

many a practical and successful man. Men of action, who stand full in the eye of the world, commonly derive their stimulus and guidance from men of thought, of whom the world seldom hears. And when we pass out of this world into the larger and more equitable world beyond, there are many of these last who will there be first, and shine as stars, and stars of the first magnitude, in the spiritual firmament for ever.

S. E. C. T.

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THE BOOK OF JOB.

IV.—THE SECOND COLLOQUY. (CHAPTERS XV.—XXI.)

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5.—ZOPHAR TO JOB. (CHAPTER XX.)

WHEN Zophar first appeared on the scene I described him as “the common good man of his day, the vulgar but sincere formalist; the man who implicitly believes what he has been taught, and demands not only that every one else should believe it too, but also that they should accept it in the very forms in which it has commended itself to him, and, above all, that they should refuse to believe anything *more*. He is sharp and bitter and hasty in his tone, moreover. . . . A dangerous man to differ from or to outstrip; the kind of man with whom it is of no use to go a mile if you go but a single inch beyond him; the kind of man, too, who is very apt to call down fire from heaven whenever he cannot conveniently lay his hand on the match-box.” And again, when he first opened his lips, I described him as the champion of orthodoxy. “A man without culture or erudition, he stands for and utters the common thought, the current conceptions and formulas, of his time, and savours of bigotry, as self-styled ortho-

doxy is wont to do. He catches up the opinions in vogue, and delivers them as *his* opinions with a tone of authority. He cannot quote oracles like Eliphaz; but, nevertheless, there is a touch of 'Sir Oracle' about him, and when he 'opes his mouth' no dog must bark dissent. With singular fidelity to nature, this comparatively unlearned and unspiritual champion of accepted traditions is depicted as harsh, authoritative, sudden and loud in censure. He is 'hasty and tinder-like upon too trivial motion.' 'A very little thief of occasion robs him of a great deal of patience.'"

If this description of him seems overcharged, tinged with colours of dislike for the type of man he represents, now that Zophar makes his last appearance before us we shall have an opportunity of putting it to a decisive test by comparing with it the man himself. We shall see him acting and speaking after his kind, and be able to determine for ourselves what that kind is.

To the capable eye there is in the present condition of every man an index both to his past and to his future; from what we find him to be we may, if we are wise enough, infer both what he has been and what he will be.

There is a history in all men's lives,  
Figuring the nature of the times deceased;  
The which observed, a man may prophesy,  
With a near aim, of the main chance of things  
As yet not come to life.

On this principle all three of the Friends have acted; from his present miserable conditions they have both figured to themselves that, in times gone by, Job's life must have been an evil and a wicked one, and pre-

dicted that sooner or later it must provoke its appropriate punishment, that his "main chance as yet not come" was a very ominous one. In Chapter xviii., for instance, Bildad, seeing Job to be enmeshed in a net of calamity, had inferred that he had been thrust into it by his own sins, and that he could only be released from it by the punitive stroke of Death. And now Zophar pursues a similar course, but pursues it with a heat and virulence all his own. Bildad had said, "The wicked cannot always prosper—must at last come to a disastrous and shameful end." "Yes," adds Zophar, "but the prosperity of the wicked is *only for a moment*, and the destruction which comes on him is *swift, sudden, overwhelming*." So that *he* touches Job closer home; for Job was still in the prime of his days, and the strokes by which he was being destroyed were, indeed, most sudden, unexpected, and severe. All the Friends take Job for a sinner; but Zophar takes him, first, for an epicure in sin (Verses 12 and 13), and then for an open, violent, and rapacious offender against the laws of man no less than against the laws of God (Verses 19–21); and declares that the terrible and ignominious end of all his greatness was simply the natural and inevitable outcome of his heinous and notorious crimes. Having to deal with a heretic, or at least a sceptic, *i.e.*, with one who declined to subscribe his creed, he at once pronounces him a sinner above all men, and, as men of his type are apt to do, betakes himself to denunciation. He holds any divergence from his "views" to be a personal insult, and mistakes the passionate resentment of wounded vanity for the inspiration of religious zeal. According to him, not only had Job sinned, but, deeming retribution to be of halting and

uncertain foot, he had thought to sin with impunity—thought himself so “far before” his sins that even “the swiftest wing of recompense” would fail to overtake him. But he had deceived himself; the wing of recompense had already overtaken him and struck him down. There was no escape for him. He had lost much already; he would soon lose all. The fire which had already kindled upon him, and had burned up well-nigh all that he possessed, would wholly devour him and consume whatever was still left in his tent (Verse 26), without so much as needing to be “blown,” to be fanned and stimulated to its utmost fierceness.

And all this is conveyed in words and figures coarser and more vindictive than we find anywhere else in the Poem. Not only does Zophar speak his mind “with frank and with uncurbed plainness,” he speaks it like one

whose bosom burns  
With an incensed fire of injuries.

Although he is “furnished with no certainties,” although he proceeds wholly on the most questionable inferences and deductions, he treats Job with a “jeering and disdained contempt;” he seems to exult in the doom he denounces on him. Perhaps the most pitiless and venomous stroke in his oration is his attempt to crush down Job’s rising trust in the God who has so causelessly and profoundly afflicted him. Inspired by this trust, Job had appealed to Heaven, or rather to One in heaven, to bear witness to his innocence; and (in Verse 27) Zophar retorts that “the heavens will reveal,” not his innocence, but his “iniquity.” He had invoked earth as well as heaven to attest his innocence, by re-

fusing to cover his blood ; and Zophar mocks at his appeal, assuring him that the very " earth will rise up against him," to condemn him.

Nothing could be more cruel, nothing more malignant even, had Zophar but seen what he was doing. But, probably, he was far from seeing all that he was doing—did not realize that he was aiming at the very faith in God which God Himself was evoking in the heart of Job, though he surely must have felt that he was shutting on him the only door of hope. Except, indeed, for his scarcely veiled censure on Job, we must admit that his argument, though it " suited not in native colours with the truth " throughout, has a certain colour and measure of truth in it, and that the very intensity of the passion which breathes and burns in it gives it a certain eloquence and power. That every sin contains the seed of its own punishment, is true ; but it is not true that every such seed matures and ripens within the limits of time. That some insolent and greedy sinners are suddenly overtaken by judgment, is true ; but that all such offenders see their sins running before to judgment, is not true. While the latent charge and implication of the whole speech, that *Job* was a sinner, so in love with sin that he could not be persuaded to let it go ; that *he* was a man of an unbounded stomach, from whose greedy cravings nothing was safe, and that therefore his good fortune had not endured, were so plainly and monstrously untrue, that if Zophar's nature had not been warped by theological preconceptions, and inflamed with the heat of an affronted egotism, it was simply impossible that even he should have entertained the suspicion for a moment.

## CHAPTER XX.

1. *Then answered Zophar the Naamathite and said :*
2.       *Nevertheless my thoughts urge me to answer,  
And the impulse that stirreth in me.*
3.       *I have heard a chiding to my shame,  
But out of my understanding my spirit yieldeth me a reply*
4.       *Knowest thou not this, that, from of old,  
Since man was placed upon the earth,  
The triumph of the wicked is brief,  
And the joy of the impious but for a moment ?*
5.       *Though he lift himself up to the heavens,  
And his head sweep the clouds,*
6.       *Yet shall he perish for ever like his own ordure :  
They that saw him shall say, " Where is he ? "*
7.       *Like a dream shall he flit away and not be found,  
He shall be chased away like a vision of the night ;*
8.       *The eye that saw him shall see him no more,  
Neither shall his place any more behold him :*
9.       *His children shall court the poor,  
And his own hands shall restore their substance.*
10.       *Though his bones are full of his youth,  
It shall lie down with him in the dust.*
11.       *Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth,  
So that he retain it under his tongue,  
So that he spareth it, yet will not leave it,  
But holdeth it still in his mouth,*
12.       *Nevertheless his food is changed in his stomach,  
It is gall of asps within him ;*
13.       *He swallowed down riches, and shall disgorge them  
God will drive them out of his belly :*
14.       *He sucked the poison of asps,  
The viper's tongue shall slay him.*
15.       *He shall not see the brooks,  
The rivers, the torrents, of honey and cream ;*
16.       *That for which he toiled he shall restore and not consume,  
Though large be his gain, he shall not have joy in it.*
17.       *Because he ground down and abandoned the poor,  
Seized a house which he did not build,—  
Because his cravings knew no bounds,  
With none of his delights shall he escape ;*
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.

21.           *Nothing was safe from his greed,  
Therefore his good fortune shall not endure :*
22.   *In the fulness of his abundance shall he be straitened ;  
Trouble of every kind shall come upon him.*
23.           *Let there be food to fill his belly,—  
God shall cast on him the glow of his wrath,  
And shall rain it upon him while he is feasting.*
24.           *If he flee from a weapon of iron,  
A bow of brass shall transfix him ;*
25.   *If one draw it out, and it cometh forth from his body,  
And the gleaming point from his gall,  
[New] terrors shall be upon him.*
26.           *All darkness is hoarded in his treasures ;  
A fire, not blown, shall devour him,  
And feed on what is left in his tent :*
27.           *The heavens shall reveal his iniquity,  
And the earth rise up against him ;*
28.           *The increase of his house shall depart,  
Flowing away in the day of his anger.*
29.           *This is the portion of the wicked from God,  
And this the heritage ordained him of the Lord.*

*Verses 2 and 3.*—Zophar's opening words are not very clear. He is evidently, and confessedly, agitated and perturbed ; and for this reason. In the First Colloquy (Chap. xi. 6) he had warned Job that he was so great a sinner, that even his great misery was not an adequate punishment of his guilt. He had urged him to confess and renounce his sin, promising him that so soon as he could lift up a face without spot to God his misery would give way to all prosperous and happy conditions. And how has "Sir Oracle" been met? Instead of gratefully accepting his warning and invitation, and acting on them ; instead of saying—

My voice shall sound as you do prompt mine ear,  
And I will stoop and humble my intents  
To your well-practised wise directions,

Job has actually rejected his counsel, refuted the hypothesis upon which it was based, asserted and reasserted that he needed no repentance, and even appealed with apparent sincerity and confidence from Zophar's verdict to the judgment and sentence of God! How could any man, or any such man as Zophar, with the whole weight of orthodox opinion at his back, stand *that*? It was impossible that he should sit silent while the most ancient and approved conclusions were being so wickedly called in question. It was still more impossible that he should hold his peace when opinions which *he* had espoused were mercilessly refuted, and counsels which *he* had deigned to offer were flung back into his face. He *must* speak, though he hardly knows what to say. Nay, to his own amazement, he finds that he has nothing of any real moment to say; and therefore he very naturally proceeds to abuse his adversary. Before, he had besought Job to repent; but now he finds in him

such black and grained spots  
As will not leave their tinct,

let him repent as he may. With an insolence almost incredible to Zophar, Job had even threatened *him*, the very pink and pattern of orthodoxy, with the sword and judgment of God (Chap. xix. 29). It was intolerable. Job must be silenced; but how? That was not so easy to determine. And so, in an excited yet pompous way, hiding the poverty of his invention under a cloak of big words, and yet revealing his consciousness of wounded vanity and outraged piety in the very words behind which he would fain conceal it, he begins.

*Nevertheless*, despite all you have said, and said with such intolerable confidence and presumption, *my*



*thoughts*—the word for “thoughts” is a peculiar one, used only here and in Chapter iv. Verse 13, and means “doubtful, perplexed, agitated thoughts”—*urge me to answer*. The whole line implies that there was a tempest in his soul, that he was driven to and fro by contending impulses which he could not control, and hardly knew for what point to steer. And this impression of blind, hasty, undirected force is strengthened by the words that follow, in which he confesses that a violent “impulse” is at work within him.

In the next Verse he adds new strokes to this unconscious delineation of the trouble and agitation of his spirit. *I have heard a chiding to my shame; i.e.,* “I know very well what the aim of the check and counter-check of your last words was. You intended that threatening of judgment for *me*. You meant to put me to shame. But you did not, and cannot, put me to shame, nor even put me to silence. In my “understanding” there is an immense store of arguments, if only I could get at them; and “out of” this store “my spirit” will select that which I deem most pertinent and conclusive. If I am for a moment embarrassed, and know not what to say, it is simply my wealth of replies which embarrasses me.

These are brave words, but rich men do not boast of their wealth. And I am afraid that Zophar must either have been much poorer than he thought, or that he put forward this pretension of wealth to hide a conscious penury. For, after all, he has nothing to say—nothing of the quality of an argument, or of a reply to the arguments of Job. To him, as to many of the self-appointed champions of subsequent creeds, the most familiar weapon of controversy was invective;

and his one merit is that he makes his invective as keen and biting as he can. There is really nothing but racy and telling invective in the Verses which follow; and one might have hoped that men of so much religious culture and genuine piety as Eliphaz and Bildad would have been a little ashamed of their colleague's irrational and self-defeating virulence. But just as we now often see good men, who would not themselves deign to use sinister and cruel weapons against the heretic or the sceptic, not altogether displeased when combatants of a coarser grain wield those weapons with effect; just as we occasionally see them, in times of great excitement, even stooping to use the weapons they would have disdained to touch in their calmer and better hours, so, as we shall find in the next Colloquy, even Eliphaz, the wisest of the three Friends, sinks to the level of Zophar, and stoops to invectives as baseless and cruel, though not so grossly worded as his.

There is not much in Zophar's invective to detain us. It divides itself into three sections. In the first (Verses 4-11) he describes the punishments which wait on sin; in the second (Verses 12-22) he affirms these punishments to be the natural and necessary consequences of the sins to which they are attached; and in the third (Verses 23-28) he asserts that these punishments, though they are the natural consequences of sin, are nevertheless inflicted by God, and execute his verdict on the transgressions by which they are provoked.

In *Verse 4* he affirms the constancy, the eternity, of the retributive principle which he is about to assert, viz., that (*Verse 5*) the success and prosperity of the wicked are short-lived. The higher and the more

imposing the elevation to which he climbs (*Verse 6*), the more disastrous and disgraceful is his fall from it (*Verse 7*). The coarse figure which Zophar here employs—"like his own ordure"—was probably suggested by the *mezbele* on which Job lay; and implies that Job himself, whose head had once seemed to sweep the clouds, had already fallen from his high estate, and become as loathsome as that on which he lay. So sudden and so unexpected is the downfall of the sinner, so complete and obliterating the Divine judgment on him, that men will look round for him in amazement, asking, "Where is he?" all his imposing bulk and grandeur having vanished like the pageantry of a dream (*Verse 8*). *Verse 9* is stolen bodily from Job, and was doubtless meant as a broad hint that it *was* Job whom Zophar, under the thin disguise of a general description, had in view. Job had said (Chap. vii. 8, 10), "*The eye that seeth me shall see me no more;*" and again, virtually, "*Neither shall my place know me any more;*" and Zophar now says of his wicked man, "*The eye that saw him shall see him no more, Neither shall his place any more behold him,*"—this echo being also an innuendo. In *Verse 10*, as if feeling that he was too openly breaking through his disguise, too plainly christening his wicked man *Job*, Zophar adds a more abstract and general touch to his delineation: "His children shall court the poor," *i.e.*, they will have to court the favour of those whom *he* has impoverished, restoring to them what his rapacious hands have seized. And as Job's children were all dead, we might think that here at least Zophar was not girding at *him*; but the words which follow betray him. He cannot keep his secret for two sentences together, nor even for two

clauses of the same sentence. For his wicked man, he adds, shall restore the substance of which he had plundered his neighbours *with his own hands*. And incredible as it may appear that he who knew the just and noble manner of Job's life so well should intend to charge him with having made raids on the neighbouring clans, and should have held, therefore, that the inroads of the Sabeans and Chasdim who had "lifted" his oxen and camels were only a due retribution, there can be little doubt in the mind of any student of Verses 19-21, 24, 25, that he had persuaded himself that Job was, or was like, the raiding freebooter whom he there describes. In the very next verse, indeed (*Verse 11*), there is a distinct allusion to Job's complaint (Chap. xiii. 26), that God was making him "to inherit the sins of his youth." "Yes," retorts Zophar, "your youth, or the sin of your youth, *has* come back upon you; nor need you think to escape it: it shall go down with you into the dust of death."

In the next section of the Chapter (Verses 12-22) Zophar proceeds to affirm that the destruction of the wicked man—that convenient cloak or figment behind which all the Friends stab at Job in turn—is purely natural and retributive, that it is due to and provoked by his sins. But here, again, all the Commentators are agreed that Zophar is animated by a coarseness and fierceness such as we find in no other of the interlocutors in this tragedy. The Poet is consistent in attributing this intolerant heat and passion to him alone. And yet, in *Verses 12-15*, we have a veritable touch of the Poet himself, who, like Shakespeare, is apt at times to speak through the personages of his drama. The way in which the figure of these Verses is elaborated

is in his most characteristic manner,<sup>1</sup> and the figure itself might fairly be taken as an illustration of the way in which he lingers over any simile that takes his fancy, holding it in his mouth, and refusing to part with it till he has extracted the last possibility of virtue or sweetness from it. The image of the Verses is, of course, that of an epicure with a dainty on his palate, bent on making the most of it—not a pleasant figure, though it is touched in with wonderful skill. Job, or Job's double, "the wicked man," is the epicure; sin is the dainty, which he loves so well that he holds it under his tongue, touching it and yet sparing it, loth to leave it, and still more loth to exhaust its flavours, only swallowing it unwillingly, and when he can no longer relish it. But no sooner has he swallowed it than, as dainties are apt to do, it turns to poison within him, so that he is compelled to vomit it up again. And the special sin which Zophar assumes to have been so perilously sweet to him was—the lust of wealth, a charge for which there was absolutely no foundation, except that Job had been a wealthy man, too wealthy, perhaps, for the greeding eyes of his Friend; for then, as now, even good men were apt to admire riches and to covet them.

That Zophar *was* touched by this base admiration and craving seems indicated in *Verse 17*, in which he employs the usual metaphor for Paradisaical happiness, streams of milk and honey, to denote the enjoyments which even an ill-gotten wealth may procure—a profanation of the metaphor which we should not have expected from him, for he is sound in creed, if not

<sup>1</sup> See Note on Chapter xv. Verse 10, with footnote. THE EXPOSITOR, vol. vii. p. 18.

in heart. In a series of conspicuously vigorous sentences he continues to affirm that even this sin carries its own punishment with it ; that wealth ill-gotten *cannot* be enjoyed ; and that, therefore, 'tis better to have modest and lowly aims,—

And range with humble livers in content,  
Than to be perk'd up in a glistening grief,  
And wear a golden sorrow.

In the third section of the Chapter (Verses 23–28) he proceeds to assert that the action of this law of retribution is not automatic, though it looks as if it were ; that it does not administer itself, but is administered by God. All the forces of Nature array themselves against the greedy, rapacious, insatiable sinner, and all the instincts and interests of men ; but it is God who rules these forces, and God who has so made men, and so guides and directs them, that they resent wrongdoing, and pull down the wrong-doer from his pride of place. Even though the sinner may for a moment have compassed the good fortune at which he aimed, yet at the very moment he is revelling in it God will shower upon him a hot wrath and vengeance by which he shall be consumed (*Verse 23*). Such, implies Zophar, had been Job's fate, when he was struck from the very summit of prosperity and happy hours to the depths of ruin and despair.

In *Verses 24–27* he grows at once more definite and more harsh. For here he depicts Job under the image of a freebooter, slain in a foray against some neighbouring clan. Bent on plunder, he is suddenly confronted with the sword of his purposed victim ; he flees from it, only to be transfixed by an arrow : a comrade draws it out, but his life-blood follows the

sharp gleaming point, and he falls and dies. And the treasure, the booty, which he had carefully buried in the ground or concealed in his tent before he set out on his last expedition, will remain concealed, hidden in darkness, until it is consumed either by a chance fire, a fire not kindled and blown and fed by men, or by the fire which God hurls at it from heaven.

But in *Verse 27*, as I have already said, we have the culminating point of Zophar's cruelty. What he most resents is that one who dissents from his views, and is not pious after his pattern, should claim to have a deeper faith than he has, a firmer assurance of the Divine favour. He is conscious that Job feels himself to be both the wiser and the better man of the two, with wider thoughts and a heart more devout, nearer God and with a more invincible conviction of God's good-will toward him. Possibly he half suspects that Job *is* the wiser and the better man. And yet how can that be, when Zophar has authority, tradition, the popular creed and sympathy, all on his side? It cannot be. Job must be mistaken; his wisdom must be "consumed in confidence;" his faith must be presumptuous, if not insincere. Is it for such an one as he to appeal to heaven and earth to attest his innocence? No, verily. Innocent he cannot be. He must be the greedy and violent sinner whom Zophar has pictured to himself. Let him appeal as he will, then, Heaven will but attest his iniquity, not his integrity, and the earth rise up against him, as unwilling to endure the presence of one so vile. And so he strikes at the one consolation left to his afflicted friend—the nascent trust in God born of his very despair. No day of mercy is about to dawn upon him, no day

of redemption and vindication; but (*Verse 28*) a day of anger, in which all that he has hoarded up will flow away under the tempest of God's righteous indignation.

In fine, we may say of Zophar that this last oration of his proves him to be one of that vast but foolish multitude who

choose by show,  
Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach;  
Which pries not to the interior, but, like the martlet,  
Builds in the weather on the outward wall,  
Even in the force and road of casualty.

His theology is superficial; his view of human life is superficial; and, above all, his view of Job is superficial, and not even true to the superficialities of his character. He "pries not to the interior," whether of character or of events. Being so slight and shallow a man, it was but natural both that he should take it upon himself to interpret the ways of God with men, and that he should misinterpret them. It was but natural that, his interpretation being questioned and refuted, he should blaze out into wrath and denunciation, hanging out his little hoard of maxims and menaces on the outward wall, from which casualty and the weather have long since dislodged them.

Perhaps, too, as Zophar is the last of the Friends to speak in this Colloquy, we ought to note, before dismissing him, how artistically the Poet throughout this Colloquy wins our sympathies away from the other speakers to fix them on the hero of his drama. While a spring of ever new thought, and thought surcharged with the most various and profound emotion, is constantly welling up from the heart of Job, and he is



borne on by it to the most surprising and invaluable discoveries, the Friends have but one thought among them all—retribution, and but one emotion—indignation. They are for ever harping on one string, for ever singing one song, till we grow weary both of their strain and of them. The only change in them is that they so handle their one thought as that it grows narrower and still more untrue to experience every time they take it up; that they sing their one song in an ever louder and harsher note. All the life, the variety, the progress of the drama is concentrated in Job; and thus, silently and indirectly, but most effectually, our entire sympathy with him is secured. S. COX.

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*SHORT PAPERS UPON THE PROPHET ·  
JEREMIAH.*

NO. 3.—JEREMIAH'S LABOURS IN THE FIRST YEAR OF  
JEHOIAKIM.

THE call of Jeremiah was in the thirteenth year of Josiah, and as that king reigned for thirty-one years, it was the prophet's happy lot to labour up to middle age in the company of one who had given his whole heart to God. But darker times were in store for him, and at length the day came when the work of Josiah's reign was to be tested, and when the nation must prove by its conduct whether the so-called reformation, wrought by his efforts and Jeremiah's preaching, was real, or a mere empty outward show.

Even the most inattentive reader of the Bible can scarcely fail to be struck by the very merciful way in which God dealt with the Jewish nation when lapsing