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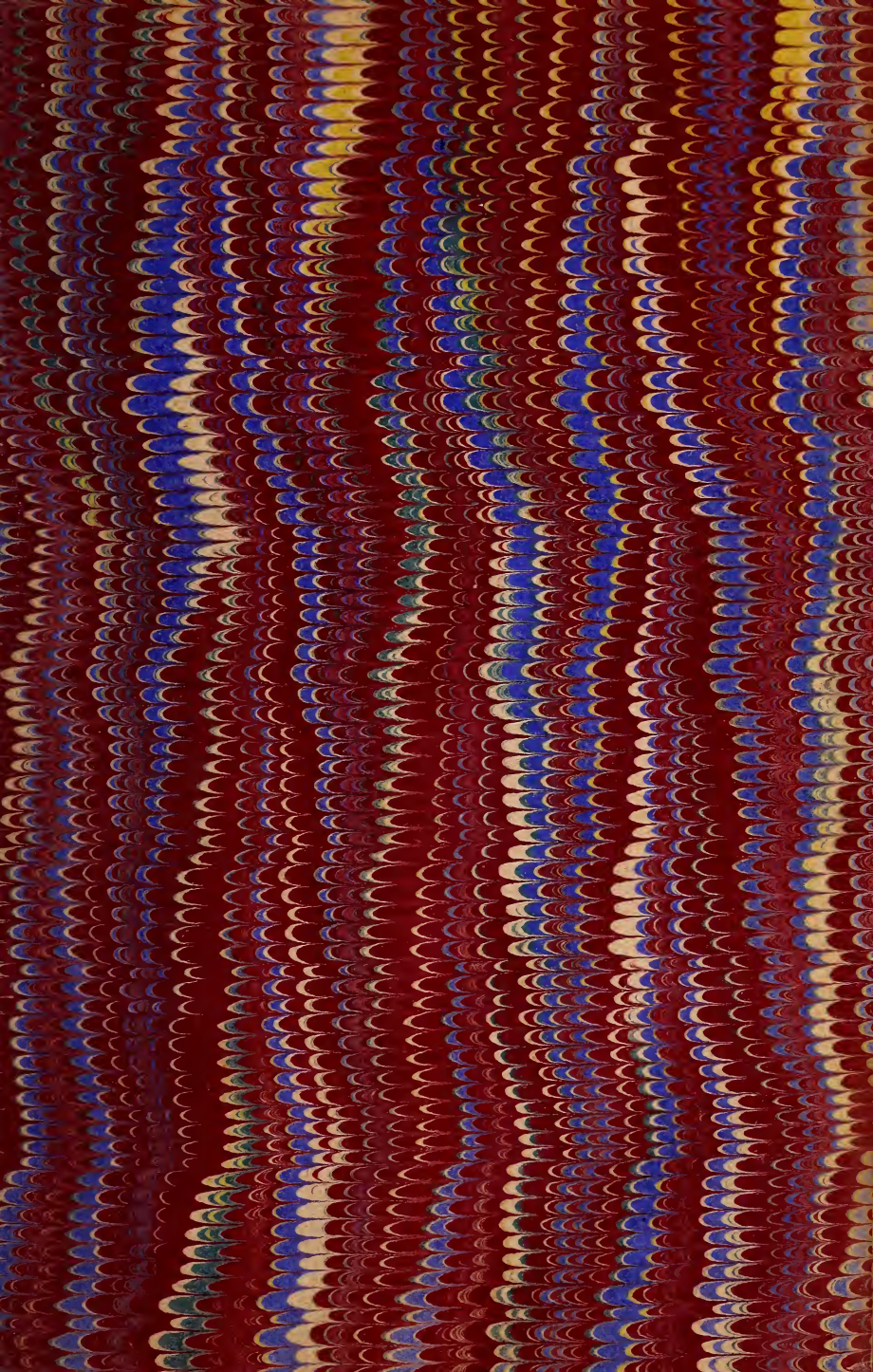
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THE
BOOK OF JOB.

BY
J. A. FROUDE, M.A.,
LATE FELLOW OF EXETER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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No. XIII.  
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THE BOOK OF JOB.

It will be matter some day of curious enquiry to ascertain, why, notwithstanding the high reverence with which the English people regard the Bible, they have done so little in comparison with their continental contemporaries towards arriving at a proper understanding of it? The books named below* form but a section of a long list which has appeared during the last few years in Germany on the Book of Job alone; and this book has not received any larger share of attention than the others, either of the Old or the New Testament. Whatever be the nature or the origin of these books, (and on this point there is much difference of opinion among the Germans as among ourselves,) they are all agreed, orthodox and unorthodox, that at least we should endeavour to understand them; and that no efforts can be too great, either of research or criticism, to discover their history, or elucidate their meaning.

We shall assent, doubtless, eagerly, perhaps noisily and indignantly, to so obvious a truism; but our own efforts in the same direction will not bear us out. Able men in England employ themselves in matters of a more practical character; and while we refuse to avail ourselves of what has been done elsewhere, no book, or books, which we produce on the

* 1. *Die Poetischen Bucher des Alten Bundes.* Erklärt von Heinrich Ewald. Göttingen: bei Vanderhoeck und Ruprecht. 1836.

2. *Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament. Zweite Lieferung. Hiob.* Von Ludwig Hirzel. Zweite Auflage, durchgesehen von Dr. Justus Olshausen. Leipzig. 1852.

3. *Questionum in Jobeidos locos vexatos Specimen.* Von D. Hermannus Hupfeld. Halis Saxonum. 1853.

interpretation of Scripture acquire more than a partial or an ephemeral reputation. The most important contribution to our knowledge on this subject which has been made in these recent years, is the translation of the "Library of the Fathers," by which it is about as rational to suppose that the analytical criticism of modern times can be superseded, as that the place of Herman and Dindorf could be supplied by an edition of the old scholiasts.

It is, indeed, reasonable that, as long as we are persuaded that our English theory of the Bible, as a whole, is the right one, we should shrink from contact with investigations, which, however ingenious in themselves, are based on what we know to be a false foundation. But there are some learned Germans whose orthodoxy would pass examination at Exeter Hall; and there are many subjects, such, for instance, as the present, on which all their able men are agreed in conclusions that cannot rationally give offence to any one. For the Book of Job, analytical criticism has only served to clear up the uncertainties which have hitherto always hung about it. It is now considered to be, beyond all doubt, a genuine Hebrew original, completed by its writer almost in the form in which it now remains to us. The questions on the authenticity of the Prologue and Epilogue, which once were thought important, have given way before a more sound conception of the dramatic unity of the entire poem; and the volumes before us contain merely an inquiry into its meaning, bringing, at the same time, all the resources of modern scholarship and historical and mythological research to bear upon the obscurity of separate passages. It is the most difficult of all the Hebrew compositions—many words occurring in it, and many thoughts, not to be found elsewhere in the Bible. How difficult our translators found it may be seen by the number of words which they were obliged to insert in italics, and the doubtful renderings which they have suggested in the margin. One instance of this, in passing, we will notice in this place—it will be familiar to everyone as the passage quoted at the opening of the English burial service, and adduced as one of the doctrinal proofs of the resurrection of the body? "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth; and *though*, after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh I shall see God." So this passage stands in the ordinary version. But the words in italics have nothing

answering to them in the original—they were all added by the translators* to fill out their interpretation; and for *in my flesh*, they tell us themselves in the margin that we may read (and, in fact, we ought to read, and must read) “*out of*,” or “*without*” *my flesh*. It is but to write out the verses, omitting the conjectural additions, and making that one small, but vital correction, to see how frail a support is there for so large a conclusion; “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and shall stand at the latter upon the earth; and after my skin destroy this; yet without my flesh I shall see God.” If there is any doctrine of a resurrection here, it is a resurrection precisely *not* of the body, but of the spirit. And now let us only add that the word translated Redeemer is the technical expression for the “avenger of blood;” and that the second paragraph ought to be rendered —“and one to come after me (my next of kin, to whom the avenging my injuries belongs) shall stand upon my dust,” and we shall see how much was to be done towards the mere exegesis of the text. This is an extreme instance, and no one will question the general beauty and majesty of our translation; but there are many mythical and physical allusions scattered over the poem, which, in the sixteenth century, there were positively no means of understanding; and perhaps, too, there were mental tendencies in the translators themselves which prevented them from adequately apprehending even the drift and spirit of it. The form of the story was too stringent to allow such tendencies any latitude; but they appear, from time to time, sufficiently to produce serious confusion. With these recent assistances, therefore, we propose to say something of the nature of this extraordinary book—a book of which it is to say little to call it unequalled of its kind, and which will, one day, perhaps, when it is allowed to stand on its own merits, be seen towering up alone, far away above all the poetry of the world. How it found its way into the Canon, smiting as it does through and through the most deeply-seated Jewish prejudices, is the chief difficulty about it now; to be explained only by a traditional acceptance among the sacred books, dating back from the old times of the national greatness, when the minds of the people were hewn in a larger type than was to be found among the Pharisees of the great

* Or rather by St. Jerome, whom our translators have followed.

synagogue. But its authorship, its date, and its history, are alike a mystery to us; it existed at the time when the Canon was composed; and this is all that we know beyond what we can gather out of the language and the contents of the poem itself.

Before going further, however, we must make room for a few remarks of a very general kind. Let it have been written when it would, it marks a period in which the religious convictions of thinking men were passing through a vast crisis; and we shall not understand it without having before us clearly something of the conditions which periods of such a kind always and necessarily exhibit.

The history of religious speculation appears in extreme outline to have been of the following character. We may conceive mankind to have been originally launched into the universe with no knowledge either of themselves or of the scene in which they were placed; with no actual knowledge, but distinguished from the rest of the creation by a faculty of gaining knowledge; and first unconsciously, and afterwards consciously and laboriously, to have commenced that long series of experience and observation which has accumulated in thousands of years to what we now see around us. Limited on all sides by conditions which they must have felt to be none of their own imposing, and finding everywhere forces working, over which they had no control, the fear which they would naturally entertain of these invisible and mighty agents, assumed, under the direction of an idea which we may perhaps call inborn and inherent in human nature, a more generous character of reverence and awe. The laws of the outer world, as they discovered them, they regarded as the decrees, or as the immediate energies of personal beings; and as knowledge grew up among them, they looked upon it not as knowledge of nature, but of God, or the gods. All early paganism appears, on careful examination, to have arisen out of a consecration of the first rudiments of physical or speculative science. The twelve labours of Hercules are the labours of the sun, of which Hercules is an old name, through the twelve signs. Chronos, or *time*, being measured by the apparent motion of the heavens, is figured as their child; Time, the universal parent, devours its own offspring, yet is again itself in the high faith of a human soul conscious of its power and its endurance, supposed to be baffled and dethroned by Zeus, or *life*; and so on through all the

elaborate theogonies of Greece and Egypt. They are no more than real insight into real phenomena, allegorized as time went on, elaborated by fancy, or idealized by imagination, but never losing their original character.

Thus paganism, in its very nature, was expansive, self-developing, and, as Mr. Hume observed, tolerant; a new god was welcomed to the Pantheon as a new scientific discovery is welcomed by the Royal Society; and the various nations found no difficulty in interchanging their divinities—a new god either representing a new power not hitherto discovered, or one with which they were already familiar under a new name. With such a power of adaptation and enlargement, if there had been nothing more in it than this, such a system might have gone on accommodating itself to the change of times, and keeping pace with the growth of human character. Already in its later forms, as the unity of nature was more clearly observed and the identity of it throughout the known world, the separate powers were subordinating themselves to a single supreme king; and, as the poets had originally personified the elemental forces, the thinkers were reversing the earlier process, and discovering the law under the person. Happily or unhappily, however, what they could do for themselves they could not do for the multitude. Phœbus and Aphrodite had been made too human to be allegorized. Humanized, and yet, we may say, only half humanized, retaining their purely physical nature, and without any proper moral attribute at all, these gods and goddesses remained, to the many, examples of sensuality made beautiful; and, as soon as right and wrong came to have a meaning, it was impossible to worship any more these idealized despisers of it. The human caprices and passions which served at first to deepen the illusion, justly revenged themselves; Paganism became a lie, and perished.

In the meantime, the Jews (and perhaps some other nations, but the Jews chiefly and principally) had been moving forward along a road wholly different. Breaking early away from the gods of nature, they advanced along the line of their moral consciousness; and leaving the nations to study physics, philosophy, and art, they confined themselves to man and to human life. Their theology grew up round the knowledge of good and evil, and God, with them, was the supreme Lord of the world, who stood towards man in the relation of a ruler and a judge. Holding such a faith, to

them the toleration of paganism was an impossibility; the laws of nature might be many, but the law of conduct was one; there was one law and one king; and the conditions under which He governed the world, as embodied in the Decalogue or other similar code, were looked upon as iron and inflexible certainties, unalterable revelations of the will of an unalterable Being. So far there was little in common between this process and the other; but it was identical with it in this one important feature, that moral knowledge, like physical, admitted of degrees; and the successive steps of it were only purchaseable by experience. The dispensation of the law, in the language of modern theology, was not the dispensation of grace, and the nature of good and evil disclosed itself slowly as men were able to comprehend it. Thus, no system of law or articles of belief were or could be complete and exhaustive for all time. Experience accumulates; new facts are observed, new forces display themselves, and all such formulæ must necessarily be from period to period broken up and moulded afresh. And yet the steps already gained are a treasure so sacred, so liable are they at all times to be attacked by those lower and baser elements in our nature which it is their business to hold in check, that the better part of mankind have at all times practically regarded their creed as a sacred total to which nothing may be added, and from which nothing may be taken away; the suggestion of a new idea is resented as an encroachment, punished as an insidious piece of treason, and resisted by the combined forces of all common practical understandings, which know too well the value of what they have, to risk the venture upon untried change. Periods of religious transition, therefore, when the advance has been a real one, always have been violent, and probably will always continue to be so. They to whom the precious gift of fresh light has been given are called upon to exhibit their credentials as teachers in suffering for it. They, and those who oppose them, have alike a sacred cause; and the fearful spectacle arises of earnest, vehement men, contending against each other as for their own souls, in fiery struggle. Persecutions come, and martyrdoms, and religious wars; and, at last, the old faith, like the phœnix, expires upon its altar, and the new rises out of the ashes.

Such, in briefest outline, has been the history of religions,

natural and moral; the first, indeed, being in no proper sense a religion at all, as we understand religion; and only assuming the character of it in the minds of great men whose moral sense had raised them beyond their time and country, and who, feeling the necessity of a real creed, with an effort and with indifferent success, endeavoured to express, under the systems which they found, emotions which had no proper place before.

Of the transition periods which we have described as taking place under the religion which we call moral, the first known to us is marked at its opening by the appearance of the Book of Job, the first fierce collision of the new fact with the formula which will not stretch to cover it.

The earliest phenomenon likely to be observed connected with the moral government of the world is the general one, that on the whole, as things are constituted, good men prosper and are happy, bad men fail and are miserable. The cause of such a condition is no mystery, and lies very near the surface. As soon as men combine in society, they are forced to obey certain laws under which alone society is possible, and these laws, even in their rudest form, approach the laws of conscience. To a certain extent, every one is obliged to sacrifice his private inclinations; and those who refuse to do so are punished, or are crushed. If society were perfect, the imperfect tendency would carry itself out till the two sets of laws were identical; but perfection so far has been only in Utopia, and as far as we can judge by experience hitherto, they have approximated most nearly in the simplest and most rudimentary forms of life. Under the systems which we call patriarchal, the modern distinction between sins and crimes had no existence. All gross sins were offences against society, as it then was constituted, and, wherever it was possible, were punished as being so; chicanery and those subtle advantages which the acute and unscrupulous can take over the simple, without open breach of enacted statutes, were only possible under the complications of more artificial polities; and the oppression or injury of man by man was open, violent, obvious, and therefore easily understood. Doubtless, therefore, in such a state of things, it would, on the whole, be true to experience, that, judging merely by outward prosperity or the reverse, good and bad men would be rewarded and punished as such in this actual world; so far, that is, as the administration of such rewards

and punishments was left in the power of mankind. But theology could not content itself with general tendencies. Theological propositions then, as much as now, were held to be absolute, universal, admitting of no exceptions, and explaining every phenomenon. Superficial generalizations were construed into immutable decrees; the God of this world was just and righteous, and temporal prosperity or wretchedness were dealt out by him immediately by his own will to his subjects, according to their behaviour. Thus the same disposition towards completeness which was the ruin of paganism, here, too, was found generating the same evils; the half truth rounding itself out with falsehoods. Not only the consequences of ill actions which followed through themselves, but the accidents, as we call them, of nature, earthquakes, storms, and pestilences, were the ministers of God's justice, and struck sinners only with discriminating accuracy. That the sun should shine alike on the evil and the good was a creed too high for the early divines, or that the victims of a fallen tower were no greater offenders than their neighbours. The conceptions of such men could not pass beyond the outward temporal consequence; and if God's hand was not there it was nowhere. We might have expected that such a theory of things could not long resist the accumulated contradictions of experience; but the same experience shows also what a marvellous power is in us of thrusting aside phenomena which interfere with our cherished convictions; and when such convictions are consecrated into a creed which it is a sacred duty to believe, experience is but like water dropping upon a rock, which wears it away, indeed, at last, but only in thousands of years. This theory was and is the central idea of the Jewish polity, the obstinate toughness of which has been the perplexity of Gentiles and Christians from the first dawn of its existence; it lingers among ourselves in our Liturgy and in the popular belief; and in spite of the emphatic censure of Him after whose name we call ourselves, is still the instant interpreter for us of any unusual calamity, a potato blight, a famine, or an epidemic: such vitality is there in a moral faith, though now, at any rate, contradicted by the experience of all mankind, and at issue even with Christianity itself.

At what period in the world's history misgivings about it began to show themselves it is now impossible to say; it was at the close, probably, of the patriarchal period, when men

who really *thought* must have found it palpably shaking under them. Indications of such misgivings are to be found in the Psalms, those especially passing under the name of Asaph; and all through Ecclesiastes there breathes a spirit of deepest and saddest scepticism. But Asaph thrusts his doubts aside, and forces himself back into his old position; and the scepticism of Ecclesiastes is confessedly that of a man who had gone wandering after enjoyment; searching after pleasures—pleasures of sense and pleasures of intellect—and who, at last, bears reluctant testimony that, by such methods, no pleasures can be found which will endure; that he had squandered the power which might have been used for better things, and had only strength remaining to tell his own sad tale as a warning to mankind. There is nothing in Ecclesiastes like the misgivings of a noble nature. The writer's own personal happiness had been all for which he had cared; he had failed, as all men gifted as he was gifted are sure to fail, and the lights of heaven were extinguished by the disappointment with which his own spirit had been clouded.

Utterly different from these, both in character and in the lesson which it teaches, is the Book of Job. Of unknown date, as we said, and unknown authorship, the language impregnated with strange idioms and strange allusions, unjewish in form, and in fiercest hostility with Judaism, it hovers like a meteor over the old Hebrew literature, in it, but not of it, compelling the acknowledgment of itself by its own internal majesty, yet exerting no influence over the minds of the people, never alluded to, and scarcely ever quoted, till at last the light which it had heralded rose up full over the world in Christianity.

The conjectures which have been formed upon the date of this book are so various, that they show of themselves on how slight a foundation the best of them must rest. The language is no guide, for although unquestionably of Hebrew origin, it bears no analogy to any of the other books in the Bible; while, of its external history, nothing is known at all, except that it was received into the canon at the time of the great synagogue. Ewald decides, with some confidence, that it belongs to the great prophetic period, and that the writer was a contemporary of Jeremiah. Ewald is a high authority in these matters, and this opinion is the one which we believe is now commonly received among biblical scholars. In

the absence of proof, however (and the reasons which he brings forward are really no more than conjectures), these opposite considerations may be of moment. It is only natural that at first thought we should ascribe the grandest poem in a literature to the time at which the poetry of the nation to which it belongs was generally at its best; but, on reflection, the time when the poetry of prophecy is the richest, is not likely to be favourable to compositions of another kind. The prophets wrote in an era of decrepitude, dissolution, sin, and shame, when the glory of Israel was falling round them into ruin, and their mission, glowing as they were with the ancient spirit, was to rebuke, to warn, to threaten, and to promise. Finding themselves too late to save, and only, like Cassandra, despised and disregarded, their voices rise up singing the swan song of a dying people, now falling away in the wild wailing of despondency over the shameful and desperate present, now swelling in triumphant hope that God will not leave them for ever, and in his own time will take his chosen to himself again. But such a period is an ill-occasion for searching into the broad problems of human destiny; the present is all-important and all-absorbing; and such a book as that of Job could have arisen only out of an isolation of mind, and life, and interest, which we cannot conceive of as possible.

The more it is studied, the more the conclusion forces itself upon us that, let the writer have lived when he would, in his struggle with the central falsehood of his own people's creed, he must have divorced himself from them outwardly as well as inwardly; that he travelled away into the world, and lived long, perhaps all his matured life, in exile. Everything about the book speaks of a person who had broken free from the narrow littleness of "the peculiar people." The language, as we said, is full of strange words. The hero of the poem is of strange land and parentage, a Gentile certainly, not a Jew. The life, the manners, the customs, are of all varieties and places—Egypt, with its river and its pyramids, is there; the description of mining points to Phœnicia; the settled life in cities, the nomad Arabs, the wandering caravans, the heat of the tropics, and the ice of the north, all are foreign to Canaan, speaking of foreign things and foreign people. No mention, or hint of mention, is there throughout the poem, of Jewish traditions or Jewish certainties. We look to find the three friends vindicate themselves, as they so well might have done,

by appeals to the fertile annals of Israel, to the Flood, to the cities of the plain, to the plagues of Egypt, or the thunders of Sinai. But of all this there is not a word; they are passed by as if they had no existence; and instead of them, when witnesses are required for the power of God, we have strange un-Hebrew stories of the eastern astronomic mythology, the old wars of the giants, the imprisoned Orion, the wounded dragon, "the sweet influences of the seven stars," and the glittering fragments of the sea-snake Rahab* trailing across the northern sky. Again, God is not the God of Israel, but the father of mankind; we hear nothing of a chosen people, nothing of a special revelation, nothing of peculiar privileges; and in the court of heaven there is a Satan, not the prince of this world and the enemy of God, but the angel of judgment, the accusing spirit whose mission was to walk to and fro over the earth, and carry up to heaven an account of the sins of mankind. We cannot believe that thoughts of this kind arose out of Jerusalem in the days of Josiah. In this book, if anywhere, we have the record of some *ἄνης πολύτροπος* who, like the old hero of Ithaca,

*πόλλων ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω
πολλὰ δ' ὄγ' ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὄν κατὰ θυμόν
ἀρνύμενος ψυχήν.*

but the scenes, the names, and the incidents, are all contrived as if to baffle curiosity, as if, in the very form of the poem, to teach us that it is no story of a single thing which happened once, but that it belongs to humanity itself, and is the drama of the trial of man, with Almighty God and the angels as the spectators of it.

No reader can have failed to have been struck with the simplicity of the opening. Still, calm, and most majestic, it tells us everything which is necessary to be known in the fewest possible words. The history of Job was probably a tradition in the east; his name, like that of Priam in Greece, the symbol of fallen greatness, and his misfortunes the problem of philosophers. In keeping with the current belief, he is described as a model of excellence, the most perfect and upright man upon the earth, "and the same was the greatest man in all the east." So far, greatness and goodness had gone hand in hand together, as the popular theory required. The details of his character are brought out in the progress of

* See Ewald on Job ix. 13, and xxvi. 14.

the poem. He was "the father of the oppressed, and of those who had none to help them." When he sat as a judge in the market-places, "righteousness clothed him" there, and "his justice was a robe and a diadem." He "broke the jaws of the wicked and plucked the spoil out of his teeth;" and, humble in the midst of his power, he "did not despise the cause of his manservant, or his maidservant, when they contended with him," knowing (and amidst those old people where the multitude of mankind were regarded as the born slaves of the powerful, to be carved into eunuchs or polluted into concubines at their master's pleasure, it was no easy matter to know it) knowing "that He who had made him had made them," and *one* "had fashioned them both in the womb." Above all, he was the friend of the poor, "the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him," and he "made the widow's heart to sing for joy."

Setting these characteristics of his daily life by the side of his unaffected piety, as it is described in the first chapter, we have a picture of the best man who could then be conceived; not a hard ascetic, living in haughty or cowardly isolation, but a warm figure of flesh and blood, a man full of all human loveliness, and to whom, that no room might be left for any possible Calvinistic falsehood, God himself bears the emphatic testimony, "that there was none like him upon the earth, a perfect and upright man, who feared God and eschewed evil." If such a person as this, therefore, could be made miserable, necessarily the current belief of the Jews was false to the root; and tradition furnished the fact that he had been visited by every worst calamity. How was it then to be accounted for? Out of a thousand possible explanations, the poet introduces a single one. He admits us behind the veil which covers the ways of Providence, and we hear the accusing angel charging Job with an interested piety, and of being obedient because it was his policy. "Job does not serve God for nought," he says; "strip him of his splendour, and see if he will care for God then. Humble him into poverty and wretchedness, so only we shall know what is in his heart." The cause thus introduced is itself a rebuke to the belief which, with its "rewards and punishments," immediately fostered selfishness; and the poem opens with a double action, on one side to try the question whether it is possible for man to love God disinterestedly—the issue of which trial is not foreseen or even foretold, and we watch the

progress of it with an anxious and fearful interest—on the other side, to bring out in contrast to the truth which we already know, the cruel falsehood of the popular faith, to show how, instead of leading men to mercy and affection, it hardens their heart, narrows their sympathies, and enhances the trials of the sufferer, by refinements which even Satan had not anticipated. The combination of evils, as blow falls on blow, suddenly, swiftly, and terribly, has all the appearance of a purposed visitation (as indeed it was;) if ever outward incidents might with justice be interpreted as the immediate action of Providence, those which fell on Job might be so interpreted. The world turns disdainfully from the fallen in the world's way; but far worse than this, his chosen friends, wise, good, pious men, as wisdom and piety were then, without one glimpse of the true cause of his sufferings, see in them a judgment upon his secret sins. He becomes to them an illustration, and even (such are the paralogisms of men of this description) a proof of their theory "that the prosperity of the wicked is but for a while;" and instead of the comfort and help which they might have brought him, and which in the end they were made to bring him, he is to them no more than a text for the enunciation of solemn falsehood. And even worse again, the sufferer himself had been educated in the same creed; he, too, had been taught to see the hand of God in the outward dispensation; and feeling from the bottom of his heart, that he, in his own case, was a sure contradiction of what he had learnt to believe, he himself finds his very faith in God shaken from its foundation. The worst evils which Satan had devised were distanced far by those which had been created by human folly.

The creed in which Job had believed was tried and found wanting, and, as it ever will be when the facts of experience come in contact with the inadequate formula, the true is found so mingled with the false, that they can hardly be disentangled, and are in danger of being swept away together.

A studied respect is shown, however, to this orthodoxy; even while it is arraigned for judgment. It may be doubtful whether the writer purposely intended it. He probably cared only to tell the real truth; to say for it the best which could be said, and to produce as its defenders the best and wisest men whom in his experience he had known to believe and defend it. At any rate, he represents the three

friends, not as a weaker person would have represented them, as foolish, obstinate bigots, but as wise, humane, and almost great men, who, at the outset, at least, are animated only by the kindest feelings, and speak what they have to say with the most earnest conviction that it is true. Job is vehement, desperate, reckless. His language is the wild, natural outpouring of suffering. The friends, true to the eternal nature of man, are grave, solemn, and indignant, preaching their half truth, and mistaken only in supposing that it is the whole ; speaking, as all such persons would speak, and still do speak, in defending what they consider sacred truth against the assaults of folly and scepticism. How beautiful is their first introduction :—

“Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this evil which was come upon him, they came every one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off and knew him not, they lifted up their voices and wept, and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads towards heaven. So they sate down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him, for they saw that his grief was very great.”

What a picture is there ! What majestic tenderness ! His wife had scoffed at his faith, bidding him leave “ God and die.” “ His acquaintance had turned from him.” He “ had called his servant, and he had given him no answer.” Even the children in their unconscious cruelty had gathered round and mocked him, as he lay among the ashes. But “ his friends sprinkle dust towards heaven, and sit silently by him, and weep for him seven days and seven nights upon the ground.” That is, they were true hearted, truly loving, devout, religious men, and yet they, with their religion, were to become the instruments of the most poignant sufferings, the sharpest temptations, which he had to endure. So it was, and is, and will be,—of such materials is this human life of ours composed.

And now, remembering the double action of the drama, the actual trial of Job, the result of which is uncertain, and the delusion of these men which is, at the outset, certain, let us go rapidly through the dialogue. Satan’s share in the temptation had already been overcome. Lying sick in the loathsome disease which had been sent upon him, his wife, in Satan’s own words, had tempted Job, to say, “ Farewell to

God," think no more of God or goodness, since this was all which came of it ; and Job had told her, that she spoke as one of the foolish women. He "had received good at the hand of the Lord, and should he not receive evil?" But now, when real love and real affection appear, his heart melts in him ; he loses his forced self-composure, and bursts into a passionate regret that he had ever been born. In the agony of his sufferings, hope of better things had died away. He does not complain of injustice ; as yet, and before his friends have stung and wounded him, he makes no questioning of Providence,—but why was life given to him at all, if only for this ? And sick in mind and sick in body, but one wish remains to him, that death will come quickly and end all. It is a cry from the very depths of a single and simple heart. But for such simplicity and singleness his friends could not give him credit ; possessed beforehand with their idea, they see in his misery only a fatal witness against him ; such calamities could not have befallen a man, the justice of God would not have permitted it, unless they had been deserved. Job had sinned and he had suffered, and this wild passion was but impotence and rebellion.

Being as certain that they were right in this opinion as they were that God himself existed, that they should speak what they felt was only natural and necessary ; and their language at the outset is all which would be dictated by the tenderest sympathy. Eliphaz opens, the oldest and most important of the three, in a soft, subdued, suggestive strain, contriving in every way to spare the feelings of the sufferer, to the extreme to which his real love will allow him. All is general, impersonal, indirect, the rule of the world, the order of Providence. He does not accuse Job, but he describes his calamities, and leaves him to gather for himself the occasion which had produced them, and then passes off, as if further to soften the blow, to the mysterious vision in which the infirmity of mortal nature had been revealed to him, the universal weakness which involved both the certainty that Job had shared in it, and the excuse for him, if he would confess and humble himself : the blessed virtue of repentance follows, and the promise that all shall be well.

This is the note on which each of the friends strikes successively, in the first of the three divisions into which the dialogue divides itself, but each with increasing peremptoriness and confidence, as Job, so far from accepting their inter-

pretation of what had befallen him, hurls it from him in anger and disdain. Let us observe (what the Calvinists make of it they have given us no means of knowing,) he will hear as little of the charges against mankind, as of charges against himself. He will not listen to the "corruption of humanity," because in the consciousness of his own innocency, he knows that it is not corrupt: he knows it, and we know it, the divine sentence upon him having been already passed. He will not acknowledge his sin, he cannot repent, for he knows not of what to repent. If he could have reflected calmly, he might have foreseen what they would say. He knew all that as well as they: it was the old story which he had learnt, and could repeat, if necessary, as well as any one: and if it had been no more than a philosophical discussion, touching himself no more nearly than it touched his friends, he might have allowed for the tenacity of opinion in such matters, and listened to it and replied to it with equanimity. But as the proverb says, "it is ill talking between a full man and a fasting:" and in him such equanimity would have been but Stoicism or the affectation of it, and unreal as the others' theories. Possessed with the certainty that he had not deserved what had befallen him, harassed with doubt, and worn out with pain and unkindness, he had assumed (and how natural that he should assume it), that those who loved him would not have been hasty to believe evil of him, that he had been safe in speaking to them as he really felt, and that he might look to them for something warmer and more sympathizing than such dreary eloquence. So when the revelation comes upon him of what was passing in them, he attributes it (and now he is unjust to them) to a falsehood of heart, and not to a blindness of understanding. Their sermons, so kindly intended, roll past him as a dismal mockery. They had been shocked (and how true again is this to nature) at his passionate cry for death. "Do ye reprove words?" he says, "and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind?" It was but poor friendship and narrow wisdom. He had looked to them for pity, for comfort, and love. He had longed for it as the parched caravans in the desert for the water-streams, and "his brethren had dealt deceitfully with him," as the brooks, which in the cool winter roll in a full turbid stream, "what time it waxes warm they vanish, when it is hot they are consumed out of their place. The caravans of Tema looked for them, the companies of Sheba

waited for them. They were confounded because they had hoped. They came thither and there was nothing." If for once these poor men could have trusted their hearts, if for once they could have believed that there might be "more things in heaven and earth" than were dreamt of in their philosophy—but this is the one thing which they could not do, which the theologian proper never has done or will do. And thus whatever of calmness or endurance, Job alone, on his ash-heap, might have conquered for himself, is all scattered away; and as the strong gusts of passion sweep to and fro across his heart, he pours himself out in wild fitful music, so beautiful because so true, not answering them or their speeches, but now flinging them from him in scorn, now appealing to their mercy, or turning indignantly to God; now praying for death; now in perplexity doubting whether, in some mystic way which he cannot understand, he may not, perhaps after all, really have sinned, and praying to be shown it; and then staggering further into the darkness, and breaking out into upbraidings of the Power which has become so dreadful an enigma to him. "Thou inquirest after my iniquity, thou searchest after my sin, and thou knowest that I am not wicked. Why didst thou bring me forth out of the womb? Oh, that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me. Cease, let me alone. It is but a little while that I have to live. Let me alone, that I may take comfort a little before I go, whence I shall not return to the land of darkness and the shadow of death." In what other poem in the world is there pathos so deep as this? With experience so stern as his, it was not for Job to be calm, and self-possessed, and delicate in his words. He speaks not what he knows, but what he feels; and without fear the writer allows him to throw it out all genuine as it rises, not overmuch caring how nice ears might be offended, but contented to be true to the real emotion of a genuine human heart. So the poem runs on to the end of the first answer to Zophar.

But now with admirable fitness, as the contest goes forward, the relative position of the speakers begins to change. Hitherto Job only had been passionate; and his friends temperate and collected. Now, however, shocked at his obstinacy, and disappointed wholly in the result of their homilies, they stray still further from the truth in an endeavour to strengthen their position, and, as a natural consequence, visibly grow angry. To them Job's vehement and desperate

speeches are damning evidence of the truth of their suspicion. Impiety is added to his first sin, and they begin to see in him a rebel against God. At first they had been contented to speak generally; and much which they had urged was partially true; now they step forward to a direct application, and formally and personally accuse himself. Here their ground is positively false; and with delicate art it is they who are now growing passionate, and wounded self-love begins to show behind their zeal for God; while in contrast to them, as there is less and less truth in what they say, Job grows more and more collected. For a time it had seemed doubtful how he would endure his trial. The light of his faith was burning feebly and unsteadily; a little more and it seemed as if it might have utterly gone out; but at last the storm was lulling; as the charges are brought personally home to him, the confidence in his own real innocence rises against them. He had before known that he was innocent, now he feels the strength which lies in innocence, as if God were beginning to reveal Himself within him, to prepare the way for the after outward manifestation of Himself.

The friends, as before, repeat one another with but little difference; the sameness being of course intentional, as showing that they were not speaking for themselves, but as representatives of a prevailing opinion. Eliphaz, again, gives the note which the others follow. Hear this Calvinist of the old world. "Thy own mouth condemneth thee, and thine own lips testify against thee. What is man that he should be clean, and he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight; how much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water." Strange, that after all these thousands of years, we should still persist in this degrading confession, as a thing which it is impious to deny and impious to attempt to render otherwise, when scripture itself, in language so emphatic, declares that it is a lie. Job *is* innocent, perfect, righteous. God Himself bears witness to it. It is Job who is found at last to have spoken truth, and the friends to have sinned in denying it. And he holds fast by his innocency, and with a generous confidence puts away the misgivings which had begun to cling to him. Among his complainings he had exclaimed, that God was remembering upon him the sins of his youth—not denying them—knowing well, that he, like others,

had gone astray before he had learnt to control himself, but feeling that at least in an earthly father it is unjust to visit the faults of childhood on the matured man; feeling that he had long, long shaken them off from him, and they did not even impair the probity of his after life. But now these doubts, too, pass away in the brave certainty that God is not less just than man. As the denouncings grow louder and darker, he appeals from his narrow judges to the Supreme Tribunal, calls on God to hear him and to try his cause—and, then, in the strength of this appeal his eye grows clearer still. His sickness is mortal: he has no hope in life, and death is near, but the intense feeling that justice must and will be done, holds to him closer and closer. God may appear on earth for him; or if that be too bold a hope, and death finds him as he is—what is death then? God will clear his memory in the place where he lived; his injuries will be righted over his grave; while for himself, like a sudden gleam of sunlight between clouds, a clear, bright hope beams up, that he too, then, in another life, if not in this, when his skin is wasted off his bones, and the worms have done their work on the prison of his spirit, he, too, at last may then see God; may see Him, and have his pleadings heard.

With such a hope, or even the shadow of one, he turns back to the world again to look at it. Facts against which he had before closed his eyes he allows and confronts, and he sees that his own little experience is but the reflection of a law. You tell me, he seems to say, that the good are rewarded, and that the wicked are punished, that God is just, and that this is always so. Perhaps it is, or will be, but not in the way which you imagine. You have known me, you have known what my life has been; you see what I am, and it is no difficulty to you. You prefer believing that I, whom you call your friend, am a deceiver or a pretender, to admitting the possibility of the falsehood of your hypothesis. You will not listen to my assurance, and you are angry with me because I will not lie against my own soul, and acknowledge sins which I have not committed. You appeal to the course of the world in proof of your faith, and challenge me to answer you. Well, then, I accept your challenge. The world is not what you say. You have told me what you have seen of it. I will tell you what I have seen.

“Even while I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold upon my flesh. Wherefore do the wicked become old, yea, and are mighty in

power. Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Their bull gendereth and faileth not; their cow calveth and casteth not her calf. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down into the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray to him?"

Will you quote the weary proverb? Will you say that, "God layeth up his iniquity for his children?" (our translators have wholly lost the sense of this passage, and endeavour to make Job acknowledge what he is steadfastly denying.) Well, and what then? What will he care? "Will his own eye see his own fall? Will he drink the wrath of the Almighty? What are the fortunes of his house to him if the number of his own months is fulfilled?" One man is good and another wicked, one is happy and another is miserable. In the great indifference of nature they share alike in the common lot. "They lie down alike in the dust, and the worms cover them." Ewald, and many other critics, suppose that Job was hurried away by his feelings to say all this; and that in his calmer moments he must have felt that it was untrue. It is a point on which we must decline accepting even Ewald's high authority. Even then, in those old times, it was beginning to be terribly true. Even then the current theory was obliged to bend to large exceptions; and what Job saw as exceptions we see round us everywhere. It was true then, it is infinitely more true now, that what is called virtue in the common sense of the word, still more that nobleness, godliness, or heroism of character in any form whatsoever, have nothing to do with this or that man's prosperity, or even happiness. The thoroughly vicious man is no doubt wretched enough; but the worldly, prudent, self-restraining man, with his five senses, which he understands how to gratify with tempered indulgence, with a conscience satisfied with the hack routine of what is called respectability, such a man feels no wretchedness; no inward uneasiness disturbs him, no desires which he cannot gratify; and this though he be the basest and most contemptible slave of his own selfishness. Providence will not interfere to punish him. Let him obey the laws under which prosperity is obtainable, and he will obtain it, let him never fear. He will obtain it, be

he base or noble. Nature is indifferent; the famine, and the earthquake, and the blight, or the accident, will not discriminate to strike him. He may insure himself against those in these days of ours: with the money perhaps which a better man would have given away, and he will have his reward. He need not doubt it.

And again, it is not true, as optimists would persuade us, that such prosperity brings no real pleasure. A man with no high aspirations who thrives, and makes money, and envelops himself in comforts, is as happy as such a nature can be. If unbroken satisfaction be the most blessed state for a man (and this certainly is the practical notion of happiness) he is the happiest of men. Nor are those idle phrases any truer, that the good man's goodness is a never-ceasing sunshine; that virtue is its own reward, &c. &c. If men truly virtuous care to be rewarded for it, their virtue is but a poor investment of their moral capital. Was Job so happy then on that ash-heap of his, the mark of the world's scorn, and the butt for the spiritual archery of the theologian, alone in his forlorn nakedness, like some old dreary stump which the lightning has scathed, rotting away in the wind and the rain? Happy! if happiness be indeed what we men are sent into this world to seek for, those hitherto thought the noblest among us were the pitifullest and wretchedest. Surely it was no error in Job. It was that real insight which once was given to all the world in Christianity, however we have forgotten it now. He was learning to see that it was not in the possession of enjoyment, no, nor of happiness itself, that the difference lies between the good and the bad. True, it might be that God sometimes, even generally, gives such happiness — gives it in what Aristotle calls an *ἐπιγιγνόμενον τέλος*, but it is no part of the terms on which He admits us to His service, still less is it the end which we may propose to ourselves on entering His service. Happiness he gives to whom He will, or leaves to the angel of nature to distribute among those who fulfil the laws upon which *it* depends. But to serve God and to love Him is higher and better than happiness, though it be with wounded feet, and bleeding brow, and hearts loaded with sorrow. Into this high faith Job is rising, treading his temptations under his feet, and finding in them a ladder on which his spirit rises. Thus he is passing further and even further from his friends, soaring where their imaginations cannot follow him. To them he is a blasphemers

whom they gaze at with awe and terror. They had charged him with sinning on the strength of their hypothesis, and he has answered with a deliberate denial of it. Losing now all mastery over themselves, they pour out a torrent of mere extravagant invective and baseless falsehood, which in the calmer outset they would have blushed to think of. They *know* no evil of Job, but they do not hesitate now to convert conjecture into certainty, and specify in detail the particular crimes which he must have committed. He *ought* to have committed them, and so he had; the old argument then as now.—“Is not thy wickedness great?” says Eliphaz. “Thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing; thou hast not given water to the weary, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry;” and so on through a series of mere distracted lies. But the time was past when words like these could make Job angry. Bildad follows them up with an attempt to frighten him by a picture of the power of that God whom he was blaspheming; but Job cuts short his harangue, and ends it for him in a spirit of loftiness which Bildad could not have approached; and then proudly and calmly rebukes them all, no longer in scorn and irony, but in high, tranquil self-possession. “God forbid that I should justify you,” he says; “till I die I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go. My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.”

So far all has been clear, each party, with increasing confidence, having insisted on their own position, and denounced their adversaries. A difficulty now arises, which, at first sight, appears insurmountable. As the chapters are at present printed, the entire of the twenty-seventh is assigned to Job, and the verses from the eleventh to the twenty-third are in direct contradiction to all which he has maintained before, are, in fact, a concession of having been wrong from the beginning. Ewald, who, as we said above, himself refuses to allow the truth of Job's last and highest position, supposes that he is here receding from it, and confessing what an over precipitate passion had betrayed him into denying. For many reasons, principally because we are satisfied that Job said then no more than the real fact, we cannot think Ewald right; and the concessions are too large and too inconsistent, to be reconciled even with his own general theory of the poem. Another solution of the difficulty is very simple,

although, it is to be admitted, that it rather cuts the knot than unties it. Eliphaz and Bildad have each spoken a third time; the symmetry of the general form requires that now Zophar should speak; and the suggestion, we believe, was first made by Dr. Kennicott, that he did speak, and that the verses in question belong to him. Any one who is accustomed to MSS. will understand easily how such a mistake, if it be one, might have arisen. Even in Shakespeare, the speeches in the early editions are, in many instances, wrongly divided, and assigned to the wrong persons. It might have arisen from inadvertency; it might have arisen from the foolishness of some Jewish transcriber, who resolved, at all costs, to drag the book into harmony with Judaism, and make Job unsay his heresy. This view has the merit of fully clearing up the obscurity; another, however, has been suggested by Eichorn, who originally followed Kennicott, but discovered, as he supposed, a less violent hypothesis, which was equally satisfactory. He imagines the verses to be a summary by Job of his adversaries' opinions, as if he said—"Listen now; you know what the facts are as well as I, and yet you maintain this;" and then passed on with his indirect reply to it. It is possible that Eichorn may be right—at any rate, either he is right, or else Dr. Kennicott is. Certainly, Ewald is not. Taken as an account of Job's own conviction, the passage contradicts the burden of the whole poem. Passing it by, therefore, and going to what immediately follows, we arrive at what, in a human sense, is the final climax—Job's victory and triumph. He had appealed to God, and God had not appeared; he had doubted and fought against his doubts, and at last, had crushed them down. He, too, had been taught to look for God in outward judgments; and when his own experience had shown him his mistake, he knew not where to turn. He had been leaning on a bruised reed, and it had run into his hand, and pierced him. But as soon as in the speeches of his friend he saw it all laid down in its weakness and its false conclusions—when he saw the defenders of it wandering further and further from what he knew to be true, growing every moment, as if from a consciousness of the unsoundness of their standing ground, more violent, obstinate, and unreasonable, the scales fell more and more from his eyes—he had seen the fact that the wicked might prosper, and in learning to depend upon his innocency he had felt that the good man's support was

there, if it was anywhere; and at last, with all his heart, was reconciled to it. The mystery of the outer world becomes deeper to him, but he does not any more try to understand it. The wisdom which can compass that, he knows, is not in man; though man search for it deeper and harder than the miner searches for the hidden treasures of the earth; and the wisdom which alone is possible to him, is resignation to God.

“Where,” he cries, “shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth said it is not with me; and the sea said it is not in me. It is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air.* God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof [He, not man, understands the mysteries of the world which He has made]. And unto man He said, Behold! the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding.”

Here, therefore, it might seem as if all was over. There is no clearer or purer faith possible for man; and Job had achieved it. His evil had turned to good; and sorrow had severed for him the last links which bound him to lower things. He had felt that he could do without happiness, that it was no longer essential, and that he could live on, and still love God, and cling to Him. But he is not described as of preternatural, or at all Titanic nature, but as very man, full of all human tenderness and susceptibility. His old life was still beautiful to him. He does not hate it because he can renounce it; and now that the struggle is over, the battle fought and won, and his heart has flowed over in that magnificent song of victory, the note once more changes: he turns back to earth, to linger over those old departed days, with which the present is so hard a contrast; and his parable dies away in a strain of plaintive, but resigned melancholy. Once more he throws himself on God, no longer in passionate expostulation, but in pleading humility.† And

* An allusion, perhaps, to the old bird auguries. The birds, as the inhabitants of the air, were supposed to be the messengers between heaven and earth.

† The speech of Elihu, which lies between Job's last words and God's appearance, is now decisively pronounced by Hebrew scholars not to be genuine. The most superficial reader will have been perplexed by the introduction of a speaker to whom no allusion is made, either in the prologue or the epilogue; by a long dissertation, which adds nothing to the progress of the argument, proceeding evidently on the false hypothesis of the three friends, and betraying not the faintest conception of the real cause of Job's sufferings. And the suspicions which such an anomaly would

then comes (perhaps, as Ewald says, it *could not* have come before) the answer out of the whirlwind. Job had called on Him, and prayed that He might appear, that he might plead his cause with Him; and now He comes, and what will Job do? He comes not as the healing spirit in the heart of man; but, as Job had at first demanded, the outward God, the Almighty Creator of the universe, and clad in the terrors and the glory of it. Job, in his first precipitancy, had desired to reason with Him on His government. The poet, in gleaming lines, describes for an answer the universe as it then was known, the majesty and awfulness of it; and then asks whether it is this which he requires to have explained to him, or which he believes himself capable of conducting. The revelation acts on Job as the sign of the Macrocosmos on the modern Faust; but when he sinks crushed, it is not as the rebellious upstart, struck down in his pride—for he had himself, partially at least, subdued his own presumption—but as a humble penitent, struggling to overcome his weakness. He abhors himself for his murmurs, and “repents in dust and ashes.” It will have occurred to every one that the secret which has been revealed to the reader is not, after all, revealed to Job or to his friends, and for this plain reason: the burden of the drama is not that we do, but that we do not, and cannot, know the mystery of the government of the world, that it is not for man to seek it, or for God to reveal it. We, the readers, are, in this one instance, admitted behind the scenes—for once, in this single case—because it was necessary to meet the received theory by a positive fact, which contradicted it. But the explanation of one case need not be the explanation of another; our business is to do what we know to be right, and ask no questions. The veil which in the Ægyptian legend lay before the face of Isis, is not to

naturally suggest, are now made certainties by a fuller knowledge of the language, and the detection of a different hand. The interpolator has unconsciously confessed the feeling which allowed him to take so great a liberty. He, too, possessed with the old Jew theory, was unable to accept in its fulness so great a contradiction to it: and, missing the spirit of the poem, he believed that God’s honour could still be vindicated in the old way. “His wrath was kindled” against the friends, because they could not answer Job; and against Job because he would not be answered; and conceiving himself “full of matter,” and “ready to burst like new bottles,” he could not contain himself, and delivered into the text a sermon on the *Theodice*, such, we suppose, as formed the current doctrine of the time in which he lived.

be raised; and we are not to seek to penetrate secrets which are not ours.

While, however, God does not condescend to justify His ways to man, He gives judgment on the past controversy. The self-constituted pleaders for Him, the acceptors of His person, were all wrong; and Job, the passionate, vehement, scornful, misbelieving Job, he had spoken the truth; he at least had spoken facts, and they had been defending a transient theory as an everlasting truth.

“And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job; and offer for yourselves a burnt-offering. And my servant Job shall pray for you, and him will I accept. Lest I deal with you after your folly, for that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job.”

One act of justice remains. Knowing as we do, the cause of Job's sufferings, and that as soon as his trial was over, it was no longer operative, our sense of fitness could not be satisfied unless he were indemnified outwardly for his outward sufferings. Satan is defeated, and his integrity proved; and there is no reason why the general law should be interfered with, which, however large the exceptions, tends to connect goodness and prosperity; or why obvious calamities, obviously undeserved, should remain any more unremoved. Perhaps, too, a deeper lesson still lies below his restoration—something perhaps of this kind. Prosperity, enjoyment, happiness, comfort, peace, whatever be the name by which we designate that state in which life is to our own selves pleasant and delightful, as long as they are sought or prized as things essential, so far have a tendency to disenoble our nature, and are a sign that we are still in servitude to selfishness. Only when they lie outside us, as ornaments merely to be worn or laid aside as God pleases, only then may such things be possessed with impunity. Job's heart in early times had clung to them more than he knew, but now he was purged clean, and they were restored because he had ceased to need them.

Such in outline is this wonderful poem. With the material of which it is woven we have not here been concerned, although it is so rich and pregnant, that we might with little difficulty construct out of it a complete picture of the world

as then it was : its life, knowledge, arts, habits, superstitions, hopes, and fears. The subject is the problem of all mankind, and the composition embraces no less wide a range. But what we are here most interested upon, is the epoch which it marks in the progress of mankind, as the first recorded struggle of a new experience with an established orthodox belief. True, for hundreds of years, perhaps for a thousand, the superstition against which it was directed continued ; when Christ came it was still in its vitality. Nay, as we saw, it is alive, or in a sort of mock life, among us at this very day. But even those who retained their imperfect belief had received into their canon a book which treated it with contumely and scorn, so irresistible was the lofty majesty of its truth.

In days like these, when we hear so much of progress, it is worth while to ask ourselves, what advances we have made further in the same direction ? and once more, at the risk of some repetition, let us look at the position in which this book leaves us. It had been assumed, that man if he lived a just and upright life, had a right to expect to be happy. Happiness, "his being's end and aim," was his legitimate and covenanted reward. If God therefore was just, such a man would be happy ; and inasmuch as God was just, the man who was not happy had not deserved to be. There is no flaw in this argument ; and if it is unsound, the fallacy can only lie in the supposed right to happiness. It is idle to talk of inward consolations. Job felt them, but they were not everything. They did not relieve the anguish of his wounds ; they did not make the loss of his children, or his friends' unkindness, any the less painful to him.

The poet, indeed, restores him in the book ; but in life it need not have been so. He might have died upon his ash-heap as thousands of good men have died, and will die again in misery. Happiness, therefore, is *not* what we are to look for. Our place is to be true to the best which we know, to seek that and do that ; and if by "virtue its own reward" be meant that the good man cares only to continue good, desiring nothing more ; then it is a true and noble saying. But if virtue be valued because it is politic, because in pursuit of it will be found most enjoyment and fewest sufferings, then it is not noble any more, and it is turning the truth of God into a lie. Let us do right, and whether happiness come or unhappiness it is no very mighty matter. If it come, life will be sweet ;

if it do not come, life will be bitter—bitter, not sweet, and yet to be borne. On such a theory alone is the government of this world intelligibly just. The well-being of our souls depends only on what we *are*, and nobleness of character is nothing else but steady love of good, and steady scorn of evil. The government of the world is a problem while the desire of selfish enjoyment survives, and when justice is not done according to such standard (which will not be till the day after doomsday, and not then) self-loving men will still ask, why? and find no answer. Only to those who have the heart to say, we can do without that, it is not what we ask or desire, is there no secret. Man will have what he deserves, and will find what is really best for him, exactly as he honestly seeks for it. Happiness may fly away, pleasure pall or cease to be obtainable, wealth decay, friends fail or prove unkind, and fame turn to infamy; but the power to serve God never fails, and the love of Him is never rejected.

Most of us, at one time or other of our lives, have known something of love—of that only pure love in which no *self* is left remaining. We have loved as children, we have loved as lovers; some of us have learnt to love a cause, a faith, a country; and what love would that be which existed only with a prudent view to after-interests. Surely, there is a love which exults in the power of self-abandonment, and can glory in the privilege of suffering for what is good. *Que mon nom soit flétri, pourvu que la France soit libre*, said Danton; and those wild patriots who had trampled into scorn the faith in an immortal life in which they would be rewarded for what they were suffering, went to their graves as beds, for the dream of a people's liberty. Shall we, who would be thought reasonable men, love the living God with less heart than these poor men loved their phantom? Justice is done; the balance is not deranged. It only seems deranged, as long as we have not learnt to serve without looking to be paid for it.

Such is the theory of life which is to be found in the Book of Job; a faith which has flashed up in all times and all lands, wherever noble men were to be found, and which passed in Christianity into the acknowledged creed of half the world. The cross was the new symbol, the divine sufferer the great example, and mankind answered to the call, because the appeal was not to what was poor and selfish in them, but to whatever of best and bravest was in their

nature. The law of reward and punishment was superseded by the law of love. Thou shalt love God and thou shalt love man; and that was not love—men knew it once—which was bought by the prospect of reward. Times are changed with us now. Thou shalt love God and thou shalt love man, in the hands of a poor Paley, are found to mean no more than, Thou shalt love thyself after an enlightened manner. And the same base tone has saturated not only our common feelings, but our Christian theologies and our Antichristian philosophies. A prudent regard to our future interests, an abstinence from present unlawful pleasures, because they will entail the loss of greater pleasure by-and-by, or perhaps be paid for with pain, this is called virtue now; and the belief that such beings as men can be influenced by any feelings nobler or better, is smiled at as the dream of enthusiasts whose hearts have outrun their understandings. Indeed, he were but a poor lover whose devotion to his mistress lay resting on the feeling that a marriage with her would conduce to his own after comforts. That were a poor patriot who served his country for the hire which his country would give to him. And we should think but poorly of a son who thus addressed his earthly father: "Father, on whom my fortunes depend, teach me to do what pleases thee, that I, obeying thee in all things, may obtain those good things which thou hast promised to give to thy obedient children." If any of us who have lived in so poor a faith venture, by-and-by, to put in our claims, Satan will be likely to say of us (with better reason than he did of Job) "Did they serve God for nought, then? Take their reward from them, and they will curse Him to His face." If Christianity had never borne itself more nobly than this, do we suppose that those fierce Norsemen who had learnt, in the fiery war-songs of the Edda, of what stuff the hearts of heroes are composed, would have fashioned their sword-hilts into crosses, and themselves into a crusading chivalry? Let us not dishonour our great fathers with the dream of it. The Christians, like the Stoics and the Epicureans, would have lived their little day among the ignoble sects of an effete civilization, and would have passed off and been heard of no more. It was in another spirit that those first preachers of righteousness went out upon their warfare with evil. They preached, not enlightened prudence, but purity, justice, goodness; holding out no promises in this world except of

suffering as their great master had suffered, and rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for His sake. And that crown of glory which they did believe to await them in a life beyond the grave, was no enjoyment of what they had surrendered in life, was not enjoyment at all in any sense which human thought or language can attach to the words ; as little like it as the crown of love is like it, which the true lover looks for when at last he obtains his mistress. It was to be with Christ—to lose themselves in Him.

How all this nobleness ebbed away, and Christianity became what we know it, we are partially beginning to see. The living spirit organized for itself a body of perishable flesh : not only the real gains of real experience, but mere conjectural hypotheses current at the day for the solution of unexplained phenomena, became formulæ and articles of faith ; again, as before, the living and the dead were bound together, and the seeds of decay were already planted on the birth of a constructed polity. But there was another cause allied to this, and yet different from it, which, though a law of human nature itself, seems now-a-days altogether forgotten. In the rapid and steady advance of our knowledge of material things, we are apt to believe that all our knowledge follows the same law, that it is merely generalized experience, that experience accumulates daily, and, therefore, that “progress of the species,” *in all senses*, is an obvious and necessary fact. There is something which is true in this view mixed with a great deal which is false. Material knowledge, the physical and mechanical sciences, make their way from step to step, from experiment to experiment, and each advance is secured and made good, and cannot again be lost ; one generation takes up the general sum of experience where the last laid it down, adds to it what it has the opportunity of adding, and leaves it with interest to the next. The successive positions, as they are gained, require nothing for the apprehension of them but an understanding ordinarily cultivated. Prejudices have to be encountered, but prejudices of opinion merely, not prejudices of conscience or prejudices of self-love, like those which beset our progress in the science of morality. Here we enter upon conditions wholly different, conditions in which age differs from age, man differs from man, and even from himself, at different moments. We all have experienced times when, as we say, we should not know ourselves ; some, when we fall below our average level ;

some, when we are lifted above it, and put on, as it were, a higher nature. At such intervals as these last (unfortunately, with most of us, of rare occurrence), many things become clear to us, which before were hard sayings; propositions become alive which, usually, are but dry words. Our hearts seem purer, our motives loftier; our purposes, what we are proud to acknowledge to ourselves. And, as man is unequal to himself, so is man to his neighbour, and period to period. The entire method of action, the theories of human life which in one era prevail universally, to the next are unpractical and insane, as those of this next would have seemed mere baseness to the first, if the first could have anticipated them. One, we may suppose, holds some "greatest nobleness principle," the other some "greatest happiness principle;" and then their very systems of axioms will contradict one another; their general conceptions and their detailed interpretations, their rules, judgments, opinions, practices, will be in perpetual and endless collision. Our minds take shape from our hearts, and the facts of moral experience do not teach their own meaning, but submit to many readings, according to the power of eye which we bring with us.

The want of a clear perception of so important a feature about us, leads to many singular contradictions. A believer in popular Protestantism, who is also a believer in progress, ought, if he were consistent, to regard mankind as growing every day in a more and more advantageous position with respect to the trials of life; and yet if he were asked whether it is easier for him to "save his soul" in the nineteenth century than it would have been in the first or second, or whether the said soul is necessarily better worth saving, he would be perplexed for an answer. There is hardly one of us who, in childhood, has not felt like the Jews to whom Christ spoke, that if he had "lived in the days of the fathers," if he had had their advantages, he would have found duty a much easier matter; and some of us in mature life have felt that, in old Athens, or old republican Rome, in the first ages of Christianity, in the Crusades or at the Reformation, there was a contagious atmosphere of general nobleness, in which we should have been less troubled with the little feelings which cling about us now. At any rate, it is at these rare epochs only that real additions are made to our moral knowledge. At such times, new truths are, in-

deed, sent down among us, and for periods longer or shorter, may be seen to exercise an ennobling influence on mankind. Perhaps what is gained on these occasions is never entirely lost. The historical monuments of their effects are at least indestructible; and, when the spirit which gave them birth re-appears, their dormant energy awakens again.

But it seems from our present experience of what, in some at least of its modern forms, Christianity has been capable of becoming, that there is no doctrine in itself so pure, but what the poorer nature which is in us can disarm and distort it, and adapt it to its own littleness. The once living spirit dries up into formulæ, and formulæ whether of mass-sacrifice or vicarious righteousness, or "reward and punishment," are contrived ever so as to escape making over high demands on men. Some aim at dispensing with obedience altogether, and those who insist on obedience rest the obligations of it on the poorest of motives. So things go on till there is no life left at all; till, from all higher aspirations we are lowered down to the love of self after an enlightened manner; and then nothing remains but to fight the battle over again. The once beneficial truth has become, as in Job's case, a cruel and mischievous deception, and the whole question of life and its obligations must again be opened.

It is now some three centuries since the last of such re-openings. If we ask ourselves how much during this time has been actually added to the sum of our knowledge in these matters, what—in all the thousands upon thousands of sermons, and theologies, and philosophies with which Europe has been deluged—has been gained for mankind beyond what we have found in this very book of Job for instance; how far all this has advanced us in the "progress of humanity," it were hard, or rather it is easy, to answer. How far we have fallen below, let Paley and the rest bear witness; but what moral question can be asked which admits now of a nobler solution than was offered two, perhaps three, thousand years ago? The world has not been standing still, experience of man and life has increased, questions have multiplied on questions, while the answers of the established teachers to them have been growing every day more and more incredible. What other answers have there been? Of all the countless books which have appeared, there has been only one of enduring importance, in which an attempt is made to carry on the solution of the great problem. Job is given over into

Satan's hand to be tempted; and though he shakes he does not fall. Taking the temptation of Job for his model, Goethe has similarly exposed his Faust to trial, and with him the tempter succeeds. His hero falls from sin to sin, from crime to crime; he becomes a seducer, a murderer, a betrayer, following recklessly his evil angel wherever he chooses to lead him; and yet, with all this, he never wholly forfeits our sympathy. In spite of his weakness his heart is still true to his higher nature; sick and restless, even in the delirium of enjoyment, he always longs for something better, and he never can be brought to say of evil that it is good. And, therefore, after all, the devil is balked of his prey; in virtue of this one fact, that the evil in which he steeped himself remained to the last hateful to him, Faust is saved by the angels. . . . And this, indeed, though Goethe has scarcely dealt with it satisfactorily, is a vast subject. It will be eagerly answered for the established belief, that such cases are its especial province. All men are sinners, and *it* possesses the blessed remedy for sin. But, among the countless numbers of those characters so strangely mixed among us, in which the dark and the bright fibres cross like a mesh-work; characters at one moment capable of acts of heroic nobleness, at another, hurried by temptation into actions which even common men may deplore, how many are there who have never availed themselves of the conditions of reconciliation as orthodoxy proffers them, and of such men what is to be said? It was said once of a sinner that to her "much was forgiven, for she loved much." But this is language which theology has as little appropriated as the Jews could appropriate the language of Job. It cannot recognize the nobleness of the human heart. It has no balance in which to weigh the good against the evil; and when a great Burns, or a Mirabeau comes before it, it can but tremblingly count up the offences committed, and then, looking to the end, and finding its own terms not to have been complied with, it faintly mutters its anathema. Sin only it can apprehend and judge; and for the poor acts of struggling heroism, "Forasmuch as they were not done, &c., &c., it doubts not but they have the nature of sin."*

Something of the difficulty has been met by Goethe, but it cannot be said that he has resolved it; or at least that he has furnished others with a solution which may guide their

* See the Thirteenth Article.

V. Carlyle's Essay on the nature of sin.

judgment. In the writer of the Book of Job there is an awful moral earnestness before which we bend as in the presence of a superior being. The orthodoxy against which he contended is not set aside or denied; he sees what truth is in it; only he sees more than it, and over it, and through it. But in Goethe, who needed it more, inasmuch as his problem was more delicate and difficult, the moral earnestness is not awful, is not even high. We cannot feel that in dealing with sin he entertains any great horror of it; he looks on it as a mistake, as undesirable, but scarcely as more. Goethe's great powers are of another kind; and this particular question, though in appearance the primary subject of the poem, is really only secondary. In substance Faust is more like Ecclesiastes than it is like Job, and describes rather the restlessness of a largely-gifted nature which, missing the guidance of the heart, plays experiments with life, trying knowledge, pleasure, dissipation, one after another, and hating them all; and then hating life itself as a weary, stale, flat, unprofitable mockery. The temper exhibited here will probably be perennial in the world. But the remedy for it will scarcely be more clear under other circumstances than it is at present, and lies in the disposition of the heart, and not in any propositions which can be addressed to the understanding. For that other question, how rightly to estimate a human being; what constitutes a real vitiation of character, and how to distinguish, without either denying the good or making light of the evil; how to be just to the popular theories, and yet not to blind ourselves to their shallowness and injustice—that is a problem for us, for the solution of which we are at present left to our ordinary instinct, without any recognised guidance whatsoever.

Nor is this the only problem which is in the same situation. There can scarcely be a more startling contrast between fact and theory, than the conditions under which practically, positions of power and influence are distributed among us, the theory of human worth which the necessities of life oblige us to act upon and the theory which we believe that we believe. As we look round among our leading men, our statesmen, our legislators, the judges on our bench, the commanders of our armies, the men to whom this English nation commits the conduct of its best interests, profane and sacred, what do we see to be the principles which guide our selection? How entirely do they lie beside

and beyond the negative tests? and how little respect do we pay to the breach of this or that commandment in comparison with ability? So wholly impossible is it to apply the received opinions on such matters to practice, to treat men known to be guilty of what theology calls deadly sins, as really guilty of them, that it would almost seem we had fallen into a moral anarchy; that ability *alone* is what we regard, without any reference at all, except in glaring and outrageous cases, to moral disqualifications. It is invidious to mention names of living men; it is worse than invidious to drag out of their graves men who have gone down into them with honour, to make a point for an argument. But we know, all of us, that among the best servants of our country there have been, and there are many, whose lives will not stand scrutiny by the negative tests, and who do not appear very greatly to repent, or to have repented, of their sins according to recognized methods.

Once more, among our daily or weekly confessions, which we are supposed to repeat as if we were all of us at all times in precisely the same moral condition, we are made to say that we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and to have left undone those things which we ought to have done. An earthly father to whom his children were day after day to make this acknowledgment would be apt to inquire whether they were trying to do better, whether at any rate they were endeavouring to learn; and if he were told that although they had made some faint attempts to understand the negative part of their duty, yet that of the positive part, of those things which they ought to do, they had no notions at all, and had no idea that they were under obligation to form any, he would come to rather strange conclusions about them. But really and truly, what practical notions of duty have we beyond that of abstaining from committing sins? Not to commit sin, we suppose, covers but a small part of what is expected of us. Through the entire tissue of our employments there runs a good and a bad. Bishop Butler tells us, for instance, that even of our time there is a portion which is ours, and a portion which is our neighbour's; and if we spend more of it on personal interests than our own share, we are stealing. This sounds strange doctrine; we prefer rather making vague acknowledgments, and shrink from pursuing them into detail. We say vaguely, that in all we do we should consecrate ourselves to God, and

our own lips condemn us; for which among us cares to learn the way to do it. The *devoir* of a knight was understood in the courts of chivalry, the lives of heroic men, pagan and Christian, were once held up before the world as patterns of detailed imitation; and now, when such ideals are wanted more than ever, Protestantism unhappily stands with a drawn sword on the threshold of the inquiry, and tells us that it is impious. The law has been fulfilled for us in condescension to our inherent worthlessness, and our business is to appropriate another's righteousness, and not, like Titans, to be scaling Heaven by profane efforts of our own. Protestants, we know very well, will cry out in tones loud enough at such a representation of their doctrines. But we know also, that unless men may feel a cheerful conviction that they can do right if they try, that they can purify themselves, can live noble and worthy lives, unless this is set before them as *the* thing which they are to do, and *can* succeed in doing, they will not waste their energies on what they know beforehand will end in failure, and if they may not live for God they will live for themselves.

And all this while the whole complex frame of society is a meshwork of duty woven of living fibre, and the condition of its remaining sound is, that every thread of it of its own free energy shall do what it ought. The penalties of duties neglected are to the full as terrible as those of sins committed; more terrible perhaps, because more palpable and sure. A lord of the land, or an employer of labour, supposes that he has no duty except to keep what he calls the commandments in his own person, to go to church, and to do what he will with his own,—and Irish famines follow, and trade strikes, and chartisms, and Paris revolutions. We look for a remedy in impossible legislative enactments, and there is but one remedy which will avail; that the thing which we call public opinion learn something of the meaning of human nobleness, and demand some approximation to it. As things are we have no idea of what a human being ought to be. After the first rudimental conditions we pass at once into meaningless generalities; and with no knowledge to guide our judgment, we allow it to be guided by meaner principles; we respect money, we respect rank, we respect ability—character is as if it had no existence.

In the midst of this loud talk of progress, therefore, in which so many of us at present are agreed to believe, which

is, indeed, the common meeting point of all the thousand sects into which we are split, it is with saddened feelings that we see so little of it in so large a matter. Progress there is in knowledge; and science has enabled the number of human beings capable of existing upon this earth to be indefinitely multiplied. But this is but a small triumph if the ratio of the good and the bad, the wise and the foolish, the full and the hungry remains unaffected. And we cheat ourselves with words when we conclude out of our material splendour an advance of the race. One fruit only our mother earth offers up with pride to her Maker—her human children made noble by their life upon her; and how wildly on such matters we now are wandering let this one instance serve to show. At the moment at which we write,* a series of letters are appearing in the *Times* newspaper, letters evidently of a man of ability, and endorsed in large type by the authorities of Printing House Square, advocating the establishment of a free Greek state with its centre at Constantinople, on the ground that the Greek character has at last achieved the qualities essential for the formation of a great people, and that endued as it is with the practical commercial spirit, and taking everywhere rational views of life, there is no fear of a repetition from it of the follies of the age of Pericles. We should rather think there was not: and yet the writer speaks without any appearance of irony, and is saying what he obviously means.

In two things there is progress—progress in knowledge of the outward world, and progress in material wealth. This last, for the present, creates, perhaps, more evils than it relieves; but suppose this difficulty solved, suppose the wealth distributed, and every peasant living like a peer—what then? If this is all, one noble soul outweighs the whole of it. Let us follow knowledge to the outer circle of the universe, the eye will not be satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. Let us build our streets of gold, and they will hide as many aching hearts as hovels of straw. The well-being of mankind is not advanced a single step. Knowledge is power, and wealth is power; and harnessed, as in Plato's fable, to the chariot of the soul, and guided by wisdom, they may bear it through the circle of the stars; but left to their own guidance, or reined by a fool's hand, they may bring the

* August 1853.

poor fool to Phaeton's end, and set a world on fire. One real service, and perhaps only one, knowledge alone and by itself will do for us—it can explode existing superstitions. Everything has its appointed time, superstitions like the rest ; and theologies, that they may not overlive the period in which they can be of advantage to mankind, are condemned, by the conditions of their being, to weave a body for themselves out of the ideas of the age of their birth ; ideas which, by the advance of knowledge, are seen to be imperfect or false. We cannot any longer be told that there must be four inspired gospels—neither more nor less—because there are four winds and four elements. The chemists now count some sixty elements, ultimately, as some of them think, reducible into one ; and the gospel, like the wind, may blow from every point under heaven. But, effectual to destroy old superstitions, whether it is equally successful in preventing others from growing in their place, is less certain and obvious. In these days of table-turnings, mesmerisms, spirit-rappings, odyle fluids, and millenarian pamphlets selling 150,000 copies among our best-educated classes, we must be allowed to doubt.

Our one efficient political science hinges on self-interest, and the uniform action of *motives* among the masses of mankind—of selfish motives reducible to system. Such philosophies and such sciences would but poorly explain the rise of Christianity, of Mahometanism, or of the Reformation. They belong to ages of comparative poverty of heart, when the desires of men are limited to material things ; when men are contented to labour, and eat the fruit of their labour, and then lie down and die. While such symptoms remain among us, our faith in progress may remain unshaken ; but it will be a faith which, as of old, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

THE END.

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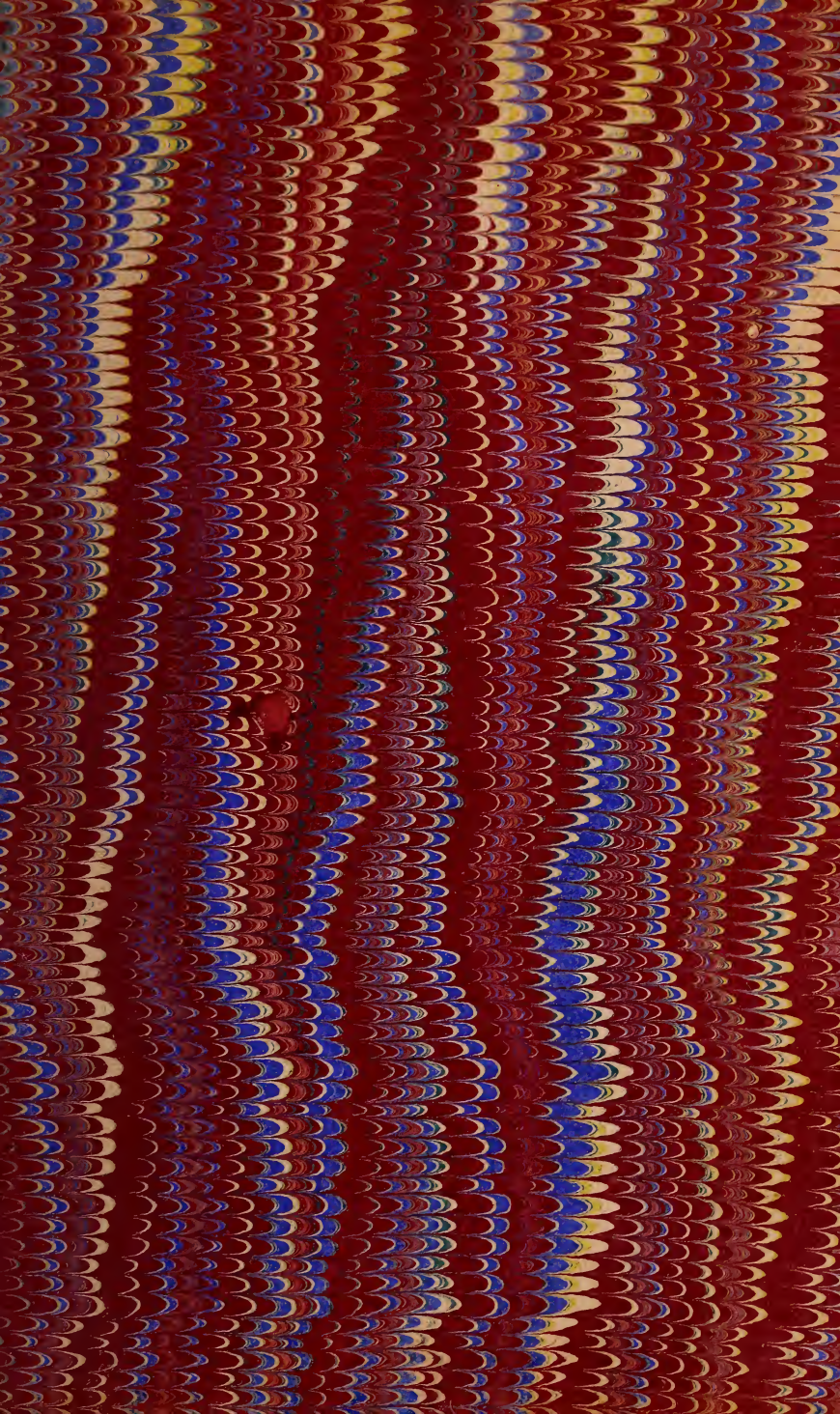
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