

asures us he will ultimately fulfil respecting us. It shone thus clearly on the patriarch of Uz for a considerable portion of his pilgrimage as he himself informs us, when reviewing light in a season of darkness: "Oh that I were as in months past; as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness;" &c. &c., see Job xxix. The father of the faithful too, must have enjoyed this light of providence when he found himself so comfortably stationed in the land of promise, abounding in substance, respected by his neighbours, revered by his domestics, cheered by the presence and attention of his affectionate Sarah, and obeyed and loved by his Isaac in whose seed, he well knew, all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. And did not the same light shine on Joseph's lot when he had attained the second seat in the land of his previous imprisonment and bondage; received the grateful homage of the myriads whom he had been instrumental in preserving from the horrors of starvation; beheld near him his venerable father, and beloved though undeserving brethren enjoying the plenty of Goshen; lived amidst a domestic scene cheered with the affection of Asenath and his sons Ephraim and Manasseh? David too could sometimes sing, the "Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters, &c. &c. Ps. xxiii. And cannot each of us remember many and long continued seasons, when the fiery pillar shed its radiance on our path—when our bodies were in health; and our wives and families were like olive branches round our table; and our friends were kind and faithful; and our fellow-men respectful; and our business prospered; and our prospects were full of promise? Yes: though we well deserve—if on no other account yet for our mistrust and murmuring—to walk in perpetual gloom; yet our gracious Lord has often long indulged us with the glowing smile of his providence.

At times, however, that providence is *dark*. It wraps itself in a cloud of mysterious adversity, through which scarcely

one ray is seen to penetrate. It prostrates our plans; disappoints our hopes; and opposes all our eager longings. We cannot trace amidst the gloom any proofs of our Saviour's goodness or wisdom; or of the veracity of his assurances; or of the realization eventually of his declared designs. Such was the dismal aspect of providence in Abraham's case, when he was called to offer up his only son in sacrifice to heaven, and thus to embitter all his comforts, disgrace his character in the view of man, rob his partner of the comfort of her old age, and bereave himself of all that entwined about his heart, and rendered his life desirable. No less incomprehensibly obscure was the providential procedure which snatched from Job in a single day, all his possessions, and children, and friends; prostrated him in the dust, tormented with a loathsome disease; and exposed him to the unfeeling accusations of mistaken neighbours, and the perilous temptations of a wicked wife. Who can wonder at his sore complaints or question the truth of his expressive description of Jehovah's ways: "He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth a cloud upon it." Joseph's history also affords an equally affecting instance of mysterious experience. He was assured of being raised to pre-eminence above his brethren, and yet was suffered to be sold by them into slavery, in which he remained for years, every day only rendering his case more and still more hopeless, till the very hour of his rescue came. Who that has read the life of the sweet singer of Israel, does not know how often his case justified his own sublime description of the Lord. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him. He bowed the heavens and came down, and darkness was under his feet. He had darkness in his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the sky." Nor is there one of us to whom the providence of Jesus has not said, as it has been calling us to walk in darkness without any light, what "I do, thou knowest not now." Perhaps just when we had said, "My mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved;" suddenly it hid its face, and we were troubled with losses and crosses and oppositions and pains and perplexities