

to 90 broad; these may be traced nearly to the top of the rise, where all evidences of the canal are destroyed by a road leading to the promontory. Two or three other tracks or paths cross the site of the canal at different points, and have had a similar effect. The highest part of the isthmus through which the canal was cut is 51 feet above the sea. The traces of the canal are less visible on the northern portion of the isthmus, but still a chain of hollows can be traced, having a decidedly artificial character. Through the plain the traces have disappeared, and the mouths of the canal have been obliterated by the action of the sea, and its sands. The distance between the two shores is 2,500 yards; but the canal, being slightly oblique, was somewhat longer than this."

Illustrations of Scripture.

NO. IV.

"Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life."—Job ii. 4.

עור בער עור וכל אשר לאיש יתן
בער נפשו:

The general purport of these words, as teaching the value we put on life, is too plain to be missed, and yet the learned are far from agreeing in the mode of working out and elucidating the sense. The cause of difficulty and of difference among the critics lies in the clause *skin for skin*. The chief of the divergent views may be briefly stated! 1. Dr. Mason Good, in his work on Job, explains it by *property for person*; and this has been even adopted by the judicious Greenfield in Baxter's Comprehensive Bible. A mere fanciful explanation can scarcely be conceived. There is no authority whatever for making *skin* signify both *property* and *person* in one and the same clause; nor is *skin* ever used in the Bible in the sense of *property*. 2. Others, and among them the celebrated Robert Hall, have proposed

to read "*skin upon skin*," conveying the idea that man would give *heaps* of skins or valuable commodities, yea, *all* his goods for his life. This might be accepted as a good explanation, if we could only admit *upon* instead of *for* as the sense of the Hebrew preposition בער. There is no case where it has just that sense. And besides, we could hardly have *upon* in the first clause and *for* in the last; for the same preposition is used in both clauses.

The translation cannot in this case be amended. And to catch the full force of the words, we have only to remember that skins, even as now, were in early times an important article of traffic, which traffic was then chiefly conducted by barter, as the precious metals were not in general use. That primitive state of society is alluded to by Lucretius in these words:—

Tunc igitur pelles, nunc aurum et purpura, curis
Exercent hominum vitam, belloque fatigant.

De Rerum Natura, lib. v. 1422.

We take it, then, that "*skin for skin*" means much the same as our *quid pro quo*, when we give or do something for an equivalent. Hence the precise import of the words in question may be thus set forth: As a man will give skin for skin, (*i. e.*: barter one thing for another of equal or greater value,) so he will give all that he hath for his life. Satan's drift in using this language is pretty clear: it is to account for Job's patience under the past trial, and to suggest the infliction of another more severe. "No wonder," as if Satan had said to the Lord, "no wonder Job has not cursed thee yet to thy face, for while he is personally safe he can bear all his losses, deeming his own life of more value than all he had; but put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh (*i. e.*, threaten his life,) and he will be patient and resigned no longer."

B. D.