

ARTICLE IV.

THE DRAMA OF JOB.

BY THE REV. CHARLES H. DICKINSON.

A LITERARY study of a scriptural subject needs no apology in this day. Such a study, to have even literary value, must be sympathetic with the peculiar religious spirit of the Hebrew writers, and must seek those religious treasures which absorbed all their thought.

This critique of the book of Job starts from the conviction that the book is purely a drama, containing nothing which detracts from dramatic quality or weakens dramatic power; that its author, though thinker and seer, is a dramatic genius of the first order, both in intensity of passion and artistic skill; that this drama is, therefore, not a treatise in the form of dialogue, nor an attempt at a speculative theodicy; and that the speculative elements of the book are introduced solely for their dramatic value.

By a drama we understand that form of literature which gives idealized representations of human experience, including experiences of inward conflict: representations of them, not accounts of them. It is none the less a drama, if it is able to dispense with an actual stage, and enacts itself before the mind of reader or auditor. The experience is idealized in the sense that the essential of it is separated from the insignificant details of daily life, and is made more intense and vivid. Whatever attainments are gained by the personages of a drama, whether in knowledge or happiness or character, are not the result of discursive thought, but of struggle and suffering. And if a mystery of life is illumined, it is by the light of an experience

which also deepens the sense of life's mysteries; as we feel the universe to be more mysterious the more we gaze at the stars. Such a drama, intended for recitation, is the book of Job: it unfolds a profound secret of life, but only by presenting life itself as the great teacher.

To test this conviction, we first look at the book as a whole, to see whether it is a dramatic unity; then we trace its course more in detail, to see if there is a purely dramatic progress. If the conviction is sustained, theories inconsistent with it disappear of themselves. A familiar acquaintance with the book is presupposed.

To begin with what is most evident,—the form of the book. In form at least this is a drama, with prologue and epilogue. The drama proper is written in magnificent verse. The prologue and epilogue are in prose. The prologue is intensely dramatic in everything except form. In the epilogue the style is idyllic, and the dramatic quality is carefully avoided. All these contrasts of form and style have an evident purpose. The author indicates that the drama proper begins with the outbreak of passionate remonstrance from the suffering hero, and ends with his confession to Jehovah, who has spoken out of the whirlwind, when Job answers him:—

“I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;
But now mine eye seeth thee,
Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

By the use of the prose prologue, the author marks off the real dramatic conflict from the situation which occasioned it. We are led by the shortest possible way to a sympathetic acquaintance with the hero in his agony. This done, the prologue does not intrude itself upon us further. The author does not expect his auditors to keep in mind certain problems supposed to be inferred from the prologue, while the drama itself is completely absorbing attention and sympathy. If the critics refuse to be carried

along by the poet, and are continually harking back, that is no fault of his.

The transition from the climax of the drama to the epilogue is like sunshine in a valley after storm along the mountain tops. The epilogue is essential to the play; but to find there the outcome of one of the most tremendous struggles ever described, is to drag the author down from the loftiest heights of poetic thought to the level of that false and dreary explanation of life against which he has poured forth a poet's "scorn of scorn." With the last word of the drama proper, the climax has been reached: the spiritual conflict is crowned with victory; the aspiration of the hero has attained its goal. But while a single word additional in the drama itself would make an anti-climax, two things remain to be done. It would be monstrous to leave the racked, distorted body on the rubbish heap, even though the soul of the protagonist has been raised to the ultimate height attainable by suffering. And besides, the mind of the auditor needs some soothing strain, must be relaxed from the drama's height to the level earth. As Beethoven's most tumultuous symphonies close with a few quiet measures, as Browning's inspired improviser

"Feels for the common chord again,
The C major of this life,"

so our poet, with a skill not inferior at least to that of his fellow-artists, paints for us a picture of peaceful, quiet happiness, when the drama is accomplished.

To make clear to ourselves the effect at which the author aimed, we must reflect that the work was evidently intended for recitation. Seat yourself in imagination among a Hebrew audience, listening with them for the first time to a reading of the book of Job, either by the author himself or by a reciter whom he has employed,—such recitations in the Orient are with no slight dramatic power,—and you will see that the author's purpose is a

tremendous dramatic impression, to be secured on the first hearing, and to be deepened, not changed into a different impression, by subsequent hearings, and that every detail is wonderfully adapted to that end. You hear in the opening sentence the name of one whose sufferings have lived in popular tradition, and your interest is at once aroused. The glowing picture of his prosperity appeals to your oriental fancy. Suddenly the court of the Most High opens before you, and the hateful Adversary launches his calumny and receives his commission. The messengers of unexampled calamity come in breathless haste and quick succession; and the hero wins your absorbed admiration by steadfast faithfulness to God, amid the wreck of his prosperity. Then a fiercer stroke, and you behold the outcast, hopeless leper, faithful to the uttermost. As the torrent of the reciter's words sinks and slackens for a moment, you feel the long silence of the seven days and seven nights of the hero's dumb anguish and of his friends' inexpressible sympathy. Then bursts forth the awful lament, borne on the mighty surges of the perfect verse, and gathering up into its colossal pain every sorrow that you have felt or seen or imagined. The wisdom of the ages protests in vain against that anguish, and can only aggravate it into a fearful challenge of the righteousness of God; then turns upon the despairing sufferer and condemns him. Then he who has but now challenged God's righteousness, appeals from human injustice to God's judgment-throne, with hopes and aspirations which lay bare unsuspected depths in your own soul. Then a calmer passion moves along grander heights whence it assails Heaven with humbler and more confident appeal. Out of the whirlwind speaks Jehovah's voice; and you bow low in contrition with him who has revealed to you your own sorrow, despair, longings, and consciousness of God. Then the poet brings his hearers to that calm mood in which a

great work of art should always leave the soul. You hear of glad and gentle things. You see a life that has passed through so great an agony, tranquil under the divine favor. You go to your home, not as having listened to a dissertation in the form of dialogue, nor to an attempt at a speculative theodicy; but you have gained a new consciousness of life; you have explored the depths and heights of man, and have learned that human anguish is to lead to the vision of God, in whose presence the victorious soul abhors itself, and repents in dust and ashes, and who throughout all storms guides into peace. Life's great lesson has been taught by the faithful representation of life itself; and the work which teaches this lesson by such means is drama pure and simple.

Our examination of the form of the book has anticipated what is to be said in general upon its *content*. In a great artistic creation, form and content are so interfused that one cannot treat either of them quite separately.

The motive of the book is commonly defined as the problem, Why are the wicked prospered and the righteous made to suffer? Our conviction of the dramatic quality of the book of Job inclines us to change at least the form of this statement. For, as it stands, it is a subject for a treatise, not a motive for a drama. And we are encouraged to make our amendment, by the failure of all attempts to bring the contents of the book under this head and to reconcile the caption with the book's dramatic form.

The dramatist suggests an interest to which the heart responds at once and instinctively; he leads us by a short path to confront the universal mystery of pain, made vivid by its sharp contrast to a happiness almost unalloyed. This mystery is presented in its most poignant aspect, as the undeserved suffering of a righteous man, and as such cries out against the order of the world and the justice of the Most High, and becomes the source of the fiercest con-

flict that is waged in the human soul,—a conflict fought out to the attainment of the vision of God, and to the experience of what God is to man and what man is to his Maker. This solution is practical, not speculative. Neither experience nor vision at their ultimate can tell why God's way of bringing man to the spiritual heights must be the way of pain.

We touch upon certain subordinate questions, only in so far as they may help us to the clearer appreciation of the drama as a drama. The *place of composition*—or rather of publication—was where the author could have a Hebrew audience, for his direct appeal is to the religious experience of the Hebrew. Whether the locality was Northern or Southern Palestine, Babylonia, Egypt, or a place not guessed, if such place can be found, is not a question of much literary importance.

As to the *date*.—The attempt to connect the work with a particular event, such as the Babylonian captivity, comes to little as we reflect that the burden of the poem is suggested by conditions which may be found in every age, and which lie upon a great soul almost as heavily in times of general prosperity as amid wide-spread calamity. On the other hand, the allusions to national deportations—to instance one of the indications of a date perhaps not earlier than the middle of the eighth century—point to a time when these disasters lay close to the sympathies and anxieties of the auditors, if not within their actual experience, since the dramatic artist uses the illustrations which most appeal. The attempt to fix a date by comparison of certain passages of Job with passages of similar import in other great Hebrew writers, overlooks the royal right, exercised by all these anointed of the Lord, to take whatever belonged to their message, wherever it might be found. The literary student is content to leave unanswered the question, whether our dramatist or the Deuteronomist first

admired the heavenly bodies without worshipping them, or whether it was Job or Jeremiah who anticipated the other in cursing the day of his own birth.

Our purpose obliges us to look more closely at the author's connection with that phase of Hebrew thought which we call the Wisdom Literature, and of which a few monuments remain. The presumption is that he wrote when that philosophy was in its flower, when it had become recognized as in a sense a system of thought, and when it had attained literary expression; but before its fundamental principle, "Prosperity for the good, adversity for the wicked," had been staggered by overwhelming national calamities, or disintegrated by the perception of its irreconcilable contradictions; before Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were already confuted. We cannot fix the date closer by supposing any perceptible effect produced by our poet upon this philosophy. In all ages, great voices have called men from speculation to life, and men have not heeded. The use which he makes of this popular and dominant philosophy concerns us most. He is its avowed antagonist, not in the sense of opposing to it a different speculation, but of challenging it by the facts of life and the actual ways of God with man. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are but foils to these realities. We can imagine the author using different foils in a different age, but in every age the conflict of the soul of Job is essentially the same. Our poet's theme is universal, as befits his genius, and appeals to men of all times. He was obliged to present his theme by the means that appealed most directly to the man of his own day. This necessity of his should not hide from us his intent. In a sympathetic study of the book of Job, we are not thrashing over old straw of ancient Hebrew controversy; we are entering into one of the deepest hearts and clearest visions that ever faced and felt the realities of human life and God's ways with men.

May I stop to make this point right here? That if the conviction of the book of Job as pure drama is sustained, we have another example of the usefulness of literary methods to glorify the ancient Word, and to make it profitable to universal needs.

The religion of the author demands a glance, for his great work is dominated by a religious spirit and purpose. Our conviction of the nature of the book is well adapted to clear away certain eccentric views on this point. The poet did not "reproduce the patriarchal religion," nor "give us the primitive monotheism of the Arab," for he is poet, not antiquarian; and as religious dramatic poet he must appeal directly to the religious consciousness of his auditors. His religion is the Jehovah religion at its ripest; its universal and most spiritual elements are emphasized, and regarded as the religion truly natural to man. If his religious conviction lacked the militant nationalism of an Isaiah, or the conservative scrupulousness of an Ezekiel or an Ezra, it was perfectly adapted to make him God's own dramatist. For prophet and scribe, Jehovah looked to other types of men.

In the light of our conviction, Who was the poet's hero, and of what land was he? It is almost certain that a dramatist with such audience and purpose would choose the hero of a tradition, popular enough to arouse interest at the first mention of Job's name, fixed enough to have made him the type of suffering faith, and elastic enough to allow the freest treatment. Whether the tradition sprang from history or legend is as one likes. But the poet's Job is more real than any history, for he is suffering man; yet not a pale abstraction, but a definite individual, as a true representative must be.

The hero's country, the land of Uz, was presumably fixed in the tradition: a real country; but how real to our poet's auditors we do not know; perhaps as real as the

Vale of Cashmere to the first readers of "Lalla Rookh." It was just the land for our poet's use; a land of shepherds like Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, where men lived as the fathers of the nation had lived, and where life had the august, poetic charm which belonged to that of the patriarchs of long ago. It was, nevertheless, a land of populous cities, and all social inequalities and problems had developed as far as in the ripest stage of Israel's civilization; and men understood allusions to the imperial policy inaugurated by Tiglath Pileser Third. The land lay outside the course of revelation; yet not only was Jehovah known by name, but those who lived there, and those who came on visits from other countries, had also attained the deepest religious consciousness which the religion of Jehovah could develop, and the acutest thought which that religious development could suggest. There, among conditions the most ancient and the most modern, life could stretch to more than twice its normal limit, and Jehovah might address men out of the whirlwind in words of human speech. It may be possible to find a land which once bore the name of Uz, but to reach Job's country one must embark from the coast of Bohemia. Yet all inconsistencies are fused together with such perfect art, that we have the very scene in which the great drama of humanity must be laid; away from the dust and noise that obscure life's real issues, yet close to the daily duties and cares of every man; in that remoteness where man and God speak together face to face, yet amid the thronging problems of modern life: land most real; land most ideal; land where every Job must fight his fight up to the vision of God.

Questions about the rights of certain disputed passages to an original place in the book are not very congenial to an article of this kind. May not the judicious reader skip? It may be enough to say, that the discourse of Elihu and the descriptions of the two animals of the Nile, in Jeho-

vah's speech, are of doubtful dramatic value to a modern taste, and seem irreconcilable with the dramatic terseness and movement of everything else in the play. The drama is less nearly perfect with them than without them, at least,—and one naturally prefers to give the author the benefit of the doubt. If retained, they do not essentially modify our conception of the work; if excised, the question of their inspiration is not affected. On the other hand, our conviction is distinctly favorable to chapters xxvii. and xxviii., since we are not concerned to keep the different stages of a spiritual conflict in strict logical unity: and attempts to cut out or re-edit other possibly inconsistent utterances of the hero have also become unnecessary.

Now that we have tested our conviction by looking over the book in a general way, to see whether it constitutes a dramatic whole, we pass to the other test, Has the book a purely dramatic progress? The story begins where an ordinary plot would end, at the height of human felicity, in the complete award of poetic justice. A man of ripe years has attained, as the result of a life without a stain, wealth, honor, love, in full measure. He has riches almost past counting. He is the greatest of the Children of the East. A band of noble sons and fair daughters, happy and affectionate, satisfies his heart. In his well-merited prosperity the man remains humble and devout, recognizing that all his possessions are dependent upon God's bounty, to whom he offers thanks continually, in no wise making gold his trust. He uses his vast wealth as God's steward, and his state is enriched with the blessings of the poor. The one anxiety of his complete and tranquil life is lest his children may renounce God, though unconsciously, by forgetting that a man's powers and possessions are from the grace of the Most High and for his service. "All this is life's crown," we say. "No," says the great artist, "it is not yet life's beginning."

The scene in heaven, when the Adversary challenges Job's righteousness and receives permission to test it to the uttermost, has for its immediate purpose to prove that Job serves God, not for a reward, but with unselfish devotion. But to conclude from this obvious intent, that the motive of the whole drama is to establish the possibility of disinterested righteousness, is to overlook considerations just as obvious. The man's character is made evident in the prologue before the play begins, and the drama is of interest as the struggle of one whose faith is already proved to be disinterested; and the thought of the drama goes far beyond and above anything that can be set within the limits of that argument.

The Adversary was a familiar figure in popular tradition: he is God's testing angel. But to the poet he is something more than that; one who gives us the sense of an inexplicable source of evil, whose mind is contrary to God's mind, who performs his horrid work not without a commission from the Most High, and is forced to serve God's good purpose. The intervention of the Adversary does not explain Job's sufferings. No light upon human pain can be extracted from that darkness.

So in a single day comes to Job a series of swift messengers, announcing to him the flight of his wealth as on eagles' wings. While one is yet speaking, another comes. Cattle, asses, and camels have been raided away by the marauders of the desert, and their keepers slain; the flocks of sheep and their shepherds destroyed by the fire of God. All these disasters are received without a sign of disquietude. But last of all comes one to declare to the loving father that a great wind swept over the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house where his sons and daughters were feasting together, and it fell upon the young men and they are dead. Then, with a father's agony, Job rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down

upon the ground, and worshiped, and he said: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away: blessed be Jehovah's name." And when the evil power, let loose by God, smites the man again with the closest stroke, a mortal disease most painful and loathsome, and he sees the inevitable approach of death in its most fearful shape, and is left without hope of any good either in this world or in the world to come, he answers the frantic counsel to curse God, and die: "What, shall we accept good at God's hand, and shall we not accept evil?"

The prologue begins where an ordinary story would end; the drama begins where an extraordinary story would end. Did ever author heap up a more difficult task? For when we have seen a man enduring the ultimate test, what can appeal to us beyond that? But greater than one who looks up trustfully into God's face through tears of anguish—so the dramatist makes us feel—is one who flings himself into the fiercest conflict of faith, from whose eyes terrific mysteries blot out the sight of any righteousness or love in the power that rules all, and who yet finds the way, through night and storm, to a clearer vision of God, and a deeper experience of what God and man are to one another.

The final preparation which the prologue makes for the drama is the visit of the three friends. When they saw Job in his pitiable condition, whom they had known as the most prosperous of men, astonishment overwhelmed them. They rent every man his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. They sat down beside him seven days and seven nights, finding no sufficient word of consolation. Job sees afresh his utter hopelessness in the consternation of his friends. At length the flood-gates of his misery are opened, his lament bursts forth, all the more

bitter for its long repression, and because he had thought himself superior to his grief.

At this point the style changes from prose to poetry; and although the form of Hebrew poetry is different from any modern style, no other form, ancient or modern, is of greater poetic distinction; it is the almost inevitable form of expression for imaginative feeling; it is capable of artistic variety above any other verse; and is the most difficult of all, because it exposes mercilessly every poverty or prosaic quality of the thought. The purest example of the sustained use of this style is the drama of Job. Now when the sympathetic reader is grasped by this magnificent form of speech, he feels at once unconsciously that the poet's intent and message are kept for this portion of the book; and that the prose elements are entirely subordinate to that which is contained in this, the fitting form of the noblest thought.

The verse bursts at once into an intense passion. Job curses the day of his birth,—why was he not delivered dead from his mother's womb? He longs for the grave's obliteration of all human things, where the greatest and the humblest, kings and counselors of the earth, and the hidden untimely births, are all on the same level of nothingness; where moral distinctions have ceased, and the good and the bad suffer and inflict suffering no more:—

“There the wicked cease raging;
And there the weary are at rest.”

Over against extinction, sweet and longed for, rises the hated present of life.

“Why is light given to the miserable,
And life to the bitter of soul?
Waiting for death, but it cometh not;
They dig for it more than for hid treasures,
Rejoicing exultantly,
Glad when they find the grave;
To one whose way is hid,
And God hath hedged him in.”

As we listen to the cry, it seems to swell into the age-long complaint of all the weary and heavy-laden from whom God hath hidden his face, and to whom death appears good, and life evil. It is the cry of the suffering creation, groaning and travailing in pain together until now, with no vision of the redemption and the liberty of the glory of the sons of God. So, with the first cry of the drama, the hero's suffering becomes the ultimate of earth's universal sorrow, and the plot is the struggle of all the weary world, coming to self-consciousness in humanity, and about to express itself in its most poignant form, as the undeserved suffering of a righteous man.

It is important to observe for the appreciation of the dramatic progress, that this speech is only the outcry of human pain. The conflict of faith is not yet begun. The passionate "Why?" is not yet addressed to the great Cause of all things. The appeals, challenges, longings, despairs of a soul agonizing Godward, are yet to be developed. And we could find in each new speech of the sufferer, a new element of the inward conflict: only our purpose does not make necessary so minute an examination. Each new element in Job's passion arises with dramatic propriety out of the speech of one of the friends, which immediately precedes; for all through there is the closest dramatic interplay of thought upon thought, of mind upon mind. Each one of these new elements joins itself to those which have already appeared. The drama is not so much a progress, in which one idea is left behind for its successor, as the continuous growth of a mighty passion.

The eldest of the three friends makes reply. Here we may take a closer look than before at their position in the drama, though we run the risk of some repetition. If we keep in mind that we are reading a drama of the soul, arising out of a suffering whose sting is this, that it is the undeserved suffering of a righteous man, which cries out

against the order of the world and the justice of the Most High, then the dramatic value of the three sages is obvious. They show that the best wisdom accessible to man, when it is confronted by the reality of human suffering, only emphasizes our perplexity with the world and the ways of God. These men stand upon the great law, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"; the law which a man must work by, if he is to work at all, the only law which can justify God's workings in his world. But when this law is put to the practical test of suffering, it fails; not necessarily because it is false, but because human resources are insufficient for applying it. And that we may see how great the failure of the world's best wisdom is, that wisdom is incarnated in men of dignified character and rare sympathy. They have done everything that men could do for one who is beyond help; they have entered very deeply into his grief; through a week's unbroken vigil, they have sympathetically shared his pain. The writer pours into their words exquisite beauty and deep thought when the venerable Eliphaz speaks; makes the next in age and dignity utter prophetic strains; and the least of them is a man of wide and thoughtful observation of life. Their motive in pleading with their friend is unselfish; they lose the tone of gentleness only when they feel obliged to choose between justifying their friend and justifying God. And though their efforts to awaken the conscience of the sufferer grow harsher as they go on, yet the harshness is necessary from their point of view. They have been treated far worse by the critics than they treated Job.

The world is ruled—to sum up the contention of the three sages—by a just God. The righteous is prospered in the end, though for a time he be chastened, for the trial of his faith and to be made worthy of a greater good.

"Is not thy fear of God thy confidence,
 Thy hope, the integrity of thy ways?
 Remember, now, who ever perished innocent?
 And where were the upright cut off?
 Behold, blessed is the man whom God correcteth:
 And despise not the Almighty's chastenings.
 For he woundeth and bindeth;
 Crusheth, and his hands heal.
 In six troubles he saveth thee,
 And in seven harm shall not touch thee.
 In famine he hath redeemed thee from death;
 And in war from the power of the sword;
 And thou shalt know that thy seed is great,
 And thy offspring as grass of the earth.
 Thou shalt come to the grave in a full age,
 Like gathering a sheaf in its season.
 Lo, this, we have searched it; thus it is;
 Hear it, and know it for thyself."

And this divine favor is offered even to the sinner when he repents:—

"If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be established;
 Removing unrighteousness from thy tents,

Thou prayest him, and he heareth thee,
 And light shineth on thy ways."

But to the wicked, say these sages, summing up the hoary wisdom of the world, the whole order of God's universe is opposed. His prosperity, even while it lasts, is "the gall of asps in his belly." The guilty conscience of the wicked man allows him no peace.

"A sound of terrors is in his ears;
 In prosperity—the spoiler is coming upon him:
 He knoweth that the day of darkness is at hand,
 And he is waited for of the sword."

It is impossible for him to hide his evil-doing.

"For God knoweth mortals of vanity;
 God seeth wickedness though man consider it not.
 The heavens reveal his iniquity,
 And the earth riseth up against him."

Soon the divine anger overtakes him.

"Though his height reach the heavens,
 And his head touch the clouds,
 He flieth as a dream and is not found,
 And is scattered like a vision of the night.
 Encompassing terrors affright him
 And chase at his heels.
 He is rooted out of the tent of his confidence,
 And is brought to the king of terrors.
 His remembrance perisheth off the earth,
 And he hath no name in the street,
 Neither offspring nor descendant among his people,
 Nor any remaining where he sojourned.
 The righteous see it, and are glad,
 And the innocent laugh him to scorn.
 Yea, these are the dwellings of the wicked,
 And this is his place that knew not God."

The deepest note that is struck in the wisdom of these sages, is this: That no man has the right to challenge God's dealings with him, because man, simply as man, is impure and guilty in the sight of absolute holiness. Eli-phaz says:—

"Now a word stole upon me
 And mine ear caught its whisper.
 In thoughts from visions of night
 When slumber falleth on men,
 Fear came upon me and trembling
 And shook all my bones.
 Then a breath passed over my face;
 The hair of my flesh bristled up;
 It stood, but I discerned not its form.
 A shape was before mine eyes;
 I heard a silence audible:
 'Shall mortal be just before God?
 Shall man be pure before his maker?
 Behold, he trusteth not his servants,
 And his angels he chargeth with folly;
 How much more the dwellers in houses of clay,
 Whose foundation is in the dust;
 And they are crushed like the moth;
 From morning to evening are destroyed;
 Perish forever, none regarding.'"

So it is said in another place:—

“What is man that he should be clean?
 And that one born of woman should be righteous?
 Behold he trusteth not his holy ones;
 Yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.
 How much less that thing abominable and corrupt,
 Man, drinking iniquity like water.”

Such is the philosophy of the three sages, briefly summarized. The immediate impression upon Job's mind, from the first note of it, is that it involves an unjust charge against his integrity. For him there is no possibility of restoration; death is at hand, and he is beyond hope; and his fate is therefore that of the wicked. Bitter words spring to his lips against these accusers. With passionate earnestness he defends his integrity against the condemnation which is from the first involved in their philosophy, and which is soon provoked into naked statement by his recriminations. But—a far more important matter—the injustice of their creed calls into light the horrible suspicion which the sufferer had tried to hide from himself,—that he, innocent, brought to the verge of death, beyond possibility of recovery, is suffering at the hands of an Infinite Injustice. And surely, the ultimate of human tragedy is despair of the divine justice,—the conviction that the Power upon whom man depends, and in whom alone he may hope to find peace, is not on the side of righteousness. Toward this utter darkness the sufferer is urged by the words of his friends. In his second speech the agony expressed in the first is charged to its divine source.

“The arrows of the Almighty are within me,
 God's terrors arrayed against me.
 Why hast thou made me thy mark?”

Granted his sin: can that affect the Transcendent One?

“Have I sinned? What do I unto thee,
 Watcher of men?
 What is man that thou shouldst distinguish him,
 Set thy mind upon him,
 And visit him every morning,
 Try him every moment?”

Will not God at least leave him alone and let him die?

“How long before thou wilt look away from me till I catch
my breath?
Then will I lie in the dust,
And when thou lookest for me I shall not be.”

Eliphaz has said, that, because the divine holiness is absolute, therefore limited man can make no claim upon God for favor. Job's answer is given in his third speech, the great ninth chapter, which is the most titanic challenge that man ever hurled against the face of God. Just because the divine holiness is absolute, declares the champion of humanity in its woes, therefore it has no right to judge the finite; for the creature is imperfect because a creature, and to judge the limited by the absolute standard is unjust. What am I, O God, that thou shouldst judge me? Before the absolute holiness, all relative moral distinctions are effaced. The best man and the worst man are equally impure in his sight. What right has he to judge?

“Though I be righteous, mine own mouth shall condemn me,
Though I be perfect, he will prove me perverse.
If I wash myself with snow,
And cleanse my hands with lye,
Yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch,
And my garments shall abhor me.
For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him,
Nor is there an umpire between us,
To lay his hand upon us both.”

So he judges, whose absoluteness debars his just judgment of the creature. So, as the award of his judgment, he punishes all alike, for all are alike guilty before him.

“It is all one, therefore I said:
It is he that destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.”

What is the answer to Job? Let some one give it, and we will listen to him! No further answer perhaps than this: that there is yet something in the All-holy Judge which makes us long to appear before his judgment-throne.

And Job declares, that, if there might be a brief respite in his sufferings at God's hands,

“ Let him take his rod off me,
And let his terror not affright me.
Then would I speak and not fear him,
For in myself I am not so.”

For man is not as he must appear in God's eyes.

In his next speech, he declares—and with reason—that his own insistence upon the facts of life, and upon the character of God, as intimated in those facts, is a more righteous thing than his friend's sleek justification of the Most High's dealings with man.

“ Will ye speak wickedness in behalf of God?
And speak deceit for him?
He will surely rebuke you,
If ye show a lying partiality.”

Better is his own desire that God and he might come together, he knows not how; that God may be to him no longer far off and unknown, but the present God. For that fearful doubt of him is not to be silenced by any explanation which man can make, but only when God and man come together face to face.

“ Withdraw thy hand from me,
And let not thy terror affright me:
Then call, and I will answer,
Or I will speak, and answer thou me.
How many are mine iniquities and my sins?
Tell me my transgressions and my sins.
Why hidest thou thy face? ”

If such a meeting might be in some future state of being, how gladly would he die with that glad hope.

“ Wouldst thou but hide me in Hades,
Keep me in secret till thy wrath is past,
Appoint me a time, and remember me.”

In one of the most effective scenes in opera, the closing scene of the Huguenots, as the work is generally performed, when the doom of St. Bartholomew's day is crashing down upon the two chief characters of the story, out

of the dissonance and despair that fill the music, there trembles forth a melody of love, uncertainly at first, broken in upon again and again, but growing in form and sweep, till at last, complete and perfect, it dominates every thought and sound; so out of the conflict of the drama of Job, the ravings, the despair, rises brokenly at first, but stronger and fuller continuously, the longing of man in his suffering to meet God face to face. Then man will know that God is just, when he beholds him not alone in his inexplicable acts, but with immediate vision. Then shall God's righteous servant hear from God's own lips a sentence strangely at variance with the torture which he is being forced to endure. Up to this passionate demand has unfolded the conflict of the hero's soul.

This longing grows intense with the increasing condemnation pronounced by his friends. For, at the point in the drama which we have now reached, they turn their philosophy most directly against the sufferer. "Because," they affirm, "God prospers the righteous and afflicts the wicked, therefore thou, Job, take this lesson to thyself, if so thou mayest repent of the secret sin which hath brought thee to this strait." Then the man who has challenged God's right to judge, appeals from human judgments to the tribunal of perfect righteousness.

"Earth, cover not my blood,
And let my cry have no resting-place!
Even now behold in Heaven my witness,
And my surety in the heights."

In the most terrible passages of his complaint, which occur in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth chapters, he turns every way for comfort: from God to his accusing friends:—

"Pity me, pity me, O my friends,
For God's hand hath touched me.
Why do ye persecute me as God,
And are not satisfied with my flesh!"

From their averted faces he appeals to the judgment of posterity.

“ Oh that my words were now written !
Oh that they were inscribed in a book,
That with pen of iron and lead,
They were graven in the rock forever ! ”

Then from all human judgment, present and to come, he turns to the perfect justice that shall be revealed.

“ But I myself do know that my Vindicator liveth,
And he shall stand hereafter above my dust.
And after this my skin is destroyed,
And without my flesh, I shall see God,
Whom I myself shall behold on my side,
And mine eyes shall see, and he shall not be my enemy. ”

From this point the conflict of Job's faith develops more calmly, though occasional outcries of pain keep us mindful of his terrible physical condition, and that peace is not yet won. Faith's victory is not yet gained, even by such a hope: for it is hope in one far away in the heavens, who will appear as his friend only in the dim future. It is still man aspiring after God; not yet God making himself known and felt by man. It is faith's choice, rather than faith's conviction; for *that* is God's own and immediate work upon the soul. The worst bitterness of human suffering, doubt of God's justice, is not removed yet; but there is the calming and steadying hope that it will be. The man is now as one who has climbed above the clouds, though the mountain's height is still far away. He is able now to confute more completely, because, with calmer mood and juster discrimination, the teachings of those who affirm that the divine righteousness is proved by the prosperity of the good and the adversity of the wicked. The happiness of the wicked, he insists, often lasts to a painless end of a long life.

“Their sons grow strong like themselves, in their presence,
And their children before their eyes.
Their houses are in peace without a fear,
Nor is the rod of God upon them.
They finish their days in prosperity,
And instantly drop into the grave.”

Yet, for now he takes a broader view of life, there are forms of sin which at once cut a man off from any rational enjoyment, and upon which the judgment of God falls speedily. And while, apart from these special cases, there are many evil men whose prosperity continues to the end; yet upon some of them swift destruction comes, as the revealing of the divine wrath against iniquity. And he acknowledges also that good men often receive a prosperity which is the manifest favor of God. He looks with clear, unprejudiced eyes upon the mingled picture of goodness and sin, joy and sorrow. God is the painter; but what his design is, no man can understand. Not by the observation of God's ways among men, can the divine righteousness be established; and he longs, with an ever-greater longing, to meet his Maker, plead his cause before him, and know from that personal communion that God is righteous in his ways with men.

“Oh that I knew where I might find him,
That I might come even to his seat.
I would order my cause before him,
And fill my mouth with arguments;
I would know the words which he would answer me,
And understand what he would say to me.
Behold, I go forward, but he is not there,
And backward but I cannot perceive him.
On the left hand where he doeth work, but I cannot behold him.
He hideth himself on the right hand that I see him not.
But he knoweth my way,
From his test I shall come forth as gold.”

He speaks of the unsearchableness of God, who is not to be traced out in the paths of human life, nor understood by the deepest scrutiny of the finite mind. Human inge-

nulty can find a way to explain the secret places of the earth, and bring up its hidden treasures from mines dug with marvelous skill and patience by human hands. But far beyond man's reach is that wisdom which is the understanding of God's ways.

“ And unto man he saith,
 ‘ Behold, the fear of God, that is wisdom,
 And to depart from evil is understanding.’ ”

With this wider and deeper lookout upon the various scenes of human life, and upward to the unfathomable mystery of the divine mind, he feels with a still intenser conviction, that the one solution is for a man to stand face to face with God; that only a divine word can answer the riddle of human suffering; that God's act can alone make things right.

And now, almost as if God were indeed standing before him, he pleads his cause; tells of the high estate from which he has fallen :—

“ In the days when God watched over me,
 And the fellowship of God was upon my tent,
 When the Almighty was yet with me,
 My children around me.”

These days, he pleads, were full of actions pleasing to God.

“ For the ear that heard me blessed me,
 And the eye that saw me bare me witness
 That I delivered the poor that cried,
 And the fatherless, who is without a helper.
 The blessing of the perishing came upon me,
 And I caused the widow's heart to sing.
 Righteousness was my garment, and it clothed itself with me.
 My justice was robe and diadem.
 I was eyes to the blind,
 And feet to the weary, I.
 Myself was father to the poor,
 And I searched out a stranger's cause.
 I chose their companionship, and sat as their protector,
 And, like a king amid his army,
 I dwelt as the mourner's comforter.”

He sets before God, in terrible contrast, his present misery; and the awful doubt of the divine justice will still intrude; and he makes a final appeal to God to reveal himself to him in righteousness.

“ Oh that I had one to hear my plea !
 Here is my signature, let the Almighty answer me;
 And that I had the plaintiff's written charge,
 Verily I would carry it on my shoulder,
 I would bind it on for a crown.
 I would make declaration to him of all my steps,
 Like a Prince approach him.
 Then answered Jehovah unto Job out of the whirlwind.

Observe to just what climax the drama has been tending. All the course of the conflict and of the resultant calm which can behold the face of God, is to this end: that God would appear as the “Vindicator” of his faithful servant; that while all things and all men were against him, approving love might stream upon the sufferer's face from that God who is the soul's all-in-all. But, when we attain that to which the fierce strife of the drama has been forcing its way, we find not the height of spiritual exaltation, but humiliation's utmost depth. It is not too much to say, that the most startling and sublime surprise in all dramatic literature is found in the first words of Jehovah's speech, at the tremendous culmination of the supreme of dramas.

It is important to mark the name of this new character in the drama. The abstract name, God, has been used, not in the prologue indeed, but generally in the drama proper. But here we have the name, Jehovah, the name of the God of Israel, the God of revelation. It is Job's own God, whose name was familiar and sweet to him before his fearful conflict, as his use of it in the prologue testifies; and even in the drama it is found once on the hero's lips. The thought of the dramatist is not that nature's revelation of God is sufficient for the soul,—the author would be anything but a faithful Israelite to hold

that;—but he bids the worshiper of Jehovah, who has known him in his special revelation, look out upon Jehovah's world, and behold his God there. The man or the civilization to whom God has not given an historic revelation, has not the spirit which can see the meaning of God's rule in the natural world. But those to whom his revelation has been given, may go forth upon his earth, and stand under his stars, and see that which God has granted them to know of him, given larger utterance through the works of his hands.

Thus out of his universe speaks the majesty of God to the awe-struck soul of man:—

“Where wast thou, when I laid the foundations of the earth?
 Declare, if thou hast understanding.
 Who [that is, what force or power] fixed the measures thereof, if
 thou knowest?
 Or who stretched the line upon it?
 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened,
 Or who laid the corner-stone thereof,
 When the morning stars sang together,
 And all the sons of God shouted for joy?
 Or shut up the sea with doors,
 When it burst forth, issued out of the womb,
 When I made the cloud the garment thereof,
 And thick darkness its swaddling-band,
 And brake for it my boundary,
 And set bars and doors,
 And said, Thus far shalt thou come and no farther,
 And here shall thy proud waves be stayed?
 Hast thou commanded the morning in thy days,
 And caused the dayspring to know his place?
 Have the gates of death been opened unto thee,
 Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?
 Canst thou bind the cluster of Pleiades,
 Or loose the Giant's bonds?
 Canst thou bring forth the signs in their seasons,
 Or guide the Bear with her train?”

Out of power immeasurable, wisdom unsearchable, goodness and care beyond all finite thought, came forth the order and beauty of all this teeming universe. And out of

power immeasurable, wisdom unsearchable, goodness and care beyond all finite thought, comes forth the order of human life, for which man in his folly arraigns the Most High. The effect of God's appearing is just the opposite of what the hero had expected. He has now no thought of self-justification, no fancies now, that God needs to vindicate himself by the vindication of his suffering servant. But his penitence is of a different kind from that which the evil counselors had commended. They had spoken of a deity of abstract holiness, and here is Jehovah stooping in the fullness of his terrible majesty to commune with man; and the soul that will not bend to that distant Almighty is melted before the face of condescending love. The great drama leaves its hero prostrate before the presence of God.

"I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,
But now mine eye seeth thee;
Therefore I abhor myself,
And repent in dust and ashes."

What follows the close of the drama is again a story told in prose. After the poetry of life's struggle follow its common days, yet filled with that which the strife has gained. In the sufferer's restoration to health, public vindication, prayer for his condemned adversaries, in the return of prosperity and in his long, untroubled life, we have a picture no less beautiful because it is not what always befalls a righteous man, or is necessary to justify God's dealings with his servants.

If we read the drama of Job as an attempt at a speculative justification of God's ways, we shall find no answer in it. If we look upon it as the picture of the soul's hardest conflict, springing out of life's deepest mystery, it will lead us unto him whose ways are past finding out, but of whom it is enough for the humbled soul to know, by the vision of him, that he is perfect Power and Wisdom and All-holy Love.