which is indeed the apology that he immediately makes for his conduct; intimating, that he is far from preſuming to plead with God, far from daring to call in queſtion the divine decrees, or even to mention his own in­nocence in the presence of his all-juſt Creator: nor is there any good reaſon for the cenſure which has been paſſed by ſome commentators upon this paſſagc. The poet ſeems, with great judgment and ingenuity, to have performed in this what the nature of his work required. He has depicted the affliction and anguiſh of Job, as flowing from his wounded heart in a manner ſo agree­able to human nature (and certainly ſo far venial), that it may be truly ſaid, “in all this Job finned not with his lips.” It is, nevertheleſs, embelliſhed by ſuch af­fecting imagery, and inſpired with ſuch a warmth and force of ſentiment, that we find it afforded ample ſcope for calumny; nor did the unkind witneſſes of his ſufferings permit ſo fair an opportunity to eſcape. The occaſion is eagerly embraced by Eliphaz to rebuke the impatience of Job; and, not ſatisſied with this, he pro­ceeds to accuſe him in direct terms of wanting forti­tude, and obliquely to inſinuate ſomething of a deeper dye. Though deeply hurt with the coarſe reproaches of Eliphaz, ſtill, however, when Job afterwards com­plains of the ſeverity of God, he cautiouſly refrains from violent expoſtulations with his Creator, and, con­tented with the ſimple expreſſion of affliction, he humbly confeſſes himſelf a ſinner@@⁋. Hence it is evident, that thoſe vehement and perverſe atteſtations of his inno­cence, thoſe murmurs againſt the divine Providence, which his tottering virtue afterwards permits, are to be conſidered merely as the conſequences of momentary paſſion, and not as the ordinary effects of his ſettled character or manners. They prove him at the very worſt not an irreligious man, but a man poſſeſſed of in­tegrity, and too confident of it; a man oppreſſed with almoſt every imaginable evil, both corporal and mental, and hurried beyond the limits of virtue by the ſtrong influence of pain and affliction. When, on the con­trary, his importunate viſitors abandon by ſilence the cauſe which they had ſo wantonly and ſo maliciouſly maintained, and ceaſe unjuſtly to load him with un­merited criminations; though he defends his argument with ſcarcely leſs obſtinacy, yet the vehemence of his grief appears gradually to ſubſide; he returns to himſelf, and explains his ſentiments with more candour and ſedateneſs: and however we may blame him for aſſuming rather too much of arrogance in his appeals to the Al­mighty, certainly his defence againſt the accuſations of Eliphaz is no more than the occaſion will ſtrictly juſtify. Obſerve, in the firſt place, how admirably the con­fidence and perſeverance of Job is diſplayed in replying to the ſlander of his falſe friends:

As God liveth, who hath removed my judgment;

Nay, as the Almighty liveth, who hath embittered my

ſou;

Verily as long as I have life in me,

And the breath of God is in my noſtrils;

My lips ſhall not ſpeak perverſity,

Neither ſhall my tongue whiſper prevarication.

God forbid that I ſhould declare you righteous!

Till I expire I will not remove my integrity from me.

I have fortified myſelf in my righteouſneſs,

And I will not give up my ſtation:

My heart ſhall not upbraid me as long as I live.

May mine enemy be as the impious man,

And he that riſeth up againſt me as the wicked@@∣∣,

But how magnificent, how noble, how inviting and beautiful is that image of virtue in which he delineates his paſt life! What dignity and authority does he ſeem to poſſeſs!

If I came out to the gate, nigh the place of public reſort.

If I took up my ſeat in the ſtreet;

The young men law me, and they hid themſelves;

Nay, the very old men roſe up and ſtood.

The princes refrained talking,

Nay, they laid their hands on their mouths.

The nobles held their peace,

And their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth @@⁋.

What liberality! what a promptitude in beneficence!

Becauſe the ear heard, therefore it bleſſed me;

The eye alſo ſaw, therefore it bare teſtimony for mc. That I delivered the poor who cried,

The orphan alſo, and him who had no helper.

The bleſſing of him who was ready to periſh came upon

me,

And I cauſed the heart of the widow to ſing for joy @@∣∣.

What ſanctity, what integrity in a judicial capacity!

I put on righteouſneſs, and it clothed me like a robe; My juſtice alſo was a diadem.

I was a father to the poor,

And the controverſy which I knew not, I ſearched it out.

Then brake I the grinders of the oppreſſor,

And I plucked the prey out of his teeth @@⁋

But what can be more engaging than the purity of his devotion, and his reverence for the Supreme Being, founded upon the beſt and moſt philoſophical princi­ples? Beſides that through the whole there runs a ſtrain of the moſt amiable tenderneſs and humanity:

For what is the portion which God diſtributeth from above,

And the inheritance of the Almighty from on high?

Is it not deſtruction to the wicked,

And baniſhment from their country to the doers of ini­quity?

Doth he not ſee my ways?

And numbereth he not all my ſteps?

If I ſhould deſpiſe the cauſe of my ſervant,

Or my maid, when they had a controversy with me, What then ſhould I do when God ariſeth,

And when he viſiteth, what anſwer could I make him? Did not he who formed me in the belly form him,

And did not one faſhion us in the womb @@∣∣?

The three friends are exactly ſuch characters as the nature of the poem required. They are ſevere, irrita­ble, malignant cenſors, readily and with apparent ſatisfaction deviating from the purpoſe of conſolation into reproof and contumely. Even from the very firſt they manifeſt this evil propenſity, and indicate what is to be expected from them. The firſt of them, indeed, in the opening of his harangue, aſſumes an air of candour:

Wouldſt thou take it unkindly that one ſhould eſſay to ſpeak to thee @@@⁋?

@@@[m]⁋ See chap. vii. 20.

@@@[m]∣∣Chap. xxvii. 2-7.

@@@[m]⁋Chap. xxix. 7-10.

@@@[m]∣∣Chap. xxix. 11-13.

@@@[m]⁋ Chap. xxix. 14, 16, 17.

@@@[m]∣∣ Chap. xxxi 2-4. 13-15.

@@@[m]⁋ Chap. iv. 2.