

THE BOOK OF JOB.

My father who, besides Arabian, also knew Persian and Hebrew, had a favorite book, the Hebrew book of Job. The mysterious depth, the overwhelming grandeur, the poetical sublimity of this marvelous book made an extraordinary impression on the thoughtful and, at the same time, deeply-feeling man.

He had been for some time past particularly devoting himself to the study of this book, when I (then seven years old) was seized by a sickness from which I recovered so slowly, that I was kept from going to school for the length of a half a year.

Now, whether it was that father was so full of his subject, that he could not refrain from imparting some of it even to me, the young boy; or whether it was that, at the beginning, he only wanted to make me acquainted with the two first chapters of the book, which are well adapted to a child's comprehension—suffice it to say, that he began explaining his favorite book to me and continued to do so from day to day until I had entirely recovered and could again attend school, by which time we had arrived at the close of the seventeenth chapter. These seventeen chapters I had learned so attentively and joyfully, that I could recite them by heart. Had not father given himself all possible pains to make the sublime contents accessible to my childish understanding? Had not his face beamed with joy while instructing me? How could I be otherwise than diligent? How would it have been possible for me not to catch a spark of his glowing enthusiasm?

At that period (on a beautiful sunny day, but which, for father, proved a very dark day indeed), father lost a dear friend. He took me with him to the funeral, and I can still see the picture the cemetery presented on that day: the numberless gray tombstones surrounding us on all sides; the crowded multitude as pale, still, and immovable as the tombstones themselves, but especially the Iman who, looking as if transfigured, and pointing to the new grave on which the sunbeams fell, exclaimed enthusiastically: "Look, the sun shines on the grave; the graves of the earth are not dark, are not without hope; for heavenly light and heavenly comfort reach even down to them."

On our way home (father walking slowly and silently and leading me, as was his custom, by the hand) the Iman joined us. For a long time neither of them spoke. The Iman did not try to console his friend, well knowing that consolation may soothe the heart when already healing, but not while yet bleeding from fresh wounds;—and father was entirely absorbed in his grief. At last father said to me: "Come, my child, into our midst and recite to us the fourteenth chapter of the book of Job. Speak in a loud and clear voice! I will hear every word of it." I began:

"Man born of woman, is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down; he fleeth as a shadow and continueth not. And dost thou, (God), open thine eyes upon such a one, and bringest *me* into judgment with *thee*," and so on to the end of the chapter.

Such words at such an hour, coming as they did from the

mouth of a child, must have had a powerful effect, for, looking up to the Iman, I saw that his eyes were wet with tears. I dared not then look up to father until, an hour later, we entered our house.

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