

1. When the work is read and studied as a whole, and not as a collection of disconnected or ill-adjusted parts, it generally leaves on the mind the impression that the writer intended to discuss the question, *whether suffering always presupposes and proves guilt in the sufferer.* The connection between happiness and virtue on the one hand, and between misery and sin on the other, has from the earliest times engaged the attention and perplexed the ingenuity of the reflecting part of mankind. According to the most ancient, and perhaps even now the most prevalent faith, that connection appears to be regarded as invariable and absolute. According to it, prosperity cannot be enjoyed apart from moral worth, nor adversity endured without sinfulness as its cause. This is notoriously the view of the question which pervades the law of Moses. It is a vital principle in his institutions; according to which the amount of a person's good or bad fortune in this life is made to depend on his conduct as a subject of the Theocracy. Fidelity to Jehovah is made a condition of worldly success, the breach of which was to be punished with temporal calamities. Now, in distinction from this view, if not in opposition to it, there is another, which is supported by a numerous class of facts in the world's history. However true it may be, that well doing and well being are essentially connected in the divine economy, it cannot be denied that the righteous often suffer while the wicked triumph. Even under the Theocracy many facts occurred in contradiction to the grand principle of the Mosaic system, as appears from the 73d Psalm and from Ecclesiastes ix. 2, 3,—"All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked," &c. Now the Book of Job seems to have been written with the design of modifying the primitive faith, by establishing the

principle, that guilt cannot always be inferred from the enduring of adversity; but that a righteous man may be overwhelmed with calamities for the trial of his virtues, and not for the punishment of his sins. If then such be the proper subject of the work, it is clear that what is related concerning Job should be considered more as an instructive tale than as real history. The design of the author was not to write a memoir of the patriarch, but to "point a moral." Indeed, as far as that design is concerned, the whole account might well be a fiction, for the instructiveness of a tale is well known to depend more on its verisimilitude, or conformity to nature, than on its actual truth. It is not, however, intended to assert, that the whole is a fiction unmingled with fact. There does appear to be a historic basis on which fancy has reared a spacious superstructure.—As Defoe founded his popular tale on the real adventures of Alexander Selkirk, so the writer of our book may be reasonably supposed to have grafted his own conceptions and plan on the tradition respecting the sufferings and deliverance of Job. We have not the means of ascertaining, minutely and beyond doubt, how much of the author's materials was furnished by the traditionary history of Job, and how much was produced by his own plastic fancy; yet we may without presumption attribute to fiction the representation given of Satan as mingling in the assemblies of angels and holding a parley with Jehovah on matters of state, and even obtaining a commission to put a holy man's virtue to the severest test. To the same source we would trace the details of Job's possessions and misfortunes, and subsequent prosperity, the elaborate conversations or discussions between him and his friends, and the appearance of the Divine Being in the character of an overwhelming disputant. On the other hand, we