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THE BOOK OF JOB.

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

2.—JOB TO ELIPHAZ (CHAPS. XVI., XVII.).

WHEN we first glance at Job's reply to Eliphaz we may think him as sad, as indignant, as passionate as ever: for he still confronts the Friends with a sarcasm at least as keen as their own; he still regards the calamities which have beaten him to the dust with loathing and resentment; and he still charges God both with having inflicted these calamities upon him, and with having inflicted them unjustly. But if we look at his reply more closely we shall see that a radical change has passed upon him, that he is now groping his way through darkness toward the light,—disengaging himself from the inopportune and irritating platitudes which the Friends still cram into his ear against the stomach of his sense, and rising to the amazing discovery that, behind the God whom he had hitherto worshipped, there was a God whom as yet he had not known, and that therefore there might be a light for him even in the darkness of death itself, and hope even in and beyond the grave. Because this hope has dawned upon him, and rises steadily on the broadening horizon of his thoughts, changing with its ethereal touch the whole pose and attitude of his spirit, his tone grows more calm and collected. The polemic fire dies out of him. He no longer deigns to answer the ill-grounded and inappropriate arguments which his Friends press upon him, but treats them with an irony through which there runs a strain of large-minded good humour and good sense. Incensed against them as he is, he admits that,

from their point of view, what they say is true enough, and that in their place he might have said to them what they are saying to him (Chap. xvi. 1-6). Nor, though he still keenly resents their ungrounded assumption of his guilt, does he deny, he admits that they are right in attributing his misery to the hand of God, and even proceeds to give a terrible description of the misery and shame heaped upon him by that unjust, and yet most just and kindly Hand (Verses 7-17). For he is beginning to learn that

in the reproof of Chance
Lies the true proof of men ;

that God permits men to breast the strokes of Accident and the blows of Circumstance, that He compels them to engage in a great fight of Affliction, in order that they may get the victory over their bosom sins, their baser selves, and carry off as spoil a treasure that will enrich them for ever. He is beginning to learn that in the wind and tempest of Misfortune's frowns,

Distinction, with a broad and powerful fan,
Puffing at all, winnows the light away,
And what hath mass or matter, by itself
Lies rich in virtue and unmingled.

Nay, more; he is beginning to learn that he has to deal with *two* Gods,—the imaginary God of the current theology, who afflicts him because He hates him, and the real and only true God, who loves him while He afflicts him; the God who is witnessing to him in heaven even while He strives with him on earth, the God who stands surety for him with Himself and will yet vindicate him against Himself. To this God he turns, appealing from the injustice of men, appealing

even against the apparent injustice of God Himself, assured that God *will* justify him, if not in this life, then in some life to come, a life which he must pass through death to inherit (Chap. xvi. 18—xvii. 16). In fine, he converts his very despair into the food of hope, and is in love with death, since, if not before, yet in death itself, in the dim Hadean kingdom from which no traveller has returned, he is sure that God will shew him a path of life.

CHAPTERS XVI. AND XVII.

CHAP. XVI.—I. *Then answered Job and said :*

2. *Many such things as these have I heard ;
Miserable comforters are ye all !*
3. *Shall there be an end to windy words ?
What goadeth thee, then, to answer thus ?*
4. *I too could speak as you
Were your soul in my soul's stead ;
I might string sentences against you,
Or shake my head at you ;*
5. *I might strengthen you with my mouth,
And soothe you with the comfort of my lips.*
6. *But now, though I speak, my grief is not assuaged ;
And if I forbear, how am I eased ?*
7. *Truly, now, He hath worn me out.
Thou hast made all my household desolate,*
8. *And Thou hast shrivelled me up ;
My leanness hath become a witness and riseth up against me,
It accuseth me to my face.*
9. *He who hateth me rendeth me with his wrath,
He gnasheth his teeth at me ;
My Foe sharpeneth his eyes against me.*
10. *They open their mouths against me,
They smite me on the cheek reproachfully ;
They conspire together against me.*
11. *God giveth me up to the ungodly,
And flingeth me over into the hands of the wicked.*

12. *I was at ease, but he shattered me,
He seized me by the throat and shook me.*
13. *He set me up to be his butt;
His archers beset me:
He cleaveth my side and spareth not,
He sheddeth my gall upon the ground;*
14. *He breacheth me with breach on breach,
He rusheth on me like a man of war.*
15. *I have sewn sackcloth on my skin,
And have thrust my horn into the dust;*
16. *My face is inflamed with weeping,
And mine eyelids darken under the shadow of death,*
17. *Although no violence is in my hands,
And my prayer is pure.*
18. *O Earth, cover not my blood,
And let there be no resting-place for my cry!*
19. *Yet even now, behold, my Witness is in heaven,
And He who testifieth to me on high!*
20. *My friends are my mockers;
But mine eye poureth out streams unto God,*
21. *That He would right a man against Himself,
And a son of man against his fellow.*
22. *For a few years will soon pass,
And I shall travel the road by which is no return.*

CHAP. XVII.—1.

- My breath is spent!
My days are extinct!
For me the tomb!*
2. *Are there not mockers about me,
And doth not mine eye lodge on their provocations?*
3. *Put down pledges now!
Be Thou Surety for me with Thyself:
Who else will strike hands for me?*
4. *For Thou hast shut up their heart from understanding;
Therefore Thou wilt not exalt them.*
5. *Whoso betrayeth his friend to the spoiler,
The eyes of his sons shall waste away.*
6. *He hath made me a byword to the people;
I am become one in whose face they spit:*

7. *Mine eye is dim with grief,
And all my limbs are as a shadow.*
8. *At this the upright are astonished,
And the innocent bestirreth himself against the impious ;*
9. *But the righteous shall hold on his way,
And he that hath pure hands shall wax stronger and stronger.*
10. *Return, now, all of you, and come on,
For I find not a sage among you.*
11. *My days are past ;
And my purposes are broken off,
Even my most cherished thoughts !*
12. *Yet would they turn night into day,
And bring light into the very face of darkness !*
13. *If I hope, it is for Hades as my home,
And to make my bed in darkness.*
14. *I cry to corruption, " Thou art my father !"
" My mother !" and " My sister !" to the worm.*
15. *Where now, therefore, is my hope ?
Yea, my hope,—who can see it ?*
16. *To the gates of Hades shall it go down,
And we shall rest together in the dust !*

Chapter xvi. Verse 2.—Job opens his reply with an allusion to the reproachful demand of Eliphaz in Chapter xv. 11: "Are the consolations of God too small for thee, and the words that we gently speak?" The consolations they brought him, and professed to bring from God, were too small for him, much too small. He had heard many such wise saws as Eliphaz and Bildad had cited, heard them till he was sick of them. If they could offer him no better consolations than these, they were but "miserable comforters;" they did but aggravate instead of lighten the trouble of his spirit.

In *Verse 3* he retorts on Eliphaz his own sarcasm

(comp. Chap. xv. 2, 3), charging him with employing the very "words of wind" for stooping to which he had himself just been rebuked. And, at the same time, he demands why Eliphaz could not at least comply with his request (Chap. xiii. 5), and be of those

That therefore only are reputed wise—
For saying nothing.

What had he done to provoke this incessant stream of ancient saws, all intended to point a modern instance?

Verses 4 and 5.—Nevertheless, with that large fair-mindedness on which I have remarked, Job admits, though still with some slight touches of sarcasm, that, in their place, he himself might have taken that very line of consolation which chafes him on the lips of his Friends. Had it been his part to condole with them, he might have strung antique "sentences" together—the original phrase implying a certain artifice and insincerity in the process; he might have shaken his head at them in grave astonishment, or mild reproof, or scornful contempt (comp. Psalm xxii. 7; and St. Mark xv. 29): he might even have strengthened them only *with his mouth*, and soothed them only *with his lips*,—affecting, *i. e.*, to stay them with words that came only from the mouth, not from the heart; speaking only, as Carlyle puts it, "from the teeth outward."

The finest commentary on this outburst of impatience under what is called "consolation," of resentment against the endeavour to preach down the heart with a hoard of musty maxims and time-honoured platitudes (as also the best illustration of a similar outburst in Chapter xiii. 2–5), is to be found in a passage in "Much Ado about Nothing," in which I

cannot but think Shakespeare had Job and the Friends of Job in his thoughts, for it includes every point that we have noted, and more. When Leonato, maddened with grief and indignation for the death and dishonour of his daughter, is warned by his brother that, if he go on thus, he will kill himself, and besought not "thus to second grief against himself," he replies:—

I pray thee, *cease thy counsel,*
 Which falls into mine ear as profitless
 As water in a sieve : *give me not counsel ;*
Nor let no comforter delight mine ear
But such an one whose wrongs do suit with mine.
 Bring me a father that so loved his child,
 Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,
 And bid *him* speak of patience. . . .
 If such an one will smile, and stroke his beard,
 Bid sorrow wag. . . .
Patch grief with proverbs ; . . . bring him yet to me,
 And I of him will gather patience.
 But there is no such man : for, brother, *men*
Can counsel, and speak comfort to that grief
Which they themselves not feel ; but, tasting it,
Their counsel turns to passion, which before
Would give preceptial medicine to rage,
 Fetter strong madness in a silken thread,
Charm ache with air, and agony with words :
 No, no : 'tis all men's office to speak patience
 To those that wring under the load of sorrow,
 But no man's virtue nor sufficiency,
 To be so moral when he shall endure
 The like himself. Therefore give me no counsel :
 My griefs cry louder than advertisement.

Verse 6.—"My griefs cry louder than advertisement" is the very thought in the mind of Job. So keen are they, so deeply have they cut into the very root and centre of his life, that he gains no relief by speaking of them ; no words can express a tithe of what he feels, or allay the emotion that swells within his heart and lifts it nearer Heaven. He craves to

·speak with God, and not to listen to men. For, on the other hand, even silence, which is the best medicine for some griefs, in no whit diminishes the clinging and growing pain which is eating into his very soul. "*If I forbear, what goes from me ?*"

This, with the brief ironical challenge contained in the tenth Verse of the next Chapter, is all the reply Job vouchsafes to the elaborate argument of Eliphaz. When Bildad had appealed to the voice and authority of Antiquity, Job had met the appeal with wise distinctions and weighty disproofs—met it, it would seem, once for all. For he now declines to reopen that point, to continue moving round and round in the narrow circle which hemmed in the thoughts of his Friends. A new and larger thought, a thought pregnant with a strange and well-nigh incredible hope, has dawned upon him,—the thought that the true God lies far behind and beyond such poor conceptions of Him as he had hitherto been able to frame ; and the hope that, if God should prove to be so much higher and greater than he had thought, then God may be his Advocate after all and not his Adversary, his Friend and not his Enemy. Many Commentators have failed to see how this thought of hope pervades the whole reply of Job, in part because Job's expression of it is chequered by so many shadows of doubt, broken by so many outcries of what seems despair ; and in part because they do not realize that it is out of the depths of a divine despair that most of our truest presentiments, our most sustaining hopes, arise upon us. They forget that we cannot expect from a man in Job's miserable condition that he should wholly forget his misery because a new and hopeful conviction has begun to form itself in his

mind, and that he should state it as firmly and brightly as though he were at ease. And they forget how commonly hope is a recoil, a reaction, from despair. We have only to put ourselves in Job's place, to sound the depths of his despair, to consider how *we* should have expressed any great hope which relieved it, in order both to see how natural it was that, if he was not to sink into the abyss of utter disbelief, this hope should have come to him, and to understand his chequered and fitful exposition of it. If we bring this sympathetic spirit to the Verses which follow, we shall not be perplexed by the fluctuations of mood and tone betrayed in them; we shall feel that, through all these fluctuations, Job holds fast to his new and great hope.

Verses 7 and 8.—He begins sadly enough, dwelling on the poignant details of his loneliness and misery, ascribing them to the hand of God, and admitting that they lend some support to the imputation cast upon him by his Friends. He admits and complains,—God has worn me out, reft from me all that I most valued,

Sequestering from me all
That time, acquaintance, custom, and condition
Made tame and most familiar to my nature ;

and even the very health and vigour he needed in order to sustain a loss so ruinous and complete. Nay, more; the very evil which Eliphaz had represented to be the punishment proper and peculiar to the wicked (Chap. xv. 34) has fallen upon him,—*his household is left unto him desolate*; his kinsfolk and neighbours have abandoned him, and even his most intimate and trusted friends “lay” but “negligent and loose regards upon him;” so that, turn where he will, no eye pities him, no word of solace greets his ear. He is utterly isolated.

and alone, shut up to himself. And, worse still, even he himself is turning traitor to himself; his diseased and emaciated body bears witness against him, confessing, as it were, that he is and must be a sinner, although his conscience acquits him of any wilful and deliberate sin:—

Nay, if I turn mine eyes upon myself,
I find myself a traitor with the rest.

And all this—his loneliness, the defection of kinsfolk and friends, the miserable self-contradictions in which he is involved—he owes to God: it is God who has done it all. So far from denying that his sorrows come from above, and bear witness against him, he insists on it; and the only question is whether, with himself, his friends, and God, against him, and only his good conscience on his side, he can still hold fast his integrity.

In *Verses* 9–16 he gives a still more appalling description of the Divine enmity against him, and of its terrible and far-spreading results. The figure of *Verses* 9–11 is that of some poor frail timid creature pursued by wild beasts, one of them powerful and dreadful beyond all telling, who is followed by a pack of inferior and ignoble attendants, to whom the prey, when caught, is contemptuously flung over. God Himself is the lion; and not the Friends only, who have shewn themselves the sycophants of God, but all who hated Job and derided him—of whom there were many (*Chap. xxx. 1–15*)—are the jackals in full cry behind Him; while Job is the victim to be run down and thrown to the yelping pack. *Verse* 9 describes the terrible onset of the furious leader—his rending anger

and gnashing teeth, and flaming eyes; *Verse 10*, the pack, "the pell-mell rout of petty curs," that barked and howled behind him, with their gaping jaws, their shameless gestures, and the hungry hate which inspired and united them; and *Verse 11*, God's scornful abandonment of the stunned and bleeding prey to his hungry train. There is an inevitable touch of bitterness and contempt in these Verses. It was impossible that Job should not be cut to the very quick as he saw the Friends he had trusted, and the clan of which he had been the honoured Chieftain, turn virulently against him.

What the declined is,
He shall as soon read in the eyes of others
As feel in his own fall.

Job had declined—fallen from the top of happy days to the very bottom of loss and misery; but it gave a new and keener edge to his misery that he should read the evidence of his decline in the averted or scornful eyes of men on whom he had relied for sympathy and help.

In Verses 9–11, though God is the chief Foe, yet the description of the human pack at his heels is so graphic as to draw our attention from Him to them. But in *Verses 12–16* Job calls our thoughts away from men to God, his chief Antagonist, setting forth the Divine enmity against him in figures which successively indicate its unexpectedness, its violence, and its destructiveness.

In *Verse 12* he describes it under the figure of a man of gigantic thews and irresistible strength, who suddenly seizes on one who sits in unsuspecting ease, shakes him in his terrible hands, and dashes him on

the ground. In *Verse* 13 the figure changes, and the shattered victim of the previous *Verse* is set up as a target; the arrows of God hiss round him; they pierce his side, cleave the gall-bladder and its ducts, so that its contents flow out upon the ground,—this shedding of the gall not being, however, a fact of science, but an image in common use by the Arab poets. Again the figure changes in *Verse* 14, and Job compares himself to “some fair edifice,” or rather, perhaps, to some brave fort, which God has assailed and breached again and again, till it has tumbled in ruins to the ground. The suddenness, the fatal force and sweep, the planned and deliberate violence of that storm of change and calamity which had swept away all that Job held dear is graphically portrayed in these picturesque *Verses*.

And in *Verses* 15 and 16 he tells us, in plain sad prose for the most part, what the results of God's unaccountable and inappeasable enmity against him had been, to what sordid and degrading conditions it has reduced him. He has put on the sackcloth of the mourner—mourning for himself, since none will mourn for or with him; nay, he has *sewn* sackcloth on to his skin, not simply assuming it as an ordinary badge of mourning, but clinging to these trappings and suits of woe, making them as it were part of his very self, because, like Hamlet, he has “that within which passeth show,” a settled and rooted melancholy, which the ordinary “forms, moods, and shapes of grief” cannot adequately denote.

His grief lies all within;
 And these external manners of laments
 Are merely shadows to the unseen grief
 That swells with silence in the tortured soul:
There lies the substance.

And he has "fouled his horn in the dust;" *i.e.*, his once high and honoured head has been brought low with shame: his face is "inflamed" with the hot ferment of his grief and indignation; and the very "shadow of death darkens on his eyelids."

All things and all persons are against him then,—his household, his clan, his very slaves and dependants, his God, and, in part, himself. Can he, can any man, stand against these, and against the evidence of guilt with which this universal antagonism is fraught? Will he, in the face of all these, still maintain his integrity? Yes, of even *this* he is capable; and it sends a thrill of pride to one's very heart to see that any human soul can rise to so heroic a strain. "All this has come upon me, and come upon me by the will of God," he says in *Verse 17*; "but still I stand to it that I have not deserved it, that there has been no violence in my hands, and that my worship has been sincere." He claims for himself what the prophet Isaiah (Chap. liii. 9) claims for the suffering Messiah, that he is being driven down to death, *although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth*. In the great and weighty line of our greatest poet, he still asserts,

Mine honour keeps the weather of my fate.

Let his "fate" be never so disastrous, he will not, that he may escape it, sacrifice his "honour;" he will maintain his integrity to the last.

But this is Job's familiar attitude and contention. Where is the *new* tone, the new thought, the new hope? It breaks upon us in *Verses 18-22*; and the overmastering grief occasioned by his loss and shame, by the aversion of God and man, are the pangs of

which it is born. For one who conceives himself abandoned both by God and man, if he is not to sink into a bottomless despair, if any remnant of faith and courage be left him, *must* struggle upward to a Love and a Justice higher than he has hitherto known: that is to say, he must reach up to a God other and higher than he has yet conceived. It is God who is the author of all Job's woes,—God who has taken from him all that He once gave, stripped him of health and wealth, alienated even his closest friends from him, stretched him on the *mezbele*, put him under a ban, made him the mark of a thousand scornful and sarcastic eyes, with none so poor to do him reverence, none so pitiful to do him kindness. Whither can Job turn from *Him*? If he is to turn anywhere, he can only turn from the hostile God whom he knows only too well, to the loving God whose ways are so large and wise as to be inscrutable to him. In plain words, there is nothing for him but to turn from the imaginary to the real God, from the God of the current theology to the God of the conscience and the heart. The philosophers, as Schlottman here reminds us, used to say, *Nemo contra Deum, nisi Deus ipse*; and Job feels that he has reached an extremity in which *he must enlist God against God*. To Him, therefore, he now and henceforth makes his appeal.

Verse 18.—This appeal begins even in the sublime invocation,

O Earth, cover not my blood,
And let there be no resting-place for my cry!

with which we may compare the challenge of Queen Constance,

Arm, arm, you heavens, against these perjured kings!

The invocation is based on the ancient traditional belief that the earth refuses to drink in the blood of the innocent, that it lies like a ghastly stain on its breast, for ever crying for vengeance. But *to whom* does the blood of the innocent cry out, *if not to God?* It is God, therefore, whom Job invokes even when he appeals to the earth. And yet it is God who has hunted him down, who is shedding his blood! It is *to God against God*, therefore, that Job appeals. With the strange boldness born of blended faith and despair, he believes that God will avenge the very blood which God Himself has shed! He may seem to be a Foe who thirsts for his destruction; but, nevertheless, He must be a Friend who will save and vindicate him; who, somehow, at some time, will confess, and even cause men to confess, that the blood of Job, like that of Abel, is that of an innocent and righteous man.

This amazing thought of a twofold God, or, rather, this convulsive clutching at the real God who is so unlike all that Job had conceived Him to be, is developed in the Verses which follow.

Hitherto the thought of his unrecognized and un-availing innocence had driven Job well-nigh frantic; at this point he had always heretofore lost his self-command, and broken out into wild and barren reproaches against the Judge who was handling him so unjustly. But now it leads him to divine that, behind the God whose face is clouded with anger, there must be a God whose aspect is bright and propitious; that he need not appeal to men against God, but may press straight on to God Himself; that he need not tax himself to look forward to some day far distant in the future in which his integrity will be acknowledged, since even

now, as he lies stripped and abandoned on the earth, God recognizes his innocence and is testifying to it on high. This is the thought, the hope, which gives so profound an interest to *Verse 19*. And this thought—so strange, so welcome, to Job—was, as we know, accurately true, although it was but a piercing prevision of faith. God *was* witnessing to him on high, calling on the heavenly host, and even on the Slanderer and Accuser who appeared among the sons of God, to confess that “there was none like him on the earth, a perfect man and an upright, one that feareth God and escheweth evil.”

This, I repeat, was the new wonderful thought which rose like a star on Job's horizon—the thought of a just God and a Saviour, who is often concealed from men by the God whom they receive by tradition or infer from nature and from human life; a God who knows the innocence of the just even now already, and will one day make it manifest, though He appears *not* to know it for the present, and for the present does not vindicate it. So clear and true is it to him even already, that in *Verse 20*, instead of appealing as heretofore from God to men, he appeals from men to the God he has just discovered. *They* mock him with false assumptions of guilt, false interpretations of the Divine rule and providence, with invitations to begin a true life by making a false confession of uncommitted sins, and with false menaces of an anger God does not feel, of a judgment which He will never execute. And, therefore, he turns from *them* to *Him*, and appeals to Him with streaming tears, which testify at once to his misery and to his sincerity.

And *for what* does he appeal? The verse which

answers that question—*Verse 21*—is one of the boldest words in Scripture. For what Job demands and entreats is, first and chiefly, that God will justify him, Job, against God Himself; and, secondly and subordinately, that God will justify him against the suspicions and misconstructions of his fellows. The sublime audacity of faith can no further go. That a man in conditions so utterly sordid and miserable, so thick with incentives to despair—abandoned, put to the ban, derided alike by Heaven and earth—should still trust in God at all, is a wonder that might well make us proud of the nature we share with him; but that he should so conceive of God, and should so invincibly trust in Him, as to believe that, in his justice, God will listen and respond to an appeal *against* his justice, is a wonder “past all expressing,” a wonder which alone explains how God should be so proud of a good man as to challenge for him the admiration of all the host of heaven.

With the unconscious art of profound emotion Job proceeds, in *Verse 22*, to wring from his very misery a plea why God should not long delay his vindication of him. Frail by nature, exhausted by his long agony, he must soon pass the bourn from which no traveller returns; and because the time is short, he presses for despatch.

Chapter xvii. Verse 1.—This plea is elaborated, it is rendered still more impressive and pathetic, in the three sighs which compose this Verse. And in *Verse 2* it is strengthened and reinforced by a new plea. Forgetting that

We may not think the justness of each act
Such and no other than event doth form it,

the Friends have judged him solely by the events and issues of his course, squaring their guess with the mere shows of his life. And their pertinacious assumption of his guilt is a perpetual provocation to him, a constant and growing temptation to distrust and despair. His life is at the last gasp, the tomb is gaping for him, and yet they mock him with the hope of a long and honourable life, if he will but repent a sin he has never committed! They fret and irritate his spirit by asserting that he *has* committed it. He cannot simply glance at their provocations and pass on his way; his eye is compelled to "lodge" or "dwell" upon them: for are they not for ever repeating them? Will not God make haste to deliver him, then,—all the more haste because of this standing temptation, this galling addition to his misery?

In *Verse 3*, as he broods over this sickening addition to a misery already insupportable, his new thought, his new hope, flashes out once more, though now in a new form. He is assured, as he has already told us, that God is his Witness, that God acknowledges his innocence and will one day vindicate it. But that day seems far off; his life meantime is hastening to a close; the Friends chafe him with their iterated suspicions of his guilt, and are even ready to triumph over him. Will not God, then, vouchsafe him some immediate and visible *pledge* of that future vindication? The Judge who chastens and afflicts him has already become his Witness: will not the Witness also become his Surety, and "strike hands" for him?—to strike hands being an ancient and customary mode of giving bail, of becoming surety for one who was contracting a loan or was suspected of a crime. It is for this

open and instant pledge of his ultimate acquittal that he now importunes the Almighty.

And from *Verse 4* we learn he is persuaded that even *this* will be granted him. He is sure that, since his Friends are so lacking in understanding as to condemn him for guilty when He can summon God Himself to attest his innocence, and even to see in that appeal only a new evidence of his guilt, God will not exalt them, will not give them the triumph they anticipate, by proving them to be in the right, or even by long allowing them to think themselves in the right.

Verse 5.—Nor will God only foil them of their expected triumph; He will also punish them, if not in their own persons, yet in the persons of their children, for expecting and desiring it. Unjust to the affection they owe their Friend, they shall be wounded through their affections. They have shewn him no mercy, treating him like mere spoil and booty; and therefore God, who to the unmerciful shews Himself unmerciful, will surely requite them for their sin.

Verse 6.—Not to them alone, but to all who think with them, *i.e.*, to his whole generation, God has made him a proverb and an object of contempt. And, *Verse 7*, under this contempt, and the judgment which caused it, he has wasted to a mere shadow. There is, therefore, the more need why God should interpose, and interpose promptly. For, *Verse 8*, by the spectacle which he presents moral distinctions were becoming confused, the unrighteous were growing bold and insolent in their opposition to Heaven, and the good, astonished at the contempt showered on a man so good, were burning with indignation against those who oppressed him. And he is assured that God *will* inter-

pose, interpose *soon*, with some guarantee of his favour, though He may still postpone that complete vindication of Job's integrity which shall abash the wicked. For in the righteous and purehanded of *Verse 9*, though he does not exclude others, he refers principally to himself. *They*, no doubt, will be strengthened and assured; but it is mainly *he* who is to hold on his way, and to wax stronger and stronger.

And thus two wonderful summits of light and clearness are conquered by the afflicted Patriarch. He has learned to believe in God, and he has learned to believe in himself as the child of God. He has learned to trust in the absolute justness of the ways of God with men, although those ways are often obscure and threatening; and he has also learned to trust that somehow, though he knows not how, and at some time, though he knows not when, God will justify him; that even to him good will be the final goal of ill.

Verse 10.—As the Friends are now full in the thought of Job, it is not unnatural, perhaps, that he should break out into this brief cartel of defiance. It may be that it is prompted even by the conviction he has just grasped of his ultimate and assured triumph over them. He challenges them afresh, challenges them contemptuously, because, knowing what the issue of the conflict must be, he no longer fears what they can do, or say, against him.

But this challenge is a digression. The main argument is resumed in *Verses 11–16*, verses which seem to breathe an atmosphere of despair as deadly as any we have thus far encountered. And yet, for all so sad as they sound, we utterly misconstrue them if we take sadness to be their fundamental tone. They really in-

dicating the stirrings and flutterings, if not the advance, of Job's new hope. He has persuaded himself that even now already God recognizes his innocence, and that some day He will vindicate it. He has also persuaded himself that God is about to give him some manifest pledge of his favour, and that right early. And now he longs to define and fix his hope; not to leave it floating unattached through the broad spaces of time, but to determine its orbit, and the moment at which it will sail into sight. Some day, some where, some how, God will appear for him! Yes, but how, and where, and when? *Will the moment of death be the moment of vindication, and Sheol its scene?* Is the grave the gate and avenue by which he must pass to life and immortal honour?

These, I take it, are the thoughts which Job is now striving to express. But whatever the construction we put on these Verses, we must at least recognize in them a strain of faith amazingly noble and high. For if they mean no more, they can mean no less than this: that, even if no deliverance, and no sign of deliverance, should come to him in life, he will carry his hope with him down into the darkness of death, finding not a path only, but *a home*, in Hades; and for the brief space which yet remains to him before he goes down to the gates of Hades he will be content with the assurance that God already knows his innocence and will hereafter prove it.

In *Verse 11*, as in *Verse 1*, we hear a cry "out of the depths." Not only has Job lost all of outward good he once possessed, not only is his life hastening to its close, but he has also lost those inward treasures which were the true power and joy of his life: his best pur-

poses, his most cherished thoughts and schemes and aims—or, in the fine phrase of the Original, “the possessions of his heart”—are broken in sunder by the stroke which has fallen on him.

Verse 12 presents some difficulty. The most natural, as also the most beautiful and suggestive, reading of it is that which finds the antecedent in the previous Verse, and makes Job lament the loss of the thoughts and purposes he had cherished in his inmost heart because, had these been spared to him, *they* would have turned the night of his sorrow into a joyful day, and brought light into the very face of darkness. But this reading seems to be forbidden by the Hebrew. Our only alternative, therefore, is to fall back on a much tamer construction, and to understand an allusion to “the consolations” of his Friends; to take him as meaning that by their false promises and invitations they were trying to beguile him, to represent his night as a day, or as about to become a day, and pretending to see an impossible light of hope in the darkness which enveloped him.

Verses 13-17.—From this delusive light of hope he recoils on the new hope which God Himself has kindled in his heart, the hope of a future vindication and deliverance. When, or how, it is to be fulfilled, he cannot tell. But probably it will not be in this world. If not, he is content to wait, to carry his hope with him into the grave. He is even familiarizing himself with the grave already, looking to it as his home and bed of rest, saluting corruption and the worm as near of kin to him, as his probable deliverers therefore. *They* would set his spirit free to descend into Hades; and in Hades might he not find a justice denied to him here, and *see*

the hope which was as yet invisible? In any case he will at least find rest from the fret and turmoil of a hungry and divided heart; after life's fitful fever sleeping well.

Canon Cook gives a fine rendering of *Verse 16*, which I should like to adopt. He translates it thus: "*Will the bars of Hades fall? And will there altogether be rest in the grave?*" But this, I think, is a stronger expression of Job's surmise that rest and deliverance await him in the world to come than his words will yet bear. All we can be sure of is that his thoughts were tending in that direction; and that, if it were God's will, he was content to wait till he descended into Hades for that vindication of his integrity for which he nevertheless so passionately longed.

As we look back over the whole of this Reply we must admit, I think, that it marks a great advance. The drama is evidently moving on toward its catastrophe. Job has grasped truths of which he can never henceforth wholly lose hold, truths which are likely to lead him on to conclusions still wider and more definite than any he has yet reached.

'Tis a strange experience through which we have seen him pass, and yet not an experience wholly strange to the more thoughtful spirits of our own time. And if I have a little lingered over it and insisted on it, it is because, in all probability, many of us have passed through a similar experience. The traditional and theologic God of our earlier years has long since grown incredible to us. We could not believe in the hard and austere Master, the angry and pre-scientific God, whom our fathers worshipped. We have had to grope, often

in great doubt and misery, after some higher and more satisfying conception of the Divine Ruler of men. Happy are we if, from the abyss of doubt or from the depths of some divine despair, we, like Job, have seen and climbed the altar-stairs which slope through darkness up to the only wise and true God. S. COX.

*SOME RECENT CRITICAL READINGS IN THE
NEW TESTAMENT.*

I.

WHILE it is satisfactory to think that the great mass of intelligent Englishmen are thoroughly agreed as to the importance of revising the Authorized Version of the Bible, the same thing cannot, as yet at least, be said of their feelings with regard to a revision of its original text. There may be no prejudice against the idea of such revision in the abstract, as indeed it would evidently be impossible for those who look upon the Word of God with becoming reverence to oppose by reasonable argument any earnest, conscientious, and scholarly effort to determine what that Word really was when first delivered to the world by "holy men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Every one who reflects upon the subject for a moment will acknowledge that precisely in proportion to the degree in which our conception of the influence exerted by the Almighty upon the writers of Scripture approaches what is commonly called Verbal Inspiration, does our obligation increase to see that what they did write shall be presented to us in its purest form. It is not contended by any that the text of the Bible, however pure from erroneous admixture at the first, has been