

need not hesitate to believe that Job did once really exist, as a person of most exemplary virtues, who nevertheless experienced signal misfortunes and afflictions; but yet not without a final restoration to a prosperous and happy state. The historic basis of the work seems to be the following. Job, a man who had lived probably in patriarchal times in the land of Uz, which appears to have been bounded on the east by Chaldea, on the south by Arabia, on the west by Idumea, and on the north by Bashan, was eminent for his righteousness as well as for his wealth. But although he was upright he was visited with dire adversity, which led several friends to repair to him from a distance for the purpose of comforting his soul by means of edifying conversation. They however took a wrong view of their friend's situation and character, and became guilty of aggravating the misery which they come to alleviate. Yet he firmly combated their false positions, and without wavering asserted his own integrity. And at length he was reinstated in his greatness.

2. The plan of the work. By far the greater portion of the canonical writings exhibit an utter want of method. There is scarcely a book in which unity of design is clearly perceptible. But in Job there is evidently a plan of great ingenuity and compactness, which will even bear to be compared with the plot of a drama. We may indeed find in it most of the properties which Aristotle and Horace, in their masterly expositions of the poetic art, require in the plot of a dramatic poem. Here may be discovered what corresponds to the *μῦθος* of the former, and the *fabula* of the latter.

The author's plan is conceived to have been this: to evolve and establish, by means of his hero, the principle that suffering and guilt are not invariably connected as effect and

cause; but the one may be inflicted even where the other is not imputed. And, in accordance with this design, our author first states, in the prologue, the unblemished character of Job, and the grievous reverses of fortune which he encountered, but under which he possessed his soul in patience, until after the arrival of three condoling friends. The writer then, after giving so much introduction, commences the discussion of his subject by making Job give vent to his feelings in a strain of doubt and impatience, which, by implication at least, impeached the goodness if not the justice of God; and in consequence of this burst of impatience, a controversy ensues between the patriarch and his friends, who came forward as the advocates of the almost superstitious principle, that misfortune is never sent except on the guilty, and who confidently infer, contrary to the truth, that the sufferer before their eyes is a heinous sinner. Job, on the other hand, maintains, that suffering is possible even where there is no wickedness, and that he is free from the sins laid to his charge. In the dispute Job seems at length to prevail, at least so far as to silence his opponents; yet the question is by no means satisfactorily decided, but only brought to an issue which calls for a more than human wisdom to adjust. In this extremity another speaker is introduced, who endeavors to bring the disputants to a better understanding, and to lead them to the true solution of the difficulty. But the matter is not put finally at rest until the Divine Being, to whom the disputants, particularly Job, appealed, appears as the umpire, and speaks out of the whirlwind. Nothing short of such an authoritative decision could put an end to their confusion and perplexity. This Divine interposition takes place in strict accordance with the Horatian rule—

*Nec Deus interit nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit.*