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THE SOLILOQUY OF JOB.

FIRST MONOLOGUE. (CHAPTER XXVIII.)

THE links which connect Chapter xxvii. with Chapter xxviii. are not very obvious: on the contrary, they are so latent and subtle that many have looked for them in vain. But we must remember both that even our Western art does not *obtrude* the logical skeleton round which it weaves its breathing forms, that even with us Poetry is "a choice and condensed form of emotional speech;" and that in all Oriental forms of composition there is what seems to us a strange and studied abruptness. It is the special glory of Oriental art "to *conceal* a thing"—as it is the honour of a student or critic "to search out the matter;" and therefore we need not be surprised to find in an Oriental poem a certain difficulty in tracing the flow and sequence of thought. But the difficulty is not, I think, insuperable, or even very formidable, if only we approach it in the right direction, and bring to it not the narrow contracted vision of the bookworm and the pedant, but the open eyes that desire the truth and are familiar with the ways of men.

1. What is the subject which Job has been discussing with the Friends, and which he still continues to discuss now that they have withdrawn from the debate? It is that mysterious Providence which does not, as men often assume that it ought to do, deal out instant and patent retribution whether to the good or

the bad. Of the lot and doom of the wicked Job has just confessed that, in the Debate, he had taken an exaggerated view; that, as a rule and in the end, they do receive the due reward of their deeds, although he had once questioned whether they did. But even so, he now adds, even when this admission is made, the mystery of Providence is not thereby solved. That mystery, indeed, is not solvable by man. Much as he can do, he cannot do this: to comprehend God, or the ways of God, is beyond him. Incapable of an intellectual solution of the problem, he must perforce be content with a moral solution of it; as he cannot master or surprise the secrets of Wisdom, he must make it his wisdom to fear God and to eschew evil.

2. This is one, and a main, link of connection. And we have only to limit and specialize the general affirmation, "*Man* cannot solve the mystery of the Divine ways;" we have only to conceive of Job as saying to the Friends, "*I* have not solved it, nor have *you*," to discover other and similar links. Conscious, perhaps, of some appearances of inconsistency between his former and his present descriptions of "the heritage of the wicked from the Almighty," Job explains, and in some sense justifies, the inconsistency by admitting that, when he has done his best to understand the ways of God with men, he cannot understand them; that, while at times he can trace the action of the law of retribution in the lot and fate of men, at other times, in other instances, he cannot trace it: so that he has no alternative but to trust in the action of that law beyond the points to which he can trace it, to believe that it is best to do good and to eschew evil, though he cannot in all cases prove it to be best.

3. But if *he* has not solved "the insoluble riddle of the world," still less have the Friends solved it. And now that, freed from the excitements of controversy, he can look on the solution they have pressed upon him with larger and calmer eyes, he can also make allowance for their failure even while he rebukes their presumption. They had been grievously in error both in so lightly assuming that *they* could interpret and vindicate the ways of God, and in accusing Job of sins of which he was the last man to be guilty in order to vindicate God's way with him. "But, after all," he seems to say to them, "and wrong as you were in much, you were not wrong in motive. You simply attempted the impossible—simply attempted to explain what no man can explain, to justify what no man can justify. You have been wrong, and I have been wrong; we could not but be wrong so long as we set ourselves to solve the insoluble. Let us humble ourselves, and bow before the unfathomable wisdom of God, and take a law from his mouth."

4. And yet, while Job makes allowance for the Friends, and in some sort condemns himself, he also in some sort defends and vindicates himself. Neither he nor they were able to penetrate to the secrets of perfect and absolute Wisdom, or to comprehend the dealings of Him with whom alone Wisdom dwelt as in its native home. No man could do that. But man's nearest approach to it, his highest attainable wisdom, was to listen to Him with whom dwelt Wisdom itself, to love and reverence Him, and to prove the sincerity of that loving reverence by eschewing the evil which He condemns, however inviting or flourishing it may look for a time. Tacitly and modestly, but unmistak-

ably and firmly, Job professes that to *this* wisdom he has attained; that he has been true to it; that even when he has seen the wicked in great power and mirth he has still cried, "Far from *me* be the counsel of the wicked;" that even when the Lord Himself seemed turned to be his foe, he had still held fast to "the fear of the Lord;" that even when goodness seemed to be a mark for all the storms of heaven, he had still clung to it and "eschewed evil."

There are other, though minuter, threads of connection that might be traced out between the Chapters, but these surely are sufficient. If we take Job as confessing and asserting that the mystery of the Divine Providence is insoluble by man, that he himself has failed in his endeavours to solve it, that the Friends have still more conspicuously failed, but that none the less he has been true to the highest appromixate solution of it which man can reach, we shall have no difficulty in seeing why he passes from describing "the doom of the wicked man from God," to elaborate the conclusion, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to eschew evil, that is understanding."

This conclusion is set forth with much wealth and pomp. The Poet seems to go out of his way to give us all that he knows of the miner's art, to work up all the details of it into one of the most charming and elaborate pictures in his richly-stored gallery. Nor is he content with this picture of the ancient miner and his art (Verses 1–11); he also works into the Chapter one or two of those simple literary feats in which the simplicity of the antique world delighted, and in which he himself excelled,[1] giving us, in Verses 15–19, both

[1] See Exposition of Chapter xv. Verse 10, with the Foot-note to it.

an inventory of the gems most prized in the East, and an assortment of most of the Hebrew words for "gold." No one of these artistic and literary feats may be actually requisite for conveying the Poet's thought, however they may serve to give weight and beauty to his thought. No doubt he lingers over them because he loves them; just as Homer describes at length the shield of Achilles, or Shakespeare the doublings of "poor Wat,"[1] and the unmatched beauty of Theseus' hounds,[2] because he delights in the work for its own sake. And yet who can wish that a picture so perfect in itself, and to us so instructive, should have been omitted or even curtailed? Who can deny that the long suspense in which our thought is held, while the description proceeds and before the conclusion is reached, lends weight to the conclusion when it comes, and so converts what looks like an artistic defect into an artistic merit and triumph?

Whence he drew the materials of his picture it is impossible to be sure. Even so early as his day mines were worked both in the Lebanon and Idumea; but, in all probability, it was from the Egyptian mines in the Sinaitic Peninsula that our Poet—whose familiar acquaintance with the life and customs of Egypt we have often remarked—gathered the knowledge here employed; for these mines—with their shafts, working apparatus, and smelting-places—are to be seen to this day in the very condition in which they were left by the Egyptian workmen four or five thousand years ago; the very marks of their tools being so fresh and sharp in that pure dry atmosphere, that more than one

[1] "Venus and Adonis," 680–708.

[2] "A Midsummer-Night's Dream," Act iv. Scene 1.

traveller has felt, while looking at them, as though the men had but knocked off work for a spell, and might come back to it at any moment.

The description extends from Verse 1 to Verse 11, and opens by simply announcing (*Verses* 1, 2) that men are capable of taking, and do take, silver and gold, iron and copper, from the earth. The statement is quite, and remarkably, accurate so far as it goes. Silver is, as a rule, found in *a vein*, an "issue," a mine; men have to dig for it: while the "place for gold" is on or near the surface of the earth; it is found imbedded in rocks carried down by ancient torrents, and needs to be *washed out* from the pulverized rock. The Hebrew language has a technical term for each of the processes of refining known to the ancients—washing and smelting: it is the former which is used of gold in Verse 1, and the latter which is used of copper in Verse 2. Diodorus (iii. 11 *et seq.*) gives a long description of the method of refining gold in use among the Egyptians. He tells us how, when the gold-bearing rock was crushed, they spread it on "a broad table slightly inclined," and poured water over it to wash away the earthy parts, repeating the operation several times, till only the finer particles of earth and dross were left, and then removing these by pressing a sponge lightly upon them, till nothing but gold remained on the slab. Thus, even then, men strained, or filtered, or "washed out," the gold from the dust and rubbish of the broken matrix.

Verse 3 shews that it is from the bowels of the earth that iron and copper were taken. For here the miner is represented as making an end of darkness by carrying light into the dark interior of the earth, and search-

ing, with candle and torch and lamp, for the precious ores buried in its cold and gloomy recesses. An unfortunate ambiguity in our Authorized Version has long led the unlearned to take the "he" of this and the following Verses as referring to a Divine nominative, and assume that it is *God* who makes an end of darkness, puts forth his hand against the rocks, overturns the mountains from their base, binds the floods, and brings that which is hidden to the light. The mistake was a natural one. But no scholar has ever doubted that the "he" of Verse 3 is *the man, i.e.*, the miner, implied in Verses 1 and 2, the man who finds the vein of silver, and washes out the gold, and takes iron from the earth, and smelts copper from the rock. For "*he* maketh an end of darkness," it is better, therefore, since it prevents so grave a misapprehension, to read, "*The miner* maketh an end of darkness."

In *Verse* 4 we are told both how he gets into the dark interior of the earth, and how he carries himself when there. The *loneliness* of the miner's life, the dark and immense solitude which he invades, his remoteness from the common ways of men, seem to have deeply impressed the Poet's mind. It is "far from the habitations of men" that he sinks his shaft—amid the untrodden precipices of Sinai, for instance: even if he mine his way under a public road or within easy reach of the haunts of men, he is "forgotten of the foot," *i.e.*, those who walk over the very ground beneath which he toils are unaware of him: he "swings" down to his work, or perhaps sits swinging at his work, on a cross-bar slung between ropes, afar from the kindly homes of men and their kindly succour. There is the true poet's touch in this Verse: in a few deft strokes he

brings out *the pathos* of the miner's life and occupation —its peril, its loneliness, its remoteness even from those who stand nearest to it.

And there is another fine touch in *Verse* 5. The Poet, though he is carefully elaborating his picture, is not engrossed by it; his mind is large enough and enough at leisure to entertain any impressive generalization which his theme may suggest, even though it should seem remote from his immediate theme. And so, while he is telling us how the miner, blasting his way through the rocks,[1] stirs up the underpart of the earth as by fire, he remembers how much else, how much that is better and more precious, we owe the earth than iron and copper; he reminds us that the earth, which yields us valuable ores, also yields us the "bread" which is still more valuable and necessary to us; and thus he enhances the effect of his delineation of the swarthy solitary miner, carrying fire and havoc through the dark interior of the solid earth, by calling up a vision of the smiling harvests, steeped in sunlight, which wave and rustle upon the surface of the earth. Man is master of the world, without and within. Not content with compelling the soil around his habitation to serve him, to find him bread, he penetrates beneath the familiar surface of the earth to its dark hidden recesses wringing from them their hoarded treasures, or wanders afar to discover the solitary haunts of gem and ore, snatching the sapphire from its bed among the rocks, and washing out the gold-dust from channels deserted by their ancient streams (*Verse* 6).

[1] That blasting was known and practised by the ancients, and that it was accompanied by many graphic incidents and effects such as we may see in our own quarries and mines, is certain from Pliny's (*H. N.* xxxiii. 4, 21) picturesque description.

Verses 7–10. Keen and wonderful as are the instincts of bird and beast, no hawk nor eagle is so quick to detect its prey as man to detect the gold or gems for which he searches; strong as are the lion and the tiger, no proudly-pacing beast rends its prey with the strength and force of man. *He* takes a path inaccessible, and even imperceptible, to them in his quest for every precious thing. With a might unknown to them, he "*puts forth his hand* against the quartz" in which gold is imbedded—the phrase denoting the force and vigour of his assault—and blasts the very roots of the mountains bare. As he cuts "channels," or "canals," to carry off the water and drain the mine (*Verse* 10), so also (*Verse* 11) he binds up the waters that leak or trickle through the roof or walls of the galleries he has run through the earth, "so that they *weep* not." This picturesque phrase may have been a technical term among miners in ancient times, just as our colliers in the north of England name the action of the water that percolates through and into their workings *weeping*, and our navvies call the fine sand which percolates through the sides of a tunnel "*crying* sand."[1] The image is, indeed, so natural and obvious, that it may well have occurred to the "swart toilers" of the antique world.

From *Verse* 12 we gather the motive of this elaborate description. The intelligence of man may, and does,

[1] For these technicalities I am indebted to the Rev. J. S. Simon, of Doncaster, who writes: "Perhaps it may interest you to know that this percolation of water into the workings of a mine is still called 'weeping' by our colliers in this neighbourhood, as I have ascertained from the manager of the Wombwell Main; and that a railway contractor informs me that one of the chief difficulties they have to contend against in making a tunnel arises from the percolating of a fine sand through the sides, which gradually fills up the working: its technical name is 'crying sand.'"

surpass the instinctive sagacity of bird and beast. He may, and does, search out every hidden and precious thing. Nothing can escape him, whether on the earth or in the earth, however distant it may be or whatever the darkness and the danger through which he must pass to reach it. But the haunt of Wisdom, the place of Understanding, is inaccessible even to his keen and sustained energy, undiscoverable even by his lofty and trained intelligence. Marvellous as his powers are, and marvellous as are his achievements, he cannot, by searching, find out *Wisdom, i.e.*, the true nature and causes of things; nor even acquire *Understanding, i.e.*, the power which discriminates, appreciates, and applies the large general principles of Wisdom to the demands and exigencies of the moment. To know the world as it is, to master the secret and ruling principles of the Divine Government and Providence, and to draw his thought and life into conformity with them—this is impossible to unaided man, great as he is, and though he be master and king of the world.

It is to lend weight to this weighty conclusion that the Poet has dwelt on what seemed to him among the most wonderful enterprises and achievements of man, on what was most penetrating, astonishing, successful in the various inquisitions of men, holding our minds in long suspense, that the sudden stroke which ends our suspense may impress us the more forcibly. It is as though he would say to us: "Much as man can do, and far as he can go in 'making an end of darkness,' there is one thing he cannot do, one darkness of which he cannot make an end. Although

> In Nature's infinite book of secresy
> A little he can read,

and even more than a little, Wisdom is beyond him, and Understanding. He cannot find them, nor dispel the darkness which veils them from his eyes; he cannot grasp the absolute; he can neither master the hidden principles of human life and duty, nor apply them to the various lots and conditions of men."

This thesis he proceeds to develop in some of his noblest yet simplest Verses. As Wisdom is everywhere at work, obviously it can be limited to no single "place," can have no single and specific haunt. As it is the chief good, we have nothing, or nothing adequate, that we can give in exchange for it. If a man were to search for it wherever life is found, traversing the habitable globe, sailing over the sea, plunging into the "abyss" of the ocean till he touched the subterranean springs which feed the ocean, in none of these would he find the place where Wisdom holds her seat. So far we are carried by the plain affirmation of *Verse* 13, and the fine impersonation of *Verse* 14. And in *Verses* 15–19 it is still further argued that, as "if a man would give all the substance of his house for Love, it would be utterly contemned," so Wisdom is in its very nature unpurchasable, that it cannot be bought for all the treasures discovered by the miner or transported by the merchant from Cush and "farthest Ind;" not for gems and jewels, though these are a passion in the East, nor for gold, however choice or choicely wrought. Detailed exposition of these Verses is impossible, for we are no longer able, as even the experts confess, to identify the precious stones catalogued by the Poet with any certainty. But we may remark that, as in Chapter iv. Verses 10 and 11, he gives us most of the Hebrew words for "lion," so in

these Verses he gives us four out of the seven Hebrew words for "gold," the original substantives having delicate distinctions of sense, which in translating we are obliged to indicate by adding such inadequate adjectives to gold as "fine," "pure," "bright."

We may also remark that by the stress and iteration here laid on wealth as the most mentionable equivalent for "Wisdom," we can hardly fail to be reminded that most men, most rich men at least, do assume a certain connection between wisdom and wealth. The rich man commonly supposes that he derives from his opulence some claim to advise, or control, or "represent" his neighbours; and too often the poor man, being himself greedy of wealth, trusts and admires, if he does not also envy, the man who has achieved it. Both the man of wealth, indeed, and the man of science, are somewhat too apt to arrogate wisdom to themselves, to speak as if their trained and practical sagacity gave them a right to speak with authority on themes which lie beyond their several spheres of thought and action. Job refuses to admit the claim of either. In the first section of this Chapter (Verses 1–12) he argues that a man may have all the faculties for mastering and interpreting the secrets of Nature, and yet be wholly destitute of the true Wisdom, destitute even of the faculty and methods by which alone it can be reached. And in the second section (Verses 13–21) he argues that, though a man should amass all that men hold most precious, and should be willing to barter all his "gold" for Wisdom, yet Wisdom is not to be had on these terms. If it is not to be found by searching, still less is it to be bought for money.

And yet, by the very emphasis he lays on the fact

that Wisdom is not to be "gotten" either by way of discovery or by way of purchase, he inspires us with the hope that there *is* a way by which even this divine treasure may be attained; that he does not intend to leave us without any answer to the question raised in *Verse* 12, and repeated in *Verses* 20 and 21. If not by the quest of the inquisitive intellect, nor yet by the gold of arrogant wealth, may not Wisdom come to man by the gift and revelation of God? Yes, replies the Poet; it may come *thus*, but *only* thus. Hidden from the eyes of all living, however keen and piercing they may be; hidden even from "the fowl of heaven," to whom the Eastern mind ascribed a supreme gift of divination, so that what is hidden from them is hidden indeed (*Verse* 21); so deeply hidden that *Death*, which unlocks so many secrets, and *Abaddon*, the unfathomed under-world into which men sink at death, and in which so much becomes plain to them, can only repeat the dubious "rumour" of it which they have heard; so deeply hidden that she is to be found neither in the seen nor the unseen world, there is One who knows it altogether (*Verses* 22 and 23); and He, whose gaze embraces all that is, and is done, on earth and under heaven—He alone can teach men Wisdom. He *has* taught it, so far as they are capable of receiving it. It was by wisdom that He made the world, determining the force of the wind, and the bounds of the sea, and the law of the rain, and even of the lawless-seeming tempest (*Verses* 24–26, with which compare Proverbs viii. 22–30). *Then*, when He created the heavens and the earth, Wisdom, which had dwelt with God, and had been his delight before it became creatively active, which had been "possessed by him from

the times before the earth was," became, as it were, objective, so that He "beheld" it; and not only beheld, but "declared" it, by embodying it in all the works of his hands; and not only declared, but "tested" it, by setting its demiurgic powers in motion, and marking what they could do (*Verse* 27). But if *men* have succeeded in gathering up and interpreting the wisdom embodied and declared in this natural revelation, *man* has not; the race, as a whole, has failed to derive from it an ethical law and training, a support and consolation under the changes and sorrows and wrongs of time. God must be his own interpreter, if his wisdom is to be made plain to man; for there is much in Nature, much in Providence, much that is most vital and essential, which man cannot explain and justify, or even understand. God *has* been his own interpreter. To man He has said, and said from "the beginning,"

> Lo, the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom,
> And to eschew evil, that is Understanding.

"Not in keen insight, or wide experience, or in the learning of the schools," humane or scientific, is man's true wisdom to be found, but in reverence and awe. "The fear of the finite in the presence of the Infinite, of the sinful in the presence of the Holy," the trust of the ignorant and feeble in the All-wise and the Almighty, *this* is the temper to which the true Wisdom comes.[1] Absolute Wisdom—to know things as they are in themselves and in their originating and final causes—is beyond the reach of man as yet; but a reverent trust in God as always good, and as ordering all things for our good, this is man's highest wisdom

[1] See Professor Plumptre on Proverbs viii. in "The Speaker's Commentary," vol. iv.

for the present, the relative wisdom by which he connects and associates himself with the absolute wisdom of the Almighty Ruler of men. And if this "fear of the Lord"—which is only another name for reverent love, the love kindled by Perfect Goodness, tempered by the awe due to the infinite Inhabitant of Eternity—if this be our Wisdom, our Understanding—since Understanding is that faculty which applies Wisdom to conduct and duty—is to eschew evil, to avoid and renounce all that God in our conscience, or by the common sense of the human race, or by some clearer revelation of his will, has condemned as wrong, injurious, base.

So that to reverence God, to fear and trust Him even when we can neither interpret nor vindicate his ways, is Wisdom; and this Wisdom shews itself practically in our hatred and recoil from evil. This, I apprehend, is what Solomon meant when, condensing and abbreviating even Job's brief and weighty conclusion, he affirmed, "*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil*" (Prov. viii. 13). And in Solomon's form, if not in Job's, this conclusion, somewhat variously expressed, would be accepted, I suppose, even by the most sceptical of men. For they admit, with Job, that man, infinite as he is in faculty, and capable of searching into the profoundest mysteries of Nature, is incapable of discovering what lies behind them—the Eternal Substance, or Force, or Will, of which all phenomena are but a various and passing show. But they scruple, and scruple on the very ground of this incapacity, to admit that all these phenomena declare *God*, or that to fear God is the sum and crown of human wisdom. Happily, however, they would be as forward as Solo-

mon himself to avow that the moral outcome of all Wisdom, its practical bearing on human conduct, if at least it may be stated on its negative side, is that we eschew evil. To them, as to us, the final dictate of wisdom is, Hate that which is evil, and its positive correlate, Follow after that which is good. And as we have Scripture for it that to hate evil is to fear the Lord, we may claim even those who as yet can see nothing beyond phenomena and the forces which produce them as among those who fear God, although they fear Him unconsciously or question his very existence: we may even affirm that, practically, they too concur in the conclusion with which Job brings his First Monologue to an end.

I cannot but be aware that, according to this interpretation of it, the Chapter must seem, to many minds, strangely modern and philosophical in its tone. It is impossible to vindicate the interpretation, however, without entering into a study of the treatment of "Wisdom" throughout the whole *Chokmah* literature of the Old Testament, which would be too serious a digression for this brief Commentary—such a study and disquisition as I hope we may soon receive from the pen of Professor Davidson.[1] Meantime, before any reader of these pages condemns the interpretation as too modern, let him at least remember that, on moral

[1] I give only one example of the modern form and tone of thought to be found in the treatment of "Wisdom" in these ancient Scriptures. The writer of the so-called Wisdom of Solomon (Chap. vii. 26, 27) has this fine passage:—

"She is the brightness of the everlasting Light,
The unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness;
And, being but one, she can do all things;
And, remaining in herself, she maketh all things new;
And, in all ages, entering into holy souls,
She maketh them friends of God and prophets."

and philosophical themes, the profoundest thoughts, and even the final conclusions of the wise of all ages, and—so far as my reading extends—of all races, do resemble each other in the strangest way, and by virtue of the constitution and limits of the human mind *must* resemble each other: their quest is the same, and their conclusion the same, however various its form.

S. COX.

A WORD STUDY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

PART I.

LANGUAGE, it has been said, is buried history; and he that will dig diligently through the strata which the lapse of ages has piled one above another, will discover, with surpassing interest and surprise, how much words can teach him of the gradual elevation of man. Among other relics of the past, here and there especially will some fossil word make him linger to look upon the upheaval—if one be granted the metaphor—of heathen thought, word, and work, by the religion of Jehovah and the mission of Him who came to mould the race anew. One of such fossil words is μακάριος ("blessed")—a stone which is in itself a sermon, the brief but eloquent story of the redemption of mankind.

For what did the word convey to the older Greeks? Derived most probably from a root implying "greatness," it appears to have been first applied to him with whom, from his superior power, outward things were free from trouble. The idea of the *outward* crops up in the poetry of Euripides. In his play of the *Bacchants* (line 909) the chorus is made to chant, "Him