether it be pain or not."

And hatred is only less ingenious than love, and is very capable of converting words and formulas of benediction to its own evil and malignant use.

More particularly we may say of this Hebrew word that its original meaning is "to bend the knee," to kneel in prayer, for example: so that it would easily lend itself to a double and ambiguous sense, since if men kneel when they implore a blessing, they also kneel to invoke a curse.

But, most probably, the full explanation of the word as used in this Prologue is to be found in the fact that the subjects and courtiers of ancient Eastern princes knelt to them, not only when they entered

their presence, but also when they left it, even though they left it in anger and cherishing treasonable designs against them in their hearts. Hence the word for "kneel" came easily and naturally to contain the double meaning of saluting a person, especially a superior, both on meeting him and in parting with him, both on giving him up or renouncing him, and on welcoming him and wishing him good speed. We can hardly suppose that even the Adversary thought to drive Job to an extremity in which, like an angry drab, he would "unpack his heart with words" of cursing and blasphemy; still less can we suppose Job to have suspected his sons (for the same word is used, Chap. i. 5) of a sin so exceptional and so alien to all the habits in which they had been nurtured: but Job may well have feared that his sons, in their mirth and gaiety, would "take leave" of God, forget Him, renounce Him, by preferring their own ways to his, by taking "the primrose path of dalliance" rather than "the steep and thorny way to heaven;" and Satan may easily have persuaded himself that, when Job was stripped of all he had gained by serving God, he would revolt from his service, and at least tacitly renounce Him. But his hope is defeated. Job does, indeed, utter the very word that Satan had set himself to force from his lips, but he uses it in the good sense, not in the bad, in the very opposite sense, that is, to that in which the Adversary had predicted he would use it. So far from "taking leave" of God, or renouncing Him, he flies *to* God, not *from* Him, and renews his homage. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God with wrong." S. COX.