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JOB 15: 1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered,

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Eliphaz charges Job with impiety in attempting to justify himself, Job 15:1-13; asserts the utter corruption and abominable state of man, Job 15:14-16; and, from his own knowledge and the observations of the ancients, shows the desolation to which the wicked are exposed, and insinuates that Job has such calamities to dread, vv. 17-35.

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JOB 15: 2 "Should a wise man answer with vain knowledge, and fill himself with the east wind?"

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Verse 2

Should a wise man utter vain knowledge - Or rather, Should a wise man utter the science of wind? A science without solidity or certainty.

And fill his belly with the east wind? - בֶּטֶן beten, which we translate belly, is used to signify any part of the cavity of the body, whether the region of the thorax or abdomen; here it evidently refers to the lungs, and may include the cheeks and fauces. The east wind, קַדִּימִּי kadim, is a very stormy wind in the Levant, or the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea, supposed to be the same with that called by the Greeks ευροκλυδων, euroclydon, the east storm, mentioned Act 27:14. Eliphaz, by these words, seems to intimate that Job's speech was a perfect storm or tempest of words.

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JOB 15: 3 Should he reason with unprofitable talk, or with speeches with which he can do no good?

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Verse 3

Should he reason with unprofitable talk? - Should a man talk disrespectfully of his Maker, or speak to him without reverence? and should he suppose that he has proved any thing, when he has uttered words of little meaning, and used sound instead of sense?

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JOB 15: 4 Yes, you do away with fear, and hinder devotion before God.

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Verse 4

Thou castest off fear - Thou hast no reverence for God.

And restrainest prayer - Instead of humbling thyself, and making supplication to thy Judge, thou spendest thy time in arraigning his providence and justifying thyself. When a man has any doubts whether he has grieved God's Spirit, and his mind feels troubled, it is much better for him to go immediately to God, and ask forgiveness, than spend any time in finding excuses for his conduct, or laboring to divest it of its seeming obliquity. Restraining or suppressing prayer, in order to find excuses or palliations for infirmities, indiscretions, or improprieties of any kind, which appear to

trench on the sacred limits of morality and godliness, may be to a man the worst of evils: humiliation and prayer for mercy and pardon can never be out of their place to any soul of man who, surrounded with evils, is ever liable to offend.

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JOB 15: 5 For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the language of the crafty.

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Verse 5

For thy mouth uttereth - In attempting to justify thyself, thou hast added iniquity to sin, and hast endeavored to impute blame to thy Maker.

The tongue of the crafty - Thou hast varnished thy own conduct, and used sophistical arguments to defend thyself. Thou resemblest those cunning persons, ערוּמִים arumim, who derive their skill and dexterity from the old serpent, "the nachash, who was ערוּם arum, subtle, or crafty, beyond all the beasts of the field;" Gen 3:1. Thy wisdom is not from above, but from beneath.

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JOB 15: 6 Your own mouth condemns you, and not I. Yes, your own lips testify against you.

JOB 15: 7 "Are you the first man who was born? Or were you brought out before the hills?"

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Verse 7

Art thou the first man that was born? - Literally, "Wert thou born before Adam?" Art thou in the pristine state of purity and innocence? Or art thou like Adam in his first state? It does not become the fallen descendant of a fallen parent to talk as thou dost.

Made before the hills? - Did God create thee the beginning of his ways? or wert thou the first intelligent creature which his hands have formed?

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JOB 15: 8 Have you heard the secret counsel of God? Do you limit wisdom to yourself?

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Verse 8

Hast thou heard the secret of God? - "Hast thou hearkened in God's council?" Wert thou one of the celestial cabinet, when God said, Let Us make man in Our image, and in Our likeness?

Dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? - Dost thou wish us to understand that God's counsels were revealed to none but thyself? And dost thou desire that we should give implicit credence to whatsoever thou art pleased to speak? These are all strong sarcastic questions, and apparently uttered with great contempt.

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JOB 15: 9 What do you know, that we don't know? What do you understand, which is not in us?

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## Verse 9

What knowest thou - Is it likely that thy intellect is greater than ours; and that thou hast cultivated it better than we have done ours?

What understandest thou - Or, Dost thou understand any thing, and it is not with us? Show us any point of knowledge possessed by thyself, of which we are ignorant.

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JOB 15: 10 With us are both the gray-headed and the very aged men, much elder than your father.

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## Verse 10

With us are both the gray-headed - One copy of the Chaldee Targum paraphrases the verse thus: "Truly Eliphaz the hoary-headed, and Bildad the long-lived, are among us; and Zophar, who in age surpasseth thy father." It is very likely that Eliphaz refers to himself and his friends in this verse, and not either to the old men of their tribes, or to the masters by whom they themselves were instructed. Eliphaz seems to have been the eldest of these sages; and, therefore, he takes the lead in each part of this dramatic poem.

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JOB 15: 11 Are the consolations of God too small for you, even the word that is gentle toward you?

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## Verse 11

Are the consolations of God small with thee? - Various are the renderings of this verse. Mr. Good translates the verse thus: "Are then the mercies of God of no account with thee?" or, "the addresses of kindness before thee?"

The Vulgate thus: - "Can it be a difficult thing for God to comfort thee? But thou hinderest this by thy intemperate speeches."

The Syriac and Arabic thus: - "Remove from thee the threatenings (Arabic, reproaches) of God, and speak tranquilly with thy own spirit."

The Septuagint thus: - "Thou hast been scourged lightly for the sins which thou hast committed; and thou hast spoken greatly beyond measure; or, with excessive insolence."

Houbigant thus: - "Dost thou not regard the threatenings of God; or, has there been any thing darkly revealed to thee."

Coverdale: - Dost thou no more regarde the comforte of God? But thy wicked wordes wil not suffre the.

Scarcely any two translators or interpreters agree in the translation, or even meaning of this verse. The sense, as expressed in the Vulgate, or in our own version, or that of Coverdale, is plain enough: - "Hast thou been so unfaithful to God, that he has withdrawn his consolations from thy heart? And is there any secret thing, any bosom sin, which thou wilt not give up, that has thus provoked thy Maker?" This is the sense of our version: and I believe it to be as near the original as any yet offered. I may just add the Chaldee - "Are the consolations of God few to thee? And has a word in secret

been spoken unto thee?" And I shall close all these with the Hebrew text, and the literal version of Arius Montanus: - ינחומות אל ממך המעט hameat mimmecha tanchumoth el. ודבר לאט עמך vedabar laat immak.

Nonne parum a te consolationes Dei? Et verbum latet tecum? "Are not the consolations of God small to thee? And does a word (or thing) lie hidden with thee?"

Now, let the reader choose for himself.

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JOB 15: 12 Why does your heart carry you away? Why do your eyes flash,

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#### Verse 12

Why doth thine heart carry thee away? - Why is it that thou dost conceive and entertain such high sentiments of thyself?

And what do thy eyes wink at - With what splendid opinion of thyself is thine eye dazzled? Perhaps there is an allusion here to that sparkling in the eye which is excited by sensations of joy and pleasing objects of sight, or to that furious rolling of the eyes observed in deranged persons. Rosenmuller translates thus: -

Quo te tuus animus rapit?

Quid oculi tui vibrantes? "Whither does thy soul hurry thee?"

What mean thy rolling eyes?"

Thou seemest transported beyond thyself; thou art actuated by a furious spirit. Thou art beside thyself; thy words and thy eyes show it. None but a madman could speak and act as thou dost; for thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest such words go out of thy mouth, Job 15:13. This latter sense seems to agree best with the words of the text, and with the context.

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JOB 15: 13 That you turn your spirit against God, and let such words go out of your mouth?

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#### Verse 13

That thou turnest thy spirit against God - The ideas here seem to be taken from an archer, who turns his eye and his spirit - his desire - against the object which he wishes to hit; and then lets loose his arrow that it may attain the mark.

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JOB 15: 14 What is man, that he should be clean? What is he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?

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#### Verse 14

What is man, that he should be clean? - מַה אֲנוֹשׁ mah enosh; what is weak, sickly, dying, miserable man, that he should be clean? This is the import of the original word enosh.

And - born of a woman, that he should be righteous? - It appears, from many passages in the sacred writings, that natural birth was supposed to be a defilement; and that every man born into the world was in a state of moral pollution. Perhaps the word יִצְדַק yitsdak should be translated, that he should justify himself, and not that he should be righteous.

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JOB 15: 15 Behold, he puts no trust in his holy ones. Yes, the heavens are not clean in his sight;

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#### Verse 15

Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight - The Vulgate has, "Behold, among his saints, none is immutable; and the heavens are not clean in his sight."

Coverdale - Beholde, he hath found unfaithfulnesse amonge his owne sanctes, yea the very heavens are unclene in his sight.

Eliphaz uses the same mode of speech, Job 4:17-18 (note); where see the notes. Nothing is immutable but God: saints may fall; angels may fall; all their goodness is derived and dependent. The heavens themselves have no purity compared with his.

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JOB 15: 16 how much less one who is abominable and corrupt, a man who drinks iniquity like water!

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#### Verse 16

How much more abominable and filthy is man - As in the preceding verse it is said, he putteth no trust in his saints, it has appeared both to translators and commentators that the original words, קִי אִי aph ki, should be rendered how much Less, not how much More: How much less would he put confidence in man, who is filthy and abominable in his natures and profligate in his practice, as he drinks down iniquity like water? A man who is under the power of sinful propensities commits sin as greedily as the thirsty man or camel drinks down water. He thinks he can never have enough. This is a finished character of a Bad man; he hungers and thirsts after Sin: on the contrary, the Good man hungers and thirsts after Righteousness.

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JOB 15: 17 "I will show you, listen to me; that which I have seen I will declare:

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#### Verse 17

I will show thee, hear me; and that which I have seen I will declare - Eliphaz is now about to quote a whole collection of wise sayings from the ancients; all good enough in themselves, but sinfully misapplied to the case of Job.

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JOB 15: 18 (Which wise men have told by their fathers, and have not hidden it;

JOB 15: 19 to whom alone the land was given, and no stranger passed among them):

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#### Verse 19

Unto whom alone the earth was given - He very likely refers to the Israelites, who got possession of the promised land from God himself; no stranger being permitted to dwell in it, as the old inhabitants were to be exterminated. Some think that Noah and his sons may be intended; as it is certain that the whole earth was given to them, when there were no strangers - no other family of mankind - in being. But, system apart, the words seem to apply more clearly to the Israelites.

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JOB 15: 20 the wicked man writhes in pain all his days, even the number of years that are laid up for the oppressor.

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#### Verse 20

The wicked man travaileth with pain - This is a most forcible truth: a life of sin is a life of misery; and he that will sin must suffer. One of the Targums gives it a strange turn: - "All the days of the ungodly Esau, he was expected to repent, but he did not repent; and the number of years was hidden from the sturdy Ishmael." The sense of the original, מיתחולל מיתחולל, is he torments himself: he is a true heautontimoreumenos, or self-tormentor; and he alone is author of his own sufferings, and of his own ruin.

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JOB 15: 21 A sound of terrors is in his ears. In prosperity the destroyer shall come on him.

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#### Verse 21

A dreadful sound is in his ears - If he be an oppressor or tyrant, he can have no rest: he is full of suspicions that the cruelties he has exercised on others shall be one day exercised on himself; for even in his prosperity he may expect the destroyer to rush upon him.

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JOB 15: 22 He doesn't believe that he shall return out of darkness. He is waited for by the sword.

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#### Verse 22

That he shall return out of darkness - If he take but a few steps in the dark, he expects the dagger of the assassin. This appears to be the only meaning of the place. Some think the passage should be understood to signify that he has no hope of a resurrection; he can never escape from the tomb. This I doubt: in the days of the writer of this book, the doctrine of a future judgment was understood in every part of the East where the knowledge of the true God was diffused.

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JOB 15: 23 He wanders abroad for bread, saying, 'Where is it?' He knows that the day of darkness is ready at his hand.

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Verse 23

He wandereth abroad for bread - He is reduced to a state of the utmost indigence, he who was once in affluence requires a morsel of bread, and can scarcely by begging procure enough to sustain life.

Is ready at his hand - Is בידו beyado, in his hand - in his possession. As he cannot get bread, he must soon meet death.

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JOB 15: 24 Distress and anguish make him afraid. They prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle.

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Verse 24

Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid - He shall be in continual fear of death; being now brought down by adversity, and stripped of all the goods which he had got by oppression, his life is a mark for the meanest assassin.

As a king ready to the battle - The acts of his wickedness and oppression are as numerous as the troops he commands; and when he comes to meet his enemy in the field, he is not only deserted but slain by his troops. How true are the words of the poet: -

*Ad generum Cereris sine caede et vulnere pauci*

*Descendunt reges, et sicca morte tyranni.*

*Juv. Sat., ver. 112. "For few usurpers to the shades descend*

*By a dry death, or with a quiet end."*

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JOB 15: 25 Because he has stretched out his hand against God, and behaves himself proudly against the Almighty;

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Verse 25

He stretcheth out his hand against God - While in power he thought himself supreme. He not only did not acknowledge God, by whom kings reign, but stretched out his hand - used his power, not to protect, but to oppress those over whom he had supreme rule; and thus strengthened himself against the Almighty.

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JOB 15: 26 he runs at him with a stiff neck, with the thick shields of his bucklers;

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## Verse 26

He runneth upon him - Calmet has properly observed that this refers to God, who, like a mighty conquering hero, marches against the ungodly, rushes upon him, seizes him by the throat, which the mail by which it is encompassed cannot protect; neither his shield nor spear can save him when the Lord of hosts comes against him.

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JOB 15: 27 because he has covered his face with his fatness, and gathered fat on his thighs.

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## Verse 27

Because he covereth his face - He has lived in luxury and excess; and like a man overloaded with flesh, he cannot defend himself against the strong gripe of his adversary. The Arabic, for maketh collops of fat on his flanks, has (Arabic) He lays the Pleiades upon the Hyades, or, He places Surrea upon aiyuk, a proverbial expression for, His ambition is boundless; He aspires as high as heaven; His head touches the stars; or, is like the giants of old, who were fabled to have attempted to scale heaven by placing one high mountain upon another: -

Ter sunt conati imponere Pelio Ossam

Scilicet, atque Ossae frondosum involvere Olympum

Ter Pater extractos disjecit fulmine montes.

Virg. Geor. i., ver. 281. "With mountains piled on mountains, thrice they strove

To scale the steepy battlements of Jove;

And thrice his lightning and red thunder play'd,

And their demolished works in ruins laid."

Dryden.

To the lust of power and the schemes of ambition there are no bounds; but see the end of such persons: the haughty spirit precedes a fall; their palaces become desolate; and their heaven is reduced to a chaos.

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JOB 15: 28 He has lived in desolate cities, in houses which no one inhabited, which were ready to become heaps.

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## Verse 28

He dwelleth in desolate cities - It is sometimes the fate of a tyrant to be obliged to take up his habitation in some of those cities which have been ruined by his wars, and in a house so ruinous as to be ready to fall into heaps. Ancient and modern history afford abundance of examples to illustrate this.

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JOB 15: 29 He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall their possessions be extended on the earth.

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Verse 29

He shall not be rich - The whole of what follows, to the end of the chapter, seems to be directed against Job himself, whom Eliphaz indirectly accuses of having been a tyrant and oppressor. The threatened evils are,

1. He shall not be rich, though he labors greatly to acquire riches.
  2. His substance shall not continue - God will blast it, and deprive him of power to preserve it.
  3. Neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof - all his works shall perish, for God will blot out his remembrance from under heaven.
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JOB 15: 30 He shall not depart out of darkness. The flame shall dry up his branches. By the breath of God's mouth shall he go away.

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Verse 30

He shall not depart out of darkness -

4. He shall be in continual afflictions and distress.
  5. The flame shall dry up his branches - his children shall be cut off by sudden judgments.
  6. He shall pass away by the breath of his mouth; for by the breath of his mouth doth God slay the wicked.
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JOB 15: 31 Let him not trust in emptiness, deceiving himself; for emptiness shall be his reward.

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Verse 31

Let not him that is deceived -

7. He has many vain imaginations of obtaining wealth, power, pleasure, and happiness; but he is deceived; and he finds that he has trusted בַּשָּׁוֹא bashshav, in a lie; and this lie is his recompense.
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JOB 15: 32 It shall be accomplished before his time. His branch shall not be green.

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Verse 32

It shall be accomplished before his time - I believe the Vulgate gives the true sense: Antequam dies ejus impleantur, peribit; "He shall perish before his time; before his days are completed."

8. He shall be removed by a violent death, and not live out half his days.

9. And his branch shall not be green - there shall be no scion from his roots; all his posterity shall fail.

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JOB 15: 33 He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive tree.

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Verse 33

He shall shake off his unripe grape -

10. Whatever children he may have, they shall never survive him, nor come to mature age. They shall be like wind-fall grapes and blasted olive blossoms. As the vine and olive, which are among the most useful trees, affording wine and oil, so necessary for the worship of God and the comfort of man, are mentioned here, they may be intended to refer to the hopeful progeny of the oppressor; but who fell, like the untimely grape or the blasted olive flower, without having the opportunity of realizing the public expectation.

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JOB 15: 34 For the company of the godless shall be barren, and fire shall consume the tents of bribery.

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Verse 34

The congregation of hypocrites -

11. Job is here classed with hypocrites, or rather the impious of all kinds. The congregation, or עדת adath, society, of such, shall be desolate, or a barren rock, גלמוד galmud. See this Arabic word explained in the note on Job 3:7 (note).

Fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery -

12. Another insinuation against Job, that he had perverted justice and judgment, and had taken bribes.

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JOB 15: 35 They conceive mischief, and produce iniquity. Their heart prepares deceit."

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Verse 35

They conceive mischief - The figure here is both elegant and impressive. The wicked conceive mischief, from the seed which Satan sows in their hearts; in producing which they travail with many pangs, (for sin is a sore labor), and at last their womb produces fraud or deception. This is an accursed birth, from an iniquitous conception. St. James gives the figure at full length, most beautifully touched in all its parts: When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death; Jam 1:15 (note), where see the note. Poor Job! what a fight of affliction had he to contend with! His body wasted and tortured with sore disease; his mind harassed

by Satan; and his heart wrung with the unkindness, and false accusations of his friends. No wonder he was greatly agitated, often distracted, and sometimes even thrown off his guard. However, all his enemies were chained; and beyond that chain they could not go. God was his unseen Protector, and did not suffer his faithful servant to be greatly moved.