

THE BOOK OF JOB.

V.—THE THIRD COLLOQUY. (CHAPTERS xxii.—xxvi.)

2.—JOB TO ELIPHAZ. (CHAPTERS xxiii. xxiv.)

A MAN who has eschewed evil and followed after that which is good, till God Himself has pronounced him upright and perfect, might, one should think, be so happy as “to avoid the carping censures of the world,” or at least of his friends, even though both his friends and the world were ignorant of the Divine verdict upon him; nay, even though they themselves knew but little of his past history. For virtue and piety leave a visible stamp and impress on the very nature of the man who has long served them.

There is a kind of character in his life,
That to the observer doth his history
Fully unfold,

quite fully enough, at all events, to save us from mistaking him for an open and notorious sinner. But let a man be never so pure, never so eminent,

No might nor greatness in mortality
Can censure 'scape : back-wounding calumny
The whitest virtue strikes.

Though there be no evil in him, there may be much in the eyes that regard him; and the evil eye distorts what it looks upon and tinges it with its own hues. Job's virtue was of the whitest. There was in him “a kind of character” which renders the censure of his

friends incredible even to us who see him but afar off. And yet, as we have heard, Eliphaz does not scruple to "accuse him home and home" with the most flagrant crimes, crimes wholly inconsistent with his character, however consistent with his position.

Job takes these charges very quietly, in part because he knew his entire innocence of them, and found open accusation a relief after so many veiled insinuations and "ambiguous givings out;" and in part because he is preoccupied with larger questions, and questions more open to debate than that of his own innocence or guilt. He can leave his character to speak for itself. "His integrity stands without blemish," let Eliphaz say what he will. And he is so absorbed in the endeavour to find God, who knows his innocence, and who seems to evade him lest He should have to attest it (Chap. xxiii.), that he can pay but little heed to what men may say against him. Nor is it only the mystery of his own fate which absorbs him. His own misery has opened his eyes to the misery of his fellows (Chap. xxiv); the mystery of his own doom runs up into a still profounder mystery. The thought which engages and appals him is not simply that God has bruised *his* heart (Chap. xxiii. 16), but that the souls of myriads mourn under the oppressions of a constant misery, and yet God heedeth not the wrong (Chap. xxiv. 12); while myriads more rebel against the light, and yet God giveth them security (Chap. xxiv. 13, 23). It is not merely the misery he suffers, and that men suffer, however, which perplexes and distresses him. *That* is a darkness which might be borne if only he could see any good end to be answered by it. What most of all tries and saddens him is that he cannot see

God through this darkness, cannot see what good end, or that any good end, is to be subserved by the wrongs and calamities men have to endure. It was on this great problem that he was engaged before Eliphaz had spoken; and he now continues to labour and agonize over it almost as though the process of his thoughts had not been disturbed.

CHAPTERS XXIII. AND XXIV.

CHAP. XXIII.—1. *Then answered Job and said :*

2. *Still is my complaint bitter,
And my stroke heavier than my groaning.*
3. *O that I knew where I might find Him !
I would press even to his seat ;*
4. *I would set out my cause before Him,
And fill my mouth with pleas ;*
5. *I should know the words with which He would answer me,
And understand what He would say to me :*
6. *Would He contend against me in the greatness of His strength ?
Nay, He would make concession unto me :*
7. *There might the upright reason with Him,
And once for all I should be acquitted by my Judge.*
8. *Behold, I go towards the East, but He is not there,
And Westward, but I cannot perceive Him ;*
9. *Toward the North, where He is working, but I cannot see Him,
Where He veileth Himself in the South, but I cannot find Him .*
10. *But He knoweth the way I take ;
When He hath assayed me, I shall come forth as gold ;*
11. *My foot hath held to his tracks,
His way have I kept, nor turned aside,*
12. *Neither have I gone back from the behest of his lips ;
I have preferred the words of his mouth to my own resolves.*
13. *Sole is He, and who can turn Him back ?
And what his heart willeth that will He do ;*
14. *That which is decreed for me will He perform :
And many such things are ordained by Him.*
15. *Therefore am I troubled at his Presence ;
When I consider, I am afraid of Him :*
16. *For it is God who hath bruised my heart,
And it is the Almighty who hath filled me with confusion :*

17. *For I should not be dumb because of darkness,
Because thick darkness enshroudeth me.*

CHAP. XXIV.—1. *Why are not times reserved by the Almighty,
And why do not they who know Him see his days ?*

2. *Some remove landmarks ;*

They steal flocks and pasture them :

3. *They drive away the ass of the fatherless,*

And take the widow's ox in pledge :

4. *They push the needy from the path,*

The poor of the land are made to slink out of sight.

5. *Behold, like wild asses in the wilderness,*

They go forth to their labour,

Rising early in quest of food :

The desert must yield them bread for their children !

6. *They reap fodder for him in the field,*

And glean the vineyards of the wicked ;

7. *Naked they pass the night, unclad,*

And with no shelter from the cold ;

8. *They are drenched by the mountain-storm,*

And for lack of shelter they cling to the rock.

9. *Some pluck the orphan from the breast,*

And exact a pledge beyond his means from the poor ;

10. *Naked, they slink away without clothes ;*

Hungry, they must bear the sheaves :

11. *They press out oil within the walls,*

They tread the winevats—and thirst :

12. *Vassals groan in the city,*

And the soul of the wounded mourns :

Yet God heedeth not the wrong !

13. *These are of those who rebel against the light,*

Who will know nothing of its ways,

And who abide not in its paths :—

14. *The murderer, who riseth before the dawn ;*

He slayeth the poor and needy,

And at night he playeth the thief :—

15. *The eye of the adulterer also watcheth for the evening gloom,*

Saying, " No eye will recognize me ! "

And he muffleth up his face :

16. *They dig through houses in the dark ;*

By day they seal themselves up,

They know not the light,

17. *For to them the dawn is as darkness,
But the night hath no terrors for them ;*
18. *They pass swiftly as on the surface of the waters,
Their heritage is cursed in the land ;
They turn no more by the way of the vineyards.*
19. *As drouth and heat consume snow-waters,
So Hades them that sin ;*
20. *The womb forgetteth them,
The worms batten on them ;
They shall be remembered no more,
And iniquity shall be broken like a tree.*
21. *They devour the barren who bear not,
And do no good turn by the widow ;*
22. *They drag off the mighty by their power :
They rise up again even when they have despaired of life.*
23. *God hath given them security, and they lean on it,
And his eyes are on their way ;*
24. *They are exalted a while ; then, they are not, but are brought low ;
They are gathered like other men,
And are cut off like the topmost ears of corn.*
25. *But, if it be not so, who will prove it,
Or make my words of no worth ?*

Chapter xxiii.—It is very strange that the Friends of Job, who have so long “gone about to apply a moral medicine to a mortifying mischief,” should have forgotten that

The miserable have no other medicine,
But only hope,

and should even have tried to snatch away from him the one hope by which he was sustained. This hope in the righteousness of God, and in an approaching manifestation of that righteousness, here finds fit and noble expression. The Chapter, so far from breathing, as some affirm, “a bitter and maddened spirit,” is inspired by a sublime and inalienable confidence in the equity of the Supreme Judge. Job distrusts neither Him nor himself. God is just ; Job is upright : but

how is the upright man to reach the seat of that Divine Judge who is present with him, and yet absent; absolutely present, but not visibly present; felt, yet not discerned? *This* is the question which now agitates the mind of Job, and not any distrust of God's equity, or any fear of his own acquittal, nor any "stubborn opposite intent."

Whether *Verse 1* is an ejaculation of distress, the sigh of a perplexed and burdened spirit, or whether it is an exclamation thrown out at Eliphaz, the only reply which as yet Job deigns to make to *him*, it is hard to say. In the one case we must read it as meaning, "Ah, how bitter is my complaint! but how much more bitter the pain that wrings it from me!" In the other, we must read it as meaning, "You still think my complaint bitter and rebellious, that there is a mutiny in my mind against God. But is not his hand heavy upon me, far heavier than my groaning?"

But if there be a passing allusion to Eliphaz in this Verse, Job at once passes from all thought of the Friends, and of the charges—gross, open, palpable—which they have alleged against him. For, in *Verse 2*, he commences a pathetic lament over the absence of his Judge, who yet is somehow present with him, which extends to the close of *Verse 9*; and this is a sorrow which it had not entered the heart of his friends to conceive. More than once (Chap. ix. 34, xiii. 21) Job had expressed the natural fear that, even were he admitted to plead his cause before God, the splendours of the Divine Majesty would strike him dumb. But he has now risen to higher, and therefore truer, thoughts of Him. Could he but find Him, he would not stand afar off: he would press straight on to his

royal seat. In the light of that gracious Presence his cause would take order and proportion in his thoughts, and, instead of being struck mute, his mouth would be filled with pleas. The words of his Judge would not perplex him as his acts had done; he would understand what He would say to him. Instead of confronting and confounding Him with the brightness of his glory, the Almighty would veil his splendours; He would both listen and speak with a grace that would put him at his ease, and decide the cause with an equity which would acquit him of every charge. His only complaint is that he cannot discover his august Adversary, who is yet his truest Friend, that his Judge eludes his search.

Besides this invincible confidence in the justice of God, two points in these Verses are worthy of special remark. One is that, in the face of all the charges and innuendoes of the Friends, Job is as sure of his own integrity as he is of the Divine justice. The consciousness that his cause is good comes out in the pervading tone of the passage; and receives direct expression—if not in the final clause of *Verse 6*, which some render, “Nay, *even He will not impute aught against me,*” at least—in the triumphant ring of *Verse 7*.

There might *the upright* reason with Him,
And once for all I should be acquitted by my Judge.

It does not follow, however, either that Job was, or that he thought himself, wholly free from sin. Never, indeed, was any man so perfect,

but some defect in him
Did quarrel with the noblest grace he owed,
And put it to the foil.

And noble as the man was, noble almost beyond pa-

rallel, even we can see that he had the defect of his quality. A righteous man, he was too apt to regard his righteousness as his own, to ignore God's part in it. But all he means to affirm, here and throughout the Poem, is that, if he had sinned, he had confessed and atoned for his sin ; that, though it had pleased God to give him

a heart
As full of sorrows as the sea of sands,

these sorrows were not the result and punishment of his sins, and did not therefore imply and prove his guilt. This is the ground on which he takes his stand, and from which he refuses to be dislodged by any pressure of argument or any biting wind of calumny.

The other point to be remarked in *Verses 2-9* is that Job's conviction of God's presence becomes the more absolute as he looks for Him in vain. He turns east and west, north and south, *i. e.*, toward all quarters of the heavens, making passionate inquisition and search for God. And though he can nowhere discern Him, he is sure that God is everywhere present—"working" in the north, "*veiling himself*" in the south (*Verse 9*), although neither in south or north can he descry Him. The point is worth noting, if only because it illustrates that double consciousness of God experienced by every spiritual mind. How often are *we* conscious of a God present, but not visible ; present, but not accessible ; at work everywhere around us, yet veiling Himself from us, so that we cannot, or fancy that we do not, come into any vital contact, any sustaining fellowship, with Him ! Stunned by some sudden stroke of sorrow or loss, or overwhelmed with contrition for a wasted life, how many a man gropes after God if haply

he may find Him, although He is not far from any one of us! To all in that unhappy, and yet most happy case—for those who really seek God *will* find Him—Job's example is of priceless value. Let them but hold fast their conviction that God "besets them behind and before," and has "laid his hand upon them," let them but still seek after Him, and for them, as for Job, the veil will drop at last, and they will see Him as He is.

It will be their wisdom, too, as it was Job's, to be sure that, though they cannot find God, God has found them. He expresses this conviction in *Verses* 10-13. God, the very God whom he cannot see, knows the way he takes—knows, therefore, his innocence of all that is alleged against him, his uniform and anxious obedience to the Divine law, his instant and constant preference of the Divine will to his own; and hence Job is sure that, when he has been fully assayed or tried, he shall come forth as gold.

These Verses are very graphic and suggestive. "The way that I take" of *Verse* 10 is, in the Original, "*the way that is with me,*" and means, "the way in which I habitually walk."¹ And this way, as we learn from *Verse* 11, is God's way—"His way have I kept." For the Poet conceives of the inward law, the law of the inward man, as a path in which God goes before us as a guide. And the first line of the Verse, "My foot hath held to his tracks," not only implies that God goes before us in the way of righteousness, that so long as we keep that way we may perceive the imprint of his feet and place our feet in the steps which He has left; it also affirms that, so far from having "kept that

¹ Ewald translates, *den mir gewohnten Weg.*

ancient way trodden by men of sin," in which Eliphaz had charged him with walking (Chap. xxii. 15), and putting God out of his thoughts, he has habitually trodden in the path of righteousness, never planting an onward foot until he could see the print of God's feet before him. In the final clause of *Verse 12*, the verb rendered "esteemed" in our Authorized Version, and here "preferred," is, literally, "*I have laid up*" as a priceless and incomparable treasure; while the word rendered "resolves" is "*law*:" so that what Job really asserts is that, as compared with "his own law," his own natural will and determination, the words of God's mouth were to him a treasure, not only of superior, but of inestimable, worth. In short, he *has* "taken a law" from the mouth of the Almighty; he *has* "laid up his words in his heart"—taking the counsel of Eliphaz (Chap. xxii. 22) even before it was given. But most remarkable of all is the conviction expressed in *Verse 10*, "*When he hath assayed me, I shall come forth as gold*;" and that, not simply because it is so fine an utterance of Job's assured trust both in his own integrity and in the Divine recognition of that integrity, but mainly because it is the first hint we have of any suspicion on his part that suffering, instead of being the punishment of sin, may be a discipline of righteousness. The hint is afterward worked out at length by Elihu. But here already Job seems to reach a glimpse of it for himself. The thought only passes through his mind; had it staid with him, it would have been an inexpressible comfort and support: but still the thought does pass through his mind that men are tried like gold, in order to purge away their dross, in order that their true value may be certified and revealed. A greater

than Job has taught us that even the branch which does bring forth fruit is pruned and cleansed, "that it may bring forth more fruit."¹ And one of our own poets, the greatest and wisest, has cast the lesson in another picturesque form:—

Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves ; for if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not.

And just as torches must be often struck and shaken if they are to give their best light, so the men who are as "lights of the world" are often exposed to shocks of change and blows of circumstance in order that they may shine before men with a purer lustre. Suffering at once tries, enhances, and manifests their virtues ; and so they are often permitted to suffer that their virtues may "go forth of them." Job's virtues would have been unknown to us but for his sufferings : it is to these he owes it that "the wide world is not ignorant of his worth."

But this gleam of light appears but for a moment ; it is instantly devoured by his traditional conception of the purpose and function of suffering ; and as he still thinks that suffering ought to be reserved for the guilty, Job returns to his unsolved problem, and is once more sorrowfully perplexed by the apparent inequalities of the Divine Providence.

The opening phrase of *Verse 13* is so curt and compressed, that it is almost impossible to determine its exact shade of meaning. Literally rendered, the Hebrew runs, *He is in one*, or, *He remains in one* ; and the underlying affirmation of this abrupt phrase

¹ John xv. 2.

may be either that God is unchangeable, or that He is unique. I have rendered it in the latter sense, "*Sole* is He," *i.e.*, unique, one by Himself, unparalleled, unapproachable; understanding Job to assert the unity of God and his sole and absolute authority. But the other rendering, which understands him to assert that the Divine Judge, who so studiously evades him, remains in one mind, and cannot be turned from his purpose to treat Job as a criminal, has as many great names in its favour, and as fully accords with the general sense of the passage. For, in *Verses* 13, 14, Job is evidently brooding over the thought that God is not to be turned from his purpose, whatever it may be; and though he has just professed that he prefers God's will to his own, he has not fully learned that what God wills must be best. It is not the goodness of God's will which now occupies his mind, but the sovereignty and unchangeableness of that will. And hence, in the latter clause of *Verse* 14, he anticipates that, as it evidently has been God's will that he should suffer, he may still have to suffer, still have to endure many similar calamities at his hands. Therefore (*Verse* 15) he is troubled at God's presence—at the *presence*, mark, of the very God whose *absence* he had just deplored (*Verses* 8, 9), and fears Him of whom he but now said (*Verses* 3-7) that, could he but see and plead with Him, he should not be afraid.

The seeming paradox is explained in *Verses* 16, 17, especially the latter; from which we learn that it is not the mere darkness of his calamity, that it is not the mere mystery of his suffering, which so intolerably wounds and amazes him, but the apparent hostility of God. Pain, penury, the scorn and contempt of men, the

unfriendliness of friends—all these may be borne : it is not these which break his spirit. What really unmans and breaks him down is not this outer darkness, but the inner darkness which it breeds, the eclipse of faith, the dejection of a love unrequited and disdained, a confidence which wins no response, the hideous confusion of thought bred by the conviction that the God who is present to bruise his heart is not present to listen to his appeals, to explain and indicate the course He takes with him. It is *this* which cuts Job to the quick ; for the spirit of a man may sustain him under any outward stroke : but a broken spirit who can bear ?

It is this also which gives force to the demand with which the next Chapter opens.

Chapter xxiv. Verse 1. — If the present God cannot become the manifest God, if He who smites men will not appear to heal at every moment when the wounded heart cries out for Him, why at least does He not go on circuit, why not have set times when all who take Him for their King may come and plead their cause before Him ? Let the Friends say what they will, and they have been very emphatic on the promptitude and certainty of the Divine judgments, God does *not* appoint, or does not keep, these days. And hence the unjust and rapacious perpetually escape the retributions they have provoked.

Then follows a graphic description of the crimes of which men dressed in a little brief authority are guilty, and of the terrible sufferings which they inflict on large and various classes of their fellows. Some are so openly and glaringly unjust that they do not scruple to remove their neighbours' landmarks — a very common crime in the East, where hedgerows are unknown and

walls are scarce—and even to drive off and openly pasture among their own flocks the sheep found in the fields they have invaded. Adding wrong to wrong, iniquity to iniquity, they seize on pretence of debt “*the ass*” of the orphan, the only one he possesses, and the yoke-ox of the widow, again the only one, leaving them utterly destitute. They push the poor, and even those they have made poor, “from the path,” from their accustomed way and course of life, so that they are compelled “to wander hither and thither, without home and without right,” to slink out of view, to fall into the miserable and abject conditions of the aboriginal inhabitants of the land (*Verses 2-4*).

In *Verses 5-11* we get a pathetic glimpse of the condition to which these aborigines, expelled by their more civilized invaders from their dwellings and fields, have sunk in the long course of years, and to which the poor and needy of the superior tribes are now being reduced by the exactions of their strong and unjust lords. Of this aboriginal and troglodyte race we have a still fuller description in Chapter xxx., and may defer till we reach that Chapter any detailed examination of their wretched estate. For the present we need only note that, like the wild asses, they wander through the barren steppe, or desert, demanding food of it, searching for its scanty and innutritious roots and herbs—these being the only bread they can get for themselves and their children. Their conquerors and oppressors may hire them to cut fodder for their cattle, but they dare not suffer them to reap the corn, lest they should eat of it. They may engage them to glean the straggling grapes which ripen late, but they dare not let them gather the best grapes or labour in the vats, lest

they should drink of the wine. Homeless and naked, they are drenched by the mountain storms, and, for lack of shelter, are compelled to huddle under the rocks, pressing close to them and clinging to them with their hands (*Verses 5-8*).

It is to this abject and miserable condition, or to a condition closely corresponding to it, that the petty tyrants of the clan are fast bringing the poor and needy of their own race. If these as yet are not driven to the wild, vagrant, and gipsy life of the aborigines who haunt the neighbouring rocks and caves, they are at least reduced to a form of serfage, or slavery, which is but a step above it. Reduced to utter penury by usury and oppression, stripped of their very clothing, they carry in the sheaves for which they hunger in vain, and tread out the wine with which they must not slake their thirst, and express the oil with which they dare not anoint themselves (*Verses 9-11*).

In the city their state is no happier than in the fields without, among the barns and vats and presses. For here they are but vassals who groan under manifold oppressions. They must fight and take wounds in quarrels not their own. Destitute of all else, their very lives do not belong to them, but must be risked, or flung away, at the bidding of their lords (*Verse 12*).

And, all the while, God looks down on town and field unmoved! So far from calling men to account, so far from smiting the wicked and saving the oppressed, He pays no heed even to these crying and intolerable wrongs!

Nor are these merciless and exacting tyrants the only "rebels against the light." In *Verses 13-17* Job

opens a new count of his indictment, and enumerates three other kinds of men who will not abide in its ways,—the murderer, the adulterer, and the thief. The villain of *Verse 14* is the base petty murderer who, rising before dawn, lies in ambush where he may spring out upon the peasant going, through the darkness, to his work, defenceless and alone, and who is content with a few paltry coins or trinkets as the wages of his guilt—the coward who is parcel brigand, parcel thief. As *he* selects the dark hour before dawn, so the adulterer of *Verse 15* waits for the sudden gloom of evening, when, to escape detection, he muffles himself in the loose robe of a woman—as those who seek such nocturnal adventures still do in the Syrian towns—that, unhindered and unsuspected, he may enter the harem of his neighbour. The thief of *Verse 16* furnishes himself, not with crowbar and chisel, but—houses in the East being for the most part built of soft unbaked bricks or of clay—with a spade, that he may “dig” his way through the walls. Hence the Greek name for a burglar is *τοιχώρυχος*, “one who digs through a wall.”

One feature is common (*Verse 17*) to all these villains. They hate the light. They “seal,” or shut themselves up from it. Light is terrible to them, lest it should disclose their guilt, and not, as to most men, darkness. To them the dawn is as darkness; the night has no terrors for them, for they are familiar with it. The thought is repeated so often in this brief description (*Verses 13–17*), and so much stress is laid upon it, that, obviously, the Poet wishes to impress upon us the fact that “they love darkness rather than light, *because their deeds are evil.*” Shakespeare has the same thought—as, indeed, what thought has he

not?—and tells us that “when the searching eye of heaven, that lights this lower world, is hid behind the globe,”

Then thieves and robbers range abroad unseen
 In murders and in outrage. . . .
 But when from under this terrestrial ball
 He fires the proud tops of the eastern pines,
 And darts his light through every guilty hole,
 Then murders, treason, and detested sins,
 The cloak of night being pluck'd from off their backs,
 Stand bare and naked, trembling at themselves.

In *Verses* 18–24 we have Job's answer to the question, What is the end, what the doom of these enemies of the light? And it is tolerably clear that in *Verses* 18–20 we have his conception of the end of the comparatively petty villains, such as the murderer, the adulterer, the thief, described in *Verses* 13–17; while in *Verses* 21–24 we have his conception of that of the tyrants—villains on a larger scale—depicted in *Verses* 2–12. But it is a moot point in which of two opposite senses we are to read these *Verses*. Many hold, it seems natural to hold, that as Job contemplates the course and end of the wicked, he sees that they are requited for their crimes even here; that he, therefore, virtually retracts his affirmation of God's indifference to the ways of men (*Verse* 12), and shews us in apt and graphic figures how the wicked are carried off as by a rushing flood, swallowed up by the ever-gaping mouth of Hades, and forgotten even by the mother who bare them; how, lulled into a false security for a while, they are broken like a tree seized in the fulness of its pride by a tempest, or cut off like the topmost ears of corn, which are the first to attract the eye of the reaper or of the passer-by.

But these *Verses* are at least susceptible of another

interpretation. It may be that, instead of retracting, Job reaffirms and completes his charge of indifference against God. He may mean that the murderer, the adulterer, the thief, and the still baser tyrant, with all who share their enmity to the light, pass on their evil way unpunished; that they float lightly down the stream and current of time; and that then, before any just doom falls upon them, any stroke of retribution, they are swallowed up of Hades, just as the heated and thirsty earth swallows up the snow that falls upon it, dying a swift and painless death. If their memory is not cherished, so neither is the remembrance of their guilt. If the worms batten on them, as on all men, their iniquity, instead of being left to bear its proper and bitter fruit, is snapped suddenly in two, like a tree in the strong hands of a storm. They live in security. God's eyes beam on them. They recover health and prosperity even when, conscious of their crimes, they have despaired of life. And if, like other men, like all mankind, they are brought low when the span of life has run out, yet, like better men, after a life free from care and laden with honour, they die a natural and even an easy death, and are carried in like the shock when it is ripe, or even like the very finest of the wheat.

Of these two interpretations I cannot but think the latter to be the better, although I admit that it is quite easy to take objection to it. I prefer it, in part, because the most able commentators incline to it; in part, because I find certain phrases and figures in these Verses which point very definitely to it, and feel it to be most consonant with the whole scope of the context; but, most of all, because it gives in another form

the conclusion at which Job arrived in his last speech (*cf.* Chaps. xxi. 7-15 and 23-33), and he is here confessedly carrying on the line of thought which he started there. Once more, I conceive, he stands amazed and perplexed before a fact which has tried the faith of the good in all ages, that at least some of the wicked, as they observe no restraints in life, so also they have no bands in their death. This, indeed, is the standing problem of the Divine Providence, and it is therefore all the more likely that it was the problem which now recurred to Job's labouring thoughts.

Incidentally I have already explained most of the phrases and figures of speech contained in these Verses; but there are one or two which may still require a word.¹ Thus the connection of thought in *Verse* 18 is still somewhat obscure. The point of comparison in the first line is the swiftness with which the wicked disappear from the scene: they are like a straw on the surface of the stream, hurried away by the rapid current. In the second line it is admitted that their heritage is cursed in the land; but in the third, the vanity of that curse is indicated—*they* are no longer there to feel the curse. They will no more walk along the familiar path to their vineyards, and, therefore, the belated curse does not seize on them: they have escaped the pursuing but tardy vengeance; they are long since in Hades.

The metaphors in *Verses* 19 and 20 carry on the same thought. If death be the end, if there be no

¹ In Verses 18, 20-23, the Poet uses the singular pronoun "he" collectively, personifying, as it were, the wicked class, or classes, which he has depicted. But as there is no doubt that he has the whole class—"rebels against the light"—in his mind, and as, moreover, he uses the plural in the other Verses of the passage, so that the transition only puzzles the English reader, I have thought it better to retain the plural ("they") throughout.

retributive life beyond the grave, they are secure; they have vanished like snow falling on the thirsty Oriental earth; they have been broken off like a tree snapped by the storm.

In *Verse 21*, Job briefly characterizes the tyrants whom he had depicted more at large in *Verses 2-12*, in order that we may note the point of transition from the fate of the vulgar criminals to that of the cruel and rapacious despots. And their doom is even less retributive; for (*Verse 24*) it is *God* who gives them the immunity from punishment in which they trust—the eyes of God resting on their way, as though He approved both it and them. Instead of living in terror, as the Friends had affirmed, they are in security; instead of being overthrown, they are supported. God lifts them up, instead of bringing them low; and even when they die, they do but share the common lot; they are but cut off like corn that is ripe.

There was sufficient truth in the description to enable Job (*Verse 24*) to close with a challenge to the Friends, and defy them to disprove it. Exaggerated it was, no doubt; nor does it express, as we shall soon see, Job's real view of the doom and destiny of the wicked. But his descriptions, like those of the Friends, have to discharge a double, if not a divided, duty. They are arguments as well as pictures. Hence he naturally emphasizes, and even exaggerates, the facts of human life which their formula will not cover, which their dogma will not explain, in order to convince them that it is erroneous and misleading. God has a solution of the problem, no doubt. Even Job has a solution of it, as he has shewn us in his confession of a retributive life beyond the grave. But the Friends have no solu-

tion of it, for they maintain a present and instant retribution. And yet here are large classes of men whose woes are unredressed, at least in this life, or whose crimes are unpunished! He may safely challenge *them*, then, to prove his "words of no worth."

In our study of his former speeches we have seen what great and precious spoils Job has carried off from his terrible conflict with doubt and despair; how he has risen to the conception of a God other and better than the God in whom he had once believed, and has laid hold on the hope of a life beyond the reach of death. And we ought not to close our examination of these two Chapters without remarking that he has now once more learned much, and gained much, from the things he has suffered. For, obviously, he has gained a wider and deeper sympathy with the woes and wrongs of men. He had never felt the miseries of the outcasts and serfs and vassals of his own land and tribe as he feels them now, or he could not have been content with the dogma he had so long held, that all suffering springs from sin. The facts were there—as numerous, as flagrant, as terrible as now; but he had not seen them, or had not seen the conclusion to which they pointed. Till now he could not say—

Oh, I have suffered
With those that I saw suffer!

or he would never have believed that men suffer no more than they deserve. His very creed indicates how little he knew or felt of the calamities of the men about and beneath him; for

What need the bridge much broader than the flood?
and why should not a man be content with the bridge

of dogma, however narrow it may be, which will cover the stream of facts beyond which he never looks ?

But Job's own woes and griefs have made him sensitive to the woes and wrongs of others. New facts have taken possession of his mind, new depths of misery have yawned before his feet, and he must have a broader bridge if he is to cross them, a wider creed if he is to co-ordinate and explain them. The direful spectacle on which he has at last opened his eyes has " touched the very virtue of compassion in him." And this compassion, this enlarged sympathy with man, ever calling, as it must, for larger and truer thoughts of God and of the discipline and intention of his Providence—was not this in very deed great gain ?

S. COX.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

VIII.—THE MASTER AND THE DISCIPLES.

THE fame of the things Jesus had done " at Jerusalem at the feast " ¹ went before Him into Galilee, and He was welcomed for his works' sake. He avoided Nazareth—the Prophet was not as yet received in his own country ²—and settled beside the lake of Gennesaret, near the homes of the men that formed the noblest legacy bequeathed to Him by John. There, beside the bright waters, in the shadow of the graceful palms, within sight of the cornfields and vineyards that sloped from the blue lake till they seemed to touch the blue sky, He breathed a purer air, enjoyed a happier life, looked upon wiser, because simpler, men than at Jerusalem. And these stiller and sweeter surroundings

¹ John iv. 45.

² Luke iv. 24.