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no just occasion of offence, whose offences were really merits, consisting essentially in this that He had come full of grace, rather than of the fury of the Lord, not to judge or destroy but to save—if Christ judged John leniently and charitably, though John stood in doubt of Him, how much more should we abstain from judging those who are without, and full of prejudices against Christianity, when too probably the blame of their prejudice and alienation lies at our own door! Surely this is a very legitimate lesson to draw from the striking saying we have been studying.¹

THE BOOK OF JOB.

III.—THE FIRST COLLOQUY. (CHAPTERS IV.—XIV.)

(4.) JOB TO BILDAD. (CHAPTERS IX. AND X.)

CHAPTER ix. contains Job's real reply to Bildad. Bildad had argued that God was and must be just,

¹ A comparison of the text Matt. xi. 11 with Matt. v. 19, 20 might throw some light upon the question who in the judgment of Christ were within, and who without, the kingdom. In the earlier text that man is pronounced least in the kingdom (*ελάχιστος*, not *μικρότερος*) who himself sets aside or teaches others to set aside any of the commandments, even the least; and on the other hand, the man whose action is not destructive, but positive and upbuilding wholly, is pronounced great (*μέγας*) in the kingdom, while the Pharisee with his sham righteousness is declared to be outside the kingdom altogether (verse 19). Under this scheme John might come in as a least one, for he was a destroyer of little commandments in zeal for the great ones, and the teacher of others to do the same; for he lived in isolation in the desert, and took no part in the religious services of the temple, so by his way of life as a hermit entering his protest against the prevalent religious hypocrisy. The text Matt. xi. 11 is not incompatible with this view, for *μικρότερος* leaves room for an *ελάχιστος*. Accepting this view then, we get the following graduated scale: The Pharisee outside, the iconoclast, or destroyer of shams, in the lowest place within, the positive upbuilder great in the kingdom. Finally, the greatest in the kingdom is He who came not to destroy but to *fulfil*, and to destroy the destructible only by fulfilling.

that his providence was simply and purely retributive ; and that no man therefore, whatever he might suffer, could have any right to complain, since he did but receive the due reward of his deeds. Job, as we have seen, traverses this argument, first by ironical assent, and then by open and hot denial. First he says, "O, of course God must be right, because He is so strong. It is vain to contend with the master of so many legions." And then he says, "Nevertheless I will not admit your dogma, for it is not true. So far from rendering to every man the due recompense of his deeds, He condemns the guiltless to the fate of the guilty, mocks at the dismay of the righteous and hands them over to the tyranny of the wicked. It is *not* because I am guilty that I suffer, but because He has unjustly determined to hold me guilty, and to treat me as though my guilt were too notorious to need proof."

Thus, driven desperate by the collision between his own clear sense that he is innocent, and the fact that he is treated as though he were guilty, he breaks out into what an old writer stigmatizes as *inferni blasphemias*. But no candid and reflective reader will now repeat that charge. He will remember that

to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain ;

and that, despite his passionate reproaches, Job did love God still, and believe Him to be just, if only he could discern his true meaning and aim, is evident from the closing verses of the Chapter. For here he longs to have God humanized—"a man as I am, whom I might answer ;" if that cannot be, he longs

for a Mediator who shall be able to interpret God to him, and to intercede for him with God. But if he no longer believed in the justice and goodness of God, why should he crave a manifestation of God, or care to renew the broken links of communion with Him? No, Job utters no blasphemy, and still less any "infernal blasphemy;" for does not Jehovah Himself affirm at the close of the drama that, on the whole, Job had spoken of Him aright? But for a while he is wroth with the God he loves, wroth with Him because He is hiding Himself from him behind an impenetrable veil of mystery; and his wrath works like madness in his brain. And when the Father of our spirits hides Himself from his children for a while, to test our courage or to chasten and nerve our hearts, thus exposing us to the most terrible fears misgivings, and perplexities, He is not likely to take the pitiful cries and upbraidings which shew how much we love and confide in Him very much amiss.

We shall need to bear this thought in mind as we proceed to consider the keen and passionate expostulation with God into which Job, forgetting Bildad and his argument, forgetting the Friends and their grave looks of censure, rises in Chapter x.

In *Verse 1* we have the sighs, or sobs, of despair which introduce the Expostulation. Job had just expressed the yearning of his spirit for a Mediator with whom he could plead his suit unabashed, since, being innocent, he had no cause for fear. But he knows this yearning cannot, or will not, be gratified; that no Arbiter will step forth, that he must still deal with a God who has prejudged the case and con-

demned before He has heard him. Was ever man in a sorer strait? He is innocent; but none the less he is treated as though culpable of the most enormous crimes. He is innocent, but God will not hear of his being innocent: and how is he to prove it before a Judge who has long since given sentence against him and left his seat? The thought unmans, overwhelms him, and he cries, "I loathe my life!" or, literally, "My soul is sick of my life." As no other relief is open to him, he resolves to unpack his heart, to give vent to the bitterness of his soul.

But this resolve introduces no extravagance of passion, no reckless and insolent declamation. On the contrary, it is evident that Job is still brooding over the attitude which God has assumed toward him, trying to account for it in divers ways, and that he tacitly rejects supposition after supposition, simply because he feels it to be unworthy of the great Ruler of the world. In *Verse 2* he makes supplication to his Judge, instead of raving against his injustice. "Do not condemn me," he cries; that is, Do not condemn me without cause; do not fasten an undeserved guiltiness upon me. Obviously he is recalling what he had said about God's determination to hold him guilty, however innocent he might be, and entreating God to revoke it, beseeching Him at least to tell him on what charge he is condemned, and to give him a chance of proving himself innocent of it. In *Verses 3-7* he frames hypothesis after hypothesis to account for the enmity which God has conceived against him, only to reject them as fast as they are framed. First, he asks, Is it becoming, is it in keeping with the character of God, is it con-

sistent with what the universe has a right to expect of Him, that He should oppress and despise the creature whom He Himself has formed? Nay, that cannot be; for how should God hate his own workmanship? Well, then, if that cannot be, can it be that God has merely human eyes, that He may be deceived by the mere appearance of innocence and guilt, deluded by the hypocrisies by which men betray their fellow-men? No, neither can that be.

It is not so with Him that all things knows
As 'tis with us who square our guess by shows.

God looks not at the outward appearance, but on the heart. But if that be impossible, is it to be supposed that the life of God is as brief as that of man,¹ so that He cannot wait till the sinful impulses and intentions of Job develop themselves in overt acts, but must put him to an instant torture that He may compel him to confess them or even to accuse himself of treasonable intents which he has never cherished? No, neither can that be. God knows well enough that he is not guilty, and that even if he were, he should never be able to elude the pursuit and stroke of justice. In fine, brood over it how he will, turn it which way he will, he can find no solution of the problem, though he feels that there must be

¹ I have translated *Verse 5*,—

Are thy days as the days of man,
And thy years as *his* years?

but in the Original the word "man" is repeated, but repeated with a difference which cannot be conveyed in a mere translation. The two Hebrew words used for "man" in this Verse are *enosh* and *geber*; *enosh* denoting man in his weakness, "frail man;" *geber* denoting man in his strength: the former word being associated with the weaker term "days," and the latter with the stronger "years."

some solution of it, could he but reach it. And so once more he turns to God, and expostulates with Him, submitting this strange problem to *Him*, and intending to ask Him how *He* solves it. But from this nascent intention, as we shall see in a moment, he is diverted by a sudden suspicion which cuts so sharply on his heart that he is shaken out of all composure, and his pensive meditation frets and rages into the mere frenzy of despair.

Verses 8-12 are an expansion of the phrase, "the work of thy hands," used in *Verse 3*. Tenderly and pensively Job recalls the loving care and skill which God has expended on him, fashioning and forming every separate organ and faculty of a frame so fearfully and wonderfully made, conducting the whole process of his development from the moment of his conception onward,¹ moulding him like some exquisite vase on which the artist lavishes his utmost skill, and then guarding so rare a masterpiece with unceasing care, and eyeing it with looks of pride and favour. As he recalls these instances of the Divine regard, he beseeches God to recall them too, that the memory of his former grace may blunt the edge of his present displeasure, and asks with blended incredulity and astonishment whether it can really be God's purpose to break in pieces a work on which He

¹ The development of the embryo is often cited by the Hebrew poets as one of the most sacred and wonderful of mysteries; *e.g.*, in Psalm cxxxix. 13-16, and Ecclesiastes xi. 5. *Here* the generation and formation of the embryo, and the gradual development of the fœtus, are described with physiological minuteness and accuracy. No marvel that this mystery bulked so large in their thoughts if, as there is much reason to believe, it was to their minds the concrete form of a problem by which the most capable and penetrating minds of the present day are exercised, *viz.*, the origin and genesis of *life*.

has lavished so much thought and skill, to destroy a creature whom He has guarded with so much love and care? His argument with God is: Does the potter mould a vessel only to dash it to pieces? And hast Thou moulded me of clay only to bring me to dust again? Incredible, impossible!

But here a terrible suspicion darts into his mind, confuses its clear action, clouds and poisons his thoughts. As if to shew how true it is, and in how many ways it may be true "that a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things," while Job is brooding with thoughtful tenderness and soft regret on the many and varied tokens he had received of the Divine love and favour in that earlier time when "he had a daily beauty in his life," all these soft chords of memory are harshly jangled out of tune by the mis-giving, which instantly ripens into a conviction, that from the very first God was plotting against his peace; that his apparent love and favour were but a disguise behind which He was hiding his true purpose; that he, Job, had been led on by a hand of seeming grace only that he might be entrapped and whelmed in boundless miseries, and that his present agony of loss and shame and perplexity might be the more dreadful to him from its contrast with the happier things and days which had preceded it. And so, in *Verse 13*, he turns on God with the exceeding bitter cry, "Thou hast granted me life and favour, indeed, and carefully guarded my breath,"

But Thou wast hiding these evils in thine heart;
That *this* was Thy purpose I know.

Can we wonder that the miserable man eagerly caught at this miserable suggestion? It seemed the

only possible explanation of God's way with him. To explain that way, and if possible to vindicate it, was the prime necessity of his position, the profoundest yearning of his soul. We have just overheard him (*Verses 5-7*) inventing, and rejecting, first this explanation and then that. But now, though he knows not in what particular thought to work, in the gross and scope of his opinion, *this* is what it all means: God has been hiding a real hatred for him behind the shows of love, and this hatred has at last broken through its disguise. He was consciously the same man now that he had always been—as just, as generous, as devout. There had been no change in him; and yet what a change in God! Formerly God had been all grace and bounty to him; now He is all austerity and displeasure. Which was God's real and abiding attitude toward him—the former or the latter? The favour of God had passed like a dream when one awaketh; it was transient, unsubstantial, evanescent, a mere simulation and disguise; but his displeasure, and the misery it bred, were not these real enough, and enduring? Had they not already stricken his soul with an incurable wound? Oh, it was a plot! a base plot! and yet a plot carried through with the most consummate skill.

The suspicion was a natural one; and Job suffers it to creep into the study of his imagination, and dwells on it, seeking to trace it through all its ramifications. To his morbid and inflamed consciousness (*Verses 14-17*) this deep Divine plot assumes the form of a trilemma, a frightful threefold “net, which should ensnare and capture the victim whichever way he might turn.” (1) Were he to sin in some common,

current, and almost venial way, God had determined to mark *in him* a sin that He would have passed by in any other man, and never to absolve him from the guilt of it. (2) Were he to "do wickedly," *i.e.*, to fall into some heinous and unusual sin, God had determined to inflict on him a punishment so terrible that words cannot utter it, and Job, as he thinks of it, can only ejaculate, "Alas for me!" or, "Woe above all woe on me!"—an exclamation keenly expressive of the soul-subduing dread with which he contemplates it. (3) Even were he free from all sin, forensically guiltless, he must not dare to lift up his head, to walk erect, to carry himself as one conscious of his integrity, but must rather demean himself like a criminal, sated with shame and conscious of misery; for should he lift up his head, should he assert his integrity, God would spring on him like a lion, who only watches for the first movement of his prey and strikes it as it moves: nay, even this figure cannot fully render the peril and the misery of his condition; and therefore he compares himself, not only to the prey of a beast of prey, but also to a culprit who only redoubles the anger of his adversary by every attempt at defence, and incites him to call fresh witnesses against him; and to a besieged city, or fort, every sally of which is but a signal for new reserves of force to be brought up against it.

Deeming himself to be caught past all hope of succour or escape in the stifling folds of this detestable net, and remembering Who it is that has woven it and flung it around him, Job once more sinks, as we might expect, into his lowest and blackest mood of despair. In *Verses* 18–22 he repeats the cry, or

curse, recorded in Chapter iii. Of that cry from the depths of an undivine despair, he had once been ashamed, confessing (Chap. vi. 3) that his words had been "wild," pleading only that they had been wrung from him by the intolerable weight and pressure of his misery. But now he adopts that bitter cry as expressing his reasoned and deliberate conclusion. He has considered all that the Friends have alleged, all that his own lingering faith and love can suggest; and the conviction has been forced home upon him that the conditions of human life are so capricious, so cruel and inexplicable, as to render it a curse, and to justify him in execrating it and longing to exchange it for death. It is impossible, I think, to compare these verses with "the Curse" and not to feel that Job is now expressing calmly and deliberately the very conclusion which he there flung out in a torrent of wild and wind-driven speech. It is the voice of reason that we now hear, and not the voice of passion; but it utters the selfsame loathing of life, the selfsame yearning for death. And now it touches us far more intimately and profoundly. There is a tragic force and pathos in such a phrase as

O, to have been as though I had not been!

of which we are the more sensible because of the severe simplicity of its form and the quiet self-restraint of its tone: it impresses us far more deeply than the wild shrieks and execrations of the Curse, for it comes from depths so profound that they are still. His craving for death is the more terrible when we see, as he enables us to see (*Verses 21 and 22*), his conception of the estate of the dead. As he conceives them they are poor thin ghosts, wandering

for ever in a sad and obscure under-world so dark that he accumulates nearly all the Hebrew epithets for darkness, each with its peculiar terror,¹ in order to depict it; a dim and dolorous Hadean world, sunk below the pendant earth, suffused at the best with what Milton, following Job, describes as "not light, but darkness visible;" and if the light that is in it be darkness, how great must be the darkness! That Job should prefer such a death as this to such a life as his implies the extremity of misery and despair to which he is now reduced by the suspicion that God has always hated him, although He had long concealed his hatred behind a show of love. And in this Chapter "he speaks" to God "as he doth ruminare, and gives his worst of thoughts the worst of words."

(5.) ZOPHAR TO JOB. (CHAPTER XI.)

THE last and least worthy of Job's opponents now enters the field against him. Eliphaz, as we have seen, was a man of a prophetic spirit, basing himself on oracles and visions. Bildad was a sage, an earlier rabbi, a man of a patristic spirit, leaning on tradition, loving and apt at citing the wisdom of the ancients. But Zophar's distinction is that there is little or nothing to distinguish him from the ordinary good man of his day. He is not a man of culture and erudition, like Bildad; and still less is he, like Eliphaz, a man in close and immediate correspondence with Heaven. He stands for and utters the common thought, the current conceptions and formulas of his time, and savours of bigotry, as self-styled orthodoxy is wont to do. Having no root in himself, no fami-

¹ Comp. on Chap. iv. 10 and 11, and Chap. vi. 15-20.

liar acquaintance with the voice of Wisdom, no Divine vision on which to fall back, he is compelled to assert himself the more. He catches up the opinions in vogue, and delivers them as *his* opinions, with a voice of authority. He cannot quote oracles with Eliphaz; nevertheless, perhaps therefore, there is a touch of "Sir Oracle" about him, and "when he opes his mouth" he expects his decision, since most of his neighbours concur in it, to be final. With singular fidelity to nature, this comparatively unlearned and unspiritual champion of accepted traditions is depicted as harsh, authoritative, sudden and loud in censure, especially of men who think more deeply and broadly than himself, and with a very keen eye for their sins. He is "hasty and tinderlike upon too trivial motion." "A very little thief of occasion robs him of a great deal of patience." In this very Chapter, for example, he virtually or expressly calls Job, "windbag," "babbling," "empty-pate," "a wild ass's colt;" and implies that his hand is smirched with iniquity, his face foul with ignominy, and his tent defiled by wickedness. He assumes that Job is suffering for some undivulged crime, and affirms, even in the face of that bitter agony and despair, that his pangs are fewer than his crimes and lighter than his guilt; yet has he nothing to go upon, even in his own breast, but "imputation and strong circumstance, which," as he supposes, "lead directly to the door of truth."

To treat men of this spirit and temper fairly is very hard. But we should be almost as unjust as Zophar himself were we not to remember that he is resenting no personal wrong, but what he conceives to be a wrong against God, and a wrong likely to

have the most injurious effects on the theology, the religious conceptions and beliefs of his age. He feels, feels quite sincerely, that in Job's new and strange conceptions

the antique and well-noted face
Of plain old form is much disfigured ;
And like a shifted wind unto a sail,
It makes the course of thought to fetch about,
Startles and frights consideration,
Makes sound opinion sick, and truth suspected ;

he fears that to have truth suspected may be to have truth denied and disobeyed ; and he is sure that should sound opinion grow sick the health of men's souls will be imperilled and undermined. His motive, therefore, is as worthy of respect as his manner and temper are of blame. Perhaps, too, we may infer from the fact that he speaks last in the Conference, that he is the youngest of the Friends, since so much deference was paid to age in the East, that the elder men would be almost sure to take precedence of the younger. And in that case some allowance must be made for his diminished opportunities of thought and experience. In that case, too, he forms a capital contrast to Elihu ; for while Zophar stands up, with the zeal and asperity of youth, for the old and familiar forms of truth, Elihu utters the new conceptions which were working in the younger men of the tribes, and which, as we shall hereafter see, were a real and considerable advance even on the views held by men so wise and meditative as Job and Eliphaz. In any case Zophar is a welcome, and even a necessary, figure in the scene ; for how should the drama be complete unless there

were at least one actor in it to represent the common and accepted notions of the day, the conceptions and formulas by which the lives of the vast majority of men were shaped? Eliphaz is to some extent raised above the ordinary run of men by his trances and visions, Bildad by his learning and erudition; but the unschooled, dogmatic, positive Zophar is one of themselves.

What, then, has Job said or done to make him so keen and hot in censure? in what has this "pattern of all patience" offended against the current dogmas of the time? He has offended against them in three ways, which yet are one. Eliphaz and Bildad had laid down the popular dogma when they had affirmed the retributive character of the Divine Providence, and had maintained that God was just on the sole ground that He meted out to every man the exact reward of his deeds. And Job had traversed this dogma, (1) by insisting on his own innocence when his very sufferings were an open proof of his guilt; (2) by asserting that God was so strong that no man, however righteous his cause, could hope to maintain that cause against Him; and (3) by affirming that in the common experience of mankind, and not only in his own experience, the wicked often passed their days in mirth and affluence, while the good were smitten with incurable griefs and despired. He had been guilty, therefore, of a threefold impeachment of the accepted dogma. And that it was this dogma which he impeached, that it was God as the Friends conceived Him rather than God as He is in Himself, is put beyond doubt by the fact that his impeachment culminated in an ardent desire and

demand that God would appear to him in some approachable form, and give him an opportunity of vindicating his integrity; for such a desire could only spring from a profound conviction that God was just, and would do justice, if only he knew where to find Him. Still it is easy to see how much there was in Job's attitude and words to provoke the resentment of a shallow and dogmatic retailer of the current truisms such as Zophar. To hear his most cherished opinions thus rudely called in question, was like having the very ground on which he stood, and from which it was impossible for him to move, cut from beneath his feet. No wonder he was angry, and thought he did well to be angry. Yet there is some method in his anger; for, after a brief rebuke of Job's empty and windy babbling, he keeps very fairly to the lines of thought which Job had pursued—the pervading sentiment of his argument being, however, the admonitory one,

You are transported by calamity
Thither where more attends you.

He expresses a wish that Job's desire to see God for himself may be granted, and is sure that, if it be granted, his claim to innocence will be utterly refuted. He meets Job's attack on the equity of Divine Providence by asserting that its seeming inequalities arise simply from its unsearchableness and the incapacity of man to comprehend and interpret it aright. And he exhorts Job to repentance both by promises of good and threatenings of ill.

This is the general drift of Zophar's argument. Let us now observe how he works it out in detail.

CHAPTER XI.

1. *Then answered Zophar the Naamathite and said :*
2. *Shall a multitude of words not be answered,*
 And shall a babbler be justified ?
3. *Shall men let thy vaunts pass in silence,*
 So that thou mock with none to shame thee,
4. *And say, " My discourse is pure,*
 And I am clean in thine eyes " ?
5. *O that God would speak,*
 And open his lips with thee,
6. *And tell thee the secrets of wisdom—*
 For fold over fold is his counsel :
 So shouldst thou know that God remembereth not all thy guilt.
7. *Wouldst thou sound the depth of God ?*
 Wouldst thou reach to the perfection of the Almighty ?
8. *High as heaven ! what canst thou do ?*
 Deeper than Hades ! what canst thou know ?
9. *The measure thereof is longer than the earth,*
 And broader than the sea !
10. *If He arrest, and imprison, and hold assize,*
 Who shall oppose Him ?
11. *For He knoweth evil men,*
 And seeth iniquity when He seemeth not to regard it.
12. *But vain man is void of understanding,*
 Yea, man is a wild ass's colt from his birth.
13. *But thou, if thou apply thine heart*
 And stretch forth thy hands to Him,
14. *Should iniquity be in thy hand, put it far away,*
 And let not wickedness dwell in thy tent ;
15. *So shalt thou lift up thy face without spot ;*
 Thou shalt stand firm, and shalt not fear :
16. *For thou shalt forget thy misery,*
 Or remember it as waters that have dried up :
17. *And a day brighter than noon shall arise ;*
 If darkness come, it shall be as the dawn :
18. *And thou shalt take courage because there is hope ;*
 Thou shalt look around, and lie down in safety :
19. *Thou shalt rest, and none shall affright thee ;*
 Yea, many shall make suit to thee.

20. *But the eyes of the wicked shall pine away,
Refuge shall perish from them,
And their hope shall be like a fast breath.*

Verses 2-4.—In Zophar's judgment, Job should have been silenced by the arguments of Eliphaz and Bildad; but, instead of bowing to their exposition of the popular creed, he has grown more and more unreasonable, talks more and more wildly, and has involved himself in a mere cloud of words in order that he may evade the force of their arguments and rebukes. He is "a babbler"—literally, "a man of lips," a man who, as Carlyle phrases it, "speaks from the teeth outward," and does not utter the secrets of his breast. It is impossible to let his "vaunts" about his personal innocence, his "big talk," pass unrebuked, and leave him to "mock" on — *i. e.*, to impugn the providence of God rashly, sceptically, with a bias or prejudice against it. If he were so left, he would conclude that his "doctrine" or "discourse," *i. e.*, the position he had assumed in this great debate, was conceded, and that he had proved his integrity.

In *Verses 5 and 6* he takes up Job's yearning to see God for himself, and to come together in judgment with Him (Chap. ix. 32-35), since he knows no cause to fear the most searching investigation. Zophar devoutly hopes that this yearning may be gratified, that God may speak with Job, and disclose the secrets his wisdom has discovered; since the wisdom of God, or his "counsel"—the outcome of his wisdom—lies "fold over fold:" it is not simple and clear to the human eye, but intricate and involved: in every depth there is a deeper still. Were God to speak and disclose the secrets of his profound

and penetrating wisdom, Job, so far from being justified, would be amazed and confounded; he would discover that God, whom he had accused of heaping undeserved calamities on his head, had not inflicted a tithe of the calamities he had provoked; he would find in himself

undivulged crimes
Unwhipped of justice;

and would have gratefully to acknowledge that God was far indeed from having "remembered," from having called him to account for, "all his guilt."

This is Zophar's only original contribution to the Controversy—this unfounded and insolent assertion that Job's complaint of a punishment out of all proportion to his offence was true only in the adverse sense, that his offence was far greater than his punishment.

In *Verses 7-11* he proceeds to eulogize, with some touch of the base courtier spirit and motive—as Job points out in Chapter xiii. verses 7-9—the Wisdom which lies fold over fold, the all-penetrating all-pervading omniscience of God. It is too high and deep, too long and broad, in one word, too "perfect," for man to comprehend. And if He, whose motives no man can sound, and whose deeds, therefore, no man should censure, *should* enter into a controversy with men; if (comp. Chap. ix. 11, 12), prompted by his knowledge of their secret sins, He should cross their path, arrest and imprison them, and call them to judgment, who will be able to resist the wisdom and the force with which He will plead against them? Job had used almost the very same words, and drawn from them the same conclusion,—the

same, and yet how different! For Job had argued that it was impossible for man, however innocent, to withstand God, because He was so strong that his mere fiat would seem to make wrong right and right wrong. No, replies Zophar, it is not before mere force, it is not before a capricious Omnipotence, that he will fall, but before a divine all-searching Wisdom that detects sins in men of which even they themselves are not aware, but which He discovers at the first glance, without needing to search for them, without seeming so much as to look that way.

Verse 12 is, perhaps, the most difficult, though it is by no means the most important, we have yet encountered, and has almost as many interpretations as commentators. The general drift of it is plain, however, at least so far as this—that Zophar intends to contrast the folly of man with the wisdom of God, and that by “the vain man void of understanding,” and “the wild ass’s colt,” he means Job, who had assumed to pit his wisdom against God’s. But here all agreement ends, and out of many interpretations we must fix on one. Out of a great multitude we select two as most deserving of attention. The first, which is by far the finest, reads the verse thus—and the Hebrew is as patient of the reading as of any other :

And hollow man is hearted,
And the wild ass’s colt is quickened into man.

Read thus, the sense is that, by the discipline of the Divine Providence, the judgments inflicted on sin, which Zophar had just been vindicating, man, who is by nature “hollow,” “empty,” “vain,” has, as it were, a heart put into his hollowness, acquires, as we should

by the courage of hope, and delight himself in a security in which no possibility of danger can be discerned. So far from sitting solitary and forsaken, many shall come and pay court to him; he shall have all that should accompany a tranquil old age, with

The bounty and the benison of Heaven
To boot.

All these succours and blessings, however, depend on his instant and hearty penitence. If he remain impenitent, his will still incorrect to Heaven, he will meet the doom of the impenitent; his eyes will pine away with unsatisfied desire; every refuge of lies in which he has taken shelter will crumble into ruin; and his last hope will be fleeting, unsubstantial, irrevocable as the last breath of a dying man.

S. COX.

THE GOSPEL IN THE EPISTLES.

I believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, our Lord.

As we have adopted the Apostles' Creed for a thread on which we may conveniently range our inquiry into this subject, we are met at the very outset of our examination by a remarkable feature in Christ's teaching, which is noticed alike by Evangelist and Apostle, and noticed, too, in that undesigned manner which renders their joint testimony of such rare value. Those who listened to Christ were listening to no ordinary teacher, and when men came to Him as suppliants for aid, or as followers and companions, they were called upon to prove their fitness in a way new in the history of the world's teaching. They could not come, as men came to the lectures of the Stoic