

cause there is no theme, either of nature or of imagination, which can vie in interest with that human heart, whose feelings are often stabler than mountains—fresher than flowers—deeper than seas—and in mysterious harmony, by turns, with all that is noble, and all that is ignoble, in the universe.

But once again—if the merits of a poem are at all to be measured by the *design it is intended to serve*, the lessons it is given to teach, what poem, in this respect, can surpass the Book of Job? Divine poetry is almost necessarily the sublimest. Schiller, in one of his exquisite German lyrics, has beautifully alluded to this. He describes Jupiter as wearied with the perpetual complaints made by men of their hard lot, and resolving that the earth should be divided afresh, and that each should choose the portion he most desired. It was done; and when all else had seized their shares, at last, from afar off came the poet. Finding that all was gone, he bewailed his fate in strains so sweet that they reached the monarch on his throne, and brought this answer: "How is it that thou appealest to me? Where wast thou when they were dividing the world?" "I was," replied the poet, "with Thee. Mine eyes were gazing upon thy beauties: mine ears were captivated with the harmonies of thy heaven. Pardon a soul so absorbed in the contemplation of thine unutterable glory, that it neglected to secure its earthly heritage." And Jove did pardon that loving spirit, and assigned to it a portion far surpassing the good things of this world.

"What can be done?" said Jove. "The earth is given;

The field, the chase, the mart are gone from me;
Since 't is thy joy to dwell with me in heaven,
Come when thou wilt, for thee the path is free."

Thus, in truthful fable, Schiller has represented the poet's sphere and privilege, and taught that no theme is so majestic as one that leads the mind "from nature up to nature's God."

There is, however, a peculiar interest attaching to the Book of Job, even among divine poems, because it alone, of all the books of the Bible, grapples with those mysteries of God's providential government which have more or less perplexed every intelligent inhabitant of the universe.

It gives the answer to life's great enigma. It teaches that life is not, as most young people seem to regard it, a fete or carnival; much less, as some old people seem to think it, a temporary lodging in the dungeon of the castle of Giant Despair—that it is something between the two—a struggle, a strife, a mortal conflict between good and evil; that it is not, therefore, to be entered upon with unthinking levity, much less with unhoping gloom—but bravely, strongly, manfully, expecting with calmness the inevitable shocks of the combat, and looking up hopefully, and always, to Him in whose strength already we are more than conquerors. The object of the book is precisely that which Milton announced in the "Paradise Lost:"

"That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal providence,
And justify the ways of God to men."

But we do not hesitate to say that the Book of Job has done it better than the work of Milton. It has traced the course of the conflict more closely, and shown its end more clearly, and brought God Himself into more vital union with it. And this lesson my friends and fellow-soldiers in this battle, I earnestly hope you will all learn. If there is any one lesson more than all the rest which is important for your happiness and welfare, it is, that you cannot afford to allow your characters to be frivolous and unthinking, much less to be gloomy and unhoping; even for this life you cannot afford it—all success and happiness depend on being thoroughly earnest in life's great battle. Neither will earnestness avail you, unless to dependence on yourselves you join dependence on your God—that God who is so beautifully revealed throughout this Poem, watching from His highest heaven the conflict waged by each, controlling the assault, supporting the assaulted, Himself giving us the victory, and then uttering from His own lips the conqueror's praises, and wreathing, with His own Divine hand, the garland round his brow.

One word on the great mystery of this matchless Poem. I borrow the thought, with limitations, variations, and additions, from a powerful and popular writer, when I say:—

"It is sometimes true, the saying that