

were white with his waving harvests. Gold and silver were his in abundance; and he was "the greatest of all the men of the East." His domestic felicity was perfect. His wife and children were about him. His mind and his body were in the prime of manly vigour and dignity.

Suddenly, upon the head of this holy and happy man, a storm of misfortune breaks. We may imagine him in the midst of his happiness. It is the day of his children's rejoicing. All breathes of hope, and joy, and peace around him. We may picture him seated, as was Abraham, at his tent's door, under the shadow of a majestic tree. Then, swiftly as incarnate misfortunes, arrives messenger after messenger, bringing tidings of spoil, conflagration, and death; till, in the course of one hour of immeasurable agony, he finds himself flockless, serfless, childless, a beggar, a wreck—amid all the continued insignia of an almost regal magnificence! Wealth, subsistence, children, all gone at one stroke! A king, in a moment, reduced to ruin! It is not possible to conceive bitterer, more overwhelming woe. But his heart breaks not. He does not dash away into the wilderness; he does not throw himself wildly on the ground; he does not tear his white hair in agony. He calmly resigns himself to the change. After the fashion of his times, he "arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground;" but even while there, he worshipped, and said; "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." It is impossible too much to admire this beautiful model. Would it not be admirable if one had thus sustained a ruinous loss; if he could thus cheerfully resign luxuries or comforts to which he had been all his life accustomed? But these are the words of one who had lost *all*. Would it not have been a wondrous proof of resignation in a parent thus meekly to have resigned to his Maker one beloved child? But he who so speaks had, in one moment, been bereft of all. "Joseph was not, and Simeon was not, and Benjamin also was taken away!" With every circumstance that could stagger faith, quench love, and destroy hope;

under every aggravation of malice; in face of a destruction so detailed in its parts, so complete in its effects, calculated and executed with such a power and precision as almost to suggest the idea of a providence of over-ruling evil—"in all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

Of the strength of Job's graces, we may gain some comparative idea from the destruction, which his trials brought upon the piety or the principles of those who witnessed them; but were less, or not at all, affected by them. "At the cry of him," we read, those whom he had treated with unvarying goodness—"fled"—through ingratitude or fear; as Israel from the pit that swallowed Korah and his company. Far above all others in duty and affection was his wife; to her he turned confidently for consolation; and, lo, she bids him curse! "Curse God, and die!" The words might indeed be translated "Bless God, and die;" but, even that miserable consolation from the wife of his bosom, we do not believe the unhappy sufferer received. For we read elsewhere, "his breath was strange unto her" (that is, she regarded not his cry for assistance), "though he entreated for the children's sake of his own body." Truly her loss was great, and to a certain extent parallel with Job's. But she imitated not his greatness. She basely deserted woman's holy ministry of love and comfort; nay, we fear she forsook him, and her God also! And now arrive the noblest actors, next to Job, upon this fearful scene. His three friends come to "mourn with him, and to comfort him." The occasion of their meeting was unprecedented: their long silence, big with emotion, commands our attention. They were unable to behold the wreck of their friend's happiness: they lifted up their voice and wept. They acknowledged that they also were sinners in the sight of God by sprinkling dust upon their heads towards heaven. Their love to their friend was wonderful, passing the love of woman. But, on the other hand, dark and deep were their questionings on his condition. Was not this their friend, their brother? Had they not taken sweet counsel together, and interchanged the secrets of their souls? Had he not been as a king among them, "the greatest of all the sons of the East?" Had they not listened to his voice in the council, bowed with him before the Lord,