A SHORT LIFE OF CHRIST.

For Old and Young.

BY

CUNNINGHAM GEIKIE, D.D.,

Vicar of St. Martin-at-Palace, Norwich.

WITH FIFTY ILLUSTRATIONS.

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TEL HÛM, PERHAPS THE SITE OF CAPERNAUM.

(By permission of the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund.)
PREFACE.

This is a new book, not an abridgment, and is written for the multitudes, older or younger, who, while shrinking from a Life of Christ in two volumes, would be very glad to read and master the amazing story, if presented vividly, and with adequate knowledge, in a moderate compass. I have spared no pains to make the following pages supply, at least in a measure, this much felt want. The fullest Life of Our Lord must always remain the best for the student, clerical or lay; but while these have their wishes already supplied, others, both older and younger, have hitherto been without a similar presentation of the Gospel narrative, within smaller limits, more suited to their taste or leisure.

I trust this volume will be found, what I fain would have it, not only pleasant reading, clear, simple, bright, but also a help to not a few, in their effort to bring before their minds a picture of their Divine Saviour, as he lived and moved when among us.
I INSCRIBE THIS BOOK

TO

MY RIGHT WORTHY DAUGHTER,

ISABEL.
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A SHORT LIFE OF CHRIST
FOR OLD AND YOUNG.

CHAPTER I.

The coast of the Holy Land of Bible times began where the shore of the Mediterranean bends north from Egypt, and reached from that point to Sidon; but the Jews never got possession of the shore, except here and there, for a short time, and had to live in the hilly country behind it. We might think that a region so famous must have been large and important in itself, to be the theatre of so much as is recorded of Palestine in the Bible, but small countries have often played a great part in history. England is very small, yet it has filled a wonderful part in the story of the world. Greece was very small, and yet has left a mighty name among the nations; and Rome, which ruled the earth for centuries, was only a city on the banks of the yellow Italian Tiber. In the same way the Holy Land is not nearly so large as England, and, indeed, is just about the size of Wales, its greatest length being only about 140 miles, while it is but twenty miles broad on the north and forty on the south. Like Wales, too, it is nearly all hills when you have crossed the sea-coast plain. Seen from off the coast, say at Joppa, the land stretches away ten or fifteen miles to a range of hills, which rise in the
background like a wall. From a distance this interval seems level, but when you ride inland you find yourself gradually ascending from the moment you leave the shore, till you reach a belt of low heights, which climb higher and higher as you approach the passes through the chain of rounded hills amidst which the Jews once lived, at a height of from two to three thousand feet above the sea.

Along the coast the soil is everywhere comparatively rich. From below Gaza, northward to Joppa, it used to be called the Philistine plain, from the people who held that part; but they had been crushed and broken as a nation long before Christ, though their name still remains to our own day in that given to the country—for 'Palestine' is derived from 'Philistine.' North of Joppa, the low land was called the plain of Sharon—a great tract of rolling land, famous in ancient times as a place of pasture for herds and flocks, and for its oak forest and groves of olives and fruit trees, and widely farmed in the days of our Lord, though now mostly desolate.

The low hills which look down on these plains are nearly without inhabitants, like every part of the Holy Land, though there are a few small towns or villages, mostly of mud houses, scattered very thinly. In the time of our Lord, however, the whole country was filled with people: not only the plains, but the heights at the foot of the mountains still abounding in ruins of what were then busy communities. There are no roads now, but then narrow but fine highways, paved with blocks of stone, and built by the Romans, ran in all directions, and the soil was made fruitful by a careful provision of water, led in skilfully built conduits, to every part, from springs in the hills or on the plains themselves. All kinds of fruit grew in these favoured regions. The palm tree yielded dates nearly as far north as Gaza, and grew freely, though without bearing fruit, along the whole coast, and even in sheltered places inland, as it still does at Jerusalem and near Nazareth. The fig, the olive, the pomegranate, the almond,
and the melon still grow in rich abundance, wherever they are planted and cared for, and the grape flourishes better than in almost any other climate. In our day, apples may be had from orchards near Gaza, and every vegetable common in England is as common in Palestine. Indeed, the name of one kind of onion—the shallot, or shalot—is taken from that of the great fortress town, Ascalon, its old name in the time of the Crusades being Ascalonia, which was the first form of the word now changed into shallot. The oranges of Joppa are famous
even in England, and this fruit and the citron were equally famous over the lowlands of Palestine in the days of Christ, for both were brought from the East after the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon. Round the humble villages of the Philistine plain the country is still beautiful in spring with the blossom of orchards and the tender green of rising crops, but it must have been much more so nineteen hundred years ago, when there were no such long gaps of waste land as there are now, and the landscape showed, in varied charms, the labours of the fruit-grower, the gardener, and the husbandman.

The mountains swelling up from the low heights behind the sea plain can only be entered by a few passes, through which the paths, or rather wild tracks, climb in painful ascent. Roads made them easy in Christ’s day, but since then these have fallen into complete ruin, so that you stumble along ways often no better than the rough bottom of a quarry, so thickly covered are they with stones and rocks of all sizes. The mountains themselves are nearly everywhere mere slopes and rounds of stone, sometimes hidden by dwarf trees and bushes, but for the most part naked and forbidding, though grass and plants sufficient to pasture flocks of goats, spring up in their countless narrow seams and chinks. Thistles and thorns of all kinds abound. Indeed, a great many plants are thorny in Palestine, as in other warm countries, for thorns are only leaves which have not been able to grow as they ought, from heat, want of water, or other causes. The region into which the mountain passes leads was, as I have said, the home of the Jewish people, who were kept shut up in them by the populations of the rich lowlands near the sea, till very late in their history, though they had villages on some of the low heights overlooking it.

This region, in which our Lord lived, and beyond which he never wandered, is in every part high above the level of the coast, the round tops of its hills rising from two thousand five hundred to over three thousand feet above it, though the
difference between them, as a whole, is so small that they look from the plains like a flat tableland. They have, indeed, in remote times formed the nearly level surface of the country, and have only been worn into hills and valleys by the rains and weather, acting often fiercely, through many ages. The rock of which they consist is soft grey limestone, abounding in larger and smaller caves, and is everywhere, in the south of the country, which used to be called Judea, bare and desolate, except where a sprinkling of dwarf trees or bushes covers the stones, or a feathering of grass or herbs grows, as I have said, out of the countless cracks which run in every direction over all the heights and slopes. In the days of Christ the landscape was not so forbidding, for not only were there spots like the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, which still looks green and pleasant: the sides of the hills, now so grey and stony, were made into terraces, one above the other, each forming a bank of soil for the growth of vines, fruit trees, or grain, as may still be seen in the ruins of the walls by which these terraces were held up. Judea must always, however, have been a very barren country, for even its valleys have more stones, one would think, than soil. But things are far worse since the terraces were neglected. The hot summer sun, swelling the moisture distilled on the hills by the sea-wind each night, continually splits off the surface, and this skin of loose stones is washed down into the valleys by the wild rains of winter, so that the rocks are left quite bare of soil.

As you go north, this gaunt barrenness slowly passes into increasing green. The middle part of the country, once known as Samaria, which in Christ's day was under the same ruler as Judea, is made up of rounded hills and pleasant valleys, far richer than those in the south, but still not at all so rich as the hills and valleys of England. Olives, figs, almonds, and pomegranates grow freely on the hill-sides, and patches of barley or wheat brighten most of the hollows. There are also more springs, which means greater plenty of all kinds of growth,
Samaria extended quite across the hill country, to the south side of the Carmel hills, which run for many miles north-west, to the coast, on the south side of the Bay of Acre. Carmel means a garden, orchard, or park, and speaks of the ancient wooded beauty of these heights. They are not high, and have no sharp peaks, but stretch along, like all the hills of Palestine in wave after wave of long rounded tops. Samaria was at first the country of the great tribe of Ephraim, but the only part of the land that kept the name of a Jewish tribe after the armies of Nineveh and Babylon had carried away the nation, was Judea, which means the "Jew's country," the race taking the name of Jews from "Judah."

On the north side of the hills of Carmel lies the greatest tract of level ground in the Holy Land; about twenty miles from end to end, and fourteen across, at its widest part. It runs nearly north and south, and is enclosed in low hills all
round, so that whichever way you look, the view is shut in by heights, never wild, but all smoothed over their tops and sides by the long-continued action of the weather. Coming from the south you enter this great plain, once called that of Jezreel—now Esdraelon, near its south end, and find the mountains of Gilboa, where Saul and Jonathan were slain, facing you, and narrowing the plain very much. Straight north, shining in pleasant whiteness from the side of a hill, three miles back from the plain, the houses of Nazareth look towards you from a distance of about twenty miles, though they seem far nearer, through the clear air of the Holy Land. There are no villages on the road except Jezreel, which is only a few wretched mud hovels, with one or two of stone, and an old watchtower, looking down on them from the low swell on which they and it stand. Yet one cannot help remembering that it was from the top of the tower of Joram, or rather of Jezebel’s palace in Jezreel, that the watchman saw Jehu driving his chariot furiously, as was his wont, up the sloping valley from the Jordan, with murder against all the race of Ahab in his heart. The whole plain was dotted with villages in Christ’s day, towns rose on the slopes of a number of the hills on both sides, and the landscape, far and near showed careful farming, or rich orchards, groves and gardens; for the country in every part was then densely peopled, so that even the hill-sides, as I have said, were made into terraces for growing trees, vines, or grain. At present you ride over a wide expanse of the richest soil, left to thistles and weeds, with only here and there a patch of grain, while the villages are high up on the hills, to be out of danger from the wild Arabs who overrun the district whenever they can, and not only rob and steal, but are ready to kill.

To get to Nazareth you have to climb the face of a hill by a rude track, which has been the only road to the town for many ages. Your horse clambers as only the horses of the country can, sometimes up places so steep that you are glad to catch hold of its mane, to keep your seat. Huge masses
of rock not seldom appear to bar further progress, but you find there is room between them for your beast to pass, though hardly more than is needed. Sheets of bare rock have to be crossed, at times made still more dangerous by their slanting this way or that, with no foothold for the creature under you. Some hundreds of feet have to be thus ascended, to find that for nearly three miles, the track though no longer a hard climb, is as wild, bare, and rocky as can be fancied. Only after a very wearisome hour do you reach Nazareth, which rises on the side of a hill, house over house, with a sweet little valley below, and rounded grey hills, perfectly bare, rising in every direction.

In this little hill-town of Nazareth there lived, nineteen hundred years ago, a carpenter named Joseph, a widower, with sons and daughters—poor, of course, with such a calling, in so simple a village, but a man of high worth, fearing God and respected by his neighbours. He was now engaged, or betrothed,\(^1\) to a maiden named Mary; but it was the custom for those who had thus been promised in marriage to each other, to wait sometimes for a year before the wedding finally took place. During this time the maiden stayed at home, with her parents or friends, and was never seen by her intended bridegroom. Indeed, in the East, women, in all ages, have been far more private in their life than with us, though Jewish women seem to have ventured into public more than any but the Christian women in Palestine do now. They do not appear at merry-makings, nor do they ever speak to men. In fact, they are not seen even if you visit a house, but keep in their own part of it. Hence, when Christ spoke with the woman at the well of Samaria, the disciples, though they said nothing, wondered that he did so. A husband in Christ’s day, as now, saw his wife’s face for the first time after he was married, and from

\(^1\) Betroth means to promise “by one’s truth.”
the hour she was his she saw no other man, except as she passed to or from the well, or on some errand, or to the synagogue—that is, to the Jewish church—and there she sat, with the rest of her sex, in a part shut off by a close lattice or a curtain.

But a strange thing was to happen to Mary. One day, after

she had been engaged to Joseph, she was in her house, when suddenly a man appeared in her chamber, where she was all alone. That any man should come to her, even if she had been in the street, would have been strange to a Jewish woman, but it was much more so when he came into her own room, as no man was allowed to enter the chamber of a woman. She must, there-
fore, have been greatly alarmed; but the words of the stranger, and no doubt his appearance and voice, presently calmed her mind. Nor did he let her long wonder at his visit, for he forthwith saluted her with the words, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee." She must have felt at once that no evil was intended her, but still she was greatly troubled. She was soon, however, calmed; for the visitor, who was no other than the angel Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, told her that there was no need for fear; she had found favour with God, and had been chosen by Him to be the mother of a son, who would be great, and would be called holy, and the Son of the Most High, and bear the name of Jesus. Having spoken thus, Mary was forthwith once more alone, the angel returning unseen to heaven.

Six months before this wonderful vision appeared to Mary, something equally wonderful had happened, far away from Nazareth, at a village called Juttah, in the hill country of the hot and dry south, not far from Hebron. A priest called Zacharias lived there, with his wife Elizabeth, who, like himself, was of the blood of Aaron, the brother of Moses, so that both were of the purest Jewish birth, and, indeed, members of the most famous branch of Jewish nobility. They were both, moreover, persons of a pure and beautiful life, and were not only "righteous before God," but also so strictly obedient to the Jewish Church that they kept all its commandments and ordinances blamelessly, though these were very numerous, and required much labour and care to observe them. Zacharias had to do duty at the Temple only twice a year, for a week each time, so that he lived mostly at Juttah, where he would have a good deal to do as a priest, in the private calls of his neighbours for various services. His home lay, as I have said, high up in the hill country south of Hebron, but the district around was not so desolate and barren as it is now, for ruins of towns and villages, and signs of terraces on the hill-sides, tell of busy life then filling the whole landscape. It is a famous part for
the vine, and the olive and fig grow finely in the hollows and on the slopes, while the hills far and near have always been rich in flocks of sheep and goats, though not so fitted for cattle. It must not be supposed, however, that because flocks wandered over the hills, the pasture was like that of England, for it is quite wonderful to see the bareness of the valleys or rocks from which both sheep and goats, in Palestine, manage to get their food. But what with his share of the priest's glebe in Juttah, and the fees and offerings he would from time to time get, Zacharias and his wife, we may believe, were very well to do in a humble way, and had great reason, as they sat peacefully under their own vine and fig tree—the vine interlacing through the fig, to make a shelter from the hot sun—to thank God that their lot was so fortunate.

But the worthy couple had a private sorrow which they felt keenly. No wish is so strong in the Jew as to have a son, that his name may be handed down, and not blotted out from among his people; and this feeling is as deep with Jewish wives. It was fancied, of old, to be a sign of the anger of God if a woman were childless, and was such a reproach among men that wives were often sent away by their husbands when this was the case, and some one else taken in their place. Not only so, but a woman had the right, if her husband died before she had a child, to demand that his brother should marry her, as you will remember is shown in the question put to our Lord by the Sadducees about a wife who married seven brothers, one after the other, as they one by one died, leaving her childless. Worst of all, both Zacharias and Elizabeth were well stricken in years, and old people have not young children. But they were soon to see that there is nothing impossible with God.

The time had again come for Zacharias to serve for his week in the Temple at Jerusalem, and he had gone thither, living in one of the chambers set apart for priests on duty, at the sides of the Temple grounds. These were very large, forming a great open space of about thirty-five acres, which you will better
understand when I say that the wall enclosing it made altogether about a mile along the four sides. It was very much the shape of an ordinary book, and had been formed, by wonderful labour, on the rough top of Mount Moriah, the steep slopes having been brought up to a level by great arches, which were then covered with earth, while the places that had been too high had been cut away, except the very summit of the hill, which was left, and still remains, in its natural roughness, rising in our day, inside the Dome of the Rock, formerly known as the Mosque of Omar, above the wide surface of the grounds outside. The Temple itself was small, for it had only two chambers, though there was a high porch in front of it, and rooms for various uses were built behind this at the sides of the sacred building. In front of the porch, probably on the rough summit of the hill, stood the great brazen altar, built of large unhewn stones, originally covered with open copper work, to keep them together, but in Christ's day hidden by coats of white cement. Standing fourteen or fifteen feet high, with a slope leading up to it, and forming a great square of between forty and fifty feet on each side, it could be seen from all parts of the Temple grounds. With the sanctuary itself, it occupied the highest ground, the space before being, in part, formed into courts—one for Jewish men, a second for Jewish women, and a third for worshippers of foreign birth; each court lower than the other, and all three lower than the space left for the priests, the great altar, and the Temple building, so that these, seen from the Temple grounds, stood clear above all.

One of the most solemn acts of daily worship was the incense offering, morning and evening, just before the morning and the evening sacrifice. The priest who officiated entered the Holy Place, in which stood the table of shewbread, set out with twelve loaves, laid as it were before God, and renewed each Sabbath; the seven-branched golden candlestick; and a golden altar, known as the altar of incense. Before he approached,
other priests had trimmed the candlestick, removed the dead coals from the altar, and put on it glowing charcoal, taken from the great altar outside, and had retired with their faces to the Holy of Holies, bowing to it lowly, and repeating set prayers as they withdrew. Lots were drawn each day to decide who should have so great an honour as to offer the incense—an honour believed always to bring a blessing with it, and allowed to no one more than once in his life.

It happened that, on one of the days of his week's duty, this special dignity fell to Zacharias, who, we may be sure, was deeply pleased with his good fortune. Wearing a white linen turban on his head, a loose-sleeved tunic of the same material, reaching from his neck to a little below his knees, over short white linen drawers, a white linen girdle binding it round his waist, and his legs and feet, as well as part of his arms, bare—the full priestly dress—he received the censer from the proper official, and with lowly reverence, opening the massive door and drawing aside the curtain, passed into the awful silence of the Holy Place. The signal for his laying the incense on the altar was given from without, and was followed, on the part of the con-
gregation, by their throwing themselves prostrate, in silent prayer, in the courts below the Temple building, and in the wide space beyond. Meanwhile Zacharias sprinkled the incense on the glowing charcoal. This done, it was the appointed course to bow to the Holy of Holies, and retire slowly backwards, that the crowds outside might know of the offering having been accepted, and not be alarmed lest God had struck down the priest from any cause. But he was not able to give them this satisfaction, for to his terror, as he approached the altar, he saw an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of it—that is, on the side which boded something good. Indeed, the place itself was enough to affect the mind; so near the Holy of Holies, where God had His peculiar seat; so still; so strange, with no light but that of the ever-burning lamps, and the feeble glow of the wood embers on the altar. But there was no cause for fear. It was Gabriel, sent by God to tell the worthy Zacharias that his wife would bear a son, whose name should be called John—that is, the son "whom God has graciously given." This child, moreover, it was announced, was to drink no wine or strong drink, but to be great in the sight of the Lord, and to be filled with the Holy Ghost from his very birth.

Scarcely able to think such a wonderful blessing possible, but calmed by the tones and look of the angel, Zacharias ventured to ask how he might know that what he had been told would happen. He must have been too confused to think clearly what he said, else he never would have spoken so, in such a place and at such a time. Dumbness, sent on him at the moment, was the deserved sign that the promise would be kept; and this moreover, was to last till after the child was born. Meanwhile, the people outside were alarmed at his delay in reappearing, to give them his priestly benediction and dismiss them. But when at last he showed himself, it was clear why he had detained them, for by signs he made it understood, though he could not speak, that he had seen a vision.

Six or seven months after this, Mary, who had also been
recently honoured, as we have seen, by vision, and had learned
from the angel that Elizabeth, her kinswoman, though so old.
was to have a son, determined to go to her, that the two might
talk of the wonderful things that had happened to each. It
was a long journey for Mary, Juttah being at least a hundred
miles, by the nearest roads, from Nazareth; but she could easily
join some small company travelling south, and could doubtless
ride, as all the people do still in Palestine, on an ass.

The meeting would be a touching one to both of the saintly
women, and has left us, as its result on the spirit of Mary,
the grandest hymn of the New Testament, called from its first
word in the Latin Bible, the Magnificat. She must have known
the Old Testament wonderfully well to utter words so filled
with its purest spirit, and her mind must have been as gifted
as her religious feeling was lofty, to fit them together into such
a psalm of praise and triumph. Listen to it, and think of it as
the song of a young Hebrew girl of humble station, in a poor
highland village in Galilee.

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour,
For He hath looked upon the low estate of His handmaiden.
For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For He that is mighty hath done to me great things;
And holy is His name.
And His mercy is unto generations and generations,
On them that fear Him.
He hath showed strength with His arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart.
He hath put down princes from their thrones,
And hath exalted them of low degree.
The hungry He hath filled with good things;
And the rich He hath sent empty away.
He hath holpen Israel His servant,
That He might remember mercy
(As He spake unto our fathers)
Towards Abraham and his seed for ever. (Revised Version.)

Mary stayed about three months with Zacharias and Eliza-
beth, apparently till the birth of John the Baptist, Elizabeth's child; and then, having seen the promise of the angel fulfilled in this case, and knowing it would be so in her own, she turned her face to the north, and made her way once more to Nazareth.
CHAPTER II.

In the time of Christ the Holy Land was part of the great Roman empire, at the head of which stood the monarch known best by his title, Augustus—"the sacred exalted one"—his name being Octavius Caesar. But just as native kings reign now in India, under the Empress of India, our Queen, so, in the Roman empire, many countries were left in the hands of their own rulers, though under Augustus. The name of the king in Palestine, at the birth of Christ, was Herod, a very clever but an exceedingly bad man. To make his throne, as he thought, safe, he had murdered his best-loved wife and her two sons, her father, her mother, and her brothers; their crime being that they were members of the old royal family of the Jews, while he was not a Jew at all, but an Edomite—that is, one of a race which every Jew hated beyond measure. The bitterness between the two nations had grown steadily greater, indeed, for many hundred years, till at last they had come to feel such an abhorrence of each other that a Jewish writer about Christ's time says of Edom—that is, of the people descended from Esau—"When I can change the skin and the bristles of a swine to wool, and when horns grow out of its head like the horns of a sheep, then will I have brotherly love to thee. And when wolves make peace with lambs, then shall I be at peace with thee in my heart; and when the lion is the friend of the ox, and goes in the yoke and ploughs with him, then I will make peace with thee; and when the raven grows white, then shall I love thee and keep peace with thee."

That a person of a race thus loathed should sit on the throne
of David was a terrible thing in the opinion of every Jew; and hence all the reign of Herod was disturbed by revolts against him, though they only led to misery and slaughter among those who joined in them.

About four years before the time from which we date the birth of Christ, Augustus had sent a command to Herod to cause all his subjects to go to the towns or villages from which their families had at first come, or where they held property, that their names, and the value they owned in land or otherwise, might be registered—for the two ends, of knowing how many soldiers could be raised from among them, and what taxes could be laid upon them. We call such an inquiry a census, and have it taken every ten years, though no one is required to move from where he may be at the time.

Herod having published this command of his master, the whole country was set astir. Away in Nazareth Joseph had taken Mary as his wife, an angel of the Lord having appeared to him in a dream, and directed him to do so, telling him that she would ere long have a son, whom God Himself had given her, and that the child’s name was to be Jesus—that is, “help,” “deliverance,” or “salvation”—because he would save his people from their sins. But the command of Herod broke in on their quiet just after this, and it was necessary that they should both go to Bethlehem, a hill-town a few miles south of Jerusalem, between eighty and ninety miles from Nazareth;
both of them being descended from David, the great king of Israel, and Bethlehem being the place where he and his father had lived.

Any one who has been in the Holy Land can picture to himself how they travelled. Even now the ass is used far more than the horse, and it was still more common two thousand years ago; indeed, it is mentioned over forty times in the Bible from the days of Abraham onwards, and was ridden by all classes, till Solomon brought horses from Egypt. One meets it on every road in Palestine, but horses are rare. The peasant rides home from his toil in the field on a bare-backed ass, his light plough often across its shoulders, before him. If you come on a string of camels taking wheat, or wool, or oil to some port, they are generally following a turbaned figure who leads the way on a small ass. Nothing is more common than to see a husband walking alongside an ass, on which his wife sits, with a child in her arms; and thus, I have no doubt, it would be with Joseph. Nobody is too poor to own an ass, for it can graze without cost on the open hill-side, and it needs no stable, but lies down at night in the little yard at the side of the house, or even comes into the dwelling, and makes itself at home in the back part of the one chamber, some goats, perhaps, or a few thin sheep, lying down beside it, and cocks and hens roosting on a spar overhead. The floor of a poor man's house is of hard mud, a little higher near the door than at the back: the higher part for the family; while the live stock, whether feathered or four-footed, have the lower to themselves. In a very poor house the one room is used both by day and night, but in better dwellings a rude outside stair from the yard leads to sleeping places—for I can hardly call them rooms—which are built very often over only half of the roof, the other half being left open to the sky, though there is a low wall round it, to prevent any one falling over. On this open space there is generally a mud dovecot rising like a clumsy sugar-loaf, pigeons flying in and out as they choose.
Downstairs there is frequently no furniture at all; a mud bench raised along the wall, and covered with whatever the house can afford, supplying the want of a sofa or chairs by day, and of bedsteads by night. Nor is the want of what we think necessary much felt, for people in the East seem to like best to sit on a mat of rushes or palm leaves on the floor, and often sleep there, on these thin beds. The want of dishes cannot be great where all eat out of one huge bowl, dipping their hands into it for what they wish, nor is a table of any height required where people sit cross-legged on the floor.

It would be a great mistake, however, to think that because the houses are so poor and so empty, the people are rough or coarse. The song of Mary shows what high thoughts, what a pure mind, and what a perfect character might be found in some of them in Christ's day; and though the humble classes of Palestine have not, in our time, the word of God, which gave her the grandeur of soul she displays, they are mild, courteous, and wonderfully dignified in their bearing. Among us a poor man is apt to cringe before those richer than himself, but there is nothing of this in the East. The poorest villager has a quiet self-respect that is never put about even before the highest dignitary. He feels that he is a man, and bears himself like one, though with no rudeness or disrespect to others. I have seen a humble beggar and the governor of his town speaking together with as perfect ease and good breeding on both sides as if they were equals.

Mary and Joseph would start for Bethlehem with at least one ass, for Mary to ride, but perhaps they travelled like the Levite and his wife in the Book of Judges,1 who had asses for himself and his wife, while a third carried a bag of tebben, or short broken straw and another of barley, as fodder, some bread, and a small skin of wine; a lad attending to take care of the beasts. Even now, the wage of a man to attend

1 Judges xix. 19.
A SHORT LIFE OF CHRIST.

a horse is almost nothing in the East. The hire of a horse at Damascus, for example, with its owner on a second to see to it, is only about three shillings a day, the man providing the food for the horses and for himself. But generally a man going with asses, walks, without thinking of riding. Mary and Joseph would go down the steep bluff above the plain of Esdraelon, trusting to the sure-footed creatures they rode, if, indeed, Joseph did not walk at the side of Mary. Then came the broad, glorious plain; then the rough pass near Engannim, leading to the uplands of Samaria; but they would not enter on this till the second day, for the plain is reckoned one day's journey across, as beasts only go at a walk in the Holy Land. Then would come Samaria, where Joseph would be troubled to find shelter, for fear of defiling himself, as a strict Jew, by anything Samaritan. Next day they would be at Nablus, the ancient Shechem; then they would rest near Gibeah; and the next day they would be at Jerusalem, from which a short journey of five or six miles would bring them to Bethlehem.

That famous place lies two thousand five hundred and fifty feet above the sea, the ridge of the hill on which it stands being thus a hundred feet higher than the hills on which Jerusalem is built. Yet it hardly seems the mountain town it is, for the whole country consists of hills, only reached by a long and weary climb from the coast plains. The road up which Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem looks down, on the left, as you ascend the last slope, into a wide green valley, sprinkled with olive groves and patches of grain or ploughed land, the houses stretching along the top of the hill, in a bend, beneath which the steep descent is seamed with the great stone walls of terraces, one over the other, green with olives and other fruit trees, including vines. The hills on the other side of the valley stand bare and grey, with rounded tops; and the eye, ranging down the fertile hollow between, meets, a little way off, the long upward slopes of a new hill, said to be that over
which the angels sang. Then the landscape sinks, in great steps, towards the Dead Sea, which is about thirteen miles off, but lies nearly four thousand feet lower than Bethlehem. Beyond its deep-blue waters rise the Moabite hills, flat-topped, and yellowish pink in colour—a beautiful sight to see.

There is one long street of flat-roofed—mostly separate—houses, in the town, with offshoots from it to another shorter street behind; and this must always have been so, from the narrowness of the hill-ridge. All the houses are built of the yellowish-white limestone of the town-hill, and are, at most, of two storeys, many of them, on the right hand, as you enter the town from the north, running into the hill at the back, the rock having been cut away to receive them, as I have seen in some cases in the Isle of Wight. Not a few thus built include a natural or artificial cave as a part of the dwelling, all the hills of Palestine being full of hollow spaces, to have one of which behind is an advantage to a house, as it forms a ready-made storehouse or stable, where the lumber of the family may be put away, and the ass, or goats, or fowls, can have shelter.

When Mary and Joseph reached the City of David, it was so full of strangers coming, like themselves, to be registered, that no house had room to receive them. There are no "inns" like ours in the East, but no native finds difficulty, in ordinary times, in obtaining shelter, since all the accommodation sought is to be allowed to lie down for the night on a mat or on the floor, in the clothes one wears by day. Every one, moreover, like the Levite and his wife, brings his own food and some barley or short broken straw for his ass, so that it costs nothing to take strangers under one's roof. We may be sure, therefore, that had there been room in any house in the town, Mary and Joseph would have been free to make use of it. The only accommodation they could have, however, was in the place where the household ass and other creatures had their nightly quarters; and there, in so lowly a shelter, Jesus Christ,
the Saviour of the world, and the Son of God, was born, very
soon after Mary reached Bethlehem.

A cave under the high altar of the Church of the Nativity,
at the end of the little town, is shown as the spot thus greatly
honoured. Thirteen steps lead down to it, but it looks very
little like a cave when you reach it, for it is paved and lined
round with marble, and lighted by thirty-two lamps, as of
course it has no light from the sun. The roof is covered with
faded cloth of gold, and three huge candlesticks, with candles
rising above one's head, stand at the back, while a very dark
picture of the Nativity rests opposite these, on a ledge called
an altar, supported at the sides by some small marble pillars.
Below this, a half-circle, about four feet high and a yard deep,
scooped out like a shell, is lighted by fifteen silver lamps,
which burn night and day for ever, round the coloured marbles
of the little recess. But the chief interest centres on a silver
star in the half-circle underneath this illumination, for it is
believed to mark the spot over which the Star of the East
once rested, and therefore the very place where our Lord was
born. Along the front you read also the touching words in
Latin: "Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin." Pilgrims
from all lands bow with lowly reverence, and kiss the marble
hallowed by such thoughts; and when I was there, I kneeled
down and did so with the rest. For it seems very probable that
this was really the scene of Christ's birth. So long ago as
about thirty or forty years after the death of St. John, the last
survivor of the apostles, it was revered as being so, and there
could hardly be stronger proof that it deserves the honour.
Indeed, from that early time till now it has been held sacred.
St. Jerome made his home in a poor cave close to it, and lived
there for thirty years, that he might be near the birthplace of
his Lord,¹ and every century since has seen countless pil-
grimages to it.

¹ St. Jerome lived A.D. 331-420.
That a cave should be regarded as the birthplace of the Redeemer may seem strange in other countries, but it is not at all strange in the Holy Land. I have said that all the hills in Palestine are full of holes and caverns of all sizes. Nothing is more common than to put up sheep, goats, asses, or even cattle, in such natural hollows, even when they are, as it were, part of a dwelling. The little ewe lamb of the poor man "grew up together with him and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter,"¹ coming to him, no doubt, as he sat or slept on the floor of his humble mud house of one room, from its own place at the back where the floor was lower, and where its mother had lain before it, and the ass had its crib and the fowls their roost.

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 3.
Nothing is said in the Gospels of any wonders at the time of Christ’s birth, but poetry has done its utmost since to honour the great event. Thus we are told, in a very ancient writing, that “the angels were round him at his birth, and worshipped the New Born. Joseph, in the meanwhile, was wandering about, seeking help. And when he looked up to heaven, he saw that the pole of the heavens stood still, and the birds of the air stopped in the midst of their flight, and the sky was darkened. And looking on the earth he saw a dish full of food, and workmen resting round it with their hands in the dish, to eat, and those who were stretching out their hands did not take any of the food, and those who were lifting their hands to their mouths did not do so; but the faces of all were turned upwards. And he saw sheep which were being driven along, and the sheep stood still, and the shepherd lifted his hand to strike them, but it remained uplifted. And he came to a spring, and saw the goats with their mouths touching the water, but they did not drink, but were under a spell, for all things at that moment were turned from their course.”

The birth of an earthly prince is announced by royal salutes, and the swiftest agencies carry the news to every land; but the Son of God came into the world unnoticed even by the villagers of Bethlehem, while Jerusalem, a few miles off, learned of his birth only, after long delay, when a star was guiding wise men from the East to his cradle. But if it were unnoticed on earth, it was a great event in heaven; so great that a choir of angels, for the first and last time in the history of our world, came to gaze on the babe as he lay in the manger, and showed themselves, before they returned again to their glorious home, to a band of shepherds, then lying out through the night, with their flocks, on the hills near Bethlehem. The slopes pointed out as the scene of this miracle stretch away some distance to the east of the town, rising gently with a faint greenness, the vegetation barely covering the grey stony soil. Beyond them are the barren hills of the wilderness of
Judea, sinking steeply to the Dead Sea. Some old olives, with trunks hollow from age, rise here and there; and you may still see poor shepherds tending their flocks, with sheepskin coats over their long blue shirts, turbans made by an old kerchief bound round a felt or cotton skull-cap, and their legs and arms left uncovered. Simple as children, they have no learning of any kind, and live away from men, with no companions but the sheep. They were not so degraded, however, in ancient times, for David was a shepherd, and so was Amos the prophet; and we know that, in Christ's day, every Jewish child was carefully taught in the Old Testament, which itself must have quickened their minds and raised their whole nature. That the shepherds to whom the angels appeared were in the field by night—even if Christmas be the exact time of our Saviour's birth—is nothing strange in such a climate, though December is in the middle of the rainy season in the Holy Land, and flocks at that time are generally driven in the evenings to hill-caves for shelter, or to a fold in which there is some rude protection. Yet the weather is sometimes pleasant even then. It seems most probable that Christ was born between December and February, but the day is not surely known.

The story of the appearance of the heavenly host is very simply told in the Gospel by St. Luke. As the shepherds lay, amidst their sheep and goats, "an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." A sign by which to know him was then given. "Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes,¹ and lying in a manger." "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest

¹ Babies, in Palestine, are still wrapped in strips of cotton cloth about six inches broad and three yards long.
(heavens), and on earth peace, good will toward men." Having sung this carol, the shining choir went up again to heaven, the shepherds wondering, in the darkness, what such a vision could mean. Leaving some of their number, therefore, to guard their flocks, they hastened down the hill, over the little valley, and up the steep side of the hill of Bethlehem, and found Mary and Joseph and the babe. No wonder we are told that they "returned to their flocks glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen."

It was a custom that every Jewish boy should be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth, and this was duly carried out in the case of the child Jesus. The name also was given then, so that the rite, in that respect, was very like our baptism. Mary, however, could not by Jewish law go out of the house where her infant was born for forty days—that is, you may say, for six weeks—but, after that, it was required of her to go to the Temple, being so near it, that the rite of "purification," which was just like our "churching," should be duly observed. Her journey would not be on foot, for it was needful to guard against her touching anything which was thought "unclean"; and, indeed, it is quite probable that, like most Jewish women in such cases in those days, she rode to Jerusalem on a cow or an ox, that the great body of the creature might prevent her coming near such a thing as a grave or a dead body, or whatever else might "defile" her. She would go in the early morning, for coolness, and after riding past the tomb of Rachel, which still rises at the side of the road, not far from Bethlehem, would pass slowly on till she came to the spot over against the Temple, where, it may be, Abraham made his young men stay while he went to offer up Isaac on Mount Moriah. Then, going down the Valley of the Rephaim, or Giants—often a field of battle between Israel and the Philistines in the old days—she would either turn to the right and go along the valleys of Hinnom and Jehoshaphat, to the foot of the steps leading up, on the east, to the Golden Gate, or she
would keep on, northwards, across Hinnom and mount the gradual ascent to the north-west gate, passing in front of Herod's palace, with its frowning castles, and making her way from them through the rough sloping lanes of the city, to the entrance of the Women's Court on the east side of the Temple.

Ascending the steps of the "Beautiful Gate," so called from its being covered with plates of shining Corinthian brass, more costly than gold, she and the other women who had come for the same purpose as herself would wait there till the priest came and received their offerings. The richer women gave a male lamb of a year old, which was killed, and burnt on the great altar, as a whole burnt offering—only the fat, however, and the great broad tail, which in Syrian sheep weighs several pounds, being actually consumed on the altar; the rest being shared between the priest and the offerer, and used as food by both. Besides this, the well-to-do mothers would have a young pigeon or a turtle dove for a sin offering. Lambs were very plentiful, but still they cost more than poor people could afford, and hence it was allowed that a pair of young pigeons or two turtle doves, which the very humblest could buy, should do instead of the lamb, if it were more than could be afforded. Pigeons abound in the Holy Land, no cottage being without some, hatched in the clay dovecot on the flat roof. Turtle doves come by thousands in spring, and nestle in the fig and olive trees near every village, so that all who wish can have them. Joseph and Mary were so poor that they could present only the modest sacrifice of doves, just as a very lowly mother might offer the smallest silver coin to the poor's box, at her churching, instead of the richer gifts of some of her neighbours.

But now the priest had proclaimed her "purified," and free to go forth into common life again. Descending the fifteen broad steps, under a great glittering golden vine which Herod had put up over the gate, she had to pass through the court of the men to reach that of her own sex. Worshippers had already assembled for the morning sacrifice, and, among others,
one Simeon, an old man, known by his neighbours as righteous and devout, and one of the few who wearily looked for the consolation of Israel under all its troubles, by the coming of the Messiah. It had been made known to him by the Holy Spirit that he should see "the Lord's Christ," or Anointed One before he died; and now, when Mary brought the child Jesus past him, he somehow felt that the promise had been fulfilled and taking the babe in his arms, blessed God for having seen

that hour:—"Now," said he aloud, "lestest Thou Thy servant depart, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." Then turning to Joseph and Mary, he blessed them, and told Mary that this child would be a sorrow to some and a blessing to others in Israel, and that many would speak evil of him. A sword, moreover, would pierce through her own soul. Could he have lived long enough,
he would have seen how true his words were; for his nation, by refusing to accept Christ, brought on themselves sorrow, while many, by becoming his disciples, were saved here and hereafter. How keenly, moreover, did the sword pierce Mary’s heart when her Son was at last crucified on Calvary!

Besides Simeon, there was another whose joy at the appearing of Christ is told us: a very old woman, Anna, a prophetess, of the northern tribe of Asher, who had been a widow for eighty-four years, after having been married for seven years. Having no worldly cares in her humble old age, this saint almost lived in the Temple, frequenting it at all hours when it was open. She too, being present when Jesus was brought by His mother, gave thanks to God on seeing him; the joy so filling her heart that, feeble as she must have been, she spread the news among all who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem.

So humble were the heralds who proclaimed the coming of the true Messiah—some lowly shepherds, the aged Simeon, and the still more aged Anna. Thus silently rose the light of salvation on the earth, like the noiseless rising of the day over a sleeping world.
CHAPTER III.

At the time of Christ's birth, and for about four years afterwards, the Holy Land was under the rule of Herod the Great. The son of an Edomite, 1 as I have already said, he had induced Rome to make him king over all Palestine, from the desert on the south to Lebanon on the north, and also over the country east of the Jordan. Caesarea, on the coast, had been built by him, and he had beautified many towns of his dominions; but he failed to gain the affection of his people, for he everywhere introduced Roman customs, and showed favour to heathenism, building theatres and circuses, and temples for the gods, in different places. To defile the land of Israel thus was, in the opinion of the Jews, to insult Jehovah, to whom, they held, it belonged. No king in Palestine, they fancied, could reign lawfully, unless appointed by God, and even then he could only act as the representative, or, as it were, commissioner of Jehovah, whose will alone, not his own, he was bound in all things to follow; that will being made known in sacred writings, as explained by the religious leaders of the people. But Herod never dreamed of taking such a humble position, and reigned exactly like a heathen prince, except where fear of the people made him cautious. No one, meanwhile, knew better than he that the Jews loathed him, as, indeed, they well might, for if he had fed them at great cost during a year of famine, he had also murdered all the members of their native

1 The Edomites were descendants of Esau, and lived in Idumea, a mountainous region south-east of Palestine, their capital being latterly known as Petra.
royal family, whom they passionately loved. And if he had built them a magnificent temple at Jerusalem, he had also built temples to the Emperor Augustus, and had even opened a heathen theatre and circus in the Holy City itself!

Another cause of uneasiness to the king rose from the fact that he reigned only by permission of Rome, which he had to please, as the over-lord of the country. His title came from the emperor; he could do nothing of importance without his permission, and, worst of all, he had to raise and send to him a large amount each year, as imperial taxes. To the Jew the idea of paying tribute to Cæsar was almost beyond endurance, for it seemed treason to God, his rightful sovereign: just as we should dislike to pay taxes to a power that had conquered us, after our own queen had been dethroned. It was, hence, the deep absorbing idea with every Jew, that the nation should never rest contented till heathen Rome was driven from the land, and the Law of Moses made the statute book of Jewish rulers. This feeling was kindled and sustained by the inspired words of their ancient prophets, who painted a golden age for Israel, when the heathen should have no more power in the land, and Jerusalem should become the glory of the world, to which all tribes and peoples should flock. "In the latter days," they were told by the prophet Micah, "many nations would go and say, 'Come ye, and let us go up to the Mountain of Jehovah'—that is, to the Temple—'and to the house of the God of Jacob; for out of Zion shall go forth the Law and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem.'" This grand triumph of the Jewish race over all other nations was to be brought about, they thought, by the appearance of a mighty Leader sent from God—the Messiah or Anointed One, who should rouse the land against its oppressors, and, having swept them from it, would reign, without seeing death, over all the earth, with his throne in Jerusalem. In the words of one of the Psalms, "All kings would fall down before him; all nations would serve him." The Jew was, in fact, to become the lord of the world,
under this heavenly Deliverer: all countries would be compelled to be Jews, and the sufferings of their race at the hands of the heathen in the past, would be avenged by trampling mankind under their feet, and ruling them with a rod of iron.

With such strange and mad pride filling every heart, it was impossible for Herod or any other friend of Rome to have an easy reign. Every Jew was his enemy, and the more devoted any one was to the Law, so much the more dangerous was he as a subject. The whole race were eagerly expecting the appearance of the Messiah, to lead them in the struggle against their foe, and set up his glorious kingdom. Even before Christ was born, plots had been rife to set up pretended Messiahs. Nor was it of any use to crush them, for others speedily took their place.

It so happened that just about the time of Christ’s birth, an attempt had been made in his own palace to overthrow Herod, by setting up such a false Messiah. The wife of one of his brothers had been won over by the Pharisees to aid the scheme, and the chief of Herod’s eunuchs had been induced to play into their hands, having been persuaded, poor man, that if he helped them, God would make him the father of the Messiah. But Herod found out the plot before it was ripe, and stifled it in blood. It could not, however, fail to make him anxious, for it was a grave matter that, after all the murders he had committed to secure his throne, he should find fresh enemies rising in his own household. How wretched he must have been we may imagine, especially after this fresh discovery of treason, living, as he did, in a palace that must have seemed haunted by the ghosts of his victims. But, indeed, vengeance for his crimes dogged him to the last, for his eldest son, Antipater, was put to death a few hours before he himself expired, Herod having found that this bad man had not only tried to poison him, but had led him to kill the two sons of his beloved wife, Mariamne—his own children—by making false charges against them, though he was their half-brother.

Some time after the birth of Our Lord, the arrival of some
strangers in Jerusalem from the East—perhaps from Persia or the countries near it—once more roused Herod's suspicions and fears respecting his throne. After the Captivity in Babylon, by far the larger part of the Jews remained in those regions, declining to return to the Holy Land, when permitted to do so by Cyrus. As time passed, these Eastern Jews had in many cases become prosperous, and had so increased in number that, as the Book of Esther tells us, they were to be found everywhere throughout the vast Persian Empire. That they should spread their religious opinions wherever they happened to reside, was a matter of course, and hence the hope of a Messiah was widely known among the different nations in whose midst they were settled. Moreover, the religion of Persia, which was known as that of the Magi—a name meaning 'The great,' or 'powerful,'—was, in many respects, very like that of the people of Israel. They believed in angels, in heaven and hell, in a future judgment, and in one God. The Magi, who were the priests of their faith, believed themselves descended, as a class, from Balaam, who had been summoned by the king of Moab from his home at Pether, on the river Euphrates, to curse Israel, when it was about to cross over the Jordan into Palestine, after coming out of Egypt under Moses. Balaam had gone to Moab, on this invitation, but instead of cursing the tribes, he had given them his blessing, and had foretold that a Star would come forth out of Jacob, and a sceptre rise out of Israel, and that one out of Jacob should have dominion.¹ This had long been held by the Jews to refer to the Messiah, whom they expected; and as it was a common belief that stars appeared at the birth of great personages, there was a general confidence that some new star or new wonder in the heavens would herald the birth of this mighty Prince. Such a star, men declared, had shown itself at the birth of Moses: how much more would a like "sign" appear, when God had visited His people by sending them the Messiah?

¹ Num. xxiv. 17, 19.
And such a sign did really show itself. What it was, we cannot now tell; but there was noticed in the heavens about the time when Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, some appearance which was new or striking, and this was at once thought by those who saw it, and were expecting the Messiah, to be his herald. The Magi had from the earliest times been devoted to the study of the heavens, and watched the motions of the planets with the most patient care, believing, as indeed every one did then, and till not very long ago, that the sun, moon, and planets, had wonderful power over all that happened in this world. Those skilled in "reading the stars" fancied that they could tell all that was to happen from their position to one another, or from the time of their rising or setting. Kings had their astrologers, or students of the stars, whose office it was to tell their masters the fortune of their kingdom, from night to night. Coming wars, plagues, famines, earthquakes, droughts, floods, and whatever else makes the welfare or sorrow of mankind were supposed to be revealed to these "Wise Men" by the heavenly bodies. So, also, the fate or good fortune of every one was fancied to depend on the planets seen at the time of his birth, and their position in the heavens at the moment. It was natural, then, that some of the Magi who had been impressed by the expectation among the Jews, of the birth of a great Prince of their race, destined to rule over all the world, should have been very much moved by the strange sight that now glittered overhead. What it was, as I have said, is not known. It may have been some uncommon nearness of two or more planets to each other, or it may have been the sudden blazing out of some star not hitherto noticed, for there have been several cases of such a wonderful shining for a time of a new star which afterwards disappeared.

But, whatever it was, some of the Magi saw in it the signal of the great Jewish Leader's having actually come to earth, and set out from their own country to the Holy Land, to pay him reverence. They had a long way to travel, and could only
advance at a very slow rate, for they, no doubt, came on camels, which are very leisurely in their march. It would take months for them to go up the banks of the Euphrates, till they were on a line with Damascus, and then strike across to that city, and even longer, if they went north till they came to the river Orontes, and then turned south, between the two great ranges of Lebanon, which border the plain of Baalbek. This, however, was the usual route from the East, so that the Magi may have been on their way long before Christ's birth, to reach Bethlehem at the time they did.

The arrival of these strangers in their foreign dress, with their camels and turbaned attendants, must have made a stir in Jerusalem in any case. But it would do so still more, when they told what had brought them—a new star, proclaiming the birth of "The King of the Jews," so long expected by the nation, and so much feared by its ruler. The whole world, indeed, was troubled by the expectation abroad in all lands that a great king was about to rise in Judea, who would overthrow all existing powers, and bring the whole of mankind to his feet. When, therefore, the news reached the king of the arrival of the Magi, inquiring for the New King, and saying that they had been guided to Jerusalem by a star in their search for him, he was seriously alarmed, and sent for the strangers, to find out all he could from them, under the pretence that he, like them, wished to pay the young prince homage, but really, that he might put him to death. The Magi, however, could only say that the star had shone over them, and that they were sure it was intended to lead them to the birthplace of the expected Messiah. Herod needed, therefore, to summon the Jewish Rabbis, or teachers of the Law, before him, and discover from them where this wonderful being was to appear: a question easy for them to answer, for they agreed that it was told in the words of Micah, one of their ancient prophets:—"And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art

1 They walk more slowly than asses.
in no wise least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come forth a Governor, who shall be shepherd of my people Israel." Having learned this, Herod once more called the Magi before him secretly, and told them to find out exactly all about the young child, and bring him word, that he might go to him and worship him. But God did not allow his crafty scheme to succeed.

Having found that Bethlehem was the place to which they were next to turn, the wise men left Jerusalem, and set out for that village. It lies about five miles south of the Holy City, and was reached in those days by a well-made, though narrow, Roman causeway, of which there are now few traces. They might wonder, as their camels strode on between the bare grey hills on each side, that a country so barren should be destined to rule the world, but, if they did so, the sight of the star shining above them silenced all questionings and filled them with joy, especially when, on their arrival at Bethlehem, it seemed to stand over the little mountain town. Whether they found the Holy Child easily, or, as Herod had supposed, needed to "search out carefully" for him before they did so, is not told; but the fact of the king having expected that they would have trouble in discovering him, shows how entirely private and unnoticed his birth had been, even in so small a place. They did find him, however, and his mother and Joseph, for they were still in the village, the number of children born in which within a short time could not be great. And now, what could they do when they saw One to whom they had been led by a star in heaven, but fall down before him, and pay him homage, as indeed the expected Prince? This, therefore, they did, and as it is the custom in the East never to appear before a great person without gifts, to show the honour in which he is held, they opened their chests and brought out what they had carried all the way from their own distant country to present to him, and laid it at his feet. It must have made a great

1 Matt. ii. 6, R.V. See also Micah v. 2.
stir in the quiet village when such a visit was paid to the lowly virgin and her child, for the bringing presents to the great is always, in the East, attended with as much pomp and dignity as the givers can display, many beasts of burden, gaily bedecked, being used, even when the gifts are inconsiderable and many attendants being employed to hand over what is bestowed, each, as a rule, bearing only one article. So it was when the Queen of Sheba came to Jerusalem to do homage to Solomon, with a very great train, "with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones"; and thus, each year, a multitude of foreigners from different kings brought to him "every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armour, and spices, horses, and mules." The wise men proclaimed by such gifts their reverence for the Holy Child as the future King of the Jews, destined, as the universal ruler, to be their own Sovereign in the far-away countries where they lived. Mary must have wondered at such an act from such persons, for she could not but know, as a Jewess, what it meant. Her Son, in the belief of these strangers, who had been guided to her by a star, was to be not only the King of Israel, but, as such, was to be the Lord of the world!

Herod waited anxiously for the return of the Magi to Jerusalem, that he might learn all about the child who was to be the heir to his throne, and put aside his children. If he could get information which would enable him to kill the infant secretly, it would prevent possible trouble among a people so easily excited as his subjects. But Our Lord was not to be thus destroyed. A warning given by God, in a dream, was enough to prevent it, the Magi returning to their own country apparently by crossing from Bethlehem to the steep pass of Engedi, on the Dead Sea, and then passing the Jordan at Jericho; thus avoiding Jerusalem altogether.

Still, Mary and the child were not safe; but a dream sent to

1 Kings x. 2. 2 Kings x. 25.
Joseph soon put them beyond the reach of the king. Rising by night, in obedience to the vision, and hurriedly setting out, they left Bethlehem secretly and travelled southwards to Egypt, where they were in no danger. The road lay first to Hebron, through a rough track between grey hills; then westwards over the broad ridge, in the hollow of which Hebron lies, and down a wild pass which, in a few miles, sinks more than 2,000 feet, to the low hills which overlook the Philistine plain. They would then go, by Gaza, along the track which runs towards Egypt, a little back from the shore, nearly all the way being barren desert, though not without water enough for the slow-stepping ass which bore the mother and her holy Babe. It would take many days before they reached the banks of the Nile, after passing through a well-guarded gateway in the great wall which was the boundary of the kingdom of Egypt on that side. A tree is still shown at Heliopolis, the ancient On, near Cairo, under which, it is said, Mary and Joseph, with the infant Jesus, rested; but it is not so old as to make this possible. Yet it is a very striking object, if only for the veneration in which it has been held for ages. It is a gigantic fig-tree,
measuring about twenty-seven feet round the trunk. Through the beautiful garden in which it stands, flows the spring which was that of the great Temple of the Sun at On, once quite near this spot. It was to On that Joseph went for his wife, the daughter of the high priest of the temple, and it was at the great university connected with it that Moses was taught in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; but there is no trace left of all its glories, except a single great obelisk, rising close to the sacred spring, from a bed of dry Nile mud, which, in the course of ages, has buried many feet of its height.

Egypt had for ages been full of Jews, so that Joseph would have no difficulty in getting a living among his own people, especially as life is very simple in such a climate as that of the Nile or Palestine. Fuel is never required, except for cooking, and there is very little of that, the bulk of the people living on fresh or dried fruit, bread and vegetables. Flesh is hardly at all used, except by the well-to-do, and even by them much more sparingly than with us. Small pieces boiled in a large quantity of rice or other grain, and served up in one huge bowl, into which all dip their hands, is the usual form in which it is dressed; but such a dish rather marks a special feast than an every-day meal. Wine was never, apparently, so abundant in Egypt as in Palestine, but there it must have been cheap enough to be drunk by even the very poor.

How long Mary and Joseph remained on the Nile is not told, but they must, it would seem, have been there for quite a long time, as they did not return to the Holy Land till news of the death of Herod had reached them, and this happened, as is believed, in the fourth year after Christ’s birth. If—as the fact of Herod’s killing the boy-infants of Bethlehem, “from two years old and under,” might seem to imply—Our Lord was of that age when carried off to Egypt by his mother, he must have been about two years amidst the palm groves in the Nile valley, but he may have been longer. At last, however, the fierce old king being dead, Joseph was free to go back to
Palestine, and thither, accordingly, he took Mary and her child, setting out with the intention, apparently, of settling in Bethlehem, in which he had last lived. But Judea, Samaria and Idumea had fallen to the share, after Herod's death, of Archelaus, the coarsest and worst of his sons, and it seemed therefore prudent to go north again to Nazareth, the little town of both Joseph and Mary. Another son of Herod, known as Herod Antipas, reigned there, for Nazareth was in Galilee which had been handed over to him with the country known as Perea,—"the land beyond (the river)—on the other side of the Jordan, below the Lake of Galilee. This prince was as crafty as Archelaus was violent, even Christ, afterwards, calling him "a fox." He was ruler for the whole of Christ's life, and for nine or ten years after his death; but then, at last, he pro-
voked the Emperor Caligula, and was banished to the south of France, the whole of that country being then Roman territory.

When Christ came back to his mother's town, a little child of about four, the capital of Antipas was at Sepphoris, a place on the top of a strongly-fortified, round-topped, fertile height, a few miles north-west from Nazareth, over the hills. After a time, however, when Our Lord was a young man of two or three and twenty, the Tetrarch grew discontented with this spot, which was not grand enough for his tastes, and founded the city of Tiberias, as his future residence, calling it after the Emperor Tiberius, who was then reigning. The site is still inhabited, though the town is now very poor, but in the days of Antipas it grew into a splendid city, with a great palace and citadel, and a glittering circle of courtiers, "in soft clothing," some of whom Christ must have often seen sailing proudly on the lake in gilded boats, or passing hither and thither on their richly caparisoned horses. But it was long before Tiberias had a Jewish population, as it had been built on the ruins of an older and now unknown city, the tombs connected with which defiled it, in the opinion of Israelites. Antipas had, indeed, to bribe people to come and live in it, by giving them free houses and promising not to tax them, and even then could at first only get foreigners to settle in it. Perhaps it was for this reason that we never read of Christ having visited it, though, as I have said, it grew in the end, during his lifetime, to a great and stately city enclosed by a wall three miles long, guarded by forts, and stretched along the shore of the Lake for a mile, offering a splendid sight to him as he passed and repassed on the waters before it.

We are told very little about the childhood of our Lord, but we can picture some features of his early years, from what we know of Jewish life in those times. Mary's grand hymn shows that she was deeply read in the ancient scriptures of the Old Testament, which then were all the Bible men had. It is not

1 Matt. xi. 8.
THE BOLL OF THE SAMARIAN PENTATEUCH IN ITS COVER.
likely that she had a copy of every Book it contains, for of course there was as yet no printing, and copies of any book had to be written by hand, which made them very dear. But, no doubt, she had some of the Holy Books, written on thin leather, or on parchment, or on a roll made from the papyrus, or paper reed, the writing stretching in columns, read from the right hand to the left, one after another, the ends of the roll being fastened to light pieces of wood, so that it could be turned from the one round the other as the reader advanced, by the aid of two short handles. Pages were not in use; a book being written in one piece, as far as possible, and hence, if it were a long one, the roll containing it was very thick. That Mary could read her Bible showed that she had been well trained at school, for Hebrew, in which it was written, had not been spoken for several hundred years. Jesus would, no doubt, often hear his mother read what she so much loved, and thus from the very first would be familiar with the Scriptures, nor can there be a reasonable doubt that he learned his letters from them, at her knee. But after a time he would be sent to the village school, which may have been much like one I saw in Cana of Galilee, just over the hill from Nazareth. It was held in a clay floored little room, the door of which stood open, showing a crowd of little brown children sitting cross-legged on the ground, swaying back and forward as they repeated together a verse from the Koran before their master, an old man in a turban and cotton slip, who, also, sat cross-legged on the floor. There were no desks or seats, but each child had a kind of unframed slate, apparently of painted wood, on which it wrote the verse as the master dictated. The boys wore red Turkish caps of felt, like mortars, or cotton skull caps, and had no dress but a little blue cotton smock, which left their throats, legs, and arms bare. In his school Christ would learn parts of The Law, that is, of the Five Books of Moses, by heart, and also how to read and write; but we may be quite sure that The Law was his only school book.
The synagogue or Jewish Church would also teach him much, for he would always be there with his mother, not only on Sabbaths, but when she could attend at other times; for it was open every day for prayers. As he sat beside her in the woman's part, which was divided from that for men by a thick curtain or a wooden lattice, he would listen to the loud voices repeating the prayers after the Reader, outside, and to the daily lessons from the Law and the Prophets. At the far end he would notice a lamp always burning, and would be told that it hung before the place in the wall in which the "Law" was kept carefully hidden by a curtain till taken out for public worship, and that the spaces next this were the "chief seats," occupied by the rulers of the synagogue and the great men of the town. He would turn with his mother and every one else towards Jerusalem during prayers, because God dwelt there in the Holy of Holies, and would thus learn to honour the Holy City before he saw it. He would see the elders and people watching each month for the new moon, the appearance of which brought with it special religious services. Other holy days, also, through the year—the Fast in commemoration of the decree obtained by Haman, to destroy the Jews in Persia—the feast of the Purification of the Temple, when the Syrians had been overcome by Judas Maccabaeus; all the houses and the synagogue being then illuminated in token of joy—the feast for the murder of Gedaliah, the Chaldean Governor of Judea, by Ishmael, and that of the great day of Atonement. There would be also cheerful festivals at the return of the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, among those in the village who could not go up to Jerusalem. Everything round the growing child would, indeed, in such a household as that of Joseph, breathe of the religion of his people.

At twelve years of age a Jewish boy was regarded as old enough to take on himself the duty of observing the Law, and for this purpose was taken by his parents to the Passover at Jerusalem, after having been solemnly proclaimed a "Son of
the Law,” at a special gathering of the ancients of the synagogue of his native place. Jesus had grown to be a tall strong child of his years, and showed a wisdom far beyond them, for “the grace of God was on him.” It would thus be a great occasion to him when it was proposed that he should go up with Mary and Joseph to the Passover in the Holy City. All the country was in motion at that season, great companies gathering from each district, for good fellowship and safety: much, I dare say, as similar companies may now be seen going up from all parts of the Christian world to Jerusalem, to celebrate Easter. When I was on the Lake of Galilee such a crowd of pilgrims encamped one evening, beside my tent at Khan Minieh, perhaps the site of the ancient Capernaum, on the upper edge of the famous plain of Gennesaret. It was a beautiful grassy spot, with abundant water, in clear streams, fringed with oleanders, and partly filled with tall reeds. They poured down from the North without any warning, and in a very short time covered the ground with tents, kindled fires, picketed their horses, mules, and asses, and took possession of the place as if they had been there for days. Their slight meals were very soon cooked and eaten, and then the evening passed in rejoicing. Pistols and guns were fired in the air incessantly: circles of hearers gathered round the fires in some of the tents, to listen to stories repeated by some one of their number, while in others, songs were in favour, to the accompaniment of some stringed instrument, all joining loudly, with clapping of hands, in the frequent chorus. Hours were thus spent; but at last many lay down on the open ground, beside their beasts, others on the floor of their tents, until, at last, all were still. Next morning they were all gone soon after daybreak, having started so quietly that they did not wake me though they were all round. Pilgrimages to Jerusalem in old times must, I suppose, have been very much like this, except that the blowing of horns would take the place of firing pistols and guns, which were, of course, unknown for many ages after.
The dress of the pilgrims was, we may suppose, very much the same as that of the people in the Holy Land now, for there are no changes of fashions in the East. The men wear turbans or skull-caps, the turban being only a skull-cap with a shawl, or a piece of cotton or a handkerchief, twisted round it. If poor,
woollen cloth, generally striped; its shape pretty nearly square, with short sleeves, and the front open, so that it can either be left loose or bound closely, if desired. Richer persons have gaily coloured vests and bright shawls for girdles, with white cotton garments next their person; baggy drawers or breeches, of the same material covering their legs, yellow and red slippers without heels their naked feet. Sandals are seldom seen now, but were common in the days of Our Lord, consisting simply of a sole tied on by thongs, which passed between the toes, and were fastened round the ankles. Nearly all the peasants and mechanics, however, were then, I should fancy, as they still are, barefooted.

The dress of women in Nazareth is different to some extent from that seen elsewhere in the Holy Land. Though many of the humbler classes wear simply the long blue cotton sack reaching from the neck to the ankles, and hanging loosely enough to permit free stepping, while it shows, not immodestly, the form of the wearer, numbers rejoice in loose bright-coloured or white-sleeved jackets, and a bright skirt fastened round the ankles, the feet often remaining bare. Sashes of all colours adorn the waist, while the head is covered with a kind of hood when the blue sack is worn, or among the better dressed, by a white or coloured cloth, which hangs down behind; the face, however, being always unveiled, except among the Mahomedans, and many wearing a row of silver coins down each cheek; their only wealth. Such would be the general appearance of the women in the old Jewish pilgrimages. Sleeping, at night, would be little trouble to either sex, as Orientals always lie down in their clothes, covering their head with superstitious care, and contented with any thin mat below them, or even with the ground, in the hot season. It would take four or five days to go from Nazareth to Jerusalem, for no beast in the Holy Land goes faster than at a walk, and there would be many pilgrims on foot. Food for the journey would be a small matter in such a climate; bread, some soft cheese, a little olive oil
some dried figs or raisins, and a bit of salad, when it could be got, with a drink of water or sour milk, sufficing for the modest wants of native travellers, even now. Sleeping in the open air, on the way to the Passover, would be no self-denial, for the moon shone bright, and the air was delicious with the first warmth of spring. To cover the head from the night mist as they lay down beside their fire, if they had not a tent, would be the only precaution taken by the pilgrims.

Jerusalem, especially at the Passover, must have had a wonderful charm for the child Jesus. Coming from the north, he would enter on the only side where the ground is on a level with the city wall, for everywhere else it sinks into deep valleys. But perhaps he came, on his first visit, by the same road as he took on his last, passing over the Jordan at Beisan, below the east end of the plain of Esdraelon, to avoid the "unclean" country of the Samaritans, and then re-crossing at Jericho, and coming westward to the city. In that case he could see all the glory of the Temple from the best point of view, when Mary and Joseph brought him over the path round the shoulder of Mount Olivet, and turned north, towards the Valley of the Kedron. On such a child so grand a view must have made a deep impression, for the Temple rose from the top of Mount Moriah, across the broad ravine, in wondrous splendour. It had been begun by Herod about sixteen years before Christ's birth, and had been consecrated nine and a half years later, so that it was only about twenty years old when he first saw it, and the dazzling whiteness of the great stones of which it was built would be still perfect.¹

The sight round the city would be as wonderful as the city itself; for the multitudes who came to the feast were so great that the valleys on every side, and the slopes of the hills beyond, were covered with the tents of countless pilgrims from every part of the world, with endless differences of dress, language,

¹ The Temple was not completely finished till about sixty years after Christ's birth, so long was it in building.
complexion, and manners. Inside the walls, which ran then, as still, along the edge of the city heights, every foot of open ground would be, at night, the sleeping place of some group; and not only all the houses, but their very roofs would be crowded. Even now, at Easter, great numbers sleep on the stones in the open spaces of the city, lying as closely as they can pack themselves; and the crowds must have been far greater in Christ's day. Yet, somewhere, either inside the gates, or on the slopes around, Mary and Joseph, with the child Jesus, at last found a resting-place.
CHAPTER IV.

THE Passover had been instituted to keep Israelites from forgetting the wonderful circumstances attending the deliverance of their forefathers from slavery in Egypt. It had been much neglected in the earlier times of the nation, for the tribes did not observe it during their forty years wandering, and no mention of it occurs after the time of Joshua, till that of Josiah, just before the downfall of the Kingdom of Judah, and about eight hundred and fifty years after the Exodus.\(^1\) But after the return from Babylon much greater strictness prevailed; every Jew being required to attend the feast, if possible, however far off his home might be from Jerusalem. Indeed, the observance of the Law of Moses, as a whole, became a passion with the Jewish race from the time of the captivity onwards.\(^2\) The order of "Scribes," whose principal business was to make copies of the sacred writings, gradually became also the trusted teachers of the nation, under the name either of Scribes, Rabbis, or Doctors, that is, teachers of the Law, and by degrees created a body of rules and ceremonies founded on it, which was a marvel of laborious ingenuity. As its result, even before the days of Christ, there was nothing in Jewish life, from the cradle to the grave, respecting which there was not some precept, to transgress which was to break the Law. It is hard enough to keep ten commandments, but the Jews had ten thousand, to which constant and strict obedience was demanded, and among these not a few were connected with the feast of the Passover. Each

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\(^1\) Exodus, B.C. 1455. Death of Josiah, B.C. 609.
\(^2\) The Jews returned to Judea from Babylon in B.C. 536.
family or company provided its own lamb or young goat from flocks which the Rabbis had pronounced "clean." If the number of the family or company was below ten, they needed to secure guests to make up that number, for though more might eat of the feast together, fewer could not. Women did not join in it, but only men, and boys of twelve and upwards. The kid or lamb was carried to the Temple on the day of the feast by the chief of each circle of pilgrims, and having been killed by one of the Levites, was skinned, trussed, and handed back to the owner, wrapped in its own skin, which was generally given as a return for any hospitality received during the feast. In the early evening an earthenware oven, partly sunk in the ground, had been heated, and into this the lamb or kid
was put with the greatest care, for the Rabbis had a great many rules respecting the roasting, and these must all be observed. No bones were broken, the legs being fastened with skewers of wood which the priests had duly examined beforehand; a long skewer, passing from the head, beyond the end of the body, serving to keep it off the bottom of the oven-pit, while the others prevented it touching the sides. In earlier times the guests assembled with shoes or sandals on their feet, their turbans on their heads, and a walking staff in their hand, and ate the lamb hurriedly, pulling it in pieces with their fingers; for knives were not used then, any more than now, at table, in the East. But in Christ's day, the company either sat cross-legged on the ground, round a low table, or reclined on couches, in the Roman fashion. While the lamb was being eaten, cups of wine and water were handed round at fixed times, that each might sip. Round flat cakes of bread, moreover, were laid beside each person, pieces torn off serving as rude spoons, when doubled and dipped into the dish in which the accessories to the feast had been placed, and from which all helped themselves, as when Judas dipped his fingers into it at the same time as Our Lord. A mixture of bitter herbs, lime, and fruits, stood near the lamb, and of this each tasted, to remind him of the hardships of his forefathers, when making bricks in Egypt. Thanksgivings to God were offered from time to time, and psalms were chanted at the close of the festivity; a practice, which, it will be remembered, Our Lord and his disciples observed when they had eaten their last Passover together.

If there were a boy in the company, he was called upon, during the evening, to repeat before all, the story of the first Passover, that he and the others might forever keep it in mind; and we may easily suppose that this was done by the young Son of Mary when, now, first attending the great solemnity. Rejoicings followed the conclusion of the meal, the whole night being given over, under the bright Passover moon, to all forms of gladness; even the wide Temple grounds being open through
that one night to give more space for the happy crowds. Nor was the joy of the season ended with the morning: the entire week was a universal holiday, though numbers began to set off towards home on the day after the feast, without waiting longer in the Holy City.

All the sights of the time must have been so many wonders to Mary’s Son, for, while at Nazareth he could have seen very little, in Jerusalem, the place, the people, and the occasion were alike full of ever fresh delight. We can fancy him wandering through the rough-paved narrow streets sloping from Mount Zion to the cheese-makers’ valley, on the east side of which rose the western wall of the Temple enclosure. The arched stone bazaars, with light streaming in only here and there, from openings in the roof, and the sides lined with the small open arched recesses which serve for shops in the East; the constant stream of many coloured life through every lane and valley; the strange dresses, unknown speech, and different ways of the multitudes from all parts would alike be new to him. He would meet Jews and Jewish converts, or “proselytes,” from many distant countries, who, themselves, would be a striking sight. Looking to the high ground at the west side of the city, he would be awed by the three great castles rising from the walls of Herod’s gardens and palace, and would at least hear of the broad streams, shady trees, endless statues, and noble buildings which these walls enclosed. At the north-west corner of the Temple grounds he would pass under the shadow of the castle in which the Roman garrison was quartered, and must have heard their trumpets and seen their military array. The great pools, hewn out in the rock, inside the city, to supply it with water, would be no less a wonder then than they are still. But the Temple grounds would be the grandest sight, for they reached away, as I have said, in a great park of about thirty-five acres, dotted with palms and olives and other trees, and sparkling with fountains, the whole space filled at such a time with vast crowds; for nearly a quarter of a million of
people could find room over the wide level within the walls of the enclosure. The waving trees themselves, as he looked at their shady branches, would be a lesson for such a mind, as when they led the Psalmist to speak of constant worshippers being “planted in the courts of their God.”

But the greatest attraction to the wondrous boy, as to all others who saw it, would be the Temple itself, which stood in the southern half of the great enclosure. High over its terraced courts, each bounded by walls of dazzling white stone set off with magnificent gateways, rose the sacred building, of white limestone like all else, but splendid in its gilded roof and pinnacles, and in the rich plating of gold over part of its walls. From the great altar in front of it the smoke of victims was continually rising, and on the steps leading from it, Christ would hear the Levites chanting the daily psalms to the music of their instruments, as the crowds of worshippers below, kneeled with their faces to the Holy of Holies.

Along the sides of the Temple grounds rose great arcades, like a broad covered street: that on the south, known as the Royal Porch, consisting of three aisles, separated by rows of white marble pillars, those in the centre being much higher than the others; that on the east, famous as Solomon's Porch. Outside these, an open space, from twelve to sixteen yards broad, formed, with the arcades themselves, the Court of the Gentiles, that is, the part which foreign converts to the Jewish religion might enter, though it was now filled, in some parts, with sheep and cattle for sacrifices, shops for selling doves for offerings, booths and stalls for the sale of salt and all else needed by pilgrims for the Temple rites, and by the tables of

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1 The music of the services accompanying the chanting was almost rude, consisting of viols with two strings and a bow, lyres played like a dulcimer, silver trumpets, double reed pipes with what to us would be a melancholy drone, trumpets of rams' horns, small hand drums or tabors, and cymbals; but Orientals have strange ideas about music, and the place lent a sacred dignity to everything connected with it.
those who gave silver shekels in exchange for the various coins brought by pilgrims from many lands; no coin being received by the priests for the Temple treasury but that which was obtained here. The lowing of the cattle, the bleating of the sheep, and the noise of buyer and seller must have seemed strange in a place so holy; and he did not forget in after years the impression it now made on his young mind.

There was one place in this gathering of wonders which had special charms for the boy. The Rabbis, or teachers of the Law, used as schools a number of the open chambers which ran along the inner side of the pillared arcade, springing from the western wall. Seated like a professor, the “doctor of the Law” had before him, squatted cross-legged on the floor, a semicircle of old and young, attracted by his lectures on some of the precepts of Moses; full liberty being given and taken of interrupting his instructions by questions, and seeking the truth by friendly discussion. Not seldom a number of Rabbis attended, sitting beside the Master who presided, and giving their opinion freely where difficulty arose.

That a country boy of twelve should turn aside from all other attractions of a place like Jerusalem, at such a time, and find his greatest delight in listening to the discussion of minute questions about the Law, must have seemed in the highest degree extraordinary to the Rabbis themselves. But that he should be so engrossed by such subjects, so skilled in the sacred writings, and so original and thoughtful, as to take an active part in the debates of the class-room, both in putting questions to the doctors of the Law, and answering theirs when they had given what he held insufficient replies, must have created a profound sensation. This, however, was the special enjoyment of the Son of Mary. Leaving his mother and Joseph, who could trust one so grave and thoughtful as he showed himself, alone, even in the crowded city, he made his way each morning to the chambers under the Temple porticoes where reverend Masters in Israel gathered their disciples, and
spent the day at their feet, the most eager and intelligent of their scholars.

At last the time came for the Virgin and Joseph to join the returning northern caravan, which prepared to start amidst confusion and excitement, similar, no doubt, to what may be seen each year on the departure of the pilgrims from the Holy City to the Jordan, at Easter. Crowds would go out to see them set off. The walls and the broad space outside would be covered with men in flowing robes and turbans, and women in white balloon-like dresses and veils, or in coloured loose drapery; the two sexes, between them, lighting up the scene with as many tints as a great bank of flowers. Starting for Nazareth, the road from the Damascus gate, with its wide open area stretching away past Calvary, to the north, would be the one to be travelled. Asses, camels, and possibly oxen, would be mingled in the noisy confusion, some bearing tents, no longer needed, others carrying men or women, or even children in panniers. Families and companies could not hope to keep together in such a crowd: to gather them finally must be reserved till the moving village could halt in the open country, clear of the city. There is always such a stopping place of caravans, a few miles out, to see that all is right—that no baggage beast has been left behind, and that all the members of the company are safe. The great band among whom Joseph and Mary were to travel, had thus set out and come to their first halt, when, to their alarm, Mary and her husband found that Jesus was not to be seen in the whole cavalcade. Of course they had noted his absence from the first, but he might have joined some other part of the wide rambling procession. Now, however, that it was discovered he was not in it at all, nothing remained but to return to Jerusalem to find him. But even in the city all inquiries were for a time vain. Mary and Joseph were in great trouble. Could he have wandered off in some other direction, and be lost to them for ever? Could anything have happened to him? As a last hope, the Temple
grounds were explored, and next, even the schools of the Rabbis, to which, had they known what kind of boy he was, they would have gone first. It was only on the third day that their alarm was ended. To their astonishment he was then found sitting on the ground before the doctors of the Law, hearing them, and asking them questions in return so acutely, that the grey-headed Rabbis were amazed at his intelligence. Poor Mary, overjoyed to see him again, could not help asking him, amidst all her loving kisses, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing." But the strange boy had an answer ready, which must have seemed very strange from one so young. "How is it," he asked, "that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" ¹ So early did he look up to God as especially his Father; so early was his Father's house the place, where, as a matter to be taken for granted, he might have been known to betake himself.

Of the eighteen years of our Saviour's life that followed we know nothing, for he was about thirty when he next appears in the story of the Gospels. During all that time he passed his days so quietly that Nathanael, at Cana of Galilee, just over the hill from Nazareth, never heard of him, or at most, had only known him among the rest of the villagers. He would at an early age begin to help Joseph in his humble workshop, for the neighbours knew him in after years as "the carpenter." ² Idleness was contrary to his nature, so that we may be quite sure he earned his daily bread by his own labour as early as he could. Nor was there anything degrading in a trade, among the Jews. The Rabbis were in most cases engaged in some occupation, for they knew the Law by heart, and could ponder it word by word when engaged in some every-day calling. Of those famous in Christ's day, or later, some were millers, others carpenters, cobblers, tailors, bakers, builders, money changers, scribes, curriers, or smiths. A

¹ Revised Version. ² Mark vi. 8.
meeting with another Rabbi offered an opportunity of exchanging thoughts on the subject which filled the minds of both, and thus each gradually stored up the material for endless discourses in the synagogue, or at family gatherings. Beyond the Law and the Prophets they knew nothing from books, for all other writings were regarded as either useless or sinful; apocryphal writings excepted,¹ which they held as almost sacred, though not included in the Scriptures. It was by thinking rather than by reading that one in the end became a Rabbi, and any person of good abilities, whatever his position, could think.

One who as a boy of twelve had already shown so extraordinary an interest in religion, could not fail to devote himself more and more to it, as one of a race with whom their religious books were the one great subject of thought and study. Josephus, the historian, tells us that his countrymen were, as a whole, so deeply versed in their Scriptures that any Jewish boy could repeat the Law, throughout, by heart, without missing a word, and almost equal zeal was shown in learning the words of the Prophets and other sacred writers. That it was the same with Christ is seen in the fact that twenty-seven references to the Old Testament are made by him in the Gospels, so that he must have known them with wonderful completeness to be able to quote from them by memory from so many parts, in his ordinary conversation. He had evidently, indeed, pondered them earnestly, as well as learned their words. It was, in fact, peculiar to him that he looked at everything in a way of his own, working out for himself, directly, from the Law and the Prophets, his own thoughts, so that when he became a public Teacher, he “spoke with authority,” as an independent thinker, and did not con-

¹ Apocryphal means “treating of things hidden,” but now used for books not recognized as inspired. There were various books of that kind among the Jews in the days of Christ; part of them is our “Apocrypha,” but they were all very like so many extra books of Scripture.
tent himself, like the Scribes, or Rabbis, with repeating what others had said. For no Rabbi ever ventured to speak without supporting his words by those of some other Rabbi, of an earlier day. He might apply what had thus been said as he chose, but did not dare to say anything fresh or new.

Other helps towards Christ's future life would be derived from watching thoughtfully men and nature around him. Fifteen hills, bare and white, offering at best only thin pasture, rise on all sides of Nazareth, with long easy slopes and softly rounded tops. Amidst these he could wander where he chose, with no one to hinder his thoughts or devotions. From them he looked out on a marvellous landscape, for they are the last of the hills of Galilee, before these melt into the plain of Esdraelon. There are no ravines or shady woods, for all except a few valleys are bare of trees; but he could look away from many points to the mountains of Samaria on the south, the Carmel range and the Bay of Acre on the west, and the mountains beyond Jordan on the east, while on the north, the snowy top of Hermon glittered far up in the sky. In the town itself he would doubtless study the groups that passed up or down its few narrow, lane-like streets, or to and fro over the open space below the houses, where the one fountain of the town poured out its waters. There, from the days when he went with his mother in childhood, morning and evening, on her constant journeys, with her earthenware pitcher on her head or shoulder, to get the water for her household, he had seen the villagers busy in pleasant gossip, and had often lingered beside encampments of passing traders and travellers. A rough, broken line of olive trees, and hedges of prickly pear, still mark the wide limits of this part of the village common, and there, as of old, travellers pitch their tents, children play, and camels and flocks rest till they are watered. The houses of the town stretch far up the slope, hardly in streets, but very much at random; the roadway, such as it is, winding hither and thither among them. Their flat roofs are a favourite lounging
place in the warm evenings of summer, and it would be the same in Christ's days. Probably then, as now, the village mechanics had their work places chiefly in the lower part of the town. Joseph's trade would be carried on as that of the local carpenter is still, in a small shop, with bare stone walls and an arched stone roof, timber being scarce. It might have a small bench, but some carpenters' shops have only a plank fixed on the floor, beside which the workman sits, cross-legged, planing or sawing. All Orientals, indeed, sit on the ground, when possible, whether in the open air or within doors. In Christ's day, as now, there would be some barbers, grocers, blacksmiths, and other craftsmen or shopkeepers needed in a small community, and the village mothers and grown daughters would do their washing with tucked-up garments and bare feet, in the pool before the fountain. It was a small world in which to live, but to a mind like that of Our Lord, each member of the little society would give abundant material for thought, in his daily life. The herdsman, the passing Arab with his long spear, the local grandee in fine robes, at times would vary the scene. Nor did he forget what he had thus seen, for in the Gospels he speaks of the games of childhood, the village feast, the marriage procession, the wail of the mourner, the burial of the dead, the soft clothing of courtiers, the purple and fine linen of the rich and the rags of the poor, the arts of the wily steward of a rich man's grounds, the travelling merchant with his pearls, the debtor dragged off to prison, the toil of the sower and of labourers in the vineyard, or of the fisherman on the lake, and much else, from time to time noted in his quiet mountain village.

Nor did the hills and their little valleys fail to enrich his mind. We see in his parables how he noticed the lilies of the field and the grass on the slopes. The hen, gathering her chickens under her wings from the shadow of the approaching hawk; the birds living without care on the bounty of their heavenly Father; the sheep and lambs following the shepherd,
but sometimes wandering and lost; the black goats feeding apart from their white-fleeced companions; the dogs, so common in Eastern towns; the foxes that lived in the holes of the rocks; the nests in the orchards; the sailing of the clouds; the music of the rain; the rush of the winter torrent; the roar of the tempest; the fall of the house built on the sands, were all laid up in his thoughts.

But though the feeling of the Nazareth people was strongly Jewish, the air of Galilee made men strangely different from the people of the south. In Judea, the nearness of Jerusalem and the Temple, with its schools of the Rabbis, created in the whole population a dark narrowness of mind and heart too proud and fierce to be capable of instruction or enlightenment. In the north, on the contrary, men were more easily moved, and while as true to the faith, were kindlier and more frank than the scowling Jew of the Holy City. Perhaps the pleasantness of the region, compared with Judea, affected the character of its people, for the hills of Galilee are green, not grey, like those round Jerusalem, the landscapes are nobler, the plains richer, and high in the northern heavens rises the huge mass of the Mountains of Lebanon; their highest summit about ten thousand feet above the sea. There was more of the trader about the southern Jew; more of the countryman about the Galilean. The free bracing air of his hills, moreover, made him proverbially brave and independent. The southern Jew was restless and troublesome under his Roman masters; but the Galilean rose from time to time in active rebellion, and dared all in the open field, or in the fastnesses of his hills. The Galilean was manlier than the southern Jew; more outspoken, less given up to a slavish worship of the letter of his faith; more open to be stirred by its spirit.

That they were often brought into contact with other races may also have helped to make the Galileans what they were. The trade of Western Asia and Damascus passed, to a large extent, over the plain of Esdraelon, to reach which it had to
thread its way along the roads of the province, from Lebanon, southwards. Long caravans of camels laden with wheat, fruit, glass, pottery, carpets, and much else, constantly crossed the plain of El Buttauf, behind Nazareth, on the way to the port of Ptolemais, now known as Acre, and similar strings of these ungainly creatures were still more common on the great plain

or Esdraelon. The Galilean was familiar with the sight of them, tied, beast behind beast, in long heavy-laden strings, the conductor sitting aloft on the hump of the first camel, or riding before, on an ass. Near Nazareth were great khans, of halting places for caravans—large buildings enclosing an open space, with a well in its centre, while arches along the
side provided store room for the loads, after they had been taken from the kneeling animals, and other chambers, above, furnished shelter by night for the men in charge of them, or for passing travellers. Galileans often mingled with the crowd of Syrians, Arabs, Greeks, and Phoenicians, whom this great trade employed, and must have learned to feel more kindly to other races than the Jew by doing so. They were not far, moreover, from the great heathen communities of Tyre and Sidon, the smoke of whose dye vats and glass furnaces was to be seen from many a western Galilean hill. And beyond these, a still stronger influence in widening the mind was afforded by gleams of the great sea, traversed in those days by countless sails, which spoke of other lands and unknown peoples. All this could not fail to affect the opening mind of Our Lord, and to increase that "wisdom" which those around him marked. But, above all, his relations to his heavenly Father, close and tender beyond what we can conceive, must have raised him above all that was narrow and unworthy, filling his soul with a boundless love to his fellow-men, as alike children of the great Father in heaven, towards whom his own thoughts were continually rising.

It is said that Joseph died when Christ was eighteen years old, and it seems at least certain that he did not live till Our Lord began his public teaching, as he is not mentioned in the Gospels after the opening chapters. From the time of his death, it is said that Jesus supported his mother by his daily work; other members of the household, of course, assisting. Four "brothers," and at least two "sisters" are mentioned, but they were, apparently, children of Joseph, not of Mary; he having been, as is believed, married before. The names of the "sisters" are not given, but those of the "brothers" were James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude. Of three of these we know

1 Matt. xiii. 55, 56; Mark vi. 3. Had Mary had other children besides Jesus, it would seem as if he would certainly have committed the care of his mother as he hung on the cross, to them, and not to John.
little beyond what is told in the Gospels. James, who was afterwards the head of the Church at Jerusalem, was a Nazarite from his childhood, vowed to God by his parents, and pledged never to let his hair be cut, or to taste wine; and he was a martyr in his old age. Simon is said to have become head of the Church in the Holy City after the death of James, and Jude, we are told, left descendants who were brought before the Emperor Domitian as belonging to the family of David, and thus, perhaps, dangerous claimants of the Jewish throne. But the emperor soon found he had nothing to fear from them. Demanding if they were of the race of the great Jewish king, they frankly told him they were. He then asked what property they had and how much money, but they answered that they owned between them less than three hundred pounds, and this, not in coin, but in thirty-nine acres of land, from which they paid their taxes, supporting themselves by their labour. As a proof of this they showed the emperor their hands, which were hard and rough with daily toil. Domitian then asked them some questions about Christ, and after hearing their answers, sent them away as simple people whom it was not worth while to trouble.

1 Domitian reigned from A.D. 81 till his murder in A.D. 96. He succeeded his brother Titus, the conqueror of Jerusalem, both being sons of Vespasian.

2 9,000 denarii.
CHAPTER V.

It is hard to imagine the state of things amidst which Our Lord and his herald, John the Baptist, grew up. Peace could be kept among the Jews only by iron sternness on the part of the Romans, and even in spite of their severity the spirit of revolt continually sputtered into flame. At Juttah, or Hebron, the child John would be familiar from his boyhood with this restless agitation of all minds, for every one was disturbed by it, and its wild outbreaks excited the south of the land as much as it did the people of Nazareth and the north.

The death of Herod, when Our Lord was four or five years old, had been the signal for a rising of the people against their hated rulers. They demanded that Archelaus, the late king's son, should at once head the nation against their oppressors, and the tumult was only quelled after the massacre of three thousand men in the streets of Jerusalem. Archelaus then set sail for Rome, to plead with the emperor that he should be king instead of his father, but his brother Antipas wished the throne for himself, and started for the court of the emperor at the same time, to get the better of his brother if he could. They were not alone, however, for fifty Jews were sent to beg that a Roman governor should be appointed instead of either. Many years after, Jesus needed no names to make it known whom He meant when He spoke of a king against whom his people cried, before a foreign throne, that they would not have this man to rule over them.¹

Archelaus came back ruler of Idumea, south of Judea, Judea

itself, and Samaria, which made him the richest of the sons of Herod. But terrible scenes had taken place in the Holy Land during his absence. Jerusalem, then full of strangers coming to the feast of Pentecost, had risen against the Roman garrison, who cut them down without mercy. Crowds on the flat roofs of the long ranges of chambers built against the walls of the great Temple enclosure, rained down a storm of missiles on the soldiers, till, at last, finding it impossible to drive back their enemies, the Romans set fire to the whole line of these buildings, the destruction of which left the Temple itself at their mercy. The sacred treasury, which was enormously rich, was forthwith plundered, but this only infuriated the people still more. Herod's regiments, largely Jews, went over to them, and sallied forth to the open country, creating the greatest disorder.

Across the Jordan a former slave of Herod put himself at the head of a vast multitude who called him king, and hoped to deliver their country by his aid. Betaking themselves to the wild gorges on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, they carried fire and sword to the homes of all who did not favour them, and burned to the ground the famous palace of Herod, at Jericho. But the Romans soon crushed them.

In the same region, a little later, a gigantic shepherd put himself at the head of the excited people, and held out for years against the troops sent to put him down, so well did the population support him.

Another insurrection broke out in Galilee, under one known as Judas the Galilean, son of one Hezekiah, who had raised a fierce revolt many years before, and had been crushed with terrible slaughter by Herod. Father and son had the same object—to restore the land to Jehovah as its rightful king, by driving out the alien rulers and setting up the authority of the heads of the Jewish Church. Sepphoris, then the capital of the province, was taken, and a supply of arms and much money secured. But it was recaptured, after a time, by the Romans; the town burnt to the ground, and its inhabitants carried off
to distant parts and sold as slaves. Round Jerusalem two thousand of the prisoners were crucified at the sides of the different roads, as was the Roman custom, that the lesson might be seen by every passer-by.

There was now an interval of comparative quiet for some years, in one of which Our Lord, as a boy of twelve, came up to Jerusalem with Joseph and the Virgin Mary. But worse troubles soon broke out. An attempt to ascertain the number of the population and the wealth of the country rekindled the flame of insurrection, for it seemed to the Jews, on the one hand, an affront to God, who had promised that Israel would be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be numbered, and on the other, a defiance of His will, since David's numbering their ancestors had been punished as a grievous sin.¹

The deadly hatred of the Romans added to these alarms. If the people were numbered the taxes would be increased, though, already, it was keenly discussed whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, at all, or not.² The country, moreover, had been so impoverished by the government that even existing taxes bore heavily on the bulk of the people. Tax gatherers, known as "publicans," swarmed everywhere. Wealthy men, or commercial companies, paid so much to the treasury at Rome for the privilege of collecting the imposts in a province, and then subdivided it into districts, in which they sold the privilege of collecting the taxes to the highest bidder, who, again, often sub-let his portion to smaller contractors, so that a descending series of middlemen stood between the emperor and the taxpayer, each eager to make as much as he could from those over whom he had power. Hence, abuses abounded. Far more was demanded than was just, but there was no help, for the very judges were either members of some tax-farming "Company," or themselves farmed the taxes, or were bribed by those who did so.

¹ Gen. xxxii. 12; Hosea i. 10; 2 Sam. xxiv. 1.
² Matt. xxii. 17; Mark xii. 14; Luke xx. 22.
So loud had the popular murmurs latterly become, that, when Our Lord was about twenty-four years of age, the nephew of the Emperor Tiberius was sent to the Holy Land to try to remedy matters. Hints of the terrible state of things abound in the Gospels. We read often of the debtor, the creditor, and the prison. In one parable every one but the king is described as bankrupt. The steward owes the king, and the servant owes the steward. The question, what he should eat and drink is the most pressing with the common man. The creditor meets the debtor in the street, and straightway commits him to prison till he has paid the uttermost farthing; selling him, his wife, her children, and all that he has, to lessen the debt. Buildings have to be left unfinished for want of means. The merchant invests his money, for safety, in a single pearl, which he can easily hide. Many bury their money in the ground, to save it from the oppressor. Instead of a wide field needing the plough, a spade is enough for what is left. "What shall I do?" says the steward, "I cannot dig, and I am ashamed to beg." The usurer alone thrives, increasing his loans often five or even ten times.

Amidst this widespread distress, one thought filled all hearts. God had promised to send a Messiah to deliver His people, and this Mighty One must surely come, now that the cup of Israel's misery was so full! Tolls, house-tax, excise, market tax, head tax, salt tax, crown tax, and custom dues, had drained the country of money, and had left hardly the poorest living for its people. The whole land heaved with discontent, and every popular leader who rose was, in turn, supposed to be the long and eagerly expected Messiah.

In Christ's early years, Judas the Galilean had reappeared, calling the nation to arms against the heathen oppressors. His one thought was to restore the throne to Jehovah, with the

1 Luke vii. 41; Matt. xv 23-34. iii. 2 Luke xii. 58; Matt. v. 25; xviii. 25.
3 Luke xiv. 29. 4 Matt. xiii. 46. 6 Matt. xiii. 44.
Heads of the Church as His Executive, and the Law supreme in public and private life. He was a true follower of the ancient Zealots,\(^1\) whose creed is summed up in the words of an early Jewish book, “Whoever takes on him the yoke of the law is no longer under that of man,”\(^2\) a creed which made them the deadly foe of every government but that of the Jewish hierarchy. Judas now raised the cry, “No Lord but Jehovah; no tax but to the Temple; no friend but a zealot,” and the youth of the country rallied to his standard. Fire and sword presently wasted the land. The country house of the rich Sadducee, and the ricks and barns of the well-to-do friend of Rome, everywhere went up in flames.

From the hills round Nazareth, Jesus, as a growing boy, must have seen, daily, the smoke of burning villages, and in Joseph's cottage, as in all others of the land, every heart must have beat fast, at the hourly news of some fresh story of blood. But the insurrection was ere long suppressed, Judas dying in the struggle. The terrible story, however, was never forgotten. Many years after, Gamaliel could remind the authorities, how “the Galilean drew away much people after him, but perished, and as many as obeyed him were dispersed.”\(^3\)

It was amidst times like these that John the Baptist, as well as Our Lord, grew up. The son of a priest, and of pure priestly descent on his mother's side also, John began life with every advantage. The best society was open to him, and the influences of his home formed in him a noble and godly character. He was, besides, surrounded by a strictly Jewish training. The feasts and fasts of the Law, its Sabbaths and new moons, its ten thousand rules about eating and drinking, furniture, dress, dishes, conversation, reading, travelling, meeting, parting, buying, selling, cooking, the washing of pots, cups, tables, and person, with much else, were zealously observed by his father and mother, for they walked in all the rabbinical ordinances and commandments blamelessly. From his earliest years he

\(^1\) 1 Mac. ii. 50; 2 Mac. iv. 9. \(^2\) 2 Mac. iv. 2. \(^3\) Acts v. 37.
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would learn that he must not eat, drink, clothe himself, wash his hands or feet, bathe, or perform the most secret function, except by set rules. His every act, word, and thought, would be coloured by the all-embracing laws of the Rabbis, the least neglect of which was a fatal sin.

Destined, as the son of a priest, himself to minister, in due time, in the Temple, he doubtless often went to the Holy City with his father. The crowds of pilgrims at the great feasts, the sacrifices at the altar, with its turbaned, white-robed, barefooted priests; the music of the bands and choirs of Levites, and the splendour of the Temple itself, whose glittering pinnacles could be seen from Hebron, would be familiar to him, and help to mould his nature. Every one is influenced by the little world in which he moves, and John from infancy was surrounded by all that could make it his pride and delight to be a Jew in the strictest sense. His father's connection with the Temple, indeed, was itself enough to secure this, for the narrow and bigoted spirit of the Holy City and the priesthood as a whole, was the very opposite to that round Christ, away in the freer air of Galilee.

Outward strictness, however, was united in the case of John, as it was in his parents, with a truly devout and religious nature. Men spoke of him, indeed, in the Jewish modes of expression as "filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth," and his manhood was in keeping with the godliness of his youth. Full of love for his nation and country, and deeply affected at once by their misery and their religious shortcoming, he thought out for himself a very different scheme for their happy future than that which found favour with the restless masses. Of outward religion there was abundance; that of the heart was sadly rare. He would restore Israel by leading it back to the favour of God, through sincere repentance, and would thus bring about the day when the Almighty would once more visit His people.

Luke i. 15.
His future life was, no doubt, very much biassed by the fact that his parents, before his birth, made a vow that he should all his life be a Nazarite, or one given up to God. By this vow he was required to abstain altogether, while he lived, from wine and every other intoxicating drink; even vinegar or any syrup or preparation of the grape, and the grape itself, being forbidden him; as if total abstinence from wine and the like were so necessary for a high religious life, that the remotest temptation to use them should be avoided. No razor was to come on the head of the Nazarite, though it was the custom of all round, then as now, to shave the head for coolness. He was to be "holy to God" and to let his hair grow untouched even by scissors; perhaps as a constant sign of his having taken the Nazarite vow.\(^1\) To guard against any legal uncleanness, which could not be permitted in one vowed to God, he was not to go near a dead body, even if it were that of his father, mother, brother, or sister, and if, in spite of all care, he became "defiled" by any chance from this cause, he was required to shave his head and begin his vow afresh, after having remained seven days "unclean," and presenting an offering as a token of his "trespass." Samson is the first Nazarite of whom we read: Samuel, the prophet, was a second, and it is said that James the Just, the brother of our Lord, was a third, though, of course, there were a great many at all times of whom we do not know. It was to this life John the Baptist was dedicated by his parents. He was a Nazarite, or "one vowed" to Jehovah.

But though the Child was thus marked by a special separation to God, it was not intended that he should grow up a monk—withdrawning from men,\(^2\) but only that, while living among his fellows as a husband, father, and citizen, he should bear the stamp of special religious devotion. Many, nevertheless, retired from society to the wilderness, as John himself did, in after years, but the Nazarite Samuel, as

\(^1\) Num. vi. 1–22. \(^2\) A monk means "one who lives alone."
we know, remained among men and spent his life in their service.

The troubles of the times had made the Nazarite vow common for generations before the birth of John, for we are told of three hundred having their vows declared void, by one decision, through some error in connection with a sacrifice. Zeal for the Law led numbers to devote their whole lives to its observance, so that the bare hills on which John looked down towards the East, from Juttah, were already, before his day, the home of brotherhoods of hermits living in cells in the rocks, still seen in great numbers, tier over tier, amidst scenes of unspeakable weird desolation. These called themselves Essenes, or "the pious," and gave themselves up to a rigid self-denial in food and life as a whole, that they might escape the danger of any failure in working out "the righteousness which is of the Law." Besides their colonies, which met daily for meals and religious exercises, there were many lonely hermits, living in the depths of the hills, with no food but such as these solitudes yielded, and no aim in life but communion with God and meditation on the things of religion.

It is not, therefore, strange that such an one as John should have been led by the example of so many, especially as he was a Nazarite, to turn aside from the priesthood and betake himself to a solitary life of meditation and prayer, in the depths of the wilderness. In the world, as it was, his heart could find no peace. The times were out of joint. With all their outward religiousness, his nation were proud and self-righteous, and showed little real godliness in their lives. Their sins alone, as it seemed, could have brought on them the Divine wrath under which they lay. Only repentance and a better life could cause God to make His face shine upon them, and deliver them from the calamities under which, as a nation, they lay. Even the priests, as an order, were unworthy of their office. John would flee to the desert to seek refuge with God from the sins of mankind.
From the hill over Hebron, the landscape to the east sinks in great steps towards the Dead Sea, the surface of which lies more than four thousand feet below, though only about twenty miles off. Rounded swells of yellow or grey limestone fill the horizon, with no vegetation to relieve the eye. Torrents have scooped out the landscape in every direction with gullies, ravines, or narrow clefts, only known to robbers, or to shepherds wandering with their flocks in search of thin spots of green. Earthquakes have added to the wildness of the scene, rending the hills into deep fissures, so narrow that the sacred writers caught from the gloom at the bottom, their striking image of "the valley of the shadow of death." Seamed with these crevices, and with stony beds of winter torrents, and barren ravines, the grasshopper, the bee, and the viper, were almost the only life ever seen, and tufts of aromatic herbs in the chinks of the hills or among the stones, the only vegetation. There could be no region more forbidding. The sun glares from white rocks with blinding and scorching brightness; water is to be found only in rare springs, or in holes in the dry bed of the winter torrent, and silence as of death reigns night and day.

In some rough cavern in this desert John took up his abode; his only food the locusts which abounded, and the honey of the wild bees found here and there in the clefts of the rocks; his only drink the water they yielded. Locusts are still eaten by the very poor in some parts of the East, after having been thrown into boiling water with which salt has been mixed, and then dried in the sun. The head, legs, and wings are torn off, and the rest is used as food. These insects were "clean" under the Law of Moses, so that John, though a strict Jew, was at liberty to eat them. The wild bees of the Holy Land are very common, swarming freely in the chinks of the dry limestone rocks, which everywhere afford them shelter and protection for their combs. In the region where John lived they are especially abundant, the Arabs who wander over it making the honey a great article of food.
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It is not difficult to picture the Baptist in this wild retirement. His black hair, like that of Samson, must have hung down his back and cheeks all the length it had grown from his birth. A shirt-like covering of camel's hair cloth—much resembling coarse flannel—was his only dress; a narrow belt of leather, such as the poorest still wear, keeping it to his body. He may have worn sandals, that is, the soles of shoes with no uppers, but it is quite as likely that he went about barefooted, as most of the Arabs do at this day. His head, if covered by anything except his thick hair, would be protected by a large kerchief, folded three cornered, so that the ends fell over his breast and back; a rope of soft camel's hair round his brow keeping it in its place. Exposure to the weather and the meagreness of his food must have made him gaunt and hollow eyed, but the fire of his intense earnestness would light up his face all the more strikingly. Josephus gives a sketch of a similar recluse of the desert with whom he himself lived for three years. His only clothing was the bark or leaves of trees, his only food the wild berries, or roots of the hills and gorges, his only drink the springs of the rocks. Morning and evening he bathed in cold water, to guard against any possible legal impurity.

Zacharias and Elizabeth must have felt it bitterly when their son, from whom they had hoped so much, left their quiet home, with its modest comforts, and the prospects of the priesthood, to bury himself in this terrible hermit life. But his heart was sad, and drove him forth from among men. The enemies of his people were strong, and the hand of them that hated them lay sore upon them. The cry of the faithful in the land rose to God, that He would remember His holy covenant and deliver them. They grieved that the heathen should reign in the heritage of Jehovah, and sighed for the long-promised Messiah, who should drive them out.

But if the sorrows of the nation pressed on the heart of John, so, also, did their sins. God had forsaken them only
because they had first forsaken Him. The courts of His
temple had been turned into a market for the changing of
money and the sale of birds and beasts for sacrifice, and for
other trading. Still worse, these hucksters and money-changers
were marked by so little of the religion becoming a place so
holy, that they had made it a den of thieves.\footnote{Mark xi. 17.} The priests
scribes, and rabbis, might also, in too many cases, be branded as
little better than the vipers of the desert. Blind leaders led a
blind people.\footnote{Matt. xv. 14.} So fallen was the glory of Israel that the high
priest had been changed nine times during the early life of
John, at the will of Archelaus or of a heathen governor from
Rome. The wearers of the turban, on which was borne the in-
scription, "Holiness to Jehovah," had been too often shameful
for violence, luxury, ungodliness. Nor were the people inno-
cent, for he who was meek and lowly in heart had to denounce
them, a year or two later, as an evil and adulterous generation,
more hardened and hopeless than the men of Nineveh, or even
of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The prospects of Israel being thus dark and fallen, earnest
souls could only look to the heavens! Might not national repent-
ance be awakened, that God might return, and visit the land in
mercy? Surely, also, the Messiah must be close at hand, and
what preparation so fit for his appearing as lowly self-denial,
betaking itself to prayer and watching, in the solitudes of the
desert, where nothing earthly came between the soul and God?
The Rabbis, themselves, had taught that the Messiah could not
come till Israel had prepared itself for him, by penitence and
humiliation of heart, and the whole soul of the Baptist was
absorbed in the effort to bring this about.

In the rugged wildness around him, the lonely man was
gradually convinced that the one way to accomplish his end
was by his going forth to his nation, and trying to rouse them.
He felt that the wrath of God, already burning so fiercely
against them, would be still more terribly kindled if they did
not seek His face by sincere repentance. But, knowing that God, even in wrath, remembers mercy, he felt that if they confessed and forsook their sins, the heart of their Father in heaven would again turn towards them, and the long-expected Messiah be sent. No one could have been more fitted to awake the sleeping conscience of his people. To rebuke the love of riches would have been idle had he lived in comfort, nor would he have carried weight in assailing the insincerity and wickedness of the day, if he could have been suspected of either. But men feel the power of one whose life is in keeping with his words. It was clear to all that he was intensely in earnest. Religion, in the mass of men, had become a thing of forms, but it was evident that, with John at least, it was a living reality.

In his long years of hermit-life the new prophet had pored over the writings of the ancient prophets, and learnt from them that righteousness of the heart and life was of far higher worth in the sight of God, than the round of offerings, sacrifices and rites to which his nation trusted. Although a strict Jew, he never mentions the great law-giver, but the few words left us from his preaching show that he had drunk deeply into the spirit of Isaiah. Like him, he speaks of the trees of God's vineyard, the brood of vipers, the felling of the barren tree, the consuming fire, the threshing floor, the winnowing shovel, and the feeding and clothing of the poor. Nor could his very appearance fail in impressing his fellow countrymen, for the same dress and long hair marked the old prophets, while his strange, retired life reminded them of Elijah, the greatest of them all.

The solemn stillness of the hills, and the boundless sweep of the daily and nightly heavens, had raised the soul of the Baptist above any fear of man. What was the greatest human

1 Isa. lix. 5; v. 7; xxviii. 28; x. 15; xxii. 10; xl. 24; i. 31; ix. 18; x. 17; v. 24; xlvii. 14; xxi. 10; xxviii. 27; xxx. 24; xli. 15.
2 2 Kings i. 8. Here the words cannot mean that he was clad in a hairy skin, for the sheep-skin coats of the East are not hairy, but woolly.
power before the Maker of Heaven and Earth—the Rock of Israel? It might seem hopeless to expect deliverance, for the Holy Land had never been so profaned by the heathen, and its people had never drunk so full a cup of misery. His own prayers, his penitence, his life devoted to God, had brought him peace and rest of heart. What had come in his case was possible for all Israel. If they could only be turned from their sins to lead a new life, the blessing of the Almighty would shine down upon them, and the thunders of His judgments break on their foes. Such repentance would bring the Messiah. He knew he was near. It had been revealed that he, himself, was to go before the Expected One, in the spirit and power of the great prophet Elijah, to make ready a people prepared for him. The call of God rang in his soul like a trumpet, to go forth and preach to His people the approach of the Anointed of the Lord, with grace for the contrite, but in wrath on the ungodly. He resolved to go out to the crowds of men, rebuking the lofty and proud, sparing no sin, raising up the humble and oppressed, and cheering the contrite, that he might make all ready for the appearance of the Christ.

The place chosen by John for his first appearance in public was on the banks of the river Jordan, near the city of Jericho. The river is there from ninety to a hundred feet broad, and can be forded easily, except during the spring, autumn, and winter floods. A sloping plain, about six miles across, reaches from the foot of the hills of Judea to the banks of the stream, its higher edge being about six hundred feet above the level of the water. On the eastern side, also, there is an open shelving space of two or three miles, from the stream, upwards, to the mountains of Moab. This wide sweep is, in our day, uninhabited, except by a few wretched Arabs at the modern village of Jeriha, which is a mere collection of miserable hovels. Here and there small parts of the soil, near the springs that burst from the hills, are planted with beans, maize, or other

1 Luke i. 17.  
2 Christ means, like Messiah, the Anointed.
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growths; but these fields and patches belong to peasants from Judea or Moab, who come down in the spring and autumn to plant and reap them, paying tribute to the Arabs for the use of the land. Except at these times the whole space is almost uninhabited, nor could one conceive a more vivid picture of desolation than it presents. Near the wasted rush of fountains which once made the whole landscape fertile, there is a fringe of bushes, but over all the rest, seamed here and there with the rough beds of winter torrents, you find only scattered tufts of wilderness plants breaking the sameness of the dry, stoney mud underfoot. The edge of the river itself, indeed, still vindicates the ancient fertility of the district by a dense belt of trees, growing on a terrace many feet beneath the level of the plain, but above the still lower current of the stream. As in John's day, beds of reeds, taller than a man, wave on the water's edge in many places where there is a fringe of low shore, and afford, with the thickets above, a shelter to wild boars, and a nesting place for innumerable birds.

Nineteen hundred years ago the scene was very different. The city of Jericho was the country town of the rich men of Jerusalem, both priests and laity; great mansions and palaces looked out from amidst the richest gardens, and a teeming population filled the whole landscape. Every foot of the soil was under the plough or the spade; palm trees waved in hundreds, and the whole scene was a vision of rich fertility. The line of travel between east and west ran through Jericho, so that its ford was the crossing place of all travellers and merchandise, in taking the Roman excise and customs from which a great staff of publicans found occupation.

There could thus be no better place for finding crowds of hearers, and no preacher could more certainly have arrested their attention, when he rose before them, than the Baptist. His lean figure—the proof of his self-denial and wilderness fare, his lamp-like eyes, full of the energy that burned within him, his long hair, uncut for thirty years,—the mark of
a Nazarite,—his rough tunic or shirt of camel’s wool—the sackcloth of the country, and the recognized public symbol of mourning, was bound at the waist by a poor leathern belt, making him look, as I have said, like one of the ancient prophets, for they are represented in the sacred writings as having been thus clad.\(^1\) John, like them, mourned over the iniquity around him.

The old prophets had been the fearless preachers of their day, and John resembled them in their manly boldness. He startled the people by demanding the repentance of all, if they would escape the close approaching wrath of heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven—that is, the visible reign of God as the King of Israel—was at hand, and would bring with it awful terrors to the impenitent. He seems to have expected that God was about to set up His power in Jerusalem and drive out the Romans, making the Jews lords of the land, for even the apostles thought this the meaning of the “Kingdom of Heaven,”—asking Christ, so late as after the Resurrection, if He would “at that time restore again the Kingdom”—that is, national glory—“to Israel.”\(^2\) We must not fancy that John was so far ahead of his age as to have understood how very different Christ’s Kingdom was to be from what they expected in that of the Messiah. To him the Jews were God’s own people and the Holy Land His inheritance or rightful Kingdom, over which He was to reign, as truly as earthly kings over their dominions; His Law, the statute book of the nation, for both public and private life. But he did not seek to play the part of a political agitator, or lay stress on the efficacy of rites or sacrifices. He was far too much in earnest. He demanded a spiritual reformation. The life must be worthy of the professed servants of a Holy God. Sin was hateful to the Almighty. He was of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. They must cease to do evil and learn to do well, and as a

\(^1\) 2 Kings i. 8; Rev. xi. 8; Zech. xiii. 4; 2 Kings vi. 80; Job xvi. 15; 1 Kings xxii. 27.

\(^2\) Acts i. 6.
pledge of their doing so, must confess with shame their unworthiness in the past.

The conscience of the masses was roused. Crowds flocked to the new preacher, so unlike the sleek priests or Rabbis or the self-satisfied Pharisees to whom they were accustomed. Popular excitement spread. Multitudes streamed from the farthest parts of the land to hear one so much in earnest. His soul was filled with horror at the wickedness of the times. It seemed as if it must bring on them the awful day of the Lord, of which the prophets had spoken, when the divine indignation would burn as an oven, and the proud and the wicked should be as stubble, and be burnt up till there was left neither root nor branch. ¹ Like Malachi, however, he held out the assurance that to those who feared the name of the Lord, the Sun of Righteousness should arise, with healing in his wings. The whole strain of this last of the prophets was, indeed, only an anticipation of John's preaching. "The Lord, whom ye seek, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in, shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver; and he will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and the adulterers, and the false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts." ²

For those who were moved to a new life by his words, the Baptist introduced a striking rite, not, indeed, unknown before, but never used so freely. Having openly confessed their sins and promised to live better lives, they were required to be baptized in the Jordan, as a sign that they desired to have their hearts washed by true reformation, from the sin of the

¹ Mal. iv. 1. ² Mal. iii. 1–3, 5.
past, as their bodies were cleansed by the waters. The Jordan had always been regarded as a sacred stream, since the day when its waters were divided to let the hosts of Israel pass over dry shod, and in later times bathing in it had removed the leprosy of Naaman. But no excuse was given for any one thinking that his merely being baptized was enough, for we know from Josephus, in the next generation, that John spoke of baptism as a symbol which had no meaning when "the soul had not been cleansed beforehand by righteousness."

Yet he did not leave his converts to their own unaided efforts after a nobler life. "The Lamb of God" who should take away the sin of the world stood ere long before him, and to the Jew such a name spoke of an atoning sacrifice with which God would be well pleased.

It was not wonderful that such a preacher, with such a message, stirred the hearts of the whole nation. Men honour one who fearlessly braves all opposition on behalf of the truth. The workman and the peasant left their callings; the keen trader, the Roman tax gatherer, the foreign legionary, and the soldier of the country, sought the banks of the Jordan. Every class and rank was represented in the crowds that pressed round the prophet. Haughty Rabbis, dignified priests, long-robed Pharisees, cold Sadducees, cautious Levites, grey-haired elders of the people, rich farmers, poor labourers in their blue shirts, and even the rough and morally sunken of both sexes, came from town and country, to listen. All asked, "Whom can he be?" till even the authorities of the Schools and Temple in Jerusalem felt it necessary to make inquiries respecting him. That he had no license from them as a public teacher was quite irregular, for they claimed authority over all who sought to instruct the people in religion. Some priests and Levites of the Pharisee party were, therefore, sent to ask him by whose sanction he had become a public preacher. Did he wish to be thought the Messiah, or the prophet Elijah, whom some expected to appear before the Messiah, or was he
some old prophet, perhaps Jeremiah, risen from the dead, for whom others looked as the herald of the Anointed One? But John was above any unworthy pretence. With the whole nation under his influence and ready to follow him even against the Romans, if he hinted such a movement, he quietly and humbly replied that "he was only the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as saith the prophet Essias." 1

Meanwhile, the prophet, weird and wild in his appearance, but with the light of a divine enthusiasm in his eyes, was preaching day by day to the still increasing multitudes. Cold prudence or timid caution had no place in his soul. Israel, he cried, was now a barren fruit tree, ready for felling, and the axe was already at its roots. Timely repentance and the bringing forth good fruit might ward off its fall, but without these, it would be cut down and thrown into the fire. It was like a great threshing floor, heaped with mounds of mingled chaff and wheat, but the winnowing shovel was at hand to toss both high against the wind, that the wheat might be gathered into the barn, and the chaff blown apart, to be swept up in the end and burnt with unquenchable fire. Yet there was no reason to despair, for one mightier than he was close at hand, for whom he was unworthy, in his own esteem, to perform the slave's service of unloosing and removing his sandals. This great One would baptize them, not like himself, with mere water, but with the Holy Ghost and with fire; the Holy Ghost to kindle in them heavenly grace, if penitent; fire, to burn them up, if the reverse. It would do them no good that they were Israelites in name, unless they lived worthy lives. They thought that preparation for the Messiah meant having a stout heart to fight the Romans: he proclaimed that the only true preparation was to turn to God. 2

Nor did he content himself with speaking in a vague way against sin, but fearlessly denounced the faults of classes and

1 John i. 19-24. 2 Matt. iii. 10-12.
individuals. "Ye brood of vipers," he cried, to a crowd of self-satisfied Pharisees and Sadducees, who had come to sneer, "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" That they were exposed to divine anger had never entered their minds, for had they not kept all the commands of the Rabbis and were they not Jews? That Abraham was the friend of God made them safe, they thought, as his descendants. But John scattered such ideas to the winds. "Begin not to say within yourselves," said he, "we have Abraham for our father, for I say to you that God is able of these stones of the river bank, lying countless around, to raise up true children to Abraham, but will shut you out from His kingdom, unless you repent." Honoured by men at large as specially holy, they found themselves treated by John as very much the reverse.

But if he spoke thus sternly to some, no harshness marked his words towards those who were honestly anxious to reform. They were simply to show their sincerity by their unselfishness and uprightness. He that had two coats was to give one of them to him who had none, and meat was to be shared with the same open-heartedness. Kindness to the naked and hungry was made a sign of true religiousness. Even the abhorred publicans, from whom the Pharisees shrank as accursed, were welcomed to citizenship in the new Kingdom of God, on true repentance. The proof that it was so, must lie in strict honesty in their calling. Rough soldiers were not thrust back, but invited as freely as any, their pledge of reform being shown in doing violence to no one,¹ accusing none falsely, and being content with their wages. That every man should do his special work faithfully, as in the sight of God, was his test of fitness for

¹ Juvenal, a poet who lived in the first century after Christ, tells us that the advantages of being a soldier, are, among other things, that no citizen when struck by one dared return the blow, though his teeth were dashed out, his face covered with blood, or even his eyes blinded. If, foolishly, the victim brought his assailant before the military judge, he could get no redress, while the whole legion became his enemies and wreaked their vengeance on him.—Satire xvi. 9 to 32.
the new life he had promised. But John was far from telling them that mere outward reform by their own efforts was enough; God alone could thoroughly change their natures and make their renewal deep and lasting. Awed by the words and appearance of the preacher, his hearers trembled before him, and accepted baptism at his hand with loud confessions of guilt; for Orientals, when excited, are like children, weeping, sobbing, and crying aloud. The river banks were covered with such penitents, kneeling in prayer.  

Yet John with all his earnestness was still a Jew. Greater than the old prophets, inasmuch as he could speak of that kingdom of God as at hand which they only foretold as future, he nevertheless did not live to profit by the teaching of Our Lord. He came "neither eating nor drinking,"—that is, holding the idea of the hermits of his time and of later ages, that supreme earnestness in religion demands the abstaining not only from all innocent pleasures, but even from any but the simplest food that will sustain life. The many ceremonial washings required by the Rabbis were sacred to him, as were also all their other requirements. He was a Jew of the old school, and knew nothing of the more liberal doctrines of Christ in these matters. His work was the red dawn of a better day but it was still clouded by the night.

1 Luke iii. 21.
CHAPTER VI.

THE commotion excited by the preaching of John must have alarmed both the priests and the civil authorities, when they remembered how many popular risings had followed similar religious movements. The priests were the first to stir, the questions put to him by those sent from them being very probably intended to draw out some statement on which they might found an accusation. He, therefore, soon moved away from the neighbourhood of Jericho, to a place farther north, called Enon, or "the fountains," near Salim, a few miles east of the beautiful valley of Nablûs then called Shechem—"the shoulder" of the land—where, though still in the Roman province of Judea, he was at a distance from his enemies at Jerusalem. A full brook rushes down the slopes near a village still called Salim, lying amidst low swellings of limestone hills, which sink gently towards the Jordan. It is a wild, barren region, but it may have been much more attractive in John's day, when the land was so much more thickly peopled.

As yet there was no sign of the promised Messiah. All Galilee streamed towards the great preacher, but he for whom all were looking did not appear.

Jesus, now about thirty, had been living quietly at Nazareth, for many years. Their homes being at opposite ends of the country, John and our Lord had never seen each other, though cousins; but John was, no doubt, well acquainted through his parents with the wonderful circumstances attending the birth of the Son of Mary. The proper moment for revealing himself having, at last, however, arrived, Jesus made his appearance at
Enon to be set apart by John to his great office with fitting rites. Something about him at once arrested John's attention. His holy devotion as he prayed: the light, as of other worlds, which shone from his calm eyes; the sinless nature reflected from his features, showed that a higher than other men stood in his presence. He had come to be baptized; but John, for the first and last time with any one who had sought him, hesitated and drew back. "I have need to be baptized of thee," said he, "and comest thou to me?" He might not know by name or open intimation whom he had before him, but he felt that he addressed a greater than himself. Hitherto no one of all he had seen came up to what he felt the expected Messiah should be; but as he looked at Jesus it appeared certain that the object of his longings had, at last, been found. "I knew him not," said he, some time later, but he had been trying to prepare men for his coming, and felt so sure that he would presently appear, that he had already told the people the Messiah was actually among them, though they did not know him.¹ "He comes after me, but he will be greater than I am, for I am not worthy to unloose his sandals. He will be more than I am, for he was before me. He is no mere man, but the Messiah of God."

No wonder John shrank from baptizing Our Lord. He knew that only one wholly free from sin could be the Messiah, and felt that the Being in his presence was sinless! Such meekness, gentleness, and purity showed him to be the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world—an allusion to the daily sacrifice of a lamb on the great altar in the Temple, and to the picture of the Messiah in Isaiah,² as one led as a lamb to the slaughter, bearing the iniquities of his people.

"Suffer it now," said Christ, "for it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness." Baptism in the case of our Lord was the rite by which he was to be publicly set apart to his great work as our Saviour.

¹ John i. 27. ² Isaiah liii. 7, 8, 11.
John resisted no longer, and leading Christ into the stream baptized him. Jesus had till now been known only as a humble villager of Nazareth, but he was from this time the publicly ordained Redeemer of the world. Nor were Divine signs awanting of the interest felt by other worlds in an event so great. Being baptized, we are told, the heavens opened over him, and a vision of the Holy Ghost, descending as with the gentle earthward course of a dove, the symbol of purity and peace, was vouchsafed to Baptist and Baptized; a heavenly voice meanwhile proclaiming—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." ¹ This was Our Lord's sacred anointing, foretold by Isaiah, "To preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." ² Priests were set apart by washing and anointing, and Christ submitted to the same rites. Instead of the Temple made with hands, He had around Him the vast Temple of nature, and for the water of the brazen laver, He had the flowing stream under the great sky.

With the baptism of Our Lord, the work of John may be said to have closed. A higher than himself had come, and the lesser light was lost in the rising of the greater. How much longer he preached is not known, but he was still baptizing after Christ had begun his public teaching, and had performed his first miracle at Cana of Galilee. His career was suddenly and violently ended, by imprisonment at the hands of Herod Antipas, the tetrarch ³ of Galilee. This crafty, fox-like ⁴ man was now between forty and fifty, and had reigned in Galilee

¹ Matt. iii. 17. ² Isaiah lx. 1. ³ "Tetrarch" means ruler of the fourth part of a province. The other three rulers were, or had been: Archelaus, ruling over the Roman province of Judea; Herod Philip, ruling over the regions east of the Jordan, north of those belonging to his brother, Herod Antipas; Lysanias, tetrarch of Abilene, a district between Damascus and Lebanon. ⁴ Luke xiii. 32.
since his father's death, four years before Christ's birth. During that time he had shocked the Jews by an odious second marriage, and the fearless Baptist had drawn on himself his bitter enmity, and still more that of his new wife, by denouncing the crime, the story of which is worth telling.

There had been a great gathering of all the Herod family in Jerusalem, but while enjoying the hospitality of one of his half-brothers, Herod Philip, called Boethos, Antipas had been weakly induced by Herodias, the wife of his host, to promise to marry her; she engaging to leave Philip and come to Galilee, to be his bride. Strong-minded, ambitious and unprincipled, she tempted the weak man to commit this sin, that she might gain a sounding title, and no longer be the wife of a private person. Antipas set off to Rome immediately, and on his return Herodias went to him to Galilee, after he on his side had divorced his wife—a daughter of Aretas, king of the district south of the Dead Sea. No crime could be more offensive to the Jews than this marriage, for Herodias was his brother's wife, and had borne him a child—Salome, so that she had not even a shadow of excuse, for though a Jew might marry the childless widow of a brother, every one was horrified at Antipas stealing the wife of a living brother, already a mother. John, who feared the face of no man, openly denounced such a revolting breach of the Law by a Jewish ruler, and his words, no doubt, spread far and wide. The fury of Herodias may be imagined. She was then about thirty-five, or perhaps older, and was already scheming for still more power, and John's language imperilled her ambitious plans. Her new husband's half-brother Herod Philip, the tetrarch of Iturea, across the Jordan, but close to the territories of Antipas, was unmarried; could he not be got as a husband, old as he was, to her young daughter Salome? The elderly bachelor was weak enough to be caught in her toils, and led home the girl to Cæsarea Philippi as his wife. Love had, of course, little to do with the match. The aim of Herodias was to get the tetrarchy of
Philip for Antipas or herself when Philip died. The marriage, however, did not take place till after the death of the Baptist 1

The rage of Herodias could not be appeased while John lived. But it was not easy to bring about the death of one so popular. A pretext found some time later enabled her to get at least a step nearer her end. Whispers were spread that John was becoming dangerous. With all the people crowding to his preaching, he might at any time rise, as Athronges, the Shepherd, and Judas, the Galilean had done, and create a great commotion in the land. Fear emboldened Antipas to take some measures to prevent the imaginary danger, and he was helped by the ill-will felt towards the great preacher by the Jewish authorities. They hated him for the fearless truthfulness with which he exposed their shortcomings; and of course Antipas himself at once hated and feared him for daring to expose the crime of a king.

Afraid to take his life, it was yet possible to throw him into prison. Watching an opportunity, therefore, Antipas seized and carried him off to the dungeons of the great fortress of Machaerus, on the east side of the Dead Sea. This frowning stronghold, half castle, half palace, towered in great masses of squared stone over a gorge of gloomy depth immediately below. There had been a fortress here in olden times, but the tetrarch had added greatly to it since his reign began. A huge wall, surmounted by strong towers, enclosed the top of the cliff, and within this space he built a grand palace, the walls of which were lined with many-coloured marbles, while it had magnificent baths, and every form of Roman luxury. Vast cisterns stored up water, barracks were raised for a large garrison, besides storehouses, and all else needed for defence in case of a siege. The underground dungeons, into one of which John was cast, are still to be seen, hewn deep down into the rock: living graves for prisoners shut up in them. The palace stood

1 Salome was still a "damsel," that is, unmarried, when she danced before Herod, and asked the head of John.
at the one end of the fortifications, and here, in the hot months, Antipas held high revelry with crowds of guests invited to the splendour of his gilded halls.

In this wild place the Baptist lay, cut off from all men, with his great work stopped when at its height, and his life virtually ended in its high spring-tide, for he was just thirty. Around him were only soldiers of all the barbarous races of the neighbouring lands—Arabs, Idumeans, Amorites, and Moabites, who ran no risk of his moving them to pity. He may have been more favoured than other prisoners, since he had been guilty of no crime, and may have been allowed to come up from his dungeon, at times, to the pure air. If so, he could look afar from his lonely height, over the very regions where he had spent the years of his desert life, and the months of his great triumph as a preacher to Israel. There was, however, no hope of escape, had he been willing to make an effort to be free, for his prison was cut off by precipitous depths on three sides, while on the fourth, only a bridle path, leading through numerous fortified gates, permitted approach. Nor could he hope for mercy from Antipas, for the revengeful Herodias would not permit it. She had her victim in the toils, and meant to keep him there till she could slake her hatred in his blood. Sheiks of the desert tribes around went out and in; the troops of the garrison were reviewed and drilled, or lounged round the battlements, and haughty courtiers flashed hither and thither in their bravery, to and from the town in the valley beneath, but John lay hopelessly in his dungeon, with no prospect of deliverance but through death. Yet the nation had not forgotten him, though he could know little of their pitying sympathy.

Antipas hardly knew what to do with his prisoner. The fear of a rising of the people, should he venture to put him to death, refrained him from doing so. Besides, he was, like many bad men, very superstitious, and feared John, knowing that "he was a just man and a holy," and therefore "kept
him safe\(^1\) from the rage of Herodias. Not only so; at times he even "heard him gladly," calling him apparently from his dungeon, or perhaps secretly going to him in it. But though much perplexed by his words, he had not principle enough to amend his life in accordance with them, and his craven spirit might at any time yield him up, under some sudden impulse. It would even seem that he did not attempt to shield him from the cruel ill-treatment suffered by prisoners in those days, for Christ expressly tells us that "they did to him whatsoever they pleased."\(^2\)

Thus he lingered, we know not how long, in the stronghold of Antipas. His followers, however, were allowed more or less access to him, for some of them brought news, among other matters, of Christ's preaching in Galilee, and he was able to send out a message of inquiry respecting Our Lord. The imprisonment of their chief, and the new teachings of Christ, had sorely perplexed his disciples. Strict Jews, like John himself, they clung zealously to the washings and fasts on which the Pharisees, as the most exact observers of the Law, laid so much stress, and were at a loss what to think of his successor allowing his followers to neglect rites which they held so essential. Could he be the Messiah and act thus? John had said he was, but would the Messiah permit the Law to be broken in such a way? The multitudes that had gathered to hear John had scattered to their homes, and now flocked to the new prophet. Was it right to become his disciples or not?

Hearing such things, it is no wonder that the Baptist, like his followers, was troubled. The Law, with all the forms added to it by the Rabbis, was in his eyes unspeakably sacred. The Kingdom of God, which he had announced as having come, would, he had supposed, raise Israel above all nations. Lonely, disappointed, half informed of the facts, he was almost inclined to doubt whether he had not himself erred in hailing Jesus as

\(^1\) Mark vi. 20. R.V. \(^2\) Matt. xvii 12.
the Promised One. In this mood he fancied it would be best to send to Our Lord and tell him his difficulties. "Now when John heard in the prison," says the gospel,\(^1\) "the works of the Christ"—the healing of the centurion's slave at Capernaum, and the raising from the dead of the widow's son at Nain—"having called unto him two of his disciples, he sent them to the Lord, saying, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another? And when the men were come unto him, they said, John the Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" And Jesus "in that hour cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered and said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good tidings preached to them." Then he added, as if to bring John back from his doubts, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me."

This answer showed that Our Lord was fulfilling the promise of Isaiah respecting the Messiah, and John would remember that in one place it was written, "Your God will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing;" and in another—which I have already quoted—"The Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."\(^2\)

Christ could have given no proof more convincing to John that he was indeed the Messiah.

This was the summer of John's captivity, but the winter was

\(^1\) Luke vii. 18, R.V.
\(^2\) Isaiah xxxv. 4, 5; Isaiah lxi. 1, 2.
fast approaching. It was the custom of the age to hold great banquets on the birthday of kings, and on the day of their accession to the throne, to celebrate the anniversary. The time for the birthday festival of Antipas came round, and invitations to it were issued to the officers at Machaerus, the sheiks of the neighbouring tribes, and any dignitaries within reach, including the chiefs, high military officers, and foremost men of the province. The palace was brilliantly illuminated on such occasions, and hung with garlands of flowers; the tables spread with every luxury, and wine flowed freely. This year the mirth and rejoicing ran high when the night came. Herodias was not present, for it is not the custom, even now, in the East, for women to take part in the festivities of men. But to do honour to the day and to the company, her young daughter Salome was

1 Mark vi. 21, 22.
A SHORT LIFE OF CHRIST.

allowed to break through the rule of not mixing with the other sex, and condescended, though a princess and the daughter of kings, to dance before Antipas and his guests. A similar scene, on an inferior scale, is often part of the entertainment of an honoured guest in Eastern countries, even now. At a local great man's house at Thebes, I saw several female dancers, who performed singly or in couples, before rows of men squatted on the divan, which ran along the walls of the large empty room. Music from rude stringed instruments, played by performers seated on the ground, at one end of the hall, gave the measure for motions and postures, as the dancer pirouetted, now slowly, now faster, up one side and down another, throwing her body into a succession of attitudes revoltingly immodest to any but Orientals. There was no speaking or singing. The dancing in vogue, both in Rome and the Provinces, in St. John's day, seems to have been of very much the same kind. The dancer did not speak, but acted some story by gestures, movements, and attitudes, to the sound of music. Masks, however, were then used in all cases, to conceal the features. The subject was always something from the fables of the gods, and hence intensely offensive to strict Jews, who still further were shocked by the dress of the dancer being always planned to show her figure to the greatest advantage. There never was more than one female dancer at a time, nor did women display their skill in public, though, as in the instance of Salome, they sometimes appeared at private festivities.

Salome's dance was a great success. The revellers were charmed, and the weak head of Antipas, perhaps made weaker by wine, was fairly turned. He could not give away the humblest village without permission from Tiberius, but, forgetful of this, he vowed, with true Eastern extravagance, to do anything the dancer asked, if it were that he should give her half of his kingdom. Crafty beyond her years, she asked time to think what she would like, and withdrew to consult her
mother. Herodias had now found her long wished revenge, and instantly told her to go back and ask the head of John the Baptist. Antipas had hitherto saved him, but his mad words to Salome seemed, to his drunken brain, only too binding, forcing him, as he fancied, to yield up John at last into the hand of his deadly enemy. It was a mean advantage to take of a husband, but Herodias longed for revenge. The priests at Jerusalem had said nothing when she and Antipas had outraged the Law and shocked public morality by their marriage, but John had denounced their sin, and must die for exposing iniquity on the throne. Indignant at being overreached, and alarmed for the possible results of submitting to his wife's demand, Antipas, nevertheless, had not the manliness to refuse compliance. His honour, he fancied, bound him to the rash word given before his guests, as if any one had a right to ask him to commit a crime, or to twist his words to a sense they were never intended to bear. Had he taken time, like Salome, to reflect, he might have broken through the snare; but he had lost his presence of mind, and having no principle to restrain him, motioned to a soldier of the guard to carry out Salome's request. No warning was given to the prophet. The entrance of the messenger was the signal for execution, and the bloody head was presently brought on a salver and given, before the company, to Salome, who took it out as a welcome present to her mother. The mutilated body, cared for by loving disciples, was, perhaps the same night, laid in a tomb.

Such a scene marks the coarseness of the times, even in the highest ranks; for Antipas was not singular in mingling such a deed of horror with the mirth of a banquet. Caligula often had men put to torture before the guests at his feasts, and swordsmen, skilled in beheading, amused the table by cutting off the heads of prisoners brought in from their dungeons, to show the dexterity of the artists. At a public feast in Rome, he ordered the executioner to strike off the hands of a slave, accused, perhaps unjustly, of having taken a silver plate from
one of the couches, and made the poor wretch go round the
 tables with his hands hanging on his breast, a board being
carried before him, inscribed with his alleged offence.

After the death of the Baptist, Antipas went back to Tiberias,
haunted, as we shall see, by the remembrance of his victim. Salome
was soon afterwards married, but her husband died in a
short time, leaving her childless. She did not, however, remain
a widow, finding a second husband in a great grandson of Herod
the Great, who was made King of Lesser Armenia by Nero.
But Herodias and Antipas had no profit by Philip's death,
though they had married Salome to him in the hope of being
his successors; and in the end his inheritance, for which they
had schemed, as they thought so cleverly, was the cause of their
utter ruin.

Some years after Christ's death, Antipas was banished to
Lugdunum, the modern Lyons, in France, and Herodias accom-
panied him; the ambitious dreams for which they had com-
mittied so many crimes, and to realize which had been the one
idea of their lives, ending in nothing greater than the shame
and oblivion of dethronement and exile.

1 Matt. xiv. 1.  2 A.D. 39.
CHAPTER VII.

The baptism of Our Lord marked the opening of his public life. Hitherto he had been known only in his own village; but from this time he always spoke of himself as sent from God to set up His kingdom upon earth. "Ye know," says St. Peter, "the good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), which were preached throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; concerning Jesus of Nazareth—that God anointed him with the Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." 1

He now began to proclaim that the kingdom of God was not only, as John had taught, near at hand, but had already come, and took his place as its Head, bearing himself as "the only begotten of the Father," but also assuming the title of "the Son of Man," which had been assigned to the Messiah since the days of the prophet Daniel.

The earliest chapters of the gospels show with what dignity and completeness our Saviour entered on his great work. Honouring John as a noble servant of God, he yet took his place from the first above him. John had confined himself to seeking to reform his nation, while requiring them to observe all the precepts of the Rabbis, though they were so numerous that St. Peter, himself a strict Jew, afterwards openly spoke of them as "a yoke which neither their fathers nor they themselves were able to bear." 2 Our Lord, on the other hand, said

1 Acts x. 37, 38, R.V. 2 Acts xv. 10.
nothing of these painful and endless outward forms, but sought to win the soul to a higher spiritual life.

To enter on so great a work, however, needed special preparation, for Christ was, in all things except sin, a man like ourselves. It would expose him to the fiercest assaults of the evil one, and to the opposition and hatred of all whose lives he censured, or whose interests he threatened; he would have to encounter bigotry, hypocrisy, ingratitude, indifference, mockery, misconception, and at last to die a martyr to the truth. Still more, he could only look forward to a life of awful loneliness, for who could help him to bear his burden, or enter into the troubles of his soul? He resolved, therefore, to retire for a time from among men to prepare for such a future. In the words of the gospels, "He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness." In its silent depths he could equip himself for his great task, weigh all the difficulties, and lay down his course in view of them. Moses had been prepared in the lonely mountains of Sinai for delivering Israel from Egyptian slavery, and for being their ruler and lawgiver. The Baptist had lived in the wilderness before he began his work on the Jordan; and St. Paul, after his conversion, retired for three years to "Arabia," before he entered on his office as an apostle.

To what part Christ withdrew himself is not told us, but St. Mark says he was "with the wild beasts," so that he must have gone outside the limits of even scattered human habitations. The yellow cliffs behind Jericho are still known by the name of Quarantania, or the place of the forty days' sojourn; and one summit, higher than the others, is called the Mount of Temptation. The whole region is pierced by innumerable caves, inhabited in later ages by multitudes of hermits. No grass or trees grow in the dreary, scorched ravines, or slopes of yellow and white limestone. Underfoot, the tracks, hither and thither, are only rough beds of winter torrents, heaped with boulders and stones of all sizes, and the sides of the hills are

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covered with similar wreck, precipitated from above by the storms and weatherings of ages. No place could be imagined more wild and desolate.

In this vast and lonely chamber of meditation and prayer Our Lord remained, we are told, for Forty days, pondering the great work before him. To be thus alone was to have every thought rise in turn; to have human weakness plead for indulgence, and human fears counsel safety. Nor could he escape graver trials. The Prince of Darkness had, doubtless, often before sought to overcome him, for "he was tempted in all points like as we are."  It was fitting, however, that the Anointed of God should be put to the test. We gain clearness and fixed resolution only as our thoughts bring before us both the right course and the wrong, and the choice of the right is the final tempering of the soul and its test of fitness for the true work of life.

The narrative of this time in the gospels belongs to the closing of the forty days; the fiercest attacks of Satan being kept back till there was least power to resist them. Like all others, Jesus had been surrounded by evil from his earliest years, and might at any time have sinned had he chosen. But his holy nature remained pure and unsoiled, like the white lily which is unstained by the muddy water around it. We feel that Milton is true to nature when he speaks of Satan as telling our Lord that he had heard the angels' song at Bethlehem, and—

"From that time seldom have I ceased to eye
Thy infancy, thy childhood, and thy youth,
Thy manhood last, though yet in private bred."

It was nothing new, therefore, that he should be tempted now in the wilderness, though the time chosen, and the circumstances in which he was placed, made the trial more severe and his triumph over it more weighty.

1 Heb. iv. 15  2 "Paradise Regained," iv. 507-509.
The contrast between the teaching of Christ and the ideas in which he had been trained, helps us to see how easily any one but he might have been led astray by the tempter. Moses had been set apart by God as the Lawgiver of Israel, and the Temple with its priesthood and services had the Divine approval. Would it be right to teach that the rites and ceremonies thus established were no longer binding? Every Jew believed that the Messiah was to be a great king who would crush the enemies of Israel, and rule in triumph over the world. Was this the course Christ was to follow, or would he seek only purely religious ends, ruling over the hearts of men and changing them into the spiritual image of God? It must have been very hard to break with all that his nation held most sacred. If, moreover, he was to be a faithful witness for God, he must rebuke the shortcomings of the religious leaders of his people, and he could not doubt that they would use all their influence to crush him. He knew, besides, that in any spiritual reform attempted, bigotry, self-righteousness, and self-interest would be against him. His nation thought themselves most religious, and Christ was about to tell them that their notion of religion was a mistake. They trusted largely in exact observance of outward rites, and in their descent from Abraham; but he was about to teach that neither exactness in observance of the Law, nor their being Jews by birth would profit them before God, unless their hearts were right in his sight. He came to found a religion in which the Jewish priesthood and Temple could find no place; in which the countless rules for every act of life could no longer be required. How certainly must he count on being regarded as an enemy of God.

No thought of personal interest or ambition, however, for a moment disturbed him. Life was only of worth as it advanced the glory of his Father and the welfare of mankind. But to face a people so fiercely self-righteous as his nation, so slow to move, so spiritually dead, was enough to try him to the
 utmost. All the prophets, from the first to the last, had been stoned, sawn asunder, outraged, martyred, and he knew that his fate must be the same as theirs.

Milton makes Our Lord, in these weeks, retire far into the depths of the wilderness—

"Musing and much revolving in his breast.
How best the mighty work he might begin
Of Saviour to mankind, and which way first
Publish his God-like office, now mature." 1

The final issue we all know. Casting aside the national dream of founding a great Jewish empire, with its capital in Jerusalem, he kept firm to the high purpose of teaching a religion which should win its way by bringing the hearts of men to God. That he was to die for the good of mankind, he knew from the first; but it was for that end, above all, he had come into the world.

We need not think of Satan as present in a human form, or as an angel of darkness, when he came to put Our Lord to the proof. He is never spoken of in the New Testament as visible, except when Jesus saw him fall, as lightning, from heaven. He is unseen when he assails us, and we have no reason to suppose there was any difference in the case of Our Lord. The first temptation was very subtle. Worn out with hunger, Christ was told that, if, indeed, he were the Son of God, as he claimed to be, he surely erred in suffering thus, since, at a word, he could command the millions of stones around him to become bread. To have the power to satisfy his hunger, and yet to decline to do so because of a nobler duty, is a height of goodness which it would be vain to expect from an ordinary man. But Jesus did not for a moment allow himself to question his proper course. The miraculous gifts which he possessed had been given for the glory of God, not for his private use. As a man, he was dependent on the loving care of his

1 "Paradise Regained," i. 185-188.
Heavenly Father, and to provide for hunger by a miracle
would be to show distrust of that Father's gracious providence.
Hence, his answer was at once ready. God had brought him
where he was, and would protect him. His wisdom and good-
ness would provide for him. He had fed Israel with manna in
the wilderness, and had sustained Moses and Elijah there, and
would sustain him.

The second temptation was no less artful. From childhood
Jesus had been taught that the Messiah was to reign over all
the world, and that the wealth of every land was to be poured
out at his feet. Jerusalem would be the greatest of cities,
and the court of the Messiah more splendid than that of Rome.
Since he had the power, would he not raise his nation to this
pinnacle of glory? Would not his doing so, indeed, be the
surest way to spread the worship of Jehovah, whose irresistible
power it would show so clearly, and whose Law would thus be
made that of the whole earth?

If he shrank from using his miraculous power to overthrow
Rome, there were before him only shame, poverty, neglect,
derision, insult, and suffering, closed by a violent death. To
make the temptation stronger, a vision was raised by the Evil
One, in which Christ looked down, as from the top of some
great mountain, on all the kingdoms of the world and their
glory, which would be his in their widest bounds, if he be-
came the Messiah expected by his nation. Fair rivers, wind-
ing through rich pastures and fertile cornfields; huge cities,
high towered, the seats of mightiest monarchies; regions be-
yond the conquests of Alexander, in the East, or of those of
Rome, in the West, lay spread out before him, and would all
be his, and, as his, would be won for God!

But even this had no power over Christ. He would not rest
his empire on force. To do so would hinder his great end.
He came to found a kingdom on the love, not on the fears or

\[1\) Isa. lx. 1, 5, 22.\]
outward submission of mankind. In the words of Milton, he virtually said,—

"Victorious deeds
Flamed in my heart—heroic acts one while—
To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke;
Men to subdue,—and quell, o'er all the earth,
Brute violence and proud tyrannic power,
Till truth were freed, and equity restored;
Yet, hold it more humane, more heavenly, first
By winning words to conquer willing hearts,
And make persuasion do the work of fear."¹

Worldly power and glory were nothing to him, and he wished only to secure the reign of righteousness and peace and joy. He knew that if he did not flatter the pride and ambition of his nation by preaching a universal Jewish empire, he would turn them against him. But the temptation lost its power as he uttered the words, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

He had now been tempted by hunger and by ambition: there remained another chance of overcoming him, by an appeal to vanity. He might be willing to seek popular admiration by a display of his miraculous powers before the multitude. No spot was so suitable as Jerusalem for such an exhibition of them as would at once convince men that he was indeed the Messiah. And, in the holy city, no spot was so fitting as the Temple, the centre of the national religion, and the chosen dwelling-place of God. The whole temptation, no doubt, passed only as a dream in the mind of Our Lord, just as we ourselves continually have waking visions in which we seem to do what, after all, we only think. In this way he seemed borne by Satan to one of the pinnacles of the great three-aisled Royal Porch, which ran along the south end of the Temple enclosure, and overlooked the valley of Hinnom from a dizzy height.

¹ "Paradise Regained," i. 215-223.
Perhaps it was the time of one of the great feasts, when countless pilgrims were at Jerusalem; would it not, through them, carry his fame everywhere, if he cast himself from the glittering spire and fluttered down safely into the ravine, hundreds of feet below! The devil always has Scripture ready to serve his end, and in this case quoted the promise of God, "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up." But the meek and lowly spirit of Christ despised vanity, and would not for a moment entertain the idea of employing his miraculous gifts for merely personal honour. One brief sentence turned off the attack: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." He would not claim help from his Father for that which had not the sanction of his command.

That Our Saviour should have been thus tried by the sorest temptations is the greatest comfort to us all. He could not have shown his sinlessness if he had not been put to the proof like other men. But how real the struggle was at times, we know from his prayers and supplications, broken by strong crying and tears,1 and by the touching outburst, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour."2 He was proved and tried from his youth to his death, and, like us, might have given way. But we know that he did not, coming forth victorious over all the tempter's arts.

The desert had now served its purpose. His spiritual struggle passed away, and angels came and ministered to him

1 Heb. v. 7. 2 John xii. 27; Luke xii. 50; Matt. xxvi. 39.
CHAPTER VIII.

We know nothing of the personal appearance of the Saviour at any period of his life. Portraits or statues of men or women were forbidden among the Jews. They were images, and, as such, idolatrous. "Neither did the mischievous invention of men deceive us," says the "Wisdom of Solomon," "nor an image spotted with divers colours, the painter's fruitless labours: the sight whereof enticeth fools to lust after it, and so they desire the form of a dead image that hath no breath." ¹ In Solomon's Temple there were figures of Cherubim, copied no doubt from the palaces of Assyria, but they were carved or painted by heathen workmen from Tyre, accustomed to such forms of art. All that is said therefore of portraits of Christ, or of his personal appearance, is only misleading. No hint as to his features or form is given in the New Testament, and hence the early Christians had as little idea of them as we have. For this reason, when sorely persecuted in the first ages, they imagined that his visage and form were marred more than those of other men,² and that there was no beauty in him that men should desire him.³ But when days of prosperity came, the Church fancied he must have been supremely beautiful, from his divine nature, and represented him as "fairer than the sons of men." "He was beautiful in his mother's bosom," says one of the later Fathers, "beautiful in the arms of his parents, beautiful on the Cross, and beautiful in the sepulchre." Yet even while thus describing him, it is added that these words are only a picture of the fancy, for

¹ Wisdom xv. 4, 5. ² Isa. liii. 14. ³ Isa. liii. 2.
"we are wholly ignorant of his appearance, and the likenesses of him vary according to the imagination of the artist."

There are some verbal portraiture. of Our Lord, however, which at least help us to set a living form before our minds. About the year A.D. 1400, a Greek historian describes him, from the report of past ages, in striking words. "He was," says he, "very beautiful. His height was fully seven spans; his hair bright auburn, not too thick, and inclined to wave in soft curls. His eyebrows were black and arched, and his eyes seemed to shed from them a gentle golden light. They were very beautiful. His nose was prominent; his beard lovely, but not very long. He wore his hair, on the contrary, very long, for no scissors had ever touched it, nor any human hand, except that of his mother, when she played with it in his childhood. He stooped a little, but his body was well formed. His complexion was that of the ripe brown wheat, and his face, like that of his mother, rather oval than round, with only a little red, but there shone through it dignity, intelligence of soul, gentleness, and a calmness of spirit which was never disturbed."

A little later, a letter pretending to date from the time of Christ, but really composed by some one living at the time it was published, says—"there has appeared and still lives, a man of great virtue, called Jesus Christ. He is tall in stature, noble in appearance, with a reverend countenance. His hair is waving and curly, showing a darker shade and a richer brightness where it flows down from his shoulders. His brow is smooth and wondrously calm, his features have no wrinkles, or any blemish, and a red glow makes his cheeks beautiful. His nose and mouth are perfect. He has a full, ruddy beard, the colour of his hair; not long, but divided in two. His eyes are bright, and seem of different colours at different times. He is terrible in his threatenings: calm in his admonitions: loving and loved: cheerful, but with an abiding gravity. No one ever saw him smile, but he often weeps. His hands and
limbs are perfect. He is gravely eloquent, retiring and modest, and the fairest of the sons of men."

An imaginary picture of Our Lord by a famous German scholar, still living, may be added to these fancies. "Our eyes were restlessly attracted to him, for he was the centre of the group. He did not wear soft clothing of byssus and silk, like the courtiers of Tiberias or Jerusalem, nor had he long trailing robes, like some of the Pharisees. On his head was a white keffiyeh—a square of linen doubled crosswise, so that a corner fell on each shoulder, and the third, down the back; a fillet, or soft rope, of camel's wool, twisted into a double ring, keeping it in its place on the head. On his body he wore an inner garment which reached to his wrists and to his feet, and over this a blue tallith with the legal tassels of blue and white at the four corners; its length such that the inner clothing, which was grey, striped with red, was little seen. His feet, shod with sandals, not shoes, were only visible now and then, as he walked or moved.

"He was of middle size, beautiful as a youth in his face and form. The purity and charm of early manhood mingled in his countenance with the ripeness of mature years. His complexion was fairer than that of those around him, and showed less of the bronze colour of his nation. He seemed, indeed, even pale, under the white head covering, for the ruddy glow of health, usual at his years, was wanting. The type of his features was hardly Jewish, but rather as if that and the Greek types blended into a perfect beauty, which, while it awakened reverence, filled the heart, still more, with love. His eyes looked on you with light which seemed broken and softened, as if by passing through tears. He stooped a little, and seemed communing with his own thoughts, and when he moved there was no haughtiness as with some of the Rabbis, but a natural dignity and grace, like one who feels himself a king, though dressed in lowly robes."

1 Very fine linen. 2 A broad scarf, with tassels at the corners.
Jesus returned, apparently in the early spring, from the wilderness, to the place where John was still baptizing. Here he may have communed with him for a time, but he lived apart, passing silently among the multitudes, day by day. Just before his coming, John had renewed to a deputation from the Temple authorities the testimony he had previously borne to him. Disclaiming all honour, though still at the height of his popularity, the noble man told them—"I am only he of whom Isaiah speaks as a voice crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord"; an allusion to the fact that in the East the dry channels of winter torrents, or a track along a hillside, rough and stony, are often the only roads; requiring the larger stones to be removed and the others to be covered with earth, when a great man is on his travels, that he may have a smooth path. He added: "I only baptize with water, but there stands among you One whom ye know not—he who is to come after me, before whom I am not worthy to kneel that I might unloose his sandal." A slave acknowledged the rights of a new master by untying his sandals and binding them on again; but even this, in John's opinion, was too great an honour for him to be permitted to pay to Christ. He had often borne witness thus to the Coming One, but he was now able to do so in his presence. As he was standing, the next day, among his followers, Jesus himself approached. He was still unknown, but the very end of John's mission was that he should "be made manifest to Israel," and the hour had now come to draw aside the veil. Pointing to him, therefore, while yet at a distance, he told them to "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is become before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing with water. I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon him. And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, he said unto
me, Upon whomever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." 

Flocks of lambs then crossing the Jordan, for the Temple sacrifices, at the ford at which John was baptizing, may have led him to speak of Christ as "the Lamb of God"; a name since so sacred. Before our Lord's baptism he had only been described as having his fan in his hand, and as laying the axe at the root of the trees, and baptizing with fire as well as with the Spirit. Now, however, John saw in him the meek, spotless, and patient Lamb, appointed by God as a sacrifice for the sin of the world.

These words of the Baptist found some hearts in which they at once bore fruit. The next day, as John was standing with two of his disciples, Jesus once more passed, and was pointed out again in the same terms. It was enough. Waiting with anxious hearts for the Messiah, two of those standing near no sooner heard this language than they followed him who was thus honoured. The Rabbis had usually a number of disciples living more or less in their company, to be trained thoroughly in the law, that they might afterwards themselves become teachers, and hence it was natural to suppose that in the same way these two might be allowed by Jesus to attach themselves to him.

Those who now joined him were the first of the trusted friends who in due time became his Apostles. They did not come from among the Rabbis or their followers, who had little sympathy with him, but from the sons of the people, who had minds more open to the truth and less clouded by self-sufficiency. He found those he wanted mostly in the lowly fishermen and peasants of Galilee—his own country.

Of the first two disciples, the one was Andrew, a fisherman from Bethsaida, on the Lake of Galilee; the other, doubtless,

1 John i. 29-34, R.V.
A SHORT LIFE OF CHRIST.

was the Apostle John, a native of the same town, though, with his usual modesty, he withholds his name. Very probably it was he who proposed to seek our Lord, and if so, he was the first to follow as he was the last to leave him. It seems as if he had been struck by the name given Christ by John—"The Lamb of God"—and loved him especially for the associations it excited, for we find him using it more than thirty times in the Book of Revelation, written by him a generation after Christ's death.

Noticing the two following him, Jesus lovingly waited their approach. Seeking permission to be his disciples by the modest question where he had his home, they were forthwith invited to share it with him. The crowds attending John's preaching could not have found houses to shelter them, and must have put together simple shelters of boughs, with perhaps some cloth thrown over them, as a slight seclusion and makeshift home, sufficient for the climate of Palestine, where all that is needed for most of the year is a protection from the night mists. The encampment on the Jordan may have been like the frail shelter I have seen among the Indians of the American woods: thin calico laid over a rude framework of boughs, or like a sight I once came upon in Asia Minor, where a whole town was housed in tents as frail, their houses having been burnt down by a chance conflagration. The title Rabbi, by which they addressed Christ, belonged strictly only to persons ordained by the Rabbinical schools; but though officially limited to teachers thus sanctioned, it was freely accorded to any teacher who secured popular respect, and had been given to John as it now was to Jesus.\(^1\) Indeed, Our Lord was addressed thus by the Pharisees and Rabbis themselves.

The day passed quickly in Christ's company, and even when night approached they were unwilling to leave. Won by their new Master's words and sweet attractiveness, it was natural that they should tell their friends what had happened, and

\(^1\) John iii. 22.
invite them to join such a Teacher. Retiring, therefore, for a while, Andrew hastened to his brother Simon, and soon returned with him, thus bringing St. Peter for the first time within the spell of Christ's words and presence. In him, as in John and Andrew, Jesus saw one worthy to follow him. His strong fidelity, energy, warmth of heart, and religiousness were read at a glance. He was to be the most rock-like of all the apostles—one who, except for a single moment, would never be untrue to his Lord amidst all the trials of the future. "Thou art Simon," said Christ, "the son of Jonas. Henceforth thou shalt be called 'The Rock'"; and this he has been, ever since, for Peter or Cephas, the names by which he is best known, are the Latin and Aramaic for the honourable title thus given him. The Church was already founded when these three fishermen-disciples were gained.

According to the earliest traditions, James, the brother of John, was one of those who at this time came to Christ, brought by John as Simon had been by Andrew. The four belonged to Bethsaida—or Fish town—on the Lake of Galilee, somewhere near Capernaum. A spot on the north edge of Geennesaret, Ain el Tabijeh, has been thought the spot. The hills sink behind it into gentle knolls, leaving a delightful recess of comparatively level ground, through which a strong brook, still turning a mill, and hidden by thickets of oleanders and trees, pours swiftly towards the lake. A rough landing place of stone reaches out a few yards, to assist the loading or unloading of any chance boat; its length apparently much less now than formerly, to judge from the heaps of stone in the clear shallows. There is a little bay just above, where the branches of shrubs and trees overhang the water, the coast jutting out into a cape to the north; but there is no population except the households of the mill-owner and of one or two fishermen. When I was at the spot my boat was turned to

1 The Aramaic was the language of the natives of Palestine in the days of our Lord.
the small promontory, to which one of the four boatmen waded after stripping himself to the waist, making his way thence with a small round casting net, the border of which was hung with lead weights, to cause it to sink rapidly. After a few minutes he had reached the shadow of the branches in the little bay, and walked slowly and silently along its edge, watching for fish. Seeing some in the shallows below him, the net, in a moment, flew out in a circle over them. The next, they were in his hands, as he waded in and took them from below the meshes. Was this a picture of the fisher life of Christ’s disciples nineteen hundred years ago?

**Fish from Sea of Galilee.**

We know nothing of the father of Andrew and Simon, but James and John were the sons of one Zebedee and Salome, so honourably mentioned in the gospels. They had thus the priceless blessing of a godly mother, for Salome “ministered of her substance” to Our Lord while he lived, and was so true to him that she stood by the cross as he died. That she should have been able to contribute to the wants of Our Lord, and that her husband is mentioned as having hired men in his

1 Mark xv. 40; xvi. 1; Matt. xxvii. 56.
2 Luke viii. 3; Mark xv. 40, 41.
service, shows that the family was comparatively well-to-do. Simon lived at Capernaum in a house large enough to give a home not only to his own household, his brother Andrew, and his wife's mother, but also to Christ himself, who appears to have usually lived with him. The courtyard of the house, indeed, seems to have been the scene of some of Christ's discourses; the building being apparently two storeys high.

Having now four disciples, Our Lord turned once more towards Galilee, and was joined on the way by Philip—like the others, from Bethsaida. They did not, however, go to that village, but to Cana, a small place on the edge of the fine plain of El Battauf, over the hill behind Nazareth; Mary seeming to have lived there at this time; Joseph, apparently, being dead. The hamlet now called Cana lies on the track between Nazareth and Sepphoris—still, as I have said, a small town on a pleasant hill-top, and once the capital of Galilee, till Antipas built Tiberias during Our Lord's boyhood at Nazareth. Cana consists of a few mud cottages, flat-roofed, and generally of only one room, with a small mud-walled court at the side. One into which I went had no furniture, the room being largely filled, instead, with a clay oven built from the floor like a great ant-hill, and a clay bench along the walls; the clay floor of two heights; the higher part near the door, the living and sleeping chamber of the household; the lower, behind; the shelter of the ass, cow, or goat of the establishment. Fowls roosted on a rough perch overhead, and pigeons nestled in a clay dove-cote on the roof. What simple utensils daily life needed were outside in the yard, from which the sleeping mats were brought at night when it was time to lie down. On the north side of the hamlet there are a few poor gardens inside loose stone walls, and there is a village well round which the women and girls gather, morning and evening. The landscape is very pleasant, but not striking; its principal features being the ruins of Sepphoris; the hill over Nazareth, covered with the whitewashed tomb of a

1 Mark i. 20.  2 Mark i. 29–35; ii. 2.  3 Mark ii. 2, Greek.
Mahomedan saint, and in front, the plain of Battauf, with
gentle green hills on its northern side, reaching away towards
the Lake of Galilee. A small Franciscan church, of white stone,
recently built, bears an inscription over its door, “Here Jesus
made the water into wine.”

No sooner had Our Lord reached this village than Philip,
rejoicing at having found the Messiah, sought out a friend who
lived in Cana,—Nathanael, known also as Bartholomew, or the
“Son of Tolmai.” This good man knew nothing of Jesus,
though Nazareth was so near. Indeed, he could not conceive
that anything good could come from such a place, for it seems
that the people of Nazareth bore a very indifferent reputation.
Yet he was willing to come and see for himself. “An Israelite
indeed, in whom there is no guile!” said Christ to those
round, as he approached; loving words heard by Nathanael,
and already winning his heart. “How do you know me?”
asked he, wondering. Philip had found him under a fig-
tree near his house, hidden, as he thought, from all eyes.
“Before Philip called thee,” said Christ, “when thou wast
under the fig-tree, I saw thee.” Nathanael felt that he was
before one who even in secret could read the heart. “Rabbi,”
said he, “thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of
Israel.” “Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-
tree,” replied Jesus, “believest thou? Thou shalt see greater
things than these.” Far higher grounds of faith would be
granted; for, from this time, the heavens would be seen, as it
were, open, and the angels of God ascending and descending
upon the Son of man—the name of the Messiah in Daniel, now
used continually by Jesus of himself. There would from
this time be a constant intercourse between him and heaven;
countless blessings descending as if brought by angels, and
tidings of the progress of God’s work in redeeming man as
constantly ascending.

1 Some think that the Cana of the Gospels lay on the north side of the
plain.
CHAPTER IX.

CANA, "the reedy place," so-called, no doubt, from the original condition of the plain beside it, which is still swampy and fever-causing after the winter rains, was a busy village in the days of Our Lord, for the country was as populous then as it is desolate now. Opposite it, on the north, rose the village of Kefr Menda, still noted for its deep spring used in the hot summer, and its clay-banked pool of rain water for consumption in the other months. The plain rises and falls for two or three miles, in stretches of grass, barley, wheat, or beans, without fences, from Menda to Sepphoris—"the bird-like," several caravan tracks crossing it, to and from the northern fords of the Jordan; figs and olives fringing the southern edge and running up the slopes of the hill from which Sepphoris looks down. Peasants and townsmen, then, as now, dotted the roads; trains of camels stalked along laden with wool, oil, or wheat, for the market at Acre, or with goods for that of Damascus; asses pattered on with loads of grass, or vegetables, or with stone for building, balanced in small coarse frames at their sides, or bearing some turbaned citizen or humble villager; small flocks of sheeps and goats wandered forth to the pastures on the hills round the plain, and the streets of the village itself were astir with busy life.

A marriage was about to take place in the circle of Mary's friends, perhaps of her connections; and she and her Son were invited to the usual rejoicings. These began then, as they do still, by the bridegroom, in his best, going, attended by his groomsmen, "the sons of the bride-chamber," to the house of
the bride on the wedding day. The visit, however, was paid, not to her, but to her father, to close the bargain by which she became a wife: a matter respecting which she was not allowed to have anything to say. This finished, preparations for the marriage began. A special girdle—the "attire" which a bride could not forget,1 was always part of the maiden's dress, and a long veil covered her from head to foot. A wreath of myrtle or other shrub,—like our wreaths of orange blossom—was so necessary that the bride herself was often spoken of by its name. Her hair was left flowing, her dress perfumed, and her brow glittered with as many coins as the family boasted, or, if poor, could borrow. The bridegroom had given her what presents he could afford when the marriage was finally settled; and, on her part, she sent as her gift a shroud, to be worn, as she wore hers, on the Great Day of Atonement, each year; and finally to be wrapped round him in his coffin, as her own would be round herself.

The bride was led to her husband's home with much pomp, and always after dark. She set out from her father's house in state, seated on an ass, and preceded by some of the droning flutes of the East, and such other music as could be had, a number of married women walking alongside her beast. No one could see her, for she was closely hidden by her veil. Numbers of girls followed with loud rejoicings, and men with torches or lanterns lighted the way; for there are no lamps or shining windows in the streets of the East. Arriving at her future home, she was led to her own chamber, where she remained for the time under the care of a matron.

Meanwhile, the rejoicings began. The bridegroom, like the bride, wore a crown or wreath, given him by "his mother in the day of his espousals, in the day of the gladness of his heart,"2 and sat, "decked like a priest in his ornaments."3 The invited guests joined in a modest feast, eaten from one or

1 Gen. xxiv. 32; Jer. ii. 32; Rev. xix. 7, 8; 1 Cor. xi. 10.
2 Cant. iii. 11.
3 Isa. lxi. 10.
more great bowls, often set on the clay floor, fingers serving for
knives and forks, and pieces of bread for spoons; the meal
consisting usually of a lamb or kid stewed in rice or barley.
At last came the hour for the bridegroom’s retirement. He
had not yet seen his wife’s face, but now lifting her veil as she
sat alone in her chamber, his satisfaction, which was almost a
matter of course, was made known by a shrill cry of joy, for
which the company outside eagerly listened, answering by
similar gratulations. “Rejoicing greatly because of the bride-
groom’s voice,”¹ they then returned to their places to carry
on their humble festivities.

It was to some such marriage that Jesus and his five dis-
ciples had been invited. The earthen floor and the ledge round
the wall which served as a couch by day, and a sleeping place
by night, would be spread with carpets or mats, and the walls
hung with branches. We may be sure that there was no
excess, though innocent joy brightened all faces. John had
been a Nazarite, tasting no wine, and eating no pleasant food,
but giving himself to painful self-denial and hardship. Jesus,
on the other hand, had come to make life, as a whole, religious;
heightening its joys and tempering its sorrows, but not de-
manding the self-inflictions endured by the Baptist.

A marriage feast lasted usually for a whole week, but the
cost of such prolonged rejoicing is very small in the East. The
simple fare I have mentioned constitutes all the entertain-
ment provided. The guests sit round it, the great bowl, or
bowls on the floor; the most honoured nearest; others behind;
and all, in eating, dip their hand into the one smoking mound;
pieces of the thin bread, bent together, serving, as I have said,
for spoons when necessary. After the first circle have satisfied
themselves, those lower in honour sit down to the rest: the
whole company being men, for women are never seen at a feast.
Water had been poured on the hands before eating, and this is
repeated when the meal closes, the fingers having first been

¹ John iii. 29.
wiped on pieces of bread, which after serving the same purpose as table-napkins with us, are thrown on the ground, to be eaten by any dog that may have stolen in from the streets through the ever-open door, or picked up by those outside when gathered and tossed out to them.\(^1\) Rising from the ground, and retiring to the seat round the walls, the guests then sit down, cross-legged, and gossip, or listen to recitals, or puzzle over riddles; light being scantily supplied by a small lamp or two, or, if the night be chilly, by a smouldering fire of weeds kindled in the middle of the room, perhaps in a brazier; often in a hole in the floor. As to the smoke, it escapes as it best may; but, indeed, there is little of it—though enough to blacken the water- or wine- or milk-skins hung up on pegs on the wall: a result to which the Psalmist alludes when he says that he has “become like a bottle in the smoke”—his face being, as it were black, like it, from his troubles.\(^2\)

Wine is little used now in the East, from the fact that Mahomedans are not allowed to taste it, and very few of other creeds touch it. When it is drunk, water is generally mixed with it, and this was the custom in the days of Christ also. The people, indeed, are everywhere very sober in hot climates; a drunken person, in fact, is never seen. This must be remembered when we read of wine being miraculously provided by our Lord for the simple guests at the Cana marriage. To supply it when there was no risk of its being abused is a very different thing from doing so in countries like ours, where drinking is a national curse.

As it happened, the supply of wine in the Cana household ran short, so that shame before his neighbours threatened the bridegroom. Would Our Lord do anything to prevent this? Mary, outside, remembering the wonders attending his birth, thought he might; knowing that even so small a matter would move a heart full of kindness and sympathy. She ventured, therefore, to hint to him the state of affairs, but, though her

\(^1\) Matt. xv. 27; Mark vii. 28.  
\(^2\) Ps. exix. 83.
Son, tender and loving in all things, he had now higher matters to concern him than even her pleasure. "Woman," said he, using the form of address universal in his day, "what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." There was no disrespect in the word "woman," for he afterwards used it in his loving farewell to Mary when he hung on the Cross. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," said she, on hearing this answer—for it had no harshness to her. Six stone jars of large size stood in the court, for the constant legal cleansings required of Jewish households. "Fill the waterpots with water," said Jesus, adding, when they had filled them to the brim—"Draw out now, and take to the governor of the feast," that is, to the person acting as host. But the water had become glowing wine.

The "glory" of Jesus had always shone in the spotless beauty of his life, but he had not till now shown his power to work miracles. This was the beginning of the new glory reflected by such wondrous gifts.

The age of Our Lord at this time is not clearly known. Some fancy he was thirty-four, others thirty-one, thirty-two, thirty-seven, and even forty. The words of the Gospels—that he was about thirty years of age leave room for different estimates. It has been even supposed, from the saying of the Jews, "Thou art not yet fifty years old,"¹ that he was between forty and fifty. But when so many differ, it is safest to keep to the words of St. Luke that "he was about thirty," though not younger, at his baptism.

The people of the Holy Land at the time of Our Lord were by no means all Jews. On the contrary, the villagers and peasants were, in great measure, descendants of the old Canaanite population, mixed with Philistine, Phœnician, and other blood, especially that of the settlers brought from Eastern regions by the Assyrian king, after the destruction of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes. This mingled race had, no

¹ John viii. 57.
doubt, largely intermarried with Jews, and had very generally adopted the Jewish religion, except in Samaria. The pure Jews, however,—townsmen or priests, for the most part—treated them with the utmost contempt. A peasant, to them, was "a beast," one "born under the curse of God;" his hard daily life preventing him from carrying out the ten thousand rules of the strict Jews. The very name of "peasant" was, in fact, a loathing to these self-righteous bigots.

There was very little trade, for Joppa, Caesarea, and Ptolemais, or Acre, where harbours had been formed on the otherwise unsheltered coast, were not in Jewish hands. Besides, there was little to sell, for the tangle of mostly bare hills, which made up Jewish territory, seamed by stony ravines and boasting few open valleys, were very rudely tilled. There were potters, dyers, and tanners in the towns, then, as now, and spinning and weaving were familiar, as they are still, to every housewife. Smiths made or sharpened the simple implements used in the field or the olive yard. Shops, such as they were, invited purchasers in the lanes of the towns, and pedlars, often from other countries, passed from village to village with various wares; but the Jew had not, in Christ's day, at least in Palestine, become the keen money-maker he has shown himself in later ages. He kept in great measure aloof from trade, if only to avoid coming near the common people or the heathen Greek or Roman population.

The language of the common people was not Hebrew, but very much the same as it is to-day,—a dialect of the Syriac language spoken by Abraham before he came to Palestine, where he exchanged it for Hebrew, then spoken in the country. The language of the Old Testament was hence a foreign tongue to the mass of the people, and indeed had been so even in the time of Ezra, for we are told that when the Law was publicly read, educated men who understood it, "gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." ¹ Hebrew

¹ Neh. viii. 8.
was known by very few peasants in Christ's day, and it is a striking proof of the care of Joseph and Mary in the education of Our Lord, that, notwithstanding their poverty, he could read it, when asked to do so, in the synagogue.¹

To the pure Jews, as a whole, the Law of Moses was the object of an almost idolatrous reverence. Constantly read in the synagogue, and the only school-book in use, it was known, in every word, by all. Nor did they neglect the Prophets, which was the name given to all the other sacred books, for portions of them were continually read as the second Lesson in the synagogues, and copies of one or other of them were treasured in many Jewish households.

The condition of the peasants, in districts where there were no synagogues or schools, and where the children, consequently, grew up unable to read or write, must have been very miserable. But even in the most favoured localities, however much they knew of the Law, their hard lives prevented them keeping the countless outward rules founded upon it. Herod and others had raised heathen temples in many parts of the land, and the old superstitious worship on the hill tops, or “high places,” never entirely ceased. Even at this day, indeed, the Bible name for them—Makom—a place—still clings in the form of Mukam, to many a rounded summit over the Holy Land; a small domed, white-washed building on it, supposed to be the tomb of some saint, being still the holy place of the poor Fellah, where he can leave his simple plough or anything else, in perfect safety, no one daring to steal from a spot so holy. The worship of sacred groves and trees was general, and, indeed, still continues, for even at present the peasants have processions to such sacred objects, and offer sacrifices under them, though in name Mahomedans.

The country looked, in Christ’s day, in all probability much as now. The whole land consists of rounded limestone hills, fretted into countless stony valleys, offering but rarely level

¹ Luke iv. 16.
tracts, of which Esdraelon alone, below Nazareth, is large enough to be seen on the map. The original woods had for ages disappeared, though the slopes were dotted, as now, with figs, olives, and other fruit trees, where there was any soil. Permanent streams were even then unknown; the passing rush of winter torrents being all that was seen among the hills. The autumn and spring rains, caught in deep cisterns hewn out like huge underground jars in the soft limestone, with artificial mud-banked ponds, still found near all villages, furnished water. Hills now bare, or at best rough with stunted growths, were then terraced so as to grow vines, olives, or grain. To-day almost desolate, the country then teemed with population. Wine presses cut in the rocks, endless terraces, and the ruins of old vineyard-towers, are now found amidst solitudes overgrown for ages with thorns and thistles, or with wild shrubs and poor gnarled scrub.

The houses of Christ's time appear to have been mostly of sun-dried mud brick, as most in Palestine are even now, for Joshua was able to reduce towns to a heap of ruins in a single day. Joab, moreover, speaks of drawing a city with ropes into the river; and Samson pulled down a whole building by dragging from under it two central pillars. Windowless, one-roomed, mud-walled huts, so dark that the woman who had lost the piece of silver needed to light a candle by day to search for
A SHORT LIFE OF CHRIST.

her missing treasure, were apparently the rule, though in some parts, as now, rough stone huts were to be found.

The peasant was busy with his strip of stony soil more or less round the year. After the autumn rains, which softened the ground baked by the glowing summer, ploughing began; but the implement even now used is so light that a boy could carry it on his shoulder. Indeed, I have seen a man carrying two. The soil having been scratched a few inches deep, was then sown. Large clods were broken by a mattock, but there were no harrows. Weeds and thistles grew in too many places, beside, or even amidst, the ploughed patches of different owners, which stretched, side by side, with only stones, as landmarks, to show their bounds. In spring, refreshing rains began to fill out the grain; showers, however, having now and then fallen from autumn to spring; varied, at times, by violent rain storms.

By the time of the Passover, in the middle of April, the first ripe sheaf of barley could be gathered, and the wheat followed a month later; but the harvest in the mountains was much later than on the low hills and sea-coast plains to the west, or in the sunken valley of the Jordan. Fruit was ripe from September onwards—including almonds, pomegranates, figs, and olives. Melons and cucumbers, lentils, vetches, millet, and much else, grew wherever there was water; but in no case must we think of the landscape as like that of England. Stones lie so thick wherever one turns in Palestine, that though the loose walls of orchards and vineyards are built of those cleared from the ground, it seems as if, after all, there were as many as ever left. Indeed, the paths between the vineyards are often half filled up with stones thrown into them from the two sides. What an Englishman would call a "clean field" is not to be seen in all the Holy Land, for weeds and thorns abound where stones are wanting, and almost everywhere but on the sea-coast plains, or that of Esdraelon, loose stones cover the ground.

The stay of Our Lord at Cana seems to have been brief, for such a place was not a good centre from which to begin his
great work. Nor could he make Nazareth his headquarters. It lay secluded among its hills, and, besides, was unfriendly, for a prophet has little honour in his own country. The place chosen for his future home was Capernaum, on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, which lies to the north-west, over the hills, thirteen or fourteen miles from Cana.

This fine sheet of water is about the size of our Lake Windermere, stretching, pear-shaped, about twelve and a half miles north and south, with its greatest breadth at the upper end, where it is about eight miles across. Its main feeder is the river Jordan, which flows into and out of it; but a few strong springs and brooks run into it here and there. The surface of the Mediterranean, thirty miles off in a straight line, is 682 feet above its waters, so that its shores, thus nearly 700 feet below the coast line, are very warm; a girdle of heights and rounded hills on the western side, and high bluffs on the eastern,
making it additionally sultry by shutting out the free sweep of the winds. At the present day the borders of the lake are almost uninhabited; Tiberias, a miserable village, being the only place of any size on them. On the west side the hills, which are only a few hundred feet high, are little tilled. On the east the cliffs stretch along in a table-land worn into deep ravines by the rains of ages. On both sides the hills, except for short distances, come close to the shore, the largest level space on the west being a waste but fertile stretch, two and a half miles long and a mile broad, watered by several fine springs, and once famous as the plain of Gennesaret. A few palms dot the banks, and there is a palm grove at the south-east corner, the last relics of countless trees of the kind which flourished in the time of Christ. Everywhere the landscape is so wild and uncultivated that the few spots brought under the light plough, on the slopes and in the little valleys, are not noticed till one comes on them. Even Gennesaret is covered with thorns and thistles, though in Christ's day it was the garden of the Holy Land. Various large towns then dotted the west shore: Tiberias, the capital, built in Our Lord's childhood by Herod Antipas, having walls three miles in their sweep, and a great palace and citadel. The hills as well as the plain were then everywhere richly cultivated, and there was a large fishing trade at different points, giving employment to thousands, though now there are only two or three boats on the waters.

Where Capernaum lay is disputed. Tel Hûm, a few miles from the head of the lake on the north-west bend, has been thought by many to be the site. The hills recede some distance from the shore, leaving a level space still covered with ruins, of which the most striking are the remains of a synagogue with carved lintels and door posts: possibly part of that which was built by the centurion mentioned in the Gospels. The white limestone of the district has, in this part, been buried, in past ages, under an outflow of black lava from neighbouring volcanoes long ago extinct, and of this the ruins chiefly consist;
the stones of the synagogue forming a striking exception. It could never have been a large place if this were its site, and indeed it is described, almost in Christ's day, as a village.

Some, however, think that Capernaum lay three or four miles farther south, just below the spot thought to be the site of Bethsaida, at a place now called Tel Minieh. There is a delightful bay of land, with a low hill on its north over a bright pool, fringed with Syrian papyrus; a meadow running back from it; the camping ground to this day of pilgrims and chance travellers coming from the north. The surface is dotted with mounds from which the peasants still dig out everywhere great squared stones for building, or to burn as
lime. Capernaum may, therefore, lie underneath the green mantle around, especially as the Roman road to Damascus came down to the lake at this point, while the low rocky heights closing in on the lake would readily mark the boundary between the dominions of Herod Antipas and his brother Philip, which was at Capernaum. If this be the place, Our Lord must often have wandered along the road northward, across the meadow streamlet, and he must have taken the narrow path hewn in the crag over the water, when he went towards the head of the lake, for it is still the only one in that direction.

Capernaum was then a thriving village, for the road from the north brought travellers, and the lake yielded great quantities of fish. It had a custom house, barracks for a small garrison, and a fine synagogue. The townsmen seem, as a rule, to have been well-to-do, and, indeed, they had the reputation of being given to good living and too copious drinking. That they were immensely proud of their town and expected a great future for it, is implied in the words of Our Lord himself: "And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down into Hades," and assuredly it has done so, for, as we see, even its site is a question.

Here Christ settled, amidst fisher-people, grain and fruit-sellers, and the various classes who gather together in a bustling place of trade. Gennesaret with its fine constant streamlets and rich soil lay close at hand on the south; the grey bluffs of the east rose beyond the waters, and from many points the great snowy top of Hermon flashed in the upper sky to the north, beyond a sea of hills rising ever higher and higher. With no spot is the story of Our Lord more closely connected. Capernaum was the home of the Apostles Peter, John, James, and Andrew. Here the centurion's slave was healed, the daughter of Jairus raised, the mother-in-law of Peter cured of a fever, and Matthew called from the booth.
where he sat to take dues; from a boat pushed out from the shore Christ preached to the crowds, and it was in the waters near that he granted the Apostles the great draught of fishes.\footnote{Luke vii. 1; viii. 41; v. 3, 11.}

The whole neighbourhood, indeed, is sacred to the memory of Our Lord. The vineyards round which the owner planted a hedge, and in which he built a water tower and dug a wine press, stretched along the slopes behind. On these dry but fertile hills the old wine had grown and the new was growing, for which new skin bottles were needed. Lilies more glorious than the robes of Solomon grew in thousands on every hand in

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\caption{Skin Water Bottles.}
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the open ground, and the eye rested, far and near, on the grass which was so soon to be made fuel for the oven. He could not walk into the hills without coming on the thin pastures where the shepherd left the ninety and nine sheep to go after one that was lost. The ravens that have neither storehouse nor barn, daily sailed overhead to the steep cliffs behind Magdala, from which, also, flew forth the hawks, at the shadow of which the hens gathered their chickens under their wings, and the vultures, which gathered wherever the carcase of a dead animal was to be seen. Fig-trees abounded, on any one of which the dresser may have found no fruit for three years,
and the mustard grew here and there into so great a tree that the fowls of the air lodged in its branches. The signs of the weather were read by the townsfolk from the look of the sky round the lake. A murky red to the east, in the morning, was held to predict a storm; and when the sun sank red and glowing in the west, fair weather was expected the next day. A cloud from the sea warned every one that a shower was coming, and when the clouds sailed north, it was held that the day would be hot. Christ would see in the bazaar of the town, or on the street, the travelling merchant who exchanged a heavy load of Babylonian carpet, for one great pearl brought, perhaps, from
Ceylon. Fishermen, publicans, and peasants passed continually. In Tiberias were the courtiers in silk robes, who lived in the palace of Antipas; and he would daily hear the bugle of the little garrison announce the different watches, and the horns blown on the roof of the synagogue to summon to morning and evening prayer.

In this town Christ lived at first, for a short time, with his mother and the few disciples he had gathered; but he soon went off to the Passover at Jerusalem, and appears, on his return, to have stayed with Peter, whose house was on the shore of the lake, with a courtyard before it.¹

¹ Mark i. 29; ii. 2, 4, 13; iv. 1; Matt. xvii. 24.
CHAPTER X.

JOHN had chosen for his home "the terrible wilderness," with its "vipers, and scorpions, and drought"; Jesus made his abode in the district spoken of by his nation as "Paradise." The one had around him only silence and desolation; the other the hum of a busy community. Nothing could better show the difference between the work of the two. Christ was to wear no rough prophet's mantle like John, but the simple dress of other men of a lowly station. He was to lay no stress on fasts and washings, as John did, for he came to all men, irrespective of their race; and while indifferent to the Jewish laws about meats or drink, taught that the one thing required for pleasing God was to be righteous in heart and life.

Our Lord had resolved to go up to Jerusalem to the Passover, when the time came, but meanwhile preached diligently throughout the country, though his words, very strangely, seem not to have been much heeded.¹

In the month of April, on the eve of the 15th of which the Passover was eaten, the bare hills and open plains were decked with wild spring flowers and fresh grass. The roads were crowded for weeks before with pilgrims, droves of sheep and oxen, and traders; for the Holy City was the centre of business as well as religion, at the great feasts. The city itself and the neighbourhood became more and more crowded as the feast approached; the narrow streets and dark arched bazaars showing the same throng of men of all nations as when Jesus

¹ Matt. xi. 20, 24; Luke x. 18, 15.
had first visited Jerusalem as a boy. Even the Temple offered
a strange sight at this season, for in parts of the outer
courts a wide space was covered with pens for sheep, goats,
and cattle, to be used for offerings. Sellers shouted the merits
of their beasts, sheep bleated, oxen lowed. Sellers of doves,
also, had a place set apart for them. Potters offered a choice
from huge stacks of clay dishes and ovens, for roasting and
eating the Passover lamb. Booths for wine, oil, salt, and all
else needed for sacrifices, invited customers. Persons going
to or from the city shortened their journey by crossing the
Temple grounds, often carrying burdens. Stalls to change
foreign money into the shekel of the Temple, which alone
could be paid to the priests, were numerous; the whole con-

fusion making the sanctuary like a noisy market. Indeed the
Passover was the great fair of the year, the priests allowing
these scandals for the sake of the licences and rents. The
high priest himself, moreover, supplied doves to the traders.

Jesus was greatly troubled by all this. Young, unknown,
and a Galilean, he had no authority to interfere, but such
scenes in a place so holy roused his soul. Hastily tying to-
gether some small cords, he commanded the sellers of sheep and
oxen to leave the Temple, and followed them up till they and
their beasts were driven out of the gates. The sellers of doves
were allowed to take their cages away, but they, too, had to
leave. The money changers—a race of cheats—fared worst,
for their tables were overturned and they themselves expelled.
The Temple, for the first time in many years, was really sacred to God.

The priests were, for the moment, paralyzed by such lofty zeal. Strict rules were framed, for they feared that Jesus had the people behind him. For some time there was a great reform, but three years later matters had become as bad as ever. It was soon asked, however, by what authority Our Lord had acted, but nothing could be done against one whose fidelity to the Law had won the admiration of the crowd.

Still the authorities ventured to ask that, as he claimed to act by authority from God, he should show some proof of it.¹ Nor did he refuse an answer, though his reply shows that he already knew the fate brought on himself by witnessing for the truth. He told them that, instead of merely cleansing the Temple, he could, if he chose, destroy it by his word, and presently restore it, and that as a proof of his having this wondrous power, they might, if they chose, destroy the still more sacred temple of his body, and he would raise it up from the dead within three days. It is easy to twist any one's words, and the enemies of Our Lord took care to do so in his case. From this time he was charged with threatening to destroy the Temple, than which no accusation was more fitted to rouse the bitterest fury of the nation. The cry of "the Temple in danger" was enough at all times to kindle the whole race to frenzy, as was shown when the high priests at Our Saviour's trial raised the cry that he had spoken against the Holy Place, and in a moment stirred up the multitude by this means to demand that he should be crucified. Nor was it forgotten when he hung on the cross, or even when the first martyr, St. Stephen, was before his enemies.

After the cleansing of the Temple, a number of miracles wrought by Christ in Jerusalem led many to accept him as a Teacher come from God,² but none of these converts attached themselves closely to him. Nor did he trust himself to them,

¹ John ii. 18.  
² John ii. 23.
for he knew what was in man." We know of very few indeed out of Galilee who at any time connected themselves publicly with Our Lord, and the only apostle from Judea was Judas Iscariot, "the man of Kerioth," a village of Judah. His intimate friends and the most of his disciples were, like himself, from Galilee.

One of the half disciples, now gained in the Holy City, bore the Greek name of Nicodemus, "a ruler," or member of the supreme Church Court, and a strict Pharisee. He was wealthy, moreover, and thus, at once from his position and means, might have been of great use in securing favour and help for Christ, had he been time-servicing or self-seeking. But Our Lord’s perfect sincerity and truthfulness would in no way lower the conditions demanded for admission among his disciples, even to gain such a convert.

Cautious, from his age and position, this dignitary would not come openly to the new Teacher, but stole to him under cover of night, anxious to hear more from one whose discourses had already greatly impressed him. Believing that as a Jew, a Pharisee, and a leader in the Church, he would of course be welcomed into the kingdom of the Messiah when it was set up, he wished simply to learn the duties this would require of him. But Christ saw into his heart. So far from making any attempt to win him, his whole ideas were upset by the first words of Our Lord. He must be "born again," if he would even "see the kingdom of God." "Born again," said Nicodemus, amazed, "what do you mean?" "By nature all men are sinful," replied Jesus, "and unfit for God’s Kingdom. A great change must take place in them before they can enter it: a change wrought by the Spirit of God, and that I call a new birth." "How can these things be?" asked Nicodemus, still more amazed. He was the great Rabbi of the Sanhedrim, and, as such, Jesus asked him: "Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things?" I see that you cannot grasp

1 Josh. xv. 25. 2 John iii 1; xii. 42. 3 John iii. 3, 10, 1:V.
my meaning, though this is the first and simplest fact in true religion. How then will you understand or believe if I tell you still higher truths respecting the Divine plan for the salvation of man? He then went on to state in the simplest terms the condition of favour with God, closing with the startling declaration that eternal life could only be had by believing on him.

It must have been hard, indeed, for Nicodemus to understand such teaching. Though only a young man, a Galilean, and not taught in the school of any Rabbi, Jesus bore himself as altogether his superior. Indeed, setting aside even Moses, he took his place as a teacher of higher dignity. Poor and friendless, he proclaimed himself the Son of man or "Messiah," and spoke with authority respecting matters that could only be revealed by God.

The stay of Christ in Jerusalem was short, for he left when the crowds of Passover pilgrims were gone, setting out with his disciples on his first missionary journey. The district thus favoured embraced all Judea, as if the country nearest the Temple should first hear of the new Kingdom of Heaven. He would thus be led southwards, to Hebron and the hilltowns of the south, a region of grey, dry hills, sinking to the Dead Sea on the east, the Philistine plain on the west, and Beersheba on the south. It is abandoned, at this day, to scattered flocks of sheep or goats, chiefly owned by poor Arabs, who roam with their wretched black tents, over the district, which appears to the traveller too sun-scorched to give pasture for anything. Round Hebron, indeed, there is a pleasant valley, still famous for its vineyards and olive groves, but even there the soil is more stone than earth.

Yet in this grey and melancholy waste of shapeless hills the ruins of a great many places of varied size are found, with cisterns cut in the rocks, remains of stone walls formerly damming back and saving the winter torrents in the ravines, long lines

1 Acts x. 37.
of stone heaps reaching along the slopes and once used to train vines, and there are even parts of many aqueducts through which water was led hither or thither. Clearly, therefore, in Christ's day southern Judea was very different from what it is now, for even at the desolate wells of Beersheba, beyond the hills and on the edge of the desert, there was then a busy population and a Roman military post. What with Bethlehem and Hebron, and the numerous small hill-towns and villages, there would be thus abundant opportunity for preaching the new gospel. Over this dry and glowing land the Redeemer and his disciples hasted from town to town, and from shepherd village to village, often, we may be sure, glad of a cup of cold water as they toiled on in the glare of the Eastern sun. How long the tour lasted is not known, but it must have occupied some months, for he stayed from time to time at different points, he teaching, and his disciples baptizing the converts gained.

Christ's preaching at this time was no doubt the same as in his early ministry in Galilee,—"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The time had not yet come for openly proclaiming himself the Messiah, though he acted as such from the first. Caution was needed to prevent alarming the authorities. Meanwhile, John was still free, and drew large multitudes to him at Enon. But though himself absolutely self-forgetful, his followers were not so humble. Nothing was dearer to the Jews than disputing on some religious question; their synagogues being the scene of such controversies at every service. Hence it was natural that some of those who had followed John should challenge the different teaching of Our Lord, and this, accordingly we find done, about this time, in respect to baptism. That John baptized and Christ did not, seemed strange, while it almost appeared as if they were opposed to each other, since our Lord was attracting greater numbers than the Baptist. John, however, gently told them he

1 Matt. x. 42. 2 John iii. 26.
expected that, now the Christ had come forward, he himself should lose popularity. He was, said he, only a voice proclaiming Our Lord as the great Messiah. He was the heavenly bridegroom, the Kingdom of God was the bride, and himself only the friend who led her to him. Incapable of any feeling but devout homage towards Jesus, he seized the opportunity to announce afresh that every one must accept Our Lord as the Messiah.
CHAPTER XI.

Jesus had now remained in Judea about nine months, from the Passover in April to the sowing-time at the close of the year; but though his popularity grew daily greater, and his fame spread even to Galilee, the good done was so small that to the Baptist it seemed as if he had gained no disciples at all. The bigoted southern people might listen, but they were too self-righteous to follow a teacher who laid no stress on forms and rites, but taught that all men alike needed repentance and a new life. It was time, therefore, to return to the north.

To avoid going through Samaritan territory, most travellers from Judea to Galilee went down to Jericho, and thence up the eastern side of the Jordan, to the fords at Beisan, from which the ascent to the plain of Esdraelon was short and easy. Our Lord, however, chose to take the direct road, north from Jerusalem.

Leaving the Holy City by the Damascus gate, through which, years later, he was to pass on his way to the Cross, Our Lord's journey lay, first, through the great cemetery, where he afterwards found a tomb. It consists entirely of rock-hewn chambers, larger or smaller, for there is no soil in which to dig graves. There are no hills, but the rock crops out in low ridges on all sides, and are honeycombed with ancient burial places. At a short distance, however, on both sides, hills rise, grey and barren, with rounded tops, seamed in every direction by shallow clefts, like brain coral;

1 John iv. 35. 2 John iii. 32; iv. 45.
giving foothold to thin lines of brown thorny shrubs and rank weeds and grass, from which goats and sheep manage to pick a scanty living. The long ascent of Neby Samwil—the birthplace of Samuel—and the highest summit in Judea, comes in sight very soon, and remains the chief object in the landscape till the wayfarer is far to the north. In Christ's day terraces along the sides of the hills redeemed the view from the desolation it now offers; but it is not till the ancient territory of Benjamin has been crossed, and the hills of Ephraim are reached, that the eye rests on anything like fertility. The population is very scanty, but the slopes are beautiful with olive groves and fig trees, with green pastures intervening. Our Lord would not, perhaps, go through Bethel, for it lies to the right of the road, but he would see the hill of Gibeah, with its limestone beds jutting out, step over step, like great walls, the flat top of each green with fruit trees or grain, and the poor mud village above. He would cross the stony waste over which the Canaanite chiefs leagued against Joshua fled, down the pass of Bethhoron, to the sea plain. At the steps of Akrabbim, or the "Scorpions," Christ would pass into Samaritan territory, after toiling up long, rough, natural steps of rock, like a huge stair, infested by countless scorpions in the hot months. Once at the top, the territory of Samaria was before him, while high in the distance the snowy top of Mount Hermon glittered like a great white cloud, the most splendid feature in the landscapes of Palestine, and always in view from Akrabbim, north.

Samaria is a much richer country than Judea. The green rounded hills are dotted with olive and walnut trees, while in the hollows, fruit trees of many kinds alternate with patches of corn or grass, for springs are much more plentiful than in the south, and spread fertility far and near. Yet the homes of the peasants were very wretched then as now. Poor mud villages were around Christ as they still are round the traveller, though the roads now so desolate were then full of people. He would
soon find himself in the large and fertile plain of Mukhna, running north and south, and opening on its west side into a little valley in which lay Shechem, under the shadow of Mount Gerizim, and opposite the barer height of Mount Ebal. Jews were not very safe in these parts in Christ's day; they and the Samaritans being bitter enemies, but the Roman garrison at Samaria, with its different outposts, in a measure preserved the public peace. Mukhna, shut in on each side by hills, rises and falls in soft waves, some crowned by villages famous in Bible story, while patches of grain, lentils, or other growths, stretch in delightful succession on every hand for miles together. It is, indeed, one of the richest parts of the Holy Land, and the wide sea of grain, as our Lord looked over it from his seat at Jacob's well, naturally raised thoughts of the great harvest of spiritual good that called for his labour and that of his followers.¹

Shechem lies about a mile and a half up the side valley, on its southern slope, under the shadow of Mount Gerizim, which towers over 1,100 feet above it, while, on the north, with only a narrow bay of green between, is Mount Ebal, a little over a hundred feet higher. Under this mountain a fine brook runs eastwards, down the valley, towards the Dead Sea, but other brooks run out of Nablûs to the west, that is, to the Mediterranean; a slight rise of ground making this spot the watershed of the district, as, indeed, its old name, Shechem—"a shoulder"—implies. Abundant water, in Christ's day, empowered the town in gardens and orchards, as it does still. Behind the climbing flat-roofed houses the steep slope of Gerizim is crowded far up with fruit trees, and still above them, terraces, built on every available spot, wave with grain. Where too steep for culture, the rocks are covered with bushes and scrub, so that waving green looks out from every angle. On the other side of the little valley, the grey walls of Ebal are terraced with gardens of the cactus known as the prickly pear, grown

¹ John iv. 35.
for its fruit, which is eaten by the poor. There is little culture at this time in the valley itself, but it may have been very different in the days of Our Lord.

Close under Gerizim, at the mouth of the valley, there was then, as there is still, a well famous as that dug by the patriarch Jacob, to avoid disputes with his neighbours; for nothing raises more strife in the East than the right to use wells or

![Jacob's Well](image)

brooks. The wall enclosing the mouth served in Christ's time as a seat for the weary traveller; if, indeed, there were not some pillared structure over it to give shade. At present the ruins of an ancient church form a low mound round the well, the covering stone of which lies four or five feet down through a heap of rubbish. The shaft is still seventy-five feet deep, but it rarely has any water in it. The large stone over the well
mouth has an opening for water jars in the centre. Fifty years ago the depth below was more than a hundred feet, but as every visitor hurls down stones to listen for their rebound, it is rapidly filling up.

Tired with his long walk, and by the heat, though it was only six in the morning, our Lord gladly turned aside from the path to Shechem, down the short slope leading to the well, and seated himself in the shade of the trees which we may suppose grew around, or of the arch at the well's mouth, while his disciples went a mile and a half up the valley to the town, to buy bread and fruit for the morning's meal. While he thus rested a Samaritan woman from Sychar, a village at the foot of Ebal, just outside the valley, now very poor and wretched, came up with a water jar on her head and a long cord in her hand with which to let the jar down the well. No one in the East thinks of refusing a draught of water, and Jesus, when she had drawn some, craved this favour. His dress or dialect showing he was a Jew, the woman was amazed that she, a Samaritan, should be addressed by one of his race, no Jew deigning to speak to one of her nation, and especially wondering that he should ask to drink from her jar, which a Jew would think enough to defile him.

Nothing, indeed, could exceed the bitterness between the two peoples. The Jews denounced the Samaritans as descendants of the heathen settlers brought to the Holy Land by the kings of Assyria, after the Ten Tribes had been carried into captivity, and had refused with insult their proposal, made soon after the return from Babylon, to unite with them as one people. In the end, a temple had been built on the top of Gerizim, to rival that of Jerusalem, but it had been razed to the ground by a Jewish king more than a hundred years before Christ's birth; the city of Samaria, also,

1 John uses the Roman time here, for women do not come to the well except at morning and evening. The Romans counted from midnight. The Jews from six in the evening and six in the morning.
having then been utterly destroyed. So intensely was the very name Samaritan hated at Jerusalem, from this long standing feud, that it was quite a matter of course that his enemies in Jerusalem, when, on one occasion they declared him to be a Samaritan, added that, as such, he necessarily had a devil.¹

Nor was the hatred less bitter on the other side. The Samaritans, time after time, had thrown the feasts into confusion in the Holy City, by kindling false lights on the hills at the new moon, and in the early youth of Our Lord they had even defiled the Temple itself, by strewing human bones in it, at the Passover, so that the feast could not be held, though myriads of pilgrims had come up to attend it.

¹ John viii. 48.
Towards all but the Jews, however, the Samaritans were very friendly, so that both Herod and the Romans found their country much more pleasant than Judea. Both races were equally zealous adherents of the Law of Moses, but the Samaritans recognised only the five Books in which it was contained, as inspired, and held that Gerizim, not Mount Moriah, had been selected by God for the Temple. They believed also that the Ark had rested on it after the flood, that Abraham offered Isaac upon it, and that Jacob had seen from its top the ladder that reached into heaven. They expected that the Messiah, when he came, would first appear on its sacred height, towards which every Samaritan turned his face when he prayed, as to the special seat of Jehovah, as the Jew turned towards the Temple at Jerusalem, from a similar belief with regard to Mount Moriah.

The answer of Our Lord to the woman at once roused her interest. She was coming to draw water from a well which gave only the draining of the surface rains, compared to which "living water," that is, the water of a flowing stream, was much superior. Taking advantage of this contrast, Christ told her that if she had asked him for it, he would have given her "living water" instead of that of a well. He meant, of course, spiritual instruction; but, like Nicodemus, she took his words literally. "Why, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Whence then can you give me this living water?" He surely did not think himself greater than Jacob, whom the Samaritans proudly called their father. The well was good enough for him, and yet Christ spoke as if he knew of better. Step by step the great Teacher led her from lower to higher things, speaking of water which gave everlasting life, and satisfied the soul for ever. In answer to her request for some of this miraculous water he told her to "call her husband," and, on her saying she had none, told her he knew her story: that she had had five husbands, and that she was now living with a man to whom she was not married.
She could only stammer out—"Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." Then, collecting herself, and wishing perhaps to turn the conversation, she added, looking towards the sacred mountain,—"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." "Believe me," replied Christ, "the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship him but do not know him, having cut yourselves off from his people and rejecting the words of the Prophets. The Jews,

![Image: The Woman at Jacob's Well.](image)

instructed by the Scriptures, know all that God has made known respecting himself, and are thus sure that the Messiah must come from them. But a great change is near. The hour approaches, and indeed has already come, when all true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for such alone the Father seeks. The claims of your mountain, or of that on which the Jewish Temple is built, are of no moment, and all the rites and ceremonies on which you and they lay so much stress are small matters; henceforth the worship pleasing to God is that of the sincere heart, and can
be offered anywhere over the world." Such words, in such
an age, from one born a Jew, showed Our Lord to be, indeed,
the Saviour of the world, for they founded a universal religion
and addressed all mankind as the family of a common Heavenly
Father. Feeling quite at a loss to understand them, the
simple-minded woman could only say that she thought it would
be well to put off such deep matters till the Messiah came, and
then he would "tell us all things." So widely spread was
the expectation of a heaven-sent deliverer. "You need not
wait," answered Our Lord, "I that speak unto thee am he."
Thus the first open declaration of himself as the Messiah was
made to a lowly Samaritan woman, as the first announcement
of his birth had been made to simple shepherds.

Meanwhile, the disciples returning from Shechem, to their
astonishment found Jesus talking to a woman, at the well,
although it was held unbecoming for any man, far less a Rabbi
like Christ, to speak to one of the other sex, unless she were
his wife or one of his own household. Nothing was said, how-
ever, though the lesson must have sunk into their hearts, for
Christ thus taught the world a higher respect for woman, and
raised her from the inferior position she had till now held, to
be the companion and social equal of man.

On the arrival of his followers, the Samaritan, unwilling, we
may suppose, to stand the gaze of a number of men, and per-
haps ashamed to have been talking unveiled with a man,
hurried off to Sychar with her jar and rope. The modest food
got at Shechem was then produced, but the disciples could not
induce Jesus to taste it. His heart was too full of higher
matters to let him think of hunger. "I have meat to eat,"
said he, "that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of
him that sent me, and to finish his work." Mistaking his
meaning, they fancied that some one had given him food, but,
looking over the wide plain outside, where the peasants were
scattering the seed to be reaped four months hence, and catch-
ing sight, it may be, of a number of people coming from Sychar,
led by the woman, he went on: "You say, after four months the harvest will come. But the human beings around are the noblest harvest, and one that can be reaped now, for their souls, like autumn fields, are already white for my Father's garner. What a reward for you, my disciples, who are to be the reapers! The sickle gathers fruit that perishes; your preaching will gather fruit to life eternal. You and I, the Sower and the reapers, may well rejoice together! I prepare the ground; you go forth to gather the sheaves."

The villagers who returned with the woman proved very different from the self-righteous people of Judea, who had thought themselves much too good to need any teaching from Christ. On their simpler natures his words fell like seed on good ground, making such an impression that, at their request, he stayed two days with them, to give them fuller instruction. That he did so was another proof of the difference between him and the teachers of his day, for no Jewish Rabbi would have condescended even to speak to a Samaritan. Christ, moreover, did not for a moment hint at their needing to accept the Jewish religion, as any Rabbi would have held essential. It was the first time salvation had ever been proclaimed by a Jew for any but his own people, or those who became Jews.
CHAPTER XII.

AFTER staying two days at Shechem or Sychar, Christ went on northwards, towards Galilee. The road took him to the city of Samaria, or, rather, round the hill on which it stood. It lay six or seven miles to the north-west, over a broad ridge, barren for the district, in the centre of a charming valley, shut in by green, round-topped hills; itself standing on a grassy hill, chosen by Omri as the site of his capital. Excepting a few mud houses on one end, where the road stretches up to the flat top, the place is now absolutely desolate, though the ruins from the days of Herod the Great, and the wreck of a grand church built by the Crusaders, tell of its past splendour.

When Christ passed, however, the city was in its glory, for Herod had almost rebuilt it. A temple, dedicated to Augustus, the emperor, as a god, rose on the level crown of the hill; its pillars, which still remain, showing how noble it must then have been. A great wall encircling the hill, with huge strongholds at its gates, commanded the admiration of all. A long double line of marble columns lined a grand promenade and chariot drive round the hill; many of the pillars still attesting its magnificence, and there were, moreover, in the city, fine public baths, a theatre, and triumphal arches. We do not read, however, that Christ went into Samaria. Following the road at the foot of the hill, he would cross the plain, and pass, by a slow ascent, northwards, to Engannim, on the great plain of Esdraelon, whence the white houses of Nazareth shone from their hill nearly twenty miles off, to the north-west.
But he did not purpose going, at this time, to that village. Crossing the hills beside it, he went on to Cana, where, perhaps, Mary still lived. His fame had already spread widely in Galilee, through the reports of pilgrims returning from the Passover. Thus, even though the people of Judea had rejected him, his work among them had prepared for his popularity in the north.

It soon became known at Capernaum, about seventeen miles off, on the lake of Tiberias, that he had come back to Galilee, after an absence of nine or ten months. The wonderful miracles he had wrought in the south were discussed, alike in the cottage and the mansion. Among others, an official in the palace of Herod Antipas, at Tiberias, who had a house at Capernaum, had heard of the amazing cures he had effected at Jerusalem, and having an only son ill of fever, resolved to ask the miraculous aid which had done so much elsewhere. To prevent any mistake he went himself to Christ, at Cana, and on arriving besought him to come down quickly, and heal his child, who was at the point of death. The excessive heat on the lake still causes much fever at some seasons, as in this case, and in that of the mother-in-law of Peter at another time.

The poor man's bearing showed that he had come to Our Lord only by the report of his miracles, and knew nothing of his teaching. "How is it," said Christ, therefore, "that you believe only in the signs and wonders I do? Why do you not receive the truth I preach, and think of me as the healer of souls, rather than only as the healer of the body?" But the poor man was in too great trouble to think of anything but his dying boy. "Sir," cried he, "come down before my child die." He fancied Christ would need to go to Capernaum with him, and perhaps touch the sufferer, to effect a cure, but a proof was to be given that distance made no difference to the Saviour. "Go thy way: thy son liveth," said Christ. It was enough, for he could not doubt that Jesus had the power he claimed. His look and voice gave full assurance, and so,
no doubt with grateful thanks, he turned his steps once more homewards, believing his son was cured.

It being now afternoon, however, it was impossible to get back that night, by the slow travel of the East, and he had therefore to rest on the way. Next morning he was once more on the road, but ere long some of his slaves came to meet him, with the news that his boy was getting better. "When did the turn come?" asked the rejoicing father. "Yesterday, about one o'clock the fever left him." That was the very time when Jesus told him that his child would live. What could he do but accept such an one as what he claimed to be—the Messiah; nor is it strange to read that when his household heard the facts they believed also?¹

Nothing is told respecting the next months of Our Lord's life. John was now in prison; the priests and Rabbis having roused the fear of Herod Antipas against him, by hinting that he aimed at revolution. It was perhaps necessary, therefore, that Our Lord should for a time give up preaching. His mother and family had returned to Nazareth,² and he probably went to her. Meanwhile the disciples returned to their callings, and the work of Christ was suspended. The whole country was disturbed by what had befallen John, and by a fierce struggle that had taken place in the Temple enclosure itself, between the Roman soldiers of Fort Antonia, on its north-west corner, and some Galileans who had gone up to the Feast of Tabernacles. Always brave, these hardy mountaineers had resisted so vigorously that the legionaries pressed forward into the very courts of the Temple, and hewed down their opponents beside the great altar, mingling their blood with that of the slain beasts, and thus polluting the sacred place.³ The public excitement at such an incident was intense.

After a time, however, Christ once more began his work. The universal lamentation over the sad fate of John was, indeed, in itself a loud call on him to carry out the great

mission of which John had been the Forerunner. Passing over, therefore, to Capernaum, he made it from this time "his own city," going out from it to the districts round, at first apparently alone. We have no report of his discourses in these journeys, but the gospels throughout show what must have been their tenor. The Baptist had earnestly upheld the teaching of the Rabbis, but Jesus said nothing about this, preaching instead, that only a new life could admit any one into the Kingdom of God he was establishing. Every one was summoned to repent, and none were shut out as hopeless.

It was necessary, however, that he should have help in this great work, and the small band who had followed him on the Jordan were naturally first sought out again for this end. Like other Orientals, Jesus rose early, and on the morning of his winning back his humble friends, had gone out to the lake shore, close at hand. The people round were already abroad, and thronged him in the hope that he would discourse to them, as was his habit. Unable to address such a crowd from the beach, he took advantage of some boats drawn up on the shore, and made the prow of one of them his pulpit—the fishermen having left them, and being busy on the water's edge, washing and mending their nets after a fruitless night's labour. Of two boats lying together the one proved to be that of his disciples, Peter and Andrew; the other that of James and John, and it was Peter's boat he had chosen. Causing it to be pushed out a few yards from the land, to give him open space, he sat down, as was usual with Rabbis among the Jews, and spoke to those gathered on the white beach. The rippling waters playing round the boat; the houses, palms, vineyards, and gardens, the eager listeners, with their varied and picturesque Eastern dress; the wondrous Preacher; the delicious cool of morning, and over all the cloudless Syrian sky, must have made the scene striking in the extreme.

The discourses of the Rabbis were always short, and so, no

1 Luke v. 1-11; Matt. iv. 18-22; Mark i. 16-20. 2 Matt. xxiii. 2.
doubt, was that of Our Lord. Perhaps he told them some parable, for this form of teaching was in great favour among the Jews; possibly he gave them some pointed exhortation, illustrated from the familiar scenes around. The people were, therefore, soon dismissed, and scattered, Jewish fashion, in groups, to discuss what they had heard. Meanwhile, Peter and Christ's other old friends had gathered round. The empty boat told the story of the night's useless toil, but it was soon to be filled. Directing Peter to push off into the deep water, and let down the net, it was done at once, though the toil of the weary night—the best time for fishing—had been without success. Now, however, it was very different. The lake has always been noted for its abundance of fish; the quantity, in the present day, showing this very strikingly. An acre of the surface is sometimes covered with a shoal, their back fins, as they rise above the water, roughening it till it looks as if beaten by heavy rain. Some such shoal the apostles met that morning, for no sooner had the net been thrown out than Peter and Andrew had to call James and John, their partners, to row to them quickly, to save it from breaking, and the two boats were in the end laden down till they were like to sink.

Peter, always easily moved, could not be silent under circumstances so striking to a fisherman. Half afraid of a Being who could work such a wonder, he fell down at Christ's feet, and could only say "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But Jesus had a high purpose in his bounty, for he meant it to lead them to attach themselves to him henceforth. "Fear not," said he; "come after me; from henceforth I will make you fishers of men." It was enough. From that moment the four became his devoted followers. The few arrangements needed were soon made, and from this time they threw in their lot with Christ, becoming his constant companions and devoted followers till his death. That they thus gave up their little all for his sake showed their fitness to be his chosen friends.
Henceforth our Lord appears to have lived in the house of Peter while in Capernaum, the household consisting of the Apostle, his wife and her mother, Andrew, his brother, and Jesus, the divine guest. It must have been a pleasant home,
lying as it did on the lake with its blue waters, its wall of
cliffs on the eastern side, seamed with gullies cut by winter
torrents, and varying its tints in the changing light, beyond a
sweep of wave-like plain and meadow, running back to it. The
wide green marsh at the head of the lake, where the Jordan
enters it, was only three or four miles off to the north, and the
soft hills to the west and north served as a foil to higher and
higher mountains behind, closing in the far distance with
the snowy heights of Lebanon. Nor was the town itself other
than attractive, with its three or four thousand inhabitants;
its picturesque town wall with fortified gates; its whitewashed
flat-roofed houses of black basalt; its great synagogue; its
barracks and castle—all intermingled with the verdure of
palms, figs, olives, and gardens; the houses running down to
the shore, and up to the low slopes near at hand behind.

It appears to have been on a Friday that Jesus summoned
Peter and his companions. As the sun set, the beginning of
the Sabbath was announced by three blasts of a horn from the
roof of the synagogue; the peasants at the sound ceasing their
toil in the fields and vineyards, the townsfolk closing their
business for the week, and every household kindling its Sabbath
light. Jesus did not go that night to Peter's house, but withdrew
to the hills, spending the hours till morning in devotion.
Now, at last, he was finally giving himself, without reserve,
to the great work for which he had come into the world, and
nothing could so prepare him for it as communion with his
Father, who had sent him.

The morning prayer in the synagogue began at nine, and as
the news had spread of the great miracle worker being in the
town, there was a large congregation. Women came to their
own gallery, by back streets, as required of them; men gathered
in great numbers, moving with slow Sabbath steps. The
elders had taken their places, the Reader recited the eighteen
prayers, broken by the Amens of the people; the first lesson
for the day had been read, all rising and turning reverently
towards the shrine where the Law was kept; prayers had been finished, the congregation repeating the words, and the first part of the service had closed with the second lesson.

A short address from a Rabbi, or some one regarded as equally worthy to speak, came next. The Reader forthwith called on Jesus, who was present, to take this part. What he said is not told, but its freshness, compared with the addresses of the Rabbis, had a charm for all. Wire-drawn, hair-splitting discussions, or some trifle of no importance, backed by texts twisted into the most fanciful applications, and hedged by appeals to the opinion of some noted Rabbi, left the hearers only husks for food. Instead of this, the words of Christ were weighty and living; addressed to the heart, and dealing with high religious and moral duties, and he spoke, moreover, as claiming authority of his own. "New Teaching," said his hearers to each other, "and with authority, not like the Rabbis."

But if they were struck by his teaching they were still more so by what followed. Among those present in the synagogue was an unhappy man,¹ the victim of a calamity which we cannot now understand — "possessed by a spirit of an unclean devil"— that is, a spirit that drove him to haunt burial places, and other spots specially unclean in the eyes of Jews. The service had apparently gone on quietly till Jesus began to speak, but he had no sooner done so than the poor man rose from the ground, where he had, like the rest, been sitting, and with a wild howl that must have curdled the blood of all present, yelled out, "Ha! what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee whom thou art; the Holy One of God." Among the crowd Jesus alone remained calm. "Hold thy peace," said he indignantly, "and come out of him," for he would have no honour from such a source. The demon felt its master, but, demon to the last, threw the man down in the midst of the congregation, tearing him as it did so, and then, with a wild shriek, fled out of him.

¹ Mark i. 22-26; Luke iv. 32-36.
Service over, he left with his four disciples for Peter's house, but only to find that the mother-in-law of his host lay ill of the local fever. Going, forthwith, into the chamber, and bending over the sick woman, he rebuked her disease, raised her by
the hand, doubtless with words and looks that made her his for ever. The fever was gone, and she was forthwith able to prepare the forenoon meal for the household.

The Sabbath would not be over yet for some hours, and till it was past, rest was secured for all. As soon, however, as the synagogue horn announced that the stars were beginning to shine out and that the Sabbath was ended, the people began to gather from all the town, and even from the country round, bringing the sick to the great healer; it being now lawful to do so, as the week-day had commenced. Once and again, when I was in Palestine, the hope that my companion or myself might be a doctor, crowded the door of our tent in the evening with the afflicted, and the excitement would be, of course, immeasurably more with Christ, of whose miracles every one had now heard. Fevers, convulsions, asthma, wasting consumption, dropsy, palsy, the deaf, the dumb, the brain-affected, and "many that were possessed with devils," that last worst symptom of the misery and confusion of the times, were brought, crowding, towards the house.¹

The sight of so much misery brought Jesus at once into the throng. With a command, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him," a poor demoniac was presently in his right mind. The helpless lame stood up at the words, "I say unto thee, arise." The paralytic left his couch at the sound of, "Take up thy bed and walk."

To some he had a word of comfort that dispelled alarm, and drove away its secret cause. "Be it unto thee according to thy faith." "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmities." "Be of good cheer, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee," was enough to turn sorrow and pain into joy and health. No wonder that the evangelist saw in such a spectacle the fulfilment of the words of the prophet. "Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

The night which followed brought our Lord no repose. He

knew that the multitude sought him more from wonder, or
curiosity, or desire for some benefit to their own health or that
of their friends, than from eagerness to learn the ways of God.
The excitement disturbed him. Rising therefore long before
daybreak, he made his way, once more, to the hills, where all
was still, and refreshed his spirit by long devotion and silent
meditation. Peter and Andrew noting in the morning his
absence, but little able to enter into his frame of mind, were
at a loss to imagine why he should have left. Hasting to the
uplands, however, as the most likely place to find him, they at
last did so. Crowds had already begun to gather round the
house before they left; would he not return and teach and heal
them? But he had higher duties than they knew. "I have
not come to heal the sick," said he, "but to announce and
spread the new Kingdom of God. Let us therefore go to the
neighbouring towns, for I must preach to them also, as well as
to Capernaum." Nor would he return till some of the people
had found him out and joined with his disciples in praying
him to do so.
CHAPTER XIII.

The missionary journey now begun was the first of a number, in which Jesus visited every part of Galilee,\(^1\) preaching and teaching in the synagogues or in the open air. The country, though very hilly, and now almost desolate, was in those days thickly peopled. Ruins of ancient villages and towns lie among weeds and thorns, at short intervals, over the whole land, while the remains of fine synagogues, everywhere, show the zeal for the Law once felt by the Galileans. In striking contrast to the hills of Judea, and to a far greater degree than even those of Samaria, the green slopes and valleys sparkle with copious streams, never dry. Jesus now went north along the shore of Lake Huleh—the ancient Merom, which lies cradled among the hills in a charming plain, covered at its upper end by miles of tall reed-beds, amidst which Herod was wont to hunt the wild boar in his young days. The people were mainly descendants of members of the Ten Tribes who had wandered back from Assyria after its fall, and settled here, in the north, rather than in their former country, Samaria, to keep aloof from the mixed race, more than half heathen, that now occupied the land of their fathers. The prophets had foretold the return of the Ten Tribes, and the population of Galilee was the fulfilment of their predictions.

A single incident of this journey is recorded at some length. In one of the towns he visited, a man “full of leprosy” suddenly came up to him. This fell disease, still common in Palestine, is specially terrible from the painful and loathsome

\(^1\) Luke iv. 43; Mark i. 39.
sufferings it causes, and also from the fact that a leper is cut off from mingling with his fellow men. Groups of these unfortunates may still be seen, crouched at the wall below the Jaffa gate of Jerusalem; a tin dish lying before them to receive chance alms, which can be thrown into it from a distance. Others may be found begging at the little stone arch over the dry bed of the Kedron, in the valley of Jehoshaphat, close to Gethsemane. There is a leper hospital also in the city, affording a grateful retreat to not a few, but still leprosy is only too common over all the land. It begins with specks on the eyelids and on the palms, gradually spreading over the body, bleaching the hair white wherever they appear, crusting the affected parts with white scales, and causing terrible sores and swellings. From the skin the disease eats inwards to the bones, rotting the whole body piecemeal. The Jews held it as "the stroke of God," and kept aloof from it from fear of defilement, for it does not seem to be really infectious, and hence lepers were allowed to sit in a place of their own in the synagogues. Indeed, I recently saw a young man among crowds of visitors at the Museum at Christiania, with his face one mass of the white scales of leprosy, and he would certainly have been kept apart had the disease been catching. The worst feature is that it descends to the fourth generation. In Christ's day no leper could live in a walled town, though he might in an open village. But, wherever he was, he was required to have his outer garment rent, as a sign of deep grief, to go bareheaded, and to cover his beard with his mantle, as if in lamentation at his own virtual death. He had further to warn passers-by to keep away from him, by calling out "Unclean, unclean"; nor could he speak to any one, or receive or return a salutation, since, in the East, this involves an embrace.

The news of the wonderful cures wrought by Christ had reached the unhappy man who now made his way to the Healer, breaking the Law to do so. Falling at his feet, he won the heart of Our Lord by perhaps the first open confession
of simple and earnest faith he had received. "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!" Such frank belief in his power and submission to his will at once secured what he asked. Touching him and uttering the words, "I will; be thou clean," the suppliant was a leper no longer. No Rabbi, or strict Jew, would have come near him, but Jesus was ready to make himself "unclean" to heal the wretched. He could not have shown more strikingly how little he thought of outward forms when they stood in the way of doing good.

Such a cure was certain to raise public excitement, if generally known, and this was dangerous while the Baptist was still lying in prison on a charge of having stirred up the people. The cured man was told therefore not to speak about what had happened, but quietly to go to Jerusalem and show himself, as clean, to the priests on duty, that he might, after the usual ceremonies, get a certificate of his restoration to health. His joy at being healed was, however, too deep for silence, and the result of his spreading the news of his cure was that Jesus could no longer enter any town or city, from the commotion his presence excited. Nor could he escape the multitudes who gathered round him, even by withdrawing to solitary parts, so that he had, apparently, to return to Capernaum.

Yet, notwithstanding his caution, the report of his growing influence reached the Church authorities in Jerusalem. That he acted without a license from them stirred their jealousy, and it could be no secret that his teaching was in some respects very different from theirs. Already, therefore, they had set men on his track, to note his words, that they might bring the meshes of Judaism over him; and some of these spies were now in Capernaum. This odious task was assigned to Rabbis, the teachers of Judaism; the name "Rabbi" meaning "My Master," and being thus much the same as our "Reverend," or, in some cases, as "Doctor." The Law, not as given by Moses, but as amplified by Ezra and the Scribes, being the one study of the nation, and all public and private life being
controlled by its precepts, as laid down by its recognised teachers, the order had immense influence. They were the divines, the lawyers, the lawmakers, and the political leaders of Israel. Nothing could be done without them; no one could venture to differ from them. They were more venerated and obeyed by the people than the Roman Catholic priest in the most Romanist country. Men greeted them humbly as they passed, rising before them. They sat in the chief seats in the synagogues, and had the place of honour everywhere. Jerusalem was their headquarters, but they were found in all synagogue towns. In the capital they had the majority in the Jewish church courts, which could inflict grievous sentences on those condemned by them, and in the country they were the leading members of the local courts connected with each synagogue. Their activity never ceased. Living, for the most part, by trade or a handicraft, they passed from place to place, uniting business with religion on their journeys.

The Rabbis belonged to a great class known as the Pharisees, which, however, included many who were not Rabbis. The name means “The separated,” and had originally been taken by associations of men who devoted themselves as their supreme object to the observance of the Law as interpreted by Ezra and the scribes of his day. The precepts laid down by the Rabbis gradually increasing, there came to be grades of “holiness” even among the Pharisees, no one being held “blameless” as touching “the righteousness in the Law,”¹ who had not passed through six inferior steps and reached the seventh, which was the highest. Observance of many thousand precepts, however, demanded such constant attention, that to attain the honours of perfection was impossible without devoting one’s self entirely to that aim. Any business, even if carried on with the most scrupulous watchfulness, was certain to lead to defilement, by too near contact with men at large. The Pharisees therefore belonged as a body to the richer

¹ Phil. iii. 6.
classes of the community, though the Rabbis, who were, as I have said, all of them Pharisees, formed, in some cases, an exception.

Among such a large body of zealots there were, of course, men of very different characters. Zacharias, the father of John, Nicodemus, and St. Paul, were Pharisees, but the order largely gave themselves up to mere formalism, so that they ultimately became so unpopular for their insincerity, even with their own nation, that the name was finally used for a hypocrite and a knave; the Rabbis themselves disowning it. In the days of Christ, however, they were still in the highest honour.

Soon after Our Lord's arrival at Capernaum an incident occurred which led to his first open breach with these two all-powerful bodies. ¹ The crowds had gathered in such numbers to Peter's house that the court before it was thronged. Among the audience were a number of Pharisees, some of them Rabbis, others, "Scribes," or men whose profession in part was to make written copies of the Law—a very sacred office among such a people. All these were spies, gathered to see if they could find anything in what might be said or done, that could bring the new teacher within the grasp of the "Law."

It appears as if Peter's house had been one of two storeys, and that Our Lord spoke from the upper floor, so as to address both the people in the house and in the court. Suddenly a commotion in the throng showed that some one sought admission below and could not obtain it. A poor young man, helpless from paralysis, had been brought on a pallet by four bearers, to get into the presence of the great Healer. Finding they could not push through, and resolved to gain their point, they carried the sick man up the rough stone steps at the side of the house, and thus got to the roof, where, as in many good houses still, there was a kind of hatch, closed in the

¹ Mat. ix. 2-9; Mark ii. 1-12; Luke v. 17-20.
rainy months, but opened in summer, to let the family out to the roof from inside, by a short ladder. Raising this, the bearers had gained their end. By tying cords to the four corners of the hammock, and letting it down, the sufferer was at the feet of Our Lord. But outward troubles were not his worst. Looking on his affliction as a punishment of sin, he was even more stricken in soul than in body. He could not speak, but his eyes told the story, and Christ read it at a glance, and with an endearing word flashed hope on his heart. "My child," said he, "thy sins are forgiven thee." Such language no Rabbi would have used, but it came with impressive force from one who never admitted that he was himself a sinner, although he demanded sinlessness even in the inmost thoughts. To pardon sin was to claim divine authority, for the forgiveness of the penitent belongs to God alone.

The Rabbis felt this. Here was one, not a member of their body, who dared to forgive sin of his own authority, and in his own name. Whispers, head-shakings, and dark looks, showed that they were greatly excited. "It is blasphemy," they muttered, "for any man to talk of his forgiving sins, and the Law condemns the blasphemer to be stoned to death. No one can forgive sins but God."

This was the turning point in the life of Our Lord, for the accusation of blasphemy now raised was to bring him to the cross in the end, and he knew it. His whole religious teaching was the opposite of that of his accusers. With him, a broken and contrite heart was everything, and the minute observance of outward forms nothing; but to them these forms were the essence of religion. The charge of blasphemy was only a catch by which to lay hold on one who hated pretences and demanded sincerity, not mere empty rites. He knew they would put the worst construction on all he said, but it did not disturb him. Without waiting for their open attack, he suddenly asked, "Which is easier? To say to
this paralytic, 'Thy sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up thy bed and walk'?" No one could tell whether the sick man's sins were really forgiven; but there could be no deception in raising a living corpse to life and strength. Turning to the pallet, therefore, without waiting an answer, he continued, "That ye may know that the Son of Man"—a Jewish name for the Messiah,—"has authority on earth to forgive sins, I say, rise up, young man, take up the mat on which you have been lying, and go home." It was enough. Slowly realizing what had been said, the sick one rose, little by little, his eyes fixed on his deliverer, till at last he stood erect before him. He would, no doubt, have kneeled, next moment, in adoration, but he could not be allowed to stay. Without saying a word, Jesus motioned him to retire, and he did so, his eyes still fixed on his helper, as he made his way through the awe-stricken crowd. Meanwhile, Our Lord himself left the room, sad at heart, for the shadow of the cross had fallen on his soul.

A number of disciples had, we may imagine, been gained by this time, but Christ's personal followers were still limited to the few whom he had first "called." Another was now to be added. Among those specially impressed by his teaching at Capernaum, a publican named Matthew or Levi, had shown himself, in Christ's unerring judgment, worthy of a place among his apostles. His office was universally hated and disreputable, but that weighed nothing with Our Lord. Publicans were those who collected the taxes imposed by the Romans, and thus, to all Jews, seemed traitors, serving the heathen oppressors of Israel. They could not enter a synagogue, and were avoided by all. Neither they nor their family could bear witness in a Jewish court, nor would the poorest beggar accept an alms from their polluted hand. That Christ should choose a publican as a follower, was therefore to brave inveterate public opinion, and to discredit both himself and his work. No Rabbi would enter the house of such a person, and a Pharisee, if by chance his clothes touched one as he
passed, at once had them washed, to remove the defilement. But Christ taught that sincere penitence,—which is another name for deep sorrow for sin, and firm resolve, with God's help, to do better—was demanded from all men alike, and that God accepted any one in whom this was shown; no matter to what class he belonged, or what his former life had been. Nor would he, like those around him, condemn a whole body of men. If many in it were worthless, so much the greater was the need to try to reclaim them. Moreover, the duties of a tax-gatherer were perfectly lawful, and in some cases, among which, doubtless, was that of Matthew, they were carried out with perfect uprightness.

Matthew was busy in his office on the eventful day when Jesus, in passing, invited him to become his disciple. A word and a look sufficed. Resigning his position at the earliest opportunity, after settling business matters connected with it, he left all and followed his new Master. Nothing could have been more hateful to the Rabbis than such a slight on their teaching as the choice of the publican as an apostle, but Christ had no hesitation in the matter. He would show in the most marked way that all were free to seek him, and that the gift of eternal life which he brought, was not for a class but for mankind, however degraded or despised. There was to be no caste in Christianity.

Matthew was greatly moved by treatment so generous, shown so bravely in the face of public opinion to one who had hitherto known only disrespect and open contempt. For the first time he had been treated like a man, not scorned like a leper. To express his joy and gratitude by a "great feast" was the least he could do, and accordingly he invited a number of friends, necessarily all of doubtful calling or character,—for such alone must have made up his little world—to celebrate the new era opened to them and himself. For the respect paid him, in the face of public prejudice, proved that they still had a friend, and might from
his kindly bearing, feel once more that long lost self-respect which is the earnest of true reform in the degraded. An invitation to this gathering, which any Rabbi or Scribe would have taken as an insult, was at once accepted by our Lord.\footnote{Luke v. 29–39; Mark ii. 15–22; Matt. ix. 10–17.}

Till this time some of the Pharisees had treated Christ with politeness and had asked him to their houses and table, but the choice of a publican as an apostle, and his eating with people of that class, shocked Jewish ideas. It was as if a white man, before the abolition of slavery in America, had treated a coloured person as an equal; a thing not to be conceived! It must have been a hard trial even for the disciples, for they had all the prejudices of their race so strongly that even after our Lord's ascension, St. Peter was distressed at the idea of entering the house of a foreigner, though a Roman officer, or of eating with him\footnote{Acts x. 14, 28.}; two breaches of the Law far less offensive than Christ's going to Matthew's house and eating with men who did not pretend to honour the Law. The apostle James, moreover, was a Nazarite—and, as such, a strict Jew—till his death. When therefore the Rabbis put the question to them, "Why Jesus thus, as they held, outraged the Law," they were sadly perplexed, and came to their Master for an explanation. No answer could have been more kind and tender; "To whom should I go but to such as these? The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Turn to the prophets, whom you honour, and think what Hosea means by saying, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,'—true acts of love, not cold exactness of outward forms—for I have come not to call the self-righteous, but to invite sinners to repentance."

There were still other grounds of trouble and complaint. Some disciples of the Baptist were disturbed and offended by noticing that, whereas their master and they, like the Rabbis, fasted often and followed set rules in prayer, the disciples of
Christ neglected both fasting and the rules as to posture and other forms laid down as necessary in devotion. Moses had appointed only one fast in the year, on the day of Atonement, but the Rabbis had added many, both public and private, some of them, like the Pharisee in the parable, fasting two days each week or even more. The Scriptures left every one free to pray as his heart urged him, but the Rabbis had laid down endless rules as to even the most trivial details, which needed to be learned and practised with scrupulous exactness to make prayer of any worth. Questioned on these matters by the disciples of John, the followers of Our Lord found it hard to answer, and carried their difficulty to their Master. We have only his reply as to fasting, "While with you, my disciples I am like the bridegroom with his companions, during the rejoicings at a marriage. Could he ask them to fast while he was with them? When I am no longer with you, you will have to fast, whether you choose or not, for privation awaits you, and it will be time enough to begin when you cannot help it." Then, seizing the opportunity, he spoke of the Baptist's position in relation to himself. John had sought to reform the Jewish Church, while retaining all the forms and rules in worship and life required by the Rabbis, but these could not be enforced by Our Lord, or made to harmonize with his teaching. To attempt it, was as vain as trying to add new cloth to mend the rents of a worn-out garment; the rents would only grow worse. Or it was like putting new wine into worn-out skin bottles, which must burst when the wine fermented. New teaching, such as his, must be put into new forms, as new wine must be put into new skin bottles, to preserve both. Thus Christ broke openly with the religious ideas of his day, and put them aside for ever.

The widening success of his work had now made it necessary

to select from his followers such as might hereafter become his Apostles. The band chosen was limited to twelve; perhaps in allusion to the Twelve Tribes of past Jewish history. As his friends and intimate companions, they were to enjoy his fullest confidence, and to be trained as a missionary staff—the name Apostle meaning a missionary—to spread Christianity after his death. When about to select them, he spent the whole previous night in solitary prayer, and, in the morning, having returned to his disciples, now a considerable band, appointed twelve. He had only the lowly from whom to choose, but those honoured thus were, with one exception, true-hearted and worthy. Yet, had the choice been wider, some one, like Paul or Stephen, might, perhaps, have been among them, with what great results, who can tell?

The selection was strangely various. Matthew was at once a publican and a Levite; but there was a Simon who had belonged to the zealots or irreconcilables of the nation; the fiercest class among a fiercely-bigoted race. Peter, we know, had a wife, and tradition alleges that all the rest, except Thomas and the sons of Zebedee, were also married. Seven of the twelve belonged to Capernaum, Peter and his brother Andrew, James and John, James the Little, and Jude, further known as Lebbæus, "the stout-hearted," or Thaddæus, "the brave," and Matthew the publican. Philip belonged to Bethsaida, close to the favoured town; Nathanael, or Bartholomew, came from Cana, behind Nazareth; Thomas, known also as Didymus, or "The Twin," was born it is not said where; Simon, the zealot, came from some part of Galilee, and thus, as I have already said, there was only one Apostle from Judea—Judas, the traitor, from Kerioth, in the south of Judah.
CHAPTER XIV.

Of the twelve Apostles, at least four, James and John, James the Little, and Jude, seem to have been his relations, or connections, though one tradition adds Thomas also to these. That Matthew, a Levite, and thus of priestly birth, had stooped to become a Roman tax-collector, shows that some members of his order had a sore struggle to live. As a rule the Apostles were poor. The fishermen of our own coasts are humble enough, and those of the Sea of Galilee in Christ's day were probably as lowly, though there is a respect, unknown among us, paid in the East to even the poorest, simply as men, and this creates a self-respect we do not meet among ourselves in the same class. Our fishermen, moreover, are often wholly illiterate, but the New Testament shows that men of whom John, Peter, and Jude were no doubt fair representatives, were very far from being as ignorant.

Peter, the host of our Lord at Capernaum, always occupies the first place in the list of the twelve. Like a true Galilean, he was impulsive and energetic; speaking his mind on the instant, and thus always ready to speak for the rest; but though the first to draw the sword for his Master, he was also the first to deny him. The contrast between him and John is striking. John recognises Christ first at the Lake of Galilee after the resurrection; but while he waits till the boat reaches the shore, Peter throws himself forthwith into the lake, and is the first to reach Our Lord's feet. His excitable nature throws him at times off his guard, but though for a moment surprised by a sudden challenge, into denying Christ, a look melts him,
and tradition only fills up a true picture, when it tells us that he rose each night, through life, at the hour when he had sinned, to crave forgiveness, or when it speaks of him as at last crucified head downwards, thinking himself unworthy of a nearer approach to the same death as his Lord.

James and John were men of a different mould. Their energy of will, flaming up at any opposition, obtained for them, from Jesus, the name of the Sons of Thunder. They would have called down lightning on an inhospitable village, and wished to silence one who spoke in Our Lord’s name, because he had not his formal authority to do so. In James, the Apostles had their earliest martyr, but John survived all his brethren. In his case, however, as possibly in that of James, flaming zeal soon passed into the steady glow of devotion. Of all the twelve he realized most his Master’s spirit, thinking less on his outward life than on the divine words which revealed his inner perfection. We owe to him, in his gospel, an image of Our Lord such as only he could have painted. Loving him beyond the others, he drew towards himself a like love in return; for if he leaned on Christ’s bosom at the last supper, it was only because he had shown a love which presently brought him, alone, to the foot of the cross.

Of Andrew, the brother of St. Peter, we know nothing after Christ’s death. Tradition speaks of him as having gone to Scythia, and on this ground the Russians have made him their national saint. This, however, is only one story out of several, probably all without historical foundation. Philip is said to have been originally a chariot-driver; Bartholomew or Nathanael, a shepherd or gardener. That Judea should have been represented only by Judas Iscariot, shows the opposition of the Jews in and round Jerusalem to Our Lord, though the presence of the family of Bethany, and we know not how many other disciples even in that district, is not to be forgotten.

Such followers, hitherto worshippers of the Rabbis, with their endless legal rules and merely formal religion, must have needed
a divine patience to open their hearts to the wide charity and deep earnestness of the new faith. No wonder, therefore, that we read of Christ calling them "unbelieving"—"of little understanding," "hardened," "fearful," "worldly," and "of little faith." Yet they were endeared to him by the fact that they continued with him to the end, and in the remembrance of this, he could only see in them his "brethren," his "fellow-workers," his "little children." It was not till he was gone that they realized the exceeding honour of such relations to him; but the remembrance of them, thenceforward, filled their minds as the glory of their lives.

Numerous fragments of the discourses of Our Lord are preserved in the Gospels, but no continuous address is given except the Sermon on the Mount, which appears to have been delivered immediately after the choice of the Twelve. He had gone with his disciples to some secluded spot in the hills round the lake, to transact the all-important matter without interruption, but, this over, returned towards the lowlands. On his way, however, he found a great crowd looking for him, having with them not a few sick, that he might heal them. Ever pitiful, this was forthwith done, but, now, as such a multitude was gathered, he took the opportunity to address them. The scene of the memorable discourse was in all probability a height the two ends of which rise into low peaks, known as the Horns of Hattin. Five miles off, the Lake of Galilee lies far below, with the City of Tiberias on the shore; the path to it sinking in a continual descent over green slopes Hattin is a rough outburst of black basalt, the two peaks forming only part of the sides of an ancient crater. Entering this, there is a large level space strewn with volcanic stones of all sizes, and thick with tall weeds. From the eastern edge of the crater the view is magnificent; the eye sweeping over the whole lake, which lies hundreds of feet below, beyond broad descending undulations of green; the tableland of cliff rising on the other side, shutting out all further view. A very large
crowd could gather in Hattin, and a teacher could easily seat himself on some point above them, so as to make his voice reach far and near.

In the Sermon on the Mount there is no mention of priests or Rabbis—the religious despot of the time—nor is there any allusion to circumcision, the rite which admitted into the existing Church, and the proud distinction of a Jew from a heathen.

It was to be no longer the condition of admission into the "Kingdom of God." Nor is more favour shown by Our Lord to any of the multiplied forms on which his nation relied. "The righteousness of the Law," that is, the exact fulfilment of the multitudinous precepts of the Rabbis, gives place to a demand for the righteousness of heart and life. Instead of a religion only for Jews and their converts, it establishes one of character and life. All are welcomed who heartily accept Jesus as the Messiah, and honestly repent before God. Suffering in this world, which had hitherto been regarded as a mark of the divine displeasure, is made, to the Christian rightly bearing it, the pledge of heavenly reward. For the first time in the history of religion there is no mention of a priesthood, or offerings, or a Temple, or ceremonial rites, or symbolical worship. We hear only of holy love and true righteousness.

The opening verses ¹ speak comfort much needed in every age, but especially in the early years of our faith, to those faithful to their Master under bitter trial. To suffer for the truth, he tells them, is only what the truly godly have had to endure in every generation.

He next passes to the duties and true dignity of his disciples. They are the salt of the earth; the light of the world; a city set on a hill; and must bear themselves accordingly. His personal example is to be their standard and pattern. Failure, however, is human, and hence they must remember that what appears salt, but is only earth with a little salt through it, may

¹ Matt. v. 3–12.
lose its saltiness, and this, once lost, can never be restored. Absolute sincerity and devotedness alone can make them safe.

Passing to details, he proceeded to show that so far from being opposed to the Law, as the Rabbis alleged, he came to fulfil, not to destroy, it. Their worthless additions to it might and should perish, but no part of its moral or religious teaching should pass away for ever. So far from slighting that, he who should break even one of its least demands would be called least in his kingdom.

The Scribes and Pharisees were fancied especially righteous from their laborious observance of the thousand "traditions of the Elders;" the rules laid down by Rabbis since the days of Ezra. This, however, would not satisfy Christ.

Murder,¹ for example, according to the Rabbis, meant only the outward act, which brought with it in some cases punishment from God in this life, and penalties from the Church Courts in others. With Our Lord, on the contrary, the passion from which this crime rises was enough to provoke the anger of God, and if expressed even in words, should be visited by the Courts, and if not followed by repentance would be followed by the wrath of God hereafter. The heart that hates is arraigned, not merely the hand that strikes.

Nor was the application of this lofty morality less impressive. To interrupt a sacrifice well-nigh destroyed its value, but it was to be stopped at once by any one who remembered having wronged another, and he must go and make peace with the injured one before finishing it. As the debtor is seized and flung into prison by the creditor when they meet, to lie there till he has paid the last farthing, the anger of God would burn against any one who pretended to worship while anger was in his heart.

The Rabbis taught that a wife might be sent away for spoiling a dinner, or if she were less handsome than some new face,

¹ 1 John iii. 15; Matt. v. 20–26.
and she was free to marry at once, on receiving a certificate of dismissal. Contrary to this, Christ taught that marriage could only be dissolved for unfaithfulness, and that any woman put away for less, was still a wife, and, as such, could not remarry. The copious use of oaths on all occasions has always been common in the East, and the refinements of the Rabbis had increased the evils of the custom. Men were told how they might overreach each other by sly tricks in the words of an oath, which no one could detect at the time. If, for example, they did not expressly name God, or the Temple, or the Altar, an oath had no binding force. If they vowed, as part of an oath, to make an offering to God, the fulfilment of this vow freed them from the rest of their obligation. All this Jesus branded as hateful. The word of his disciples was to be enough; they were to be absolutely truthful.

The Law taught that an eye was to be given for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; a principle which in Christ's day was obeyed by payments of money, according to the offence. A hand, a foot, or an eye had its market value, and this was always exacted. Christ was as little inclined as any one to let crime go unpunished, but he demanded that no disciple of his should ever cherish revenge. To violence they were to oppose meekness. They were to bear, to yield, to give; not standing angrily on their rights in each petty case, but showing a spirit of love and gentleness worthy of their profession.

The Jew thought of Jehovah only as the God of the Jews, though supreme over the world, and, as a rule, took for granted that exact obedience to the precepts of the Rabbis, as interpreters of the Law, secured their welfare, as a right, in the world to come. Indeed, as the children of Abraham, they took for granted they would all have a place in Paradise. Fanatically proud as thus the favourites of Heaven, they hated and despised the rest of mankind. Nor did their bitterness end with this. Among themselves there were distinct parties equally abhorrent to each other. The Rabbi hated the priest,
the Pharisee detested the Sadducee, and all alike hated the humbler classes who had not leisure to keep the precepts of the Schools, or whose occupations were in themselves more or less contrary to them. Their hatred of all who were not Jews was morbid. They were bound to be friendly and humane to a neighbour, but that, they held, meant, only, to a Jew.

Toward the Samaritan or the Gentile there was to be no pulse even of common humanity. Nor was the sentiment of human brotherhood much more advanced in any other race in antiquity. If two nations were united by treaties they respected each other’s rights, but where there was no such bond each plundered and murdered the other without scruple. The idea that all men were brethren had not as yet been proclaimed by any religion.

All this, however, was now to be changed, “Ye have heard,” said Christ,¹ “that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye must, therefore, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Christianity was to know nothing of national hatreds. The world was to be a great brotherhood, bound by love and peace. No change could be greater than such teaching would effect if men carried it out.

War, slavery, tyranny, and every form of selfishness would pass away.

Almsgiving was so highly extolled by the Rabbis that the common word for it was “righteousness.” The spirit of charity might be wanting; the outward act was enough. Hence, in too many cases men fancied that to give alms was to secure, as by a payment, the favour of God hereafter. Against such

¹ Matt. v. 43–48, R.V.
hypocrisy, or acting, Christ warns his followers: "Take heed that you do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them; else ye have no reward with your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. I tell you, in all earnestness, they have received their reward: there is none for such mock charity in the world to come. But when you give alms, do it secretly, for love, not for show or pretence, and your Father, who sees in secret, will recompense thee." Unless done for its own sake, good lost its worth to the doer.

Even prayer, the cry of the heart to God, had become the subject of endless rules in Christ's day; its value being made to depend on the exact repetition of set forms, with due postures, and a correct adjustment of little charms called phylacteries, on the arm and forehead, rather than on the feelings of the worshippers. While there were, no doubt, many sincerely religious, others sought credit by affecting special fervour, and parading their devotions before the public. Not content with larger phylacteries than were common, and larger tassels at the corners of their scarf, as a sign of extra godliness, they pretended that the long prayers of the synagogues were all too short, and repeated them over and over wherever most people could see their zeal. All this Christ sternly condemned. Sincerity alone gave prayer its worth, and would court retirement rather than seek the notice of any human eye.

To assist his disciples, Our Lord proceeded to give them a model prayer. "After this manner," said he, "pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as

1 The Greek word, "hypocrites," means an actor, then a feigner, dissembler, or make-believe.
2 Matt. vi. 1-4, R.V. A few words of paraphrase are introduced.
3 Matt. vi. 9-13, R.V.
we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." He only, it was added, is forgiven by God, who has already forgiven his fellows.

Moses had appointed one fast in the year—that of the Day of Atonement, but to this the Rabbis had added two a week, besides others on special anniversaries, while private fasts also were commanded. Nothing in religion offered greater facility for pretence. While fasting, a Jew strewed ashes on his head, left his beard untrimmed, his face

unwashed, his head anointed, and wore black clothing of the meanest material. Indeed, all the outward signs of mourning for the dead were displayed. Sincerity was so often wanting that even the heathen scoffed at the mockery, and it was still more abhorrent to Christ. His disciples, when they fasted, were to take care not to put on sad looks like the hypocrites around them, for they disfigured their faces, to let men see that they were fasting. They would
get no reward hereafter. "But thou," he went on, "when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face; that thou be not seen of men to fast, but of thy Father who is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall recompense thee." 

He had already uttered a caution against worldliness; he now adds another: "Heap not up for yourselves treasures of coin, or costly robes, or aught else that men accumulate, for the moth eats the one and the rust the other, while thieves dig through the mud walls and carry off both. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves do not break through and steal. If your treasure be on earth, you will be careless of heaven; but if it be in heaven, your heart will be there. Yet, you need wisdom from God to lead you to this. As light enters the body only if the eye be sound, so it enters the soul only if the heart be right. If you make money your idol, you cannot strive both for it and for the kingdom of God. It is like trying to serve two masters. If true to the one, you cannot be so to the other. He who really trusts God will feel sure that his earthly wants will be supplied. Do not, therefore, fret about food or clothing. Your life, which God preserves, is more than food, and your body than raiment. Look at the birds; they neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet are fed by Our Heavenly Father. Are you not much better than they? No one, let him try ever so much, can add anything to his life. Why, moreover, are you so concerned about clothing? Look at the wild lilies, so fair and beautiful. They neither toil nor spin, and yet Solomon, in his royal robes, was not arrayed like one of them. But if God so clothe even the grass of the field, which grows to-day and is cut down and used to heat an oven to-morrow, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Leave it to the heathen to fret about such things; your Heavenly Father knows that you need them. Seek, therefore, first of all, his kingdom and righteousness, and

1 Matt. vi. 17, 18, B.V. (paraphrased).  
2 Apparently the narcissus.
all these things shall be added. Be not anxious for the morrow. Each day has its own sufficient cares."  

The narrow bigotry which embittered Jewish life by its harsh judgments and bitter hatreds, was contrary to the spirit of the new religion. Christianity could not suffer them, but required kindly feelings in all things, for without a spirit of love here there could be no favour hereafter. The Rabbis too often showed both bitterness and harshness, and in this respect were like blind men who could not pretend to be guides of others. To examine one's self is better than to pass judgment on our neighbour, and it is rank hypocrisy to be eager to take the mote from any one's eye while there was a beam in one's own.

Passing next to the prospects of his disciples, Christ told them that as they went about speaking of the new Kingdom of God, they would find it often blasphemed and slandered. In such a case they were to be silent, for to spend words in such cases would be only like casting what is good for man to the street dogs, or pearls to wild swine. Help from above would be needed in their office, but God would freely grant it. He would no more refuse it than an earthly father would refuse his child what it required. The golden rule in their dealings should be to treat others as they would themselves wish to be treated.

A few solemn warnings concluded the discourse. They must walk in the narrow path of a virtuous life, and avoid the easy and broad road of self-indulgence and sin. Avoid unworthy teachers, said he—wolves in sheep's clothing. Look at their lives, for you will know them as you know trees, by their fruit. Such care would be needed, for teachers would abound whom he would disown at the great day.

"Every one, now or hereafter," said he in conclusion, "who hears these sayings of mine and obeys them, is like a man who,

in building a house, dug deep and laid the foundations on the rock. The winter rains fell, the torrents rose, and the storms blew, and beat upon that house, but could not shake it, because it was founded on the rock. But every one who hears them and does not obey them, is like a foolish man, who, without laying a foundation, built his house on the sandy earth. And the rain descended, the torrents rushed down, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and straightway it fell, and its ruin was great.”

No wonder that, when he ended, the multitudes were astonished at such teaching. He had spoken as a lawgiver of greater authority than Moses.

CHAPTER XV.

AFTER some months stay in Galilee, the return of one of the great feasts, we do not know which, attracted Christ once more to Jerusalem. Only one incident of this visit is recorded, but it is very striking.

The pools, tanks, fountains, and wells of the Holy City, which are now in a disgraceful state, were then in perfect order, water flowing into the town through various aqueducts, led from the hills beyond Bethlehem, and from other parts. One of the most famous pools was known as "Bethesda"—"the house of mercy," the site of which, from discoveries made during the summer of the year 1888, seems to have been on the north side of the road passing the upper end of the Temple enclosure; two pools, side by side, being known by the one name, the smaller fifty-five feet, the larger, sixty-four feet long; the breadth of both lying hidden under some houses. Twenty-four steps led to the bottom from the eastern side, and, in the time of our Lord, five porticoes, still remaining centuries after, lined the pool, affording shelter to the crowds who came to the waters. These rose high after the winter rains, and were then noted for their red colour, caused by the red earth of the soil though which they passed. The flow into the twin pools was, further, intermittent; ceasing for longer or shorter intervals; a peculiarity caused by the siphon-like, or up and down, channel through which the water passed underground. It was commonly fancied, in Christ's day, however, that the redness was caused by the blood of a dragon living at the source of the spring, and the intermission in the flow by
the monster drinking up the water while he was awake, and leaving it to run while he slept. Yet not a few believed that the red was the blood of a demon, killed by a good angel, after much commotion; the evil visitant seeking to get into the waters to hurt those who bathed in them or drank them.

A pool, into which an angel was fancied from time to time to descend, was naturally supposed, in such an age, to have wonderful healing powers, and thus a multitude of sick and diseased thronged round it in hope of being cured, if so fortunate as to reach the water at the moment the angel was imagined to have come down to it. The steps at the side afforded means of descending, but, without help, many sufferers had to wait for months, or even years, in vain hope of being carried down. Among the sufferers lying in the porches till some one would befriend them at the right moment was a man who had been helpless from rheumatism or paralysis for thirty-eight years. Happily for him, Jesus, in passing, saw his misery, and, having heard his story, healed him by a word, telling him to rise, take up the poor palm or rush mat on which he lay, and walk. Such a deed might well have won the favour of all, but it had been done on a Sabbath, and to carry the sleeping-mat was contrary to Sabbath law, which forbade carrying anything whatever on the sacred day. Accused of the offence, the poor man innocently justified himself by saying that he who had cured him had told him to do so. But while an offence against the Sabbath was bad enough in any one, it was especially heinous in a religious teacher! The Rabbis had laid down the law with ridiculous minuteness. As much food might be carried on the Sabbath as the bulk of a dried fig; as much ink as would write two letters of the alphabet; but a needle or a pin left by chance in one's clothes was an unlawful burden, nor could a loaf be carried by one person, though it might be carried between two. Little dreaming what would follow, the healed man, terrified by the fear of being put out of the synagogue for his offence, at once told
them, on meeting his benefactor shortly after in the Temple, and then first learning his name, that it was Jesus who had told him to carry his mat. How could that be wrong which was ordered by one whom God so honoured as to give him power to work such a miracle?

Our Lord was forthwith required to appear before the Jewish Church court, but its members were little prepared for the defence he offered. His Heavenly Father, he said, had from the beginning disregarded their Sabbath laws, and he, like his Father, was Lord of the Sabbath, and free to do what he chose in it. He thus aggravated his guilt by making himself equal with God. His enemies had already charged him with blasphemy at Capernaum, for saying he could forgive sins: here was a repetition of the offence. Such claims must have thrown the excitable Orientals, his judges, into the wildest frenzy, like that of the Jewish court who, a few years later, gnashed their teeth at the martyr Stephen, shouting aloud and stopping their ears that he might not be further heard. But Christ remained perfectly calm, and when the tumult subsided, went on with his defence against this second charge. So far from retracting, he reasserted his claim to divine authority still more strongly. God, alone, could raise the dead, but he, as his Son, would not only, now, raise the spiritually dead, but, hereafter, would call forth all the dead from their graves. If the works he did were not accepted by them as a proof that the Father was with him, he appealed to their own Scriptures, which witnessed to him as the Messiah. Let them beware of rejecting him!

The authorities had never encountered such a prisoner, and were afraid to proceed against him; partly, we may believe, from his favour with the people. The only course they could take was to excommunicate the man who had been healed, and this they at once did. But the shadow of the Cross lay from this time on the path of the Saviour. Spies hung about him

1 John v. 2-18.  
2 Acts vii. 54, 57.  
3 John v. 19-47.
wherever he went, even in Galilee, to discover or invent charges against him. Hopeless of doing more good in Jerusalem, and longing for the comparative freedom of his own country, he once more turned his face towards it. In the bracing air of the northern hills men were less gloomy and fanatical than in the Holy City; had less of its fierce bigotry or malevolent hypocrisy. But there were Rabbis in all parts, and no hatred is so deadly as that kindled by religion.

Under these circumstances fresh charges were soon concocted. During a Sabbath day's walk, within a fortnight, the Rabbis again assailed him. By the path he had taken, doubtless of the legal length of less than three-quarters of a mile, he had led his disciples through ripening fields of barley. It was permitted both by the Law and custom to pluck ears enough from such growing crops to satisfy hunger, or grapes enough from a vine, as Orientals still do in the same circumstances, and they availed themselves of the liberty, plucking some ears and eating the grain, as they went on, after rubbing it out from the husk. This simple act, however, involved two offences against the Rabbinical laws, and eyes were ever on the watch to report any breach of them. To pluck the ears was a kind of reaping, and the rubbing was a kind of grinding or threshing. Besides, all food eaten on the Sabbath must be prepared on the Friday, and the rubbing was a kind of preparation. On any other day what had been done would have been blameless, but to break the Sabbath laws rather than wait till night, when the holy day ended, was an offence worthy of stoning! If such Sabbath desecration were left unpunished religion would perish! Had he not broken the Sabbath only a fortnight before, by telling the man whom he had healed in Jerusalem, to take up his sleeping-mat and carry it home?

Challenged at once by some Pharisees, his answer only made matters worse. Had not David when hungry eaten even the

1 Deut. xxiii. 24, 25; (Gleaning), Lev. xix. 9, Deut. xxiv. 19-22; 
Ruth ii. 2.
holy bread of the Temple, sacred to priests alone? And did not the priests do the same without blame, when on duty in the Temple on the Sabbath? But he was greater than the Temple, and it must, much more, be fitting that his disciples should break the rules of the Rabbis to satisfy their natural wants. They had acted under his authority, and, as the Son of man—that is, the Messiah, he was Lord of the Sabbath. They should ponder what God meant when He said, in the Prophet, that He valued mercy more than sacrifice, and acts of love above outward forms of religion.

Such language threatened all that the Rabbis and the nation at large held sacred, for every Jew honoured the Rabbinical rules with superstitious reverence. It was clear that he was an innovator and a revolutionary! Had he not compared the prevailing observances to an old garment and old bottles; had he not claimed to forgive sins; had he not associated with publicans and sinners; had he not slighted the prescribed washings and fastings; and, now, had he not again given permission to violate the holy Sabbath? But for his wide popularity among the lower classes, by whom the Rabbinical rules were little regarded, he would at once have been arraigned before the Church Courts, which could inflict any punishment short of death.

The Synagogues were yet free to him and he still frequented them, but it was impossible for his sincere and truthful spirit to avoid collisions with the religion of the day. Another violation of the laws of the Sabbath soon followed, in one of the services. A man in the synagogue with his right hand withered by paralysis, attracted his attention. Scribes and Pharisees, as usual, were on the watch to see if he would in any way offend. Their Sabbath rules about healing were as wire-drawn as other parts of their system. For toothache, vinegar might, be used in the mouth, if afterwards swallowed. In a sore

1 Matt. xii. 1-8; Mark ii. 23-28; Luke vi. 1-5.  2 Hosea vi. 6.  3 Luke vi. 6-11.
throat, oil might be swallowed, but not used as a gargle. To heal any one on the holy day was to work on it, and, thus, was Sabbath desecration. But Jesus never feared to do right. Looking at the paralyzed man, he bade him rise and stand forth. “Is it lawful,” said he, to the scowling Rabbis, “to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?” To such a question they could give no answer. “It is allowable, is it not,” he continued, when they refused to speak, “to help a sheep out of a pit on the Sabbath? How much better, then, is a man than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath.” “Stretch forth thy hand,” he said to the poor man, and immediately it was whole like the other.

Thus he was again at issue with the religious leaders of the people, and it was clearer than ever that he condemned them. Each new offence tended to unite the different parties among his adversaries, which were, otherwise, bitterly fierce against each other. The cry was raised that “the Church was in danger,” and all banded together to crush “the deceiver of the people.” They would have hailed a Messiah who proposed to set up a great Jewish kingdom, but one seeking only to make men better, and daring to challenge the orthodoxy of the day, was dangerous. The new wine was already bursting the old bottles.

But though thus hated by the Jewish authorities, his popularity with the Law-neglecting multitude continued to increase. As, however, it was important to avoid any open collision with his enemies, he withdrew from Capernaum for a time, on a fresh circuit, till matters quieted down. The towns and villages along the lake were first visited, and crowds gathered wherever he went, for the excitement about him was spreading far and wide, so that many came from great distances to see and hear him. At some places, indeed, it was found necessary that a boat should attend him, that he might betake himself to it when the throngs grew oppressive. Miraculous cures heightened the general enthusiasm, but even when he healed, a command of secrecy was imposed, to prevent any expression
of public feeling in his favour. He did not strive nor cry aloud, nor was his voice heard in the streets, for he was very different from the noisy Rabbis in his retiring meekness, no less than in the tenderness that would not break a bruised reed, or quench even smoking flax.

It must have been about this time that, on his return home, a deputation of "the elders," waited on him. They were, as such, "rulers" of the synagogue, and, consequently, Jewish magistrates; but, strange to say, they came on behalf of one, not a Jew by birth. Herod Antipas kept a small garrison in Capernaum, and this, at the moment, was under the command of a centurion, who, though a foreigner, was kindly disposed towards Judaism, and had won the hearts of the Hebrew community by building a synagogue for them, perhaps that of which the ruins still remain at Tel Hûm. One of his slaves having been struck down by paralysis, and fast sinking, he prayed Jesus through the "elders," with a beautiful tenderness rarely shown to a slave in those ages, to heal the sufferer. It was just the case to rouse the deepest interest in Christ, and he forthwith returned with them. The centurion had not, however, expected a personal visit, and on hearing that Jesus was coming, sent a second message, that he had only ventured to hope for a healing word from him, for that, he felt, would suffice. At last, coming forward himself, he apologised in person—"Lord," said he, "trouble not thyself thus, for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof. Wherefore, neither thought I myself worthy to come to thee, but say in a word, and my servant will be healed. For I, also, am a man set under authority (and obey my superiors), and have soldiers under me, and I say to this one, Go, and he goes; to another, Come, and he comes, and to my slave, Do this, and he does it. (If, therefore, you command the demons who cause disease, they will doubtless at once obey your word and leave

1 Isa. xlii. 1–3; Matt. xii. 15–21; Mark iii. 7–12.
my servant, for they are under your authority, as my soldiers or slaves are under mine.)" "Verily," said Christ, as he heard such humble faith, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Then, cheered by such an earnest of future triumphs, he astonished his Jewish hearers by adding, that many would come from all parts of the world to the joys of the new Kingdom of God, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in heaven, while the Jew, so confident of getting there as one of the chosen people, would be shut out. "Go thy way," he continued, addressing the centurion, "and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee." And the slave was healed in that very hour.

The next day our Lord was far from Capernaum, having walked over the hills and across the plain of Esdraelon, to the "mountains of Gilboa," which run into the wide level, leaving, at its eastern end, only a narrow stretch of plain on each side of them. He was making for Nain—"the beautiful,"—then a good-sized village on the northern slope of Gilboa, a little above the valley, but now a miserable hamlet, inhabited by a few poor and fanatical Moslems. The track from the plain passes up the slope to the west of the village, from which another path runs westward to a small cemetery among the rocks. As he reached this, the funeral of the only son of a widow was passing to the grave, all the men of the village following. Funerals to-day are, no doubt, much the same as they were long ago. A flag or two, if they can be had, are borne aloft, women veiled in white—real or hired mourners—fill the air with lamentations, and behind the bier comes a crowd of men and boys, generally without any pretence of seriousness, but simply to honour a custom. A poor woman left to mourn alone in her desolated home, over an only son who had been alive a very few hours before, touched the heart of Our Lord. It was not meet that death should triumph in his presence. Stepping towards the mother, he told her not to weep, and then, having stopped the bier, he went to it
regardless of the defilement of a corpse, which would have made a Rabbi keep as far as he could from it, he laid his hand on the open frame on which the dead lay. "Young man," said he, "I say unto thee, arise." It was enough. "He that was dead sat up and began to speak, and he delivered him to his mother." The report of such a miracle, recalling the wonders told of Elijah and Elisha in this very district, flew far and wide, to Judea on the south, and even to the remote Perea beyond Jordan.¹

It was about this time that Jesus, noticing, it may be, some Rabbis or Pharisees watching him, and feeling bitterly the opposition he met from them, broke out in stern denunciation of the obdurate blindness of heart of their class.² "To what," cried he, "shall I liken the men of this generation? They are like children in the open market place, playing at marriages and funerals; pretending to make music for the one, and to act as mourners for the other, but left quite unregarded by their companions. John the Baptist came upholding the Law, for he fasted and commanded his disciples to obey the Rabbis. But you thought him too strict, and because he condemned

your sins, you said he had a devil. I came, eating and drinking like other men, neither ordering men to fast, nor insisting on all the laws about food which prevail, and you call me a glutton and a winebibber, and a friend of the publicans and sinners whom you abhor. But the truly wise think both John and myself right; he, as the last prophet of the Law of Moses; I, as the founder of the new Kingdom of God." Christ had done many miracles in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and their refusal to admit even such proofs of his being the Messiah, roused his indignation. "Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago," said he, "had such mighty works been done in them; but these cities, destroyed by God's wrath for their sins, would fare better in the day of judgment than those which had rejected him."

Yet, though strict legalists were fierce against him, he found a simpler and truer spirit among the humbler classes. Our Lord could therefore cheer himself by the thought that while the self-righteous slighted him and his message, the Heavenly Father had revealed the truth to the babe-like common people. The religious world affected to scorn the Redeemer as unworthy of notice, but the poor and despised accepted him. It was natural, therefore, that he should turn to the lowly crowd around, whom the "better" classes despised and hated, and address them in the memorable words, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden (with the rites and traditions of men, which give no peace of heart from their observance), and I will give you rest. (Cast off their heavy yoke), and take on you mine, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart (not haughty like the Rabbis), and you shall find rest for your souls. For the yoke I lay on you is easy (and brings health to the spirit), and my burden is light (for it is the law of love)."
CHAPTER XVI.

The distrust or hatred of Christ had not as yet gone so far as to shut him out altogether from society. A Pharisee, named Simon, in good position, was, indeed, liberal and courteous enough to invite him, about this time, to his house and table, though, as the result proved, there was more of curiosity than heartiness in the politeness, for the usual civilities shown to guests were withheld from Our Lord. He might come, but he would be made to feel that his being asked was a condescension.

At the present day, as has been said, meals are eaten from a round table, little higher than a stool, guests sitting cross-legged on mats or small carpets, in a circle, and dipping their fingers into one large dish heaped with a mixture of boiled rice or other grain and meat. But in the time of Our Lord, and perhaps even from the days of Amos, the foreign custom had been largely introduced of having broad couches, forming three sides of a small square; the guests reclining at ease on their elbow during meals, with their faces to the space within, up and down which servants passed, offering various dishes, or, in the absence of servants, helping themselves from dishes laid on a table set between the couches. All shoes or sandals were left outside the house, then as now, the guests coming in barefooted, which was a relief in a hot climate. A kiss from the master of the house greeted their arrival, and this was followed, on the guest taking his place on the couch, by a servant coming behind with a laver and basin, and pouring

1 Amos vi. 4, 7.
water over the feet, to cool them, and wash off the dust, and then wiping them dry with a soft towel. The head and beard were next oiled, as a sign of glad welcome, and water was finally brought, once more, to wash the hands, which was
very important when the fingers were to be put into the dish. Not to wash the hands thus, was, indeed, so flagrant a breach of the ceremonial laws that it is reported of one great Rabbi that when in prison, with only enough water to satisfy the pangs of extreme thirst, he preferred to use it for washing his hands rather than for drinking—so great was the sin of neglecting this rite. None of these usual expressions of kindness and respect had been shown by Simon to Jesus, but there was one, near at hand, who presently made up for the omission. Houses are always open in the East, and any one walks in or out at pleasure. Silently gliding into the chamber, though it was contrary to custom for one of her sex to come to a gathering of men, there now passed a woman. In a small town where every one was known, Simon recognised her as a doubtful character, and was no doubt greatly shocked at her presence. What could be her object? Her actions soon explained it. Kneeling down outside the couch on which Jesus was resting, she began to anoint his feet with fragrant ointment, but, as she did so, her tears fell so fast on them that she was fain to wipe them with her hair, which had escaped its fastenings. She was in sore trouble of mind. The words of Christ had sunk into her heart, but, while humbling her for the sins of her past life, he had kindled hope in her breast by his gracious invitation to all who were weary and heavy laden to come to him for rest. Weeping, and wiping his feet with her hair, and meekly kissing them, she gave free vent to her mingled sorrow and gratitude. Nor did Jesus disturb her. He knew her motive, and left her to herself.

The Pharisee was horrified. That a Rabbi should let such a woman, or, indeed, any woman, approach him, and perform such offices, was most improper. He did not speak, but his thoughts showed themselves in his looks. This man, said he to himself, if he really were a prophet,—that is, a true religious teacher,—would have known what kind of woman she is who touches him, for she is a sinner. But Jesus, noticing all, had
a ready and decisive defence. Turning to Simon, he put this question, "A certain creditor had two debtors: one who owed him five hundred pence; another who owed him fifty, but when he found they had nothing with which to pay him, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, which of them would love him most?" "I suppose," said the Pharisee, "the one to whom most was forgiven." "You have judged rightly," replied Jesus. "When I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet; but this woman has washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. You did not anoint my head with oil; but she has anointed my feet with precious ointment. I say unto you, therefore, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she has loved much; but one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." Then, addressing the woman, he told her, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace." 1 That he should claim power to forgive sins had already been charged against him as blasphemy, and this repetition of the offence was, no doubt, treasured up against him.

During these months Our Lord seems to have journeyed through Galilee 2 preaching, followed by the Twelve, and also by some female disciples of good social position, who assisted in supplying the wants of their Master and the apostles. Of these earliest mothers of the Church the names of five have been preserved—Mary Magdalene, Johanna the wife of Chuza, a high official of Herod Antipas, Mary the mother of James the Little and Joses, Salome, of whom only the name is known, and Salome, the mother of James and John, and wife of Zebedee. It was new to have members of their sex following a religious teacher, and showed that he had introduced a nobler feeling toward woman, raising her from inferiority to the dignity and respect she has ever since obtained among Christian nations.

We can only imperfectly fill up the daily life of Our Lord on these journeys. From many notices in the Gospels, how-

ever, we see that in bearing and dress he was very different from the Rabbis. The large "phylacteries" and huge tassels at the corners of their tallith or scarf, which were their pride, found no favour with him, and in contrast to their terror at coming near the common people, he freely mixed with the humblest in the streets and in their homes. As "the friend of sinners," he thus treated the legal rules of defilement with indifference. He was pleased with the amenities of life. He did not decline the anointing of his head or beard, or the washing of his feet at each resting-place,\(^1\) and his daily food was not that of a hermit, like John the Baptist, for we find him permitting the use of wine, bread and honey, fish, flesh, and fowl.\(^2\) Yet there was no extravagance, for he enjoined on his disciples, the strictest moderation, both in dress and living, setting them in all things an example.\(^3\) In his familiar intercourse with the Twelve there was no reserve. They saw him in every light; but this close and constant knowledge tended day by day to an increasing reverence and love, for we find them afterwards speaking of their intercourse with him as a hallowed memory, which grew more sacred with the lapse of years. His condescension, the endearments of his tender friendship, the peace and calm of his spirit, remembered in connection with his almighty power, filled their hearts with loving adoration, which made it their one supreme longing, after he had left them, that he might speedily return, or that they should depart to be for ever with him.

He always travelled on foot, and doubtless often felt grateful for a cup of cold water as he toiled over the bare sun-scorched chalk hills of Galilee or Judea. When he found a temporary home, he blessed it on entering, with the words: "Peace be to this house," and did not trouble himself, like the Rabbis, with any scruples about the legal "cleaness" of

\(^1\) Matt. vi. 16; xxvi. 6; Luke vii. 44.
\(^2\) Matt. xi. 19; vii. 10; x. 29; xiv. 17; Luke xxiv. 42; John xxi. 18.
\(^3\) Matt. xi. 8; viii. 20; x. 9; Phil. iv. 12.
tables, benches, or vessels. If he met inhospitality, he quietly went forward to another village, except in special cases, when even his gentle spirit was roused, and then his protest was confined to shaking the very dust of the place from his feet.

The summer passed in continuous labour throughout wide districts. Wherever he appeared, crowds gathered, anxious to see and hear him. The sick came or were brought, that he might heal them. From morning to night, day after day, there

[Image: The Gift of a Cup of Cold Water]

was an unbroken strain on his whole nature; excited throngs pressing even into the retirement of the house in which he might be resting, and leaving hardly time or free space for meals. All this must have been very wearying, for he had not only to bear the sight of every form of misery, but to endure the exhaustion of his nervous and physical strength by constant labour and excitement. Still more, he was borne down by the want of
sympathy among so many, for though all were willing to hear him, few went farther.

Meanwhile, even the success he enjoyed made the authorities daily more bitter. Their power and pocket were both in danger, for he assailed their teaching and even their personal shortcomings; thus, in their opinion, attacking religion itself, of which they were the public representatives. While he had only a few disciples they could afford to neglect him, but he constantly gave fresh grounds of provocation. Twelve apostles had been chosen; the people thronged to hear him; and if not stopped, he might create a great party.

That he performed wonderful miracles could not be denied, but they might be ascribed to unholy aid from Satan, and thus be made to tell against rather than for him. He had healed at Capernaum a man blind, dumb, and possessed by a devil, and a cure so astounding naturally led many to ask themselves whether he must not be the Messiah, but the Rabbis insinuated that he was in league with the devil. After the miracle he had returned to Peter's house wearied and faint, but an excited crowd followed him, pressing even into the room where he was, so that he could not get a moment's rest for necessary food. Among others, some Scribes had entered, for no good end, but Jesus read their scowling faces, and knew how they spoke of him, and he determined now to rebuke them publicly.¹

"Every one knows," said he, "that if a kingdom be divided against itself it cannot stand. Now my life is devoted to the destruction of the kingdom of Satan, and how can it be he who gives me power to work his own ruin? You say that you cast out spirits; by whose power do you pretend to do so? You use magic spells and all the rules of the black art, and that looks, indeed, like invoking Beelzebub. But if I cast them out by the power of God, He must be near! A devil can only be driven

away by one stronger than himself, and therefore I must be
greater than the power of Evil. Think what a sin you commit
in speaking so! It is the Spirit of God that works through me,
and you blaspheme Him by your language, for you have shut
your eyes against the light. But to blaspheme the Spirit of
God is a sin which cannot be forgiven, since it is He alone who
gives spiritual life. The soul guilty of this has chosen dark-
ness as its portion. Beware, therefore. If my acts be like
good fruit from a good tree, call them so, but do not call a tree
bad if its fruits be good.” Growing more indignant as he went
on, he denounced them as a generation of vipers! Their
blasphemy was natural to them, for a good heart spoke worthy
words, but only a bad heart such words as theirs! By their
words they would be judged at last!

At this point some Scribes and Pharisees, while asserting that
he was helped by the devil, asked a sign from heaven in sup-
port of his claim to be the Messiah. His miracles, it would
seem, were not enough. It was expected that the Messiah
would do something on a great scale; perhaps throw down the
walls of Jerusalem by a word, or divide the Jordan and make
a dry pathway through it for his followers. Men blind to the
signs of God’s presence with Christ, and unmoved by his
gracious words, were the worst enemies of the truth, and as
such he turned from them with saddened heart. The only
sign he would give, said he, would be his own death and
resurrection, which he compared to the wonders related of
Jonah. His words and deeds were “signs” so marked and
all-sufficient, that the heathen of Nineveh, who repented at the
preaching of Jonah, would, hereafter, rise in judgment against
those round him for their unbelief. The Queen of Sheba would
condemn them, for she came from afar to listen to Solomon,
while they slighted him, though greater than their famous
king. They had, indeed, both under the ministry of John, and
under his own, in large numbers professed penitence and pro-
mised reform, but it had all passed away, as when a soul, left
for a time by an evil spirit, was entered, ere long, by seven still worse.

He had silenced the Rabbis, and, in doing so, had deepened their hatred. But worse awaited him. His enemies had hinted that his brain was affected, and this insinuation had reached his family at Nazareth. Very possibly its members, regarding the Rabbis with superstitious reverence, accepted their hideous suggestion that he was possessed by a devil. Like their countrymen they could not think of him as the Messiah, so long as he remained only a teacher and did not become a political leader. Capernaum was only about seven hours' distance from Nazareth, over the plains of Battauf. They would go and see him for themselves; and so, Mary and the half brothers and sisters of Jesus—Joseph being dead—set out for Peter's house.¹

They arrived at the very time when Our Lord was still surrounded by the crowd who had seen the cure of the blind, dumb, and possessed man, and when the Rabbis had been silenced by him. He was worn out with the toil and excitement of the last months, and needed rest, but his relatives instead of looking at matters thus, fancied his mind affected by religious enthusiasm, and resolved to take him home by force, if necessary, and keep him for a time under restraint. What this meant we know from the chains and fetters with which the possessed man in "the country of the Gadarenes" was loaded.²

As it happened, when his mother and those with her arrived, they could not get to him for the crowd, and had to pass him word of their presence and wish to speak with him. But even the tenderest relationship could not be considered while his whole soul was engrossed with the interests of the Kingdom of God which he was proclaiming and defending. "Who is my mother?" asked he, "and who are my brethren?" Then, stretching his hands towards those around him, "Behold,'

¹ Mark v. 3, 4. ² Matt. xii. 46-50; Mark iii. 31-35; Luke viii. 19-21.
said he, "my mother and my brethren, for whosoever shall do the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Foiled in their effort to brand Our Lord as in league with the devil, the Pharisees appear to have resolved to entrap him by the subtler plan of pretending friendliness. One of them, therefore, asked him to join the light morning meal, then lately introduced into Palestine by the Romans; and though he knew the insincerity of the compliment, he at once complied. It was thought, perhaps, that in the company of a circle of Rabbis he might be drawn out to his hurt, but the miscalculation was soon evident. Washing the hands before eating was, as we have seen, a matter of first importance to a Pharisee. "It is better," said one Rabbi, "to die of thirst than to break the commandment, and thus die eternally." Moreover, Christ had just come from a crowd, and ought to have bathed before coming to table, and yet he quietly took his place without attending to either of these legal requirements. The host and his guests, shocked at this, soon betrayed their real feelings towards him, but he turned on them, knowing they were already his deadly enemies, and rebuked their attention to mere forms while disregarding matters much more weighty. "They cleaned the outside of the cup and platter," said he, "but were full of greed and wickedness within, while God requires purity in the heart, not worthless rites. They tithed small herbs, such as mint and rue, and were indifferent to uprightness and the love of God. Their whole life was mere acting. They loved the chief seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the crowded market-places: in short, they were like hidden graves, which defile one when he least expects it."  

Such an attack on the religionists of the day was not easily borne. A "lawyer" present, that is, a Rabbi of a particular class, resented it on the moment as a charge against the Pharisees and Rabbis in all their varieties. This interruption,

1Luke xi. 37-54.
however, only turned Christ against the "lawyers," especially. They loaded men, said he, with a burden of forms and rites which the toiling masses could not possibly observe, and then denounced them as under the curse of God for not doing this impossibility. They affected great zeal for every jot and tittle of the Law, and built sepulchres to the prophets, though they were one in spirit with their fathers who martyred them, and would ere long treat as shamefully the prophets he would send among them—his apostles. These tombs were a witness against them. Their hypocrisy and malignity would, however, bring down on their heads the vengeance of God for the blood of all the prophets slain from the beginning! They pretended to teach the people, but they misled them; they neither entered the Kingdom of God themselves nor would they let others enter.

The die was finally cast. From this time Jesus was fully aware that he was doomed. The unworthy spiritual leaders of the nation could not endure the truth which exposed them, and never rested till they had taken his life. A scene of wild excitement followed. Pressing vehemently round him, the Rabbis baited him with whatever was likely to give them a chance of catching at his answers, and it seemed as if they would even attack him. His great popularity with the multitude, for the moment, however, protected him.

About this time one of the crowd, thinking, perhaps, that, like other Rabbis, he would give an opinion on a question of civil law, asked if he would "speak to his brother, to divide the inheritance with him." But he showed at once that the applicant had misconceived his character. In the fewest words he let it be known that he would not interfere in mere worldly matters. They were not his province.

This incident, however, gave a text on which to deliver an earnest warning against selfish greed and worldliness, and we are indebted to it, besides, for the striking parable of the rich man, whose heart was set on his teeming harvests, and who,
unmindful of the uncertainty of life, resolved to build great barns in which to store them. His many years of enjoyment were, alas! only a dream, for that very night his soul was required of him! It is thus, said Our Lord, with him who heaps up treasures for himself, and is not rich towards God. Death strips him of all, and that, often when he least expects it.¹

¹ Luke xii. 18-21.
CHAPTER XVII.

THE meal in the house of the Pharisee marks the first violent outbreak of the fierceness of Christ’s enemies. As he left, the Rabbis followed him, with fierce words and angry gesticulations, till a great crowd had gathered, some for, others against him. He could no longer be silent. What would he say? Pressing through the multitude, and stepping into a boat floating close to the land, he delivered the first of a wonderful succession of parables; henceforth using this form of picture-lesson as his usual mode of address. As he sat in the boat the fertile slopes behind would show the sower going forth from his cabin, to sow his patch on the open hill-side, with its varied soil; here, crossed by a path, there, full of the seeds and roots of thorns and weeds, or boasting only a thin layer of soil over the rock, or, perhaps, offering a stretch of rich and deep earth. From this he preached his sermon. The seed was good, and the Sower did his work faithfully; but the result depended not only on what was sown, or on the rain, and light, and heat, which came equally on all the hill-side, but also on the soil itself. Part fell on the path, now hard, but once as soft as the best, and was crushed under foot by the feet of men and beasts, or picked off by the birds. Some fell on spots where thistles had already taken root, and would soon outgrow it; some on the shallow skin of earth over the rock, which hindered the grain from striking down, and supplied no moisture to feed it, and only a part fell on good soil and yielded a return for the sower’s toil. So was it with the sowing of the Word of God!

As the Parable of the Sower describes the earliest stage of a religious life, others treat of its growth in the individual and the world at large. It was like the silent growth of seed, said Christ, which springs up successively into the blade, the ear, and the ripened corn.\(^1\) Or it was like a grain of mustard seed, which, though at first a mere speck—the smallest of seeds usually sown—grows to a bush from eight to twelve feet high,\(^2\) in which the birds of the air lodge; or it was like a spot of yeast put into flour and silently leavening the whole. As the seed ripens into corn, or the mustard grows to a tree, or the yeast spreads through the meal, the new Kingdom of God would triumph in the individual, and finally over the world. They looked for it to be spread by force; it was to extend only by conviction and love.

That there should be hindrances was natural, and these he illustrated by comparing them to tares, or rather darnel, sown in a man's field by his enemy, and not to be known from the grain till both had come to fruit. For the sake of the wheat both were left till the harvest time, and then, when the weed had flowered, it would be picked out from the wheat before reaping, and gathered in bundles for burning, while the wheat would be carried, when thus separated, into the barn: a custom one may still see in Palestine. Many would pass themselves off as Christians who were not really so, but they would be separated in the end. He further compared his kingdom to a net cast into the lake, and enclosing good fish and bad. When full, it is drawn to shore, and the good gathered into vessels, while the bad are cast away.

The supreme worth of sincere godliness was taught in different parables. It was like a treasure hidden in a field, to gain which the finder bought the field at the cost of all he had. Or it was like a costly pearl for which a travelling merchant, perhaps in Ceylon, parted with everything. These and the other parables now strung together in the gospels may not

\(^1\) Matt. xiii. 24–53. \(^2\) Riehm. *art. “Senf.”*
have been spoken at one time, but it is easy to imagine that, with Our Lord's wealth of illustration, they might have been so, had he pleased. His mind overflowed with such vivid pictures, so that it was no labour to him to pour them forth in ever fresh variety.

But evening came at last, and found him wearied with the toil and excitement of the day. Capernaum, however, could no longer be the quiet home it had been. The slanders of the Rabbis turned many against him, so that he was fain to seek peace by another circuit through the land. Besides, his apostles needed the wider experience such journeys brought. The lonely tableland on the other side of the lake stretching far to the east of the Jordan—a region more heathen than Jewish—offered a safe retreat. Instead of returning to Peter's house, therefore, he ordered his disciples to row him to the opposite shore, where he might have rest and be beyond his enemies. But the incidents of the day were not yet over. A crowd had followed him to the beach and were watching his departure, when one of them, a Rabbi, asked leave to follow him as a disciple, expressing his willingness to attend him wherever he went.¹ To have a Rabbi in his train might have seemed very desirable, but Our Lord admitted to his company only those whose sincerity was beyond question, whatever their position. He returned, therefore, an answer which would test the applicant's motives. "The foxes," said he, "have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Driven from Capernaum, he was homeless, and wished the Rabbi to know this. To a second applicant who wished, as he said, to bury his father before joining the disciples, a startling answer was given. Thirty days mourning for the dead were involved in the delay. Under other circumstances Christ would have commended such filial piety, but it was now to be taught by a supreme example that when decision for God was involved, even the most sacred natural feelings must be

¹ Matt. viii. 18-27; Mark iv. 35-41; Luke viii. 22-25.
made subordinate. "Let the (spiritually) dead bury their
dead," said he, "but go thou and preach the Kingdom of God."
In making this demand, so strange to us, Jesus was only copy-
ing a rule laid down by the Rabbis. Their disciples were
required constantly to act thus, and no less could be asked in
the service of the New Kingdom of God. A third who sought
leave to bid his family circle farewell before following Christ,
received an answer very similar. "No one having put his
hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom
of God:" he must have an undivided heart, distracted by no
earthly regrets.

As he was being rowed over the lake, the weariness of a
long day soon brought deep sleep, though the rough planks
of the fishing boat were his only couch. My own dragoman
laid himself thus in the bottom of the boat in which I sailed
over the same waters, and presently fell into a similar heavy
slumber. A sudden storm, however, such as is common on the
lake, presently swept down from the hills, and at once
roughened the water so that the boat was nearly swamped.
It was such a storm, it may be, as I saw drive over the lake,
with fierce wind and lashing rain, lasting only a short time,
but a hurricane while it continued. Amidst the wild uproar
of the elements, even bronzed fisher-folk like the Twelve,
blinded by the rain, unable to row for the wind, and like to
founder, lost their presence of mind. Jesus, however, lay still
asleep; so utterly had he been exhausted. At last, in their
alarm, they ventured to rouse him, and appealed to his pity
to save them. Rising, with calm self-possession, which was
itself a rebuke, he gently chided their fears, and then address-
ing the wind and the sea, as if they had been living powers,
commanded them to be still. Nor did they for a moment fail
to own his authority, for a great calm spread forthwith around.
"What manner of man is this?" muttered the Apostles, "for he
commands even the winds and the waves, and they obey him."

1 Matt. viii. 23; ix. 1; Mark iv. 36; Luke viii. 22-26.
The boat had meanwhile reached the other side of the lake, near the half-heathen city of Gadara, or Gerasa, now represented by the hamlet of Khera, which lay on the tableland, and was reached by a path up a steep gorge in cliffs here and there hollowed out into tombs, perhaps even then ancient. In some one of these, two furious madmen, whom no chains could bind, had made their abode, to the terror of passers-by. Both presently rushed out towards Our Lord with wild cries, imploring him not to trouble them, for they were not only

Mourners.

insane, but possessed by devils. One, especially, ran and fell down before him. "What is thy name?" said Christ, addressing not the man but the spirit which enslaved him. "Our name is Legion, for we are many," was the terrible reply. Forthwith came the command to leave their unfortunate victim, but, true to their nature, they were fain to do some harm even in departing. On the open ground near, a great herd of swine, the abomination of the Jew, were feeding—owned by some one who supplied the heathen market of Gerasa with such food, and with swine to sacrifice. "Send us into
them," cried the devils, "and do not drive us into the abyss;" a request followed, when granted, by the whole herd rushing violently down the cliff into the lake, where they were drowned. As Lord of all, Jesus was free to act as he chose, for all things are his by the supreme right of creation. Such awful power, following the amazing calm wrought on the lake by a word, must have been a further step in training the apostles to trust their Master, and to feel that whatever he might say came with an authority that could carry it into effect.

He would have liked to stay in this new district, but the terror and ill-will excited by the cure of the maniac and the destruction of the swine, had raised so great an excitement that he was forced to return to Capernaum. He had scarcely landed again at his own town, when a demand which he could not resist was made on his sympathy. The only daughter of Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogue, a girl of twelve, lay at the point of death. This sore trouble had so moved her father, that notwithstanding all that had been said against Christ by the Rabbis, he made his way to him, and falling at his feet, as inferiors in the East do before those much above them, besought him to come and lay his hand on the child and restore her to health. A heart like that of Jesus could not resist such an appeal, and he forthwith set out for the ruler's house. Before arriving there, however, a message came that the sufferer was dead. But they little knew who was on his way to help them. "Be not afraid," said he to Jairus, "only believe." The death chamber, when he arrived, was already full of neighbours, friends, wailing-women, and players on dirge-flutes, making great lamentation. Putting all out but the father and mother of the child, he went in with Peter, James, and John, who were to witness his triumph over the king of terrors. Taking the dead one by the hand, and using words of his people—Talitha cumi—Damsel, arise—the spirit returned to the pale form, and she
rose and walked. It was a sign, however, of his danger from the Rabbis, that he enjoined silence as to the miracle, lest his enemies might be still more excited against him.

A touching incident had happened on the way. A woman troubled for many years with an internal ailment which no physician could relieve, came behind him in the crowd, and ventured to touch the tassel of his tallith. Slight as was this contact, it sufficed to heal her, but he felt what had been done, and, turning, asked who had touched him. No longer able to hide her act, and alarmed lest she might be punished by the renewal of her trouble, she fell down before him and told him all the truth. It was enough. "Daughter," said he, "thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."  

The excitement caused by the miracles of Our Lord seems to have attracted, from far and near, as many needing his help as found the means of reaching his presence. On the way from the house of Jairus two blind men followed him to Peter's house, appealing to him to restore their sight, and this he did by a touch of their eyes, in return for the faith shown in his power. Another miracle recorded of those days was the casting out a devil from one who was dumb, so that the sufferer henceforth spoke freely. But no proofs of his divine gifts could silence the bitterness of his enemies. "He casts out devils by the help of the prince of devils," was still their explanation of what was happening. That he recognised and healed classes on whom they looked as under the curse of God, and from whom they stood aloof for fear of defilement, seemed a reflection on their own teaching and conduct.  

The Twelve had not yet gone out on any independent mission, but they were rapidly gathering experience which would fit them to be thus trusted. They had still, however,

1 Matt. ix. 18-26; Mark v. 22-43; Luke viii. 41-56.
2 Matt. ix. 27-34.
something to learn, which each day's experience was supplying. Jesus had never visited Nazareth since his leaving it, and yearned to remove from his mother and her circle the impressions received from the constant calumnies of the Rabbis. It was a grave matter to go there, but in company with his disciples he set out, and was soon under his mother's roof. He had to explain to her the error she shared with her nation in thinking the Messiah was to be a great national prince, heading a revolution against the Romans, and we cannot doubt that he was fully successful. It was necessary, moreover, to calm her mind, agitated as it was by the opposition he had met, and to justify the consuming zeal which had made him "a man of sorrows."

When Sabbath came he had the joy of attending morning worship in the synagogue, while she sat behind the lattice in the woman's gallery. After the reading of the Law, he stood up in silent offer to read the lesson of the day from the Prophets, and was forthwith called to the desk to do so. It was taken from Isaiah, and spoke of himself in words that could not be misunderstood. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." Then, sitting down, he began, as was the custom, an explanation of the passage, applying the predictions of the prophet to himself. But that one whom the hearers had known from his childhood should advance such lofty claims for himself, seemed sheer blasphemy. "Is not this the carpenter?" whispered one to another, "The son of Mary and Joseph, the brother of James, and Joses, and Jude, and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" They could not believe that he could be

1 Mark vi. 2.
2 Isaiah lxi. 1, R.V.
3 Luke iv. 22; Mark vi. 3.
justified in claiming to be the subject of Isaiah's prophecies. Besides, he made free with the traditions of the elders, and spoke on his own authority, without having been trained in the schools, or ordained by the Rabbis, and had been declared by them to be inspired by the devil.

As the murmuring rose louder and louder, Jesus at last turned against his assailants, and told them that, if they wanted him to prove his claims by such miracles as he had wrought elsewhere, he would not work them, since they were so prejudiced. He would rather act like Elijah, who withdrew from Israel when it rejected him, and went to the heathen widow of Sarepta, or like Elisha who healed only Naaman the Syrian, though there were many lepers of his own race in the land. Their hardness of heart would drive him forth to such as would receive him, be they whom they might. They could stand no more. Furious at the mention of the heathen being in any case preferred to their own nation, the whole congregation rose in wild clamour, and drove him towards one of the many steep walls of rock round the town, to cast him down headlong. But his time was not yet come. Passing through the fierce mob, he left the town unhurt—never to return to it.

The apostles were now to be raised from mere followers of Our Lord to be workers with him. The times were sadly out of joint, and sorely needed to hear the good news he brought. The whole country rang with the story of a massacre of Galileans, while sacrificing in the Temple, Pilate having let loose his soldiery on them, to quell a tumult they had raised—perhaps that in which Barabbas, afterwards freed instead of Jesus, was arrested as a ringleader. He had also shocked the national bigotry by taking some of the money lying useless in the Temple, towards building a great aqueduct, much needed for the water supply of Jerusalem. That money given to the Church should be used for even such a purpose was held to be sacrilege, though it was hoarded, we may well believe, to raise a revolt against the Romans!
A cry to rise and avenge the murdered pilgrims was heard on every side, but had no countenance from Our Lord. His countrymen saw in everything signs from heaven in their own favour, but he read matters very differently. Israel, he said, was like a barren fig-tree, which might be spared another year, to see if any pains would make it fruitful, but, these failing, it would be cut down as merely cumbering the ground. To save it, if possible, he would now send forth the Twelve.

Calling them together, therefore, he gave them instructions and invested them with miraculous powers, by which to confirm what they might say. They were for the present to confine themselves to the Jews, avoiding Samaria, and heathen districts; in fact, taking Galilee for their field of labour. Their Jewish prejudices unfitted them, as yet, for the wider missions they were to undertake hereafter. Their journeys were to cost nothing, beyond the food and shelter which hospitality might offer: in this respect copying the good example of the Rabbis. They were to take no money whatever in their girdles, the common Eastern purse, nor a wallet for their food by the way, though Jews everywhere were known by their carrying one, nor were they to have anything but the sandals of the common people on their feet, and they were to have only one staff. Perfect simplicity was thus enforced, but, also, a striking independence of the ideas of the time, for the absence of a wallet exposed them to the danger of eating “unclean” food. Two were to go together, to cheer and sustain each other; but they were not to indulge in the tedious salutations usual at meeting or parting. Time was too precious for mere forms, especially when they were hollow and insincere like the ordinary profuse and wearisome greetings and adieus. If any house received them, they were to invoke on it heavenly peace; but if a house or city refused to give them entrance, they were to leave it, shaking off its dust from their feet as they did so.

To these general rules and counsels a series of warnings were added, which might well have dismayed men less in earnest. Instead of any prospect of honour or reward, they were to look only for universal hatred and bitter persecution; jails, whipping, and even death being set before them as their certain doom, with no other consolation than the assurance that if they were faithful to the last their souls would be saved hereafter. They would be like helpless sheep in the midst of fierce wolves. Their experience would be different each day: a kindly reception greeting them in one place, opposition at another. They might expect the worst, for they could not hope to fare better than their Master; but Providence would watch over them.

How long this first mission lasted, or what parts were visited, is not told, but its success was cheering, as they appeared, two by two, in the villages of Galilee. The work of Our Lord became the topic of the hour, and his name penetrated even into the palace of Herod Antipas in Tiberias. He had now been about two years before the world, and he was steadily rising in popular favour, in spite of the Church authorities. The report of his miracles, showing high relations with the unseen world, alarmed the guilty tetrarch, for he could not get out of his thoughts the murder of John the Baptist, of which he was guilty. Could it be he, come back from the dead? The very thought made him tremble in his gilded halls. Others wondered if he could be Elijah, whom many expected to appear before the coming of the Messiah; or was he Jeremiah, the patron saint of the nation, or some other of the ancient prophets?

Christ and the apostles met once more in the neighbourhood of Capernaum or, perhaps, of Tiberias, after their temporary separation. He himself had been away, as well as his missionaries, and his reappearance was the signal for fresh

1 Matt. xi. 1; xiv. 1, 2, 6–12; Mark vi. 14–16, 21–29; Luke ix. 7–9.
2 Mark vi. 80.
excitement. Every village poured out its humble throng, once
more, to hear him, so that he had not leisure even to eat, and
could not obtain the quiet he so much needed. It was not
safe, moreover, to remain longer in the territory of Antipas,
and he therefore crossed over to that of Philip beyond the
broad swamps, the delight of the black buffalo of the district,
through which the Jordan enters the lake. On the farther
side of these the country rises and falls, to the north-east, into
green slopes and pleasant valleys running up, in those days, to
the town of Bethsaida Julias, where Philip was before long to
be laid in a grand tomb. From Capernaum the spot looks like
a green bay rising gently from the lake; the tableland which
skirts the east side of the waters forming its southern slope.
Was it possible to find a retreat here? He would not be seen
from the other side, might he not get away thus from the
crowds? But his boat had been watched as it crossed. The
point to which he was making was six miles by water, but
boats were not to be had. Rather than lose him, therefore,
the people set off on foot, crossing above the marshes, and
reaching Christ from the north-west. As it was near the
Passover, a large number of the eager multitude were on their
way to Jerusalem, while the peasants of all the villages round
brought with them their sick that they might be healed. Nor
were they disappointed, for as they came near, he healed
these unfortunates by a word or touch. There were greater
wants, however, than those of the body, and he could not
refuse ministering also to them. Ascending the slope and
gathering all before him, he "spake to them of the King-
dom of God, and taught them many things." Meanwhile
evening approached, and they would soon need to return
home. Food could not be had in that lonely place; how could
they even get back without it, for many had come far? Feeling
this, the apostles urged Our Lord to dismiss them. Instead

  3 John vi. 4.
of doing so, he ordered that they first be all fed. Thirty or forty pounds worth of bread would, however, only give a morsel to each, and they had five small flat cakes of barley bread and two small fishes. But these were abundance with Christ at hand. "Make them sit down," said he. It was spring, and the slopes were rich with young grass—that simplest and

**Peter Sinks, but is Saved by Christ.**

most touching lesson of the care of God for all nature—and on this as a royal tapestry, the multitudinous guests were soon arranged, in companies of fifties and hundreds, reminding St. Peter, long after, from the bright colour of their Eastern dresses, of the flower beds of a great garden.

This done, Jesus took the loaves of the apostles and the fishes, and having first thanked the Eternal Father for them,
broke off portions to the Twelve, to hand to the crowds. But to their unspeakable wonder, in dividing these, they so multiplied, as not only to satisfy the hunger of five thousand men, besides women and children,¹ but to leave enough, after all had eaten, to fill twelve of the little food baskets or wallets which Jews always carried with them. More was left than there had been at first! The effect of such a miracle was in keeping with the spirit of the times. Murmurs ran through the crowds that Jesus must be the Messiah, and, as such, they were ready to put him at their head, there and then, and march under his wonder-working leadership against the hated Romans. But such dreams had no charm for Our Lord, and he therefore hurriedly left them, retiring into the hills beyond their reach, after sending off the Twelve, to return to the other side of the lake by boat.²

Not liking, however, to leave without him, they waited for him till night, and only rowed off then in the belief that he must have gone round by the head of the lake. When but part of the way across, however, a sudden squall burst on them, perhaps like one I myself saw from the heights over Tiberias. It was the last watch of the night—between three and six in the wild morning, and there was still a third of the distance to row. Jesus had stilled such a storm before, but he was not with them now, and they were worn out. Suddenly, however, close to the boat, they saw, through the gleam of the water and the broken light of the stars, a human form walking on the sea. Superstitious, like all seafaring men, they broke into cries of terror. But it was only for the moment. Presently, near at hand, heard above the roar of the wind and the splash of the waves, came the sound—"Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid." Always impulsive, Peter could not wait till Christ came. "Might he go to him on the waters?" A moment more and he dashed overboard, but only to give

¹ Matt. xiv. 21.
² Matt. xiv. 22–33; John vi. 15–21; Mark vi. 43–52
a memorable lesson, for while he kept his eyes on his Lord he
trod safely, but turning them in fear to the waters, he began
to sink. The helping hand was near, however, and the two
were in the boat after a few steps, and then the wind suddenly
lulled and the apostles pulled through calm waters to the
shore. No wonder that Peter kneeled at his feet, and owned
him, for the first time human lips had done so, as "of a truth
the Son of God."
CHAPTER XVIII.

NUMBERS of those miraculously fed at El Batiha had slept in the open air through the night; the warm spring making this delightful. They lingered on the spot, thinking Jesus was still in the neighbourhood; but finding, in the morning, that he had left, as many as could crossed in wood boats and the like, to Capernaum, seeking for him. Nor was he difficult to find. As they landed, he was on his way to the synagogue, attended by a crowd who, as usual, had brought their sick that he might heal them as he passed.¹

The preceding day had sorely grieved him, for it was clear that his hearers had little interest in his teaching, being too much preoccupied by ideas about the Messiah very opposite to his. His miraculous power excited in their behalf, had only made them clamour for still further use of it for their personal or political benefit. To raise their thoughts, therefore, to worthier subjects, he urged them to seek spiritual good from his words—speaking of them as "bread from heaven!" which would give them eternal life. Always gross in their ideas, they fancied he referred to some new precept they were to observe, and were confounded when he told them it meant only that they should accept him as the Messiah sent from God. The miracle of the preceding day had been either seen or was known by all round him, but the appetite for wonders as a proof of Messiahship knew no bounds. Could he not make bread rain down on them from heaven, as Moses did? The Rabbis had told them the Messiah would do this—for was it

¹ John vi. 22; vii. 1; Matt. xiv. 34–36; Mark vi. 53–56.
not written, "There will be abundance of corn in the land"? But to their astonishment he told them that the gift of Moses was not the true bread of heaven: it fell only from the lower air, while that which he would give them came down from the higher sky, from the great Father above.

Fancying he spoke of bread which would really make them immortal, many voices instantly clamoured for this wonderful gift. To their confusion Jesus answered that he, himself, was the bread of life. He had come down from heaven, he told them, to give them eternal life, and would assuredly, at the last day, raise all who accepted it at his hands. These words created a great sensation. Every one knew his family at Nazareth—Joseph, Mary, and the rest, and how could he say he had come down from heaven! He must be mad or possessed. Moreover, the Rabbis said that when the Messiah appeared no one would know whence he came.¹

But the crowd expected quite different benefits from the Messiah than being made better men by his instructions. He had told them that he must be "lifted up"—that is, crucified, while the Rabbis said that the Christ would never die.² He offered himself to them as a spiritual teacher, while they wished a revolutionary leader. "This is a hard saying," muttered most of his hearers, "who can hear it?" "He is not the Messiah for me," said others.³ He had disappointed popular expectation, and was henceforth forsaken by the multitude.

From this time Our Lord was no longer popular. It seemed as if even the Twelve would leave him, but Peter warmly pledged their loyalty. "To whom," said he, "could we go—Thou, only, hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and know that thou art the Holy One of God." Yet even among the apostles, as Christ knew and told them, there was a traitor.

¹ John vii. 27; Heb. vii. 3.
² John xii. 34.
³ John vi. 66.
Meanwhile the Heads of the Church were more than ever determined to crush One who challenged their teachings and lives, and threatened to lessen their influence with the people. Pharisees, Scribes, lawyers, doctors, and disputers, united with priests, Canonists, and Levites to silence, and, if possible, put him to death. Previous attacks having failed, they resorted to a new policy. Their spies reported that he and his disciples were living in open sin. He and they did not wash their hands before eating in the formal way required.

It was a vital act of religion, as then understood, that before tasting food the hands were first to be washed, then the finger tips to be joined and lifted up, so that the water ran down to the elbows, after which they were to be turned down, so that it might run off to the ground. Fresh water was then to be poured on them as they were again lifted up, and twice more, as they were subsequently held down; the washing itself being done by rubbing the fist of one hand in the hollow of the other. To the horror of the Rabbis, it was found that, though they of course took care that their hands were clean before eating, neither Jesus nor his disciples carried out the ceremonial requirements at all. Such independence and audacity were intolerable. It was like setting up rivalry to the Mollahs, in Mecca or Medina.

Resolved to crush so daring an innovator, representatives of the Church now sought Our Lord, asking, with smooth words, how it was that, as a religious teacher, he could permit his disciples to neglect a custom so zealously honoured by all pious Jews and so sacred in their eyes?

Jesus was ready with his reply. They challenged him for slighting a mere form; he charged them with outraging the very fundamentals of morality. "How comes it," said he, "that you accuse me of irreligion for neglecting an empty form commanded only by men, when you, my accusers, habitually break the commands of God? He has, for example, required that we should honour our father and mother, and support them in old
age, but you have invented a plan to enable children to shirk this great duty. If any one, say your Rabbis, is asked by his parents for help, he has only to answer that he has vowed as a gift to the Temple, or in their phrase, has made 'Corban' what he would otherwise have given them, and they can press him no further. You have thus contrived a way to veil your breaking the law of God under a cloak of religiousness. Not contented with thus exposing their insincerity, he now turned on them indignantly as representatives of the Church life of the day. "Ye hypocrites! your religion is a pretence—you are mere actors, playing a part!" Well has Isaiah painted you, when he introduces God as saying, "This people draw nigh me, and honour me with their mouth and lips, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which has been taught them." These words were an open declaration of war against the whole religious world around him, both priests, Rabbis and lay Pharisees. He accused them of being mere make-believes, with no more than a skin-deep religion—mere shams and impostors. It was as if some humble curate, raised by splendid zeal, blameless life, and commanding eloquence, to widely recognised influence in the nation, were to tell our archbishops, bishops, clergy, ministers, and evangelical chiefs among the laity, that they were utterly unworthy of their position—that they made a farce of religion, caring only for an easy life, indifferent to the grossness of existing abuses, and leaving everything to the devil in this world, on pretext that they had only to do with the next. Can there be a doubt that, even if he were right, which, thank God, he would not be,—he would be proclaimed an enemy of religion, and a slanderer of the servants of God? Edward Irving—the one man who has spoken fearlessly in this century—was proscribed for his noble fidelity, and cast out of the Church of his fathers.

1 Matt. xv. 1-20; Mark vii. 1-23.
2 This is the meaning of hypocrites.
3 Isaiah xxix. 13, R. V.
Hatred of prophets is common to every age or country. No brave soul in any pulpit can hope to escape hatred and slander, or even worse, from those whom his outspoken truth rebukes. It was for being thus faithful that Jesus Christ was crucified.

By assailing the hypocrisy of the religious "professors" of his day the die had been cast. But he who had come into the world to witness to the truth, could let no cautious self-interest shut his mouth. The people must know the difference between the real and the false. Calling, therefore, the crowd round him, he impressed on them the lesson to be drawn from his fearless exposure of their teachers. The merely outward, he told them, does not defile; the things that come out of a man—his words and acts—born of his heart—they alone make him impure before God. Simple as this seems to us, it was the knell of mechanical religion for all time. Smooth respectability, exact performance of rites or acts of devotion, exemplary liberality for religious objects, lavishness of good deeds—were nothing, without fearless honesty and boldness in opposing whatever, in the Church or the world, was contrary to the principles they professed.

It was hard even for the Apostles to accept this revolt from their hereditary leaders. Nor was it easy even for Christ to persuade them that those to whom they had always looked with superstitious reverence were only blind guides of the blind, or that the "customs," "traditions and commandments of men," on which they laid 1 such stress, were to be "rooted up" as not "planted" by God. Again and again was it necessary to show them that, to take one example of what was condemned, it did not make a man "unclean" or "defiled" to eat with "unwashed hands," while, on the contrary, to cherish evil in the heart made him vile before God.

Jesus had now roused against him the whole ecclesiastical and religious world. His popularity had in great measure passed

1 Matt. xv. 13.
away before the bitter enmity of the interests he had threatened and the blind fanaticism he had offended. He had for months seen his end approaching, and devoted himself to the religious education of the Twelve, that they might continue his work after he had been put out of the way. He had denounced the religious world as evil, and it hated him for doing so.¹

Rumours of possible action against him by Antipas added to the difficulty of the situation. The murderer of the Baptist could hardly allow a successor of even greater influence to be at large. But the hatred of the Church party was much more dangerous, since it surrounded him everywhere; not in Galilee only. Apparently the first official step towards violence had been taken after his cure of the blind man, on his last visit to Jerusalem, and he had, in consequence, confined him-

¹ John vii. 7; xiii. 21; ix. 22, 24; xii. 42.
self, from that time, to the north. Even there, however, spies, as I have said, dogged his steps, and the synagogues were as a rule shut against him. His innocence and caution availed nothing. His death was determined. Yet it was possible to ward off the catastrophe for a time, and the interval was invaluable for the training of the Twelve. It was necessary, however, that he should, henceforth, move from place to place

![Sidon](image-url)

as safety required, so that we do not find him staying in one locality for any length of time.

The nearer his end came the more essential it was to prepare the Twelve for it, and to show them beforehand that it was part of a divinely ordered plan. Hence he took every opportunity of impressing this on them. His warnings
against the Church officials, priestly and lay, became, moreover, frequent and keener.

Forsaking the shores of the Sea of Galilee, he now turned to the north, taking with him the Apostles. The road lay through a pleasant region of green hills and watered valleys, as he crossed, north-west, to the edge of the heathen territory of Phœinia. From the hills which bounded this he must have looked down on the smoking chimneys of the glass works of Sidon and of the dye works of Tyre; on the lofty warehouses of the docks, stored with the merchandise of the world; and on all the other details of the busy land of the Canaanite; the blue sea stretching away, beyond, to the “coasts of the Gentiles.” He might have expected to remain unknown in such a region, but it was not possible. A woman, by language a Greek, by birth a Phœnician, having heard that he was in the neighbourhood, made her way to him, pleading that he could cure her daughter, who was “grievously vexed with a devil.” His discourse to the poor woman at the well of Samaria, and his bearing towards the outcasts of his own nation—the publicans and sinners,—had shown his goodwill even to those most hated by his people, and he had proclaimed that God was the Father of all men, whatever their race; but the bigotry of his countrymen made it impossible for him to show his sympathy openly with the heathen, since any tenderness to them would at once have shut the hearts of all Jews against his preaching.

The woman’s coming to him when he was virtually in hiding was very disturbing, as it might put his enemies on his track. For a time, therefore, he took no notice of her entreaties, but she was not to be denied, and became only the more earnest from his temporary refusal to hear her. At last the disciples, offended at her pertinacity, urged him to send her away. Was not her race, according to the Rabbis, accursed? Was not Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, their chief god? The answer of Jesus seemed to favour this harshness, when at
length he spoke. "He was not sent," said he, "except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But it was impossible to silence a mother's love. Following him to the house, though he would fain have remained unknown, she cast herself at his feet and renewed her prayer. To the Twelve she was only "a dog," for thus the Jews regarded all heathen. Veiling the tenderness of his heart in affected roughness of speech, softened, doubtless, by the trembling sympathy of his voice and his gentle looks, he told her that the children—Israel, the sons of God—must be fed before others. "It is not right," added he, "to take the children's bread and cast it into the streets to the dogs." But with a woman's quickness, and a mother's love, deepened by trust in him, notwithstanding his words, even this seeming harshness was turned into an irresistible appeal. "Yes, Lord," said she, "it is true; still, the dogs are allowed to eat the fragments that fall from the children's table." She had conquered. "O woman," replied Jesus, "great is thy faith; be it unto thee as thou wilt." His word was enough, and was accepted as such. Going home she found her daughter cured. He had seen this issue from the first, and had intentionally subjected her to a special trial, that the Twelve might learn how even a heathen could put Jews to shame by her simple faith. The miracle, moreover, taught them that not even a heathen was to be sent away unheard.

How long Jesus stayed in these parts is not known, but it would seem as if this incident had forced him to leave sooner than he intended. Crossing the country to the north-east, and passing up the side of Lake Merom, with its sweet open valley, he travelled on to the country round Caesarea Philippi, and then turning south, made for the district east of the Lake of Galilee. Even there, however, his fame attracted multitudes of Jews settled in this half heathen region, and soon surrounded him with crowds, bringing numbers of sick to be healed.¹ Only

¹ Matt. xv. 21-31.
one incident is given in detail. A man had been brought to him who was deaf and could only stammer out unmeaning sounds. Taking him aside, perhaps to have more freedom or to avoid excitement, he put his fingers into the man's ears, and then touched his tongue with a finger which he had moistened on his own lips. These simple forms may have been used to arouse faith where hearing was lost, and thus prepare the heart for the miracle to be wrought. Looking up to heaven, as if to raise the poor man's thoughts to the Eternal Father, Jesus then uttered the single word of the popular dialect—Ephphatha—"Be opened," and the sufferer was cured. This and other wonders, as was natural, soon rang through the land, in spite of all commands to keep them private.

The vast concourse attracted by Christ may be imagined if we remember that it was now spring, with its delicious air, and that the simple habits of the people make sleeping in the open air natural to them, while a few dry figs suffice, if needs be, for their food. Still, as sometimes happens even now among the crowd of pilgrims at Easter, many found their provisions exhausted, so that not a few might have sunk on the way home if no provision were made to supply them. Once more, therefore, the multitude were caused to sit on the grass, and were fed from the scanty means on the spot, which were only seven of the thin round "loaves" of the country, and a few small dried fish from the Lake of Galilee. But these were enough, in Christ's hands, for the hunger of four thousand men, besides women and children; seven baskets of fragments gathered afterwards, showing there had been no stint.

Crossing the lake, he landed at Magdala, at the lower end of the small plain of Gennesaret—a spot now marked only by a few wretched mud hovels on a low knoll, with a miserable population, but then the site of a flourishing village. There, also, he found enemies ready to assail him. In their bitterness, the Pharisees had even united with the infidel Sadducees, whom they hated, and with the faction known as Herodians,
from their supporting the abhorred line of "the Edomite Usurper." Eager for a fresh dispute, these curious allies, very likely strangers from Jerusalem, forthwith opened a discussion, during which they hoped he might add to the charges already recorded against him.

"You claim," said they, "to be the Messiah, and have wrought many 'signs' in proof of your being so. But how do we know that these are not wrought by help of the devils, of whom the earth and air are full? The Egyptian magicians did wonders, but our fathers rightly disbelieved them. If, however, you give us a sign from heaven, it will be different, for devils cannot do that. Give us bread from the sky, as Moses did, or fire and rain like Elijah, or make the sun turn back like Joshua."

But the value of proof depends on honest willingness to be convinced. When men are determined not to believe, no evidence affects them. Besides, the truth he taught was its own witness, and hearts unmoved by it were not worthy of his recognition. He turned, therefore, on his tempters, with a few biting words, "How is it," said he, "that you who think you can read the signs of the heavens cannot read those of the times? In the evening you say, as you look to the west, "Fair weather tomorrow, for the sky is red; and in the morning — "Foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering." When you see a cloud rising in the west you say, "A shower is coming," and when the south wind blows, you say, "there will be heat." If God has enabled you to judge of such matters as these, how much more must there be signs of the presence of the Messiah? Your own Scriptures, the events of the day, the preaching of John, and my miracles, teaching, and life, are such signs, if you be willing to read them. As the warning of Jonah to the Ninevites was the only one given them, my preaching will be the one sign vouchsafed to you! Hereafter, indeed, Jonah will be a sign in still another sense, for as he was three days and three nights in the whale's belly,
so I, when you put me to death, shall be the same time in the
tomb, and shall come forth from it as Jonah from his living
grave." So saying, he left them, for it was clearly unsafe to
remain in their neighbourhood. Entering the boat once more,
he crossed to the other side, a fugitive from the vengeance
of the Jewish religious world.

But he had much to bear, not only from his enemies, but
even from the simple fishermen who had given up all to follow
him. They were very slow to understand his words, though
he took care to speak to them only in language which one
would have thought all could comprehend. As they rowed on,
he began to warn them against the teaching of the Pharisees
and Sadducees, who might, otherwise, lead them astray.
"Take heed," said he, "of the leaven of the Pharisees and of
Herod," using the word leaven for teaching, from the likeness
between the effects of the one on the meal with which it was
mixed and those of the other on the mind. The one wrought
a change on the whole of the meal; the other was fitted to act
on their whole ways of thinking. But they were still gross
and dull in their ideas, almost beyond conception. It hap-
pened that they had set off in their hurried flight with only
one loaf in the boat, and they actually thought he referred
to this. They forgot the twice repeated feeding of the multi-
tude from well-nigh nothing. "O ye of little faith," interrupted
Christ, "why do you talk of loaves of bread? Have you for-
gotten what I did in feeding the multitudes? How could you
think you would want when I am with you? Do you not see
that when I spoke of leaven, I meant not bread, but teaching
and influence? Beware of what my enemies say of me or my
discourses. They would fain fill your minds with false ideas,
and turn you from me."

The boat, meanwhile, landed them at the opening of the
green valley at the top of the lake, where he had fed the five
thousand, and up this the little company went, passing through
the town of Bethsaida Julias, so named by Herod Philip, in
honour of the daughter of Augustus, his patron. But the journey was not to end here; Caesarea Philippi, far to the north, was Christ's goal. He could not, however, get away unnoticed. During a short rest, some one who had heard of his presence brought a blind man to him in the street, that he might be touched and healed. To have done so, however, in public, would have attracted notice, and Christ therefore took the sufferer by the hand and led him away to the open space round the village, and there, after touching the blind eyes with his moistened finger, to fix the poor creature's thoughts upon his healer, the sightless orbs were so far restored that he could see the men near, in a cloudy haze, like trees. Another touch, and he could see clearly. "Go to your home," said Jesus, "without returning to the town, and tell no one about it." The less said of the acts or words of Our Lord the safer, at this time. The miracle had waked faith in the poor man, and to do good to one soul was enough for the Friend of sinners.

The retreat to which Christ was making was Caesarea Philippi, on the north-east of Lake Merom, now El Huleh, close to Dan, the extreme northern limit of ancient Israel, as Beersheba was that of the extreme south. Almost on a line with Tyre, it was far away from the Rabbis and priests. Herod Philip had rebuilt the town a few years before Christ's birth, and called it Caesarea in honour of the emperor. It had been the pleasure of his peaceful reign to adorn it with altars, votive images, and statues; and his own name had been added by the people to that which he had given it, to distinguish it from Caesarea on the sea-coast. A great temple of white marble, dedicated to Augustus, had been built in it by Herod the Great, nineteen years before Christ's birth; and Pan, the shepherd god, was worshipped in the hollow recess from which one of the sources of the Jordan bursts out—his name giving the place that which it now bears, Panias or Banias. No spot in the Holy Land is more beautiful. The lofty range of Hermon, often snow-capped, looks down on it from the north—a
towering hill close to it was then surmounted by a great castle, as it is to-day by ruins of a later fortress—lower hills rise on all sides, rich in olives and fruit trees of all kinds, with clumps of verdure, besides, at many points, while glittering streams run down the green slopes in every direction. On the height above the cave of Pan there is even now a magnificent olive grove, and the noisy stream of the Jordan rushes through the village, below a Roman bridge which Christ may have crossed, amidst the deep shadow of overhanging trees. Mills driven by the tumbling water give life to the scene, as perhaps they did two thousand years ago, and a little island just below the bridge, embowered in green, adds an additional charm of colour. The men and women, well grown, straight, and intelligent, seem, in their simple, picturesque dress, appropriate to the locality.

To this, the fairest part in the Holy Land, Jesus had now come, and might have refreshed himself amidst its charms had he been less occupied with higher thoughts. But he was a fugitive and an outlaw, rejected by his people, and safe only here, amongst the heathen. His public work was virtually over, for even in Galilee the Rabbis had poisoned the minds of the people against him, and his steady refusal to become a political Messiah had still further destroyed his popularity. As he would not head a revolt against Rome, but only preached the need of repentance and a better life, the nation, blindly self-righteous, turned against him as an accuser of his brethren. Thinking themselves the favourites of God, and destined to rule the world, under the Messiah, they indignantly resented teaching so subversive of their pride. The death of the Baptist foreshadowed Christ's own fate, and he felt that the crisis of his life had come. It was necessary to prepare the Twelve, to whom, after his death, the spread of his kingdom would be entrusted, for their high office, and to kindle their devotion by proofs of his high spiritual dignity, and power to fulfil his promises of reward to faithfulness, in the
world to come. He had never asked them any question respecting himself, but it was desirable that they should know his true greatness, now that the end was approaching. Before proclaiming him as the Messiah, they must distinctly accept him as such. His new Kingdom was to rest upon the personal love of its members towards him. His words, his life, his self-denial, his submission to the death of the cross as the Redeemer of mankind, were to attract men to him. But until he revealed his surpassing majesty, which hitherto had been concealed, the most powerful impulse to such devotion would be wanting.

Now that he had found rest and quiet in the delightful region of Cæsarea Philippi, he determined to make his great self-revelation to his followers. Retiring for a time to the privacy of the hills, to give his heart relief in communion with the Eternal Father, he returned ready to make the momentous disclosure. "Whom do men say," he asked, "that I, the Son of man, am?" The answer showed how far their ideas fell below the lessons of his teaching. "Some say, like Herod Antipas, that the spirit of John the Baptist has entered thee, and that thou workest thy miracles through its power, or that thou art John himself, risen from the dead, and appearing under another name. Some, that thou art Elijah, who, like Enoch, never died, but was taken up alive into heaven, and has now returned, as Malachi predicted, to prepare for the Messiah. Some, that thou art Jeremiah, come to reveal where he hid the Ark and the sacred vessels, in Mount Nebo, and thus introduce the Messiah; or that thou art one of the prophets, sent from the other world as a herald of the Deliverer." They could not yet add that they regarded him as the Messiah. Following up these answers, he went on to ask, "But whom say ye that I am?" and forthwith from the warm impulsive heart of Peter came all that he waited to hear. "Thou, my Master and Lord," said he, "art the Christ, the Son of the living God." In spite of all prejudices in favour of
a Messiah who should found his kingdom by the sword, Peter, at least, saw the far higher glory of a peaceful Messiahship of truth and love. Nor did Jesus hesitate to accept this ascription of supreme dignity. "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonas," said he; "flesh and blood hath not revealed this to you—my Father in heaven has made it known to you." Intercourse with Christ, and even his teaching, had been insufficient. The revelation of his greatness was from above, and the confession was earnestly adopted by the other apostles as their own. They had at last caught a momentary glimpse of his true glory.

That Peter should have been the first to utter this homage brought him a noble reward. The future Church would rest on him—the rock-like man, well called Peter, the Rock—as a foundation-stone, itself resting on Christ, the Living Rock, beneath. Built up thus, the gates of death would be powerless against it, for it would outlive time. Varying the figure, Peter would be not only a rock-like foundation-stone, but also the head of the new Society during his life. Its keys were to be in his hands, to admit the worthy, and to shut out the undeserving—in other words, its government and discipline were committed to him. How he used this authority was seen by his rising as the mouthpiece of his brethren to propose the election of a successor to Judas; by his taking the foremost place on the Day of Pentecost; by his being chosen to admit the Centurion, Cornelius—the first Gentile convert thus honoured—to the fellowship of the Church, and by his constant recognition as the leader of the apostles. But Our Lord, very soon after conferring this great honour on Peter, extended it, in its essentials, to the rest of the disciples, so that the astounding claims based on his so-called primacy are altogether shadowy and unfounded.

As the end of his public life was drawing near, it was, however, necessary that Our Lord should more than ever impress

\[1 \text{ Matt. xviii. 1-18.}\]
on the minds of his followers that he was to be a crucified and risen Saviour, not a Jewish Messiah. From this time, therefore, he spoke often of his approaching violent death. "He must," he told them, "go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." But it is hard to uproot fixed ideas. They still clung to the belief that he would be a great Jewish prince. True to his character, Peter could not quietly hear tidings so gloomy. Taking Christ by the hand, he led him aside, to dissuade him from a journey which was to end so painfully. "God keep this evil far from thee, my Lord and Master," said he. "You must not let it be. It will utterly ruin your work, for such a death is in poor keeping with the dignity of the Messiah. If there be any danger, why not turn it aside by your miraculous power? We cannot bear the thought of your suffering such indignities."

This was the very temptation urged on Our Lord by Satan in the wilderness, to use his divine power for his own advantage, instead of employing it only to carry out the will of his Father. But it was at once driven off. Turning round to Peter he terrified him by the stern words—"Get thee behind me, out of my sight, thou tempter. Thou art laying a snare for me. Thy words are in keeping with the ideas of men who dream of ambition and worldly honour, not with the thoughts and plans of God."

Cesarea Philippi was then a large town, and the beautiful country round was thickly inhabited. Here, as elsewhere, the name of Christ was on all lips, and his presence had soon drawn a large crowd which was round them as he rebuked Peter. Some of them were already inclined to accept him as their teacher, but they, no less than the apostles, needed clear ideas of what he required from disciples. Continuing, therefore, his address, he went on to tell all alike, that his followers, like himself, must suffer before they entered on their reward. No one in those evil times could be a disciple, and escape trials,
far less enjoy life and its comforts. Fidelity to him would, however, secure favour in the world to come. Hereafter he would return in glory and own and admit to his kingdom such as had faithfully confessed him to the end. What that kingdom was, some would, in a measure, see, even before death.¹

CHAPTER XIX.

Eight days later, Our Lord redeemed the promise to reveal his divine glory to some of his followers. Caesarea Philippi, stands, as I have said, amidst lovely hills, some of them richly wooded, and all of them green. He had spent the week in his usual work and was now about to leave the neighbourhood. The apostles must have been strangely troubled since his last warning of the violent death before him, and needed something to cheer them, and sustain their trust in him. He himself, moreover, must have had before him abidingly his approaching fate, with its shame and agony. But the glory to follow the cross must also have risen ever more fully before him, and shed its light on his course. The time had come to allow the most trusted of his little circle to see what lay for him beyond death and the grave.

In the middle ages, and till a comparatively recent period, Mount Tabor, on the plain of Esdraelon, was supposed to be the scene of the Transfiguration. Rising in curious isolation, this height, by its nearness to Christ's Galilean home, seemed most likely to have been honoured by his self-revelation, but a closer study of the gospel shows that he was at Caesarea Philippi when he was transfigured, and the characteristics of Tabor, when carefully examined, of themselves forbid the thought that it could have witnessed the great event. Its flat summit, embracing a circuit of half an hour's walk, was even then fortified, and had been so, apparently, from the earliest

1 Matt. xvii. 1-13; Mark ix. 2-13; Luke ix. 28-36.
ages. Less than a generation after Christ, Josephus mentions that he strengthened the defences. Such a spot, walled off by military works and duly garrisoned, could not have been the scene of the Transfiguration. It was rather to one of the many heights round Cesarea Philippi that Our Lord brought his disciples, to reveal himself to a chosen few of their number.

Taking the three of his little band most closely in sympathy with him, and most prepared for the disclosure he was about to make, he ascended into the upper hills, towards evening, for silent prayer. Peter, James, and John were those so specially favoured; the three, it will be remembered, who had already entered, with their Master, the death chamber in the house of Jairus, and who were, hereafter, to be the only witnesses of the agonies of Gethsemane.

Brought up among the hills, such a region—its distant summits white in spots with snow, even in summer,—its pure air, and the solitude of its wooded slopes and shady valleys, must have been unspeakably grateful to the wearied and troubled spirit of Our Lord. Leaving his companions, he withdrew a short distance, though still in sight, and kneeling down, continued absorbed in prayer till evening fell, and the three, having finished their nightly devotions, had wrapped themselves in their abbas, or wide coats, and lain down on the hill-side to sleep.

But now, as he still prayed, his soul rose above all earthly anxieties, till the divinity within shone through his human form, kindling his very raiment to brightness, like that of the light, or of the snow on the far-off heights of Lebanon. Amidst such splendour the three could not sleep. Roused by it, they gazed, awe-struck, at the wonder, when, lo! two human forms, in glory like that of the angels, stood by his side—Moses and Elijah, the Founder and the Champion of the Jewish Church, which he had come to supersede. Their presence showed that the Law and the Prophets were henceforth to take a second place; but they had also a higher mission. They had passed through
this life to a higher, and having entered on their heavenly reward, were able to speak with Our Lord as no others could, of his approaching death at Jerusalem and the glory that would follow. In such company, anxiety and conflict of soul passed away, not to return till Gethsemane. Henceforth he set his face with a calm joy towards Calvary.

Meanwhile, the three apostles gazed silently on the vision, not knowing what to think. Ere long, however, Moses and Elijah, having ended their communion with Christ, were about to return to heaven. Could they not be induced to stay? Peter, always first to speak, yet hardly knowing what he said, thought he might get them to remain. Might he not make three booths for them and his master, like those of the Feast of Tabernacles; green branches offering themselves on all sides for the purpose?

But now a bright cloud, the symbol of the Divine Presence, came down through the clear sky, and covered Our Lord and his mysterious visitants, and a voice from the midst of it was heard saying—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." The apostles needed such a testimony, and never forgot it. Almost a generation later, Peter in his second epistle still dwells on it, recalling the time he was an eye witness of the majesty of Christ, when he was with him on the holy mount, and heard the heavenly voice.

Sore afraid, the three fell on their faces, for who could stand before God. But when they, at last, dared to look up, the visitors were gone, and Jesus stood beside them, alone. Calming their fears, he requested them to tell no man what they had seen till he had risen from the dead, and then they slowly descended the hill. Such a caution, however, was hard to understand. When was this resurrection to be?—was he to rise alone, or were all the dead to be raised with him?—what did the Rabbis mean by saying that Elijah must come before the resurrection, and that the raising of the dead was to be the sign of the Kingdom of the Messiah having begun? A few
words which showed that John the Baptist had been the forerunner for whom they looked under the name of Elijah, and that Christ, like him, would be put to death, helped to solve their difficulties and add to their regrets; but they could not even yet realize all that his words conveyed.

The traveller in Palestine finds himself even now surrounded at each stopping place by the population of the neighbourhood, in hopes of his being able to cure their ailments, or simply from curiosity. In the same way, Jesus, on his reappearance, found a crowd gathered round his disciples. His absence had brought them trouble, and they were hence doubly glad to see him again. A man in the throng had brought a son liable to fits, that they might heal him; but their attempts to do so failed. Some scribes present, delighted at this, launched out sneers and cavils at them and their Master. Having asked what was the subject in dispute, the father of the boy pressed forward and told his sad tale—how the sufferer foamed at the mouth and gnashed with his teeth, the fits often seizing him when only a kind providence hindered his being drowned or burned. Sad at the want of faith which had prevented his disciples effecting a cure, Jesus rebuked them for having learned so little after being so long with him, and then desired the lad to be brought. No sooner, however, had the poor creature's eyes met those of Our Lord, than he fell to the ground in violent convulsions. "How long has he suffered in this way?" asked Christ. "From childhood," answered the father, adding melancholy details; "but if thou canst do anything at all, have compassion on me and him, and heal him." "If thou canst," replied Jesus, repeating his words. "All things are possible to him that believeth." It was a trying demand from one in so great distress, for we may be willing to believe if we could, and yet be held back by we hardly know what, from doing so as fully as we wish. All he could do was to break out into the pitiful cry which has risen since then from unnumbered hearts—"Lord, I believe; help
thou my unbelief." It was enough. The heart was willing. Turning, therefore, to the boy, Jesus addressed the demon who, it seems, possessed him and so disturbed his nature as to cause his disease—"Speechless and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him." A wild shriek and a dreadful convulsion followed, and then the boy lay still as if he were dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifting him up, gave him over to his father, amidst the loudly expressed wonder of all, at the mighty power of God.

The stay in the district of Cæsarea Philippi soon after this came to a close. Jerusalem had an attraction for Our Lord which he did not seek to resist, though his visit, as he knew, meant his death. Passing, it may be, across the delightful slopes which lie round the ancient site of Dan, he would journey southwards along the sweet valley of Lake Huleh, past the great beds of reeds fringing the blue waters on the north. The landscape is pleasantly undulating, with the hills of Galilee at a short distance on the right, and other hills rising from the edge of the lake, on the left; occasional reed-hut villages dotting the levels on the right shore. He was making his way to his old home at Capernaum, which he was about to visit for the last time. He could no longer, however, show himself as he had done before the Rabbis had stirred up so much ill-feeling against him, and he needed to be very careful in order to avoid arrest, which would have prevented his reaching the Holy City, where, alone, it was fitting he should offer himself up.

He stayed in Galilee therefore only a very short time; his purpose being to visit Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles, which was fast approaching. With the disciples his conversation turned more and more on his approaching death, if, by any means, he might prepare them for it; and he shrank from public notice, though still ready to heal and comfort the wretched who came in his way. It was difficult, however, to
root out from his followers the fixed ideas of their time. He might repeat, once and again, his warnings about the violent death before him; they still fancied that in spite of words so gloomy, he would come forward to establish a great Jewish kingdom, with his throne at Jerusalem, and even disputed on the way to Capernaum what places in it each would hold. All this he heard and saw; but for the time he said nothing, they, themselves trying to keep the matter from him, ashamed that he should know it.

At last he reached his "own town," drawn thither, no doubt, by the intense yearning natural to us all, to see for a last time haunts dear to us in former days. He loved the hills over which he had so often wandered; the orchards and vineyards now putting out their spring blossoms; the houses amidst their gardens, so well known to him.

Very soon after his arrival, the local collector of the Temple tax, seeing him in the street, appealed to Peter for payment of the half shekel due by Christ; a sum which though only equal, nominally, to about fifteen pence of our money, was in reality a considerable amount in that age, as it would have bought wheat enough for a man's use for a fortnight. From this tax the Temple treasury was filled with silver coin, for it was paid by every Jew over the world: vast wealth being thus accumulated for the expenses of the sanctuary, but, still more, for use against the Romans at some favourable opportunity.

That Christ would at once pay the sum due was to be expected, but before doing so he asked Peter whether kings levied taxes from their own children. Were they not free? Since, therefore, he was the son of Him for whose house this tax was raised, surely he ought not to be called on to pay it. Yet it would not do, as things were, to stand on this right. He had no money, however, but all things were in his hands, so that he had only to tell Peter to let down his line in the lake and open the first fish caught. He would find in it a stater, which was
twice as much as was needed. No lesson of trust in God could have been more striking, nor could anything have been more needed by the apostles who, hereafter, would have to depend so constantly on the care with which their wants would be supplied from above.

It was now a fitting time to revert to the discussion he had heard among the apostles by the way, and he accordingly asked them regarding it. Having nothing to say for themselves, he led them into the house, and sitting down, proceeded to disabuse them of their false notions. There was no room in his kingdom, he told them, for any ambition but that of humility, for he would be reckoned greatest in it who was mostlowly in heart. Then, calling a child of the family and lifting him into his lap, he told them that to be truly his they must abandon all their selfish thoughts, and become like the little one before them. It had perfect trust in him; was not disturbed by any dream of earning reward at his hands, but looked up to him with a sweet artless innocence. If any small service were asked of it, there would be no hesitation or thought of self, but instant glad compliance. So must it be with them, if they would have citizenship in his kingdom. Love that thinks first of others and is its own reward, alone made any one his true follower. They must be humble, unselfish, and self-sacrificing, if they would be Christians. Nor must the natural pride of the heart tempt them to look down on those who thus showed a child-like spirit; to honour it would be regarded by him as honouring himself.

On their journey, the Twelve had met some one who was casting out devils in their Master's name, though not following him, and had charged him to desist because he was not one of their number. Our Lord, however, at once ordered them to let him alone. Working in his name, he could not speak against him, and one who was not against him he reckoned on his side. "No one," he continued, "who, because you are my disciples, shows you goodwill, if only by a cup of cold water
on your sultry journeys, is to be lightly esteemed. Even so slight a sign of love to me is noticed with favour above. On the other hand, to turn away any humble soul from me, as you might have turned away him whom you rebuked, is a sin so great that it would be better for you to hang one of the large millstones turned by an ass round your neck, and drown yourselves in the lake than to commit such an offence. And as it is better to die than to lead any one astray, so whatever keeps you from a godly life, if it were dear to you as your foot or your hand, should be put away, that you may not for its sake lose eternal life. Take heed, therefore, not to slight any lowly, child-like soul, for I tell you that all such are under the loving care of the highest angels who stand before God. If you meet with such an one who has gone astray, do your utmost to bring him back. For what shepherd feeding, say, a hundred sheep, on our hills, does not leave the ninety and nine, to go after one that has strayed, searching far and near till he find it? And when he has done so, does he not rejoice more over one thus saved, than over the ninety and nine that had not strayed? So it is a grief, above, that a single soul be lost, and a ground of heavy displeasure if its loss has risen from any fault of my disciples."

"If a brother injure you, do not wait till he come to make amends, but go to him privately and tell him his fault, that, if possible, you may win him and end the trouble. If, however, he will not hear you, go again, with two or three witnesses, that should he still refuse to do right, you may have proof that you, at least, wished to have peace. As a last step you will have to lay the matter before the assembled brethren, that they may use their good offices, and only in case of his refusing to hear even them, are you at liberty to stand aloof from him and treat him otherwise than as a disciple."

That each Christian assembly might have full power to act in such an extreme case he now formally extended to all the Twelve the right to decide in his name as to the exclusion of
the offender from membership in his society. Thus, while Peter had first received power in the infant Church, all the apostles were now put on the same footing, and, indeed, Our Lord went even farther, for he told them that if two of them should agree on any matter thus affecting the interests of his kingdom, and should ask his Father in heaven to grant it, they would be heard. He himself, he added, would always be among them, wherever two or three were gathered together in his name, and that would secure their prayers being answered.

Peter had listened earnestly to this discourse, but felt at a loss to know how far Christ wished the spirit of forgiveness to be carried. Would it do to forgive seven times? "Not seven times, but seventy times seven, if necessary," replied Our Lord. "The servants of a certain ruler," said he, continuing, "having been called to a reckoning, one came who owed him ten thousand talents—a sum which he could not hope to pay. 'Sell him as a slave, with his wife and children and all he has, towards my debt,' cried the ruler. But the servant fell down at his knees, and implored him to have patience and he would be paid in full. Touched with pity, the ruler ordered him to be set free, and not only gave him time, but, knowing he could never pay, forgave him the debt altogether. He had not, however, learned the lesson of mercy thus strikingly taught. Meeting a fellow slave who owed him only a paltry hundred pence, less than the seven hundred thousandth of what he himself owed, he seized him by the throat, and demanded instant payment, rejecting the poor man's appeal for compassion, and casting him forthwith into prison. Such harshness so angered the Master, who soon heard of it, that, calling the offender and upbraiding him for not showing a fellow-slave some of the pity shown to himself, he handed him over to the torturers to deal with in the prison as they thought fit, till he had paid all he owed. In like manner, the infinite pity of heaven in forgiving us our sins should surely
lead us to the widest compassion towards our fellow-men; nor, if we fail in showing this could we hope to escape a worse fate at the hand of God than that of the pitiless creditor in the parable."
CHAPTER XX.

The Feast of Tabernacles was held in the month Tisri; part of our September and October. Christ had been now for about six months virtually hiding from his enemies. Even Galilee was no longer open to him. But the approaching feast at Jerusalem offered a great opportunity of spreading the "good news," and he could not stay away, whatever the danger.

He was still in Capernaum when the northern pilgrims set out to reach the Holy City on the first day of the Feast; a time all the more joyful because it fell on the week after the Day of Atonement—the Jewish Lent. His relations had apparently come over from Nazareth to induce him to accompany them, though, as yet, they had not declared themselves his disciples. "If you be really the Messiah," said they, "surely your proper place is Jerusalem." For they still clung to the idea of a Jewish political empire as the object of the Messiah's coming. But Jesus would not join them. They might go up safely at any time, but the authorities hated him, and to go with his friends would but draw on them official suspicion. He would come up afterwards, with his immediate followers only. Had he travelled afterwards with the excitable Galilean pilgrims they might have raised disturbance by their clamour in his favour in the Holy City. The feast lasted seven days and closed on the eighth, which was the greatest, so that he could afford to wait.

The hour at last came. Leaving the quiet of the lake and taking the route over the uplands, to Tabor, he crossed the
great plain of Esdraelon, to Engannim, where he was once more among the Samaritans, with their fierce hatred of everything Jewish. This was soon to show itself. As was his custom, he had sent forward to ask shelter for the night in some village, but it was at once refused, because he and his followers were on the way to Jerusalem. John and James in their indignation would fain have had their Master call down fire from heaven on people so unfriendly. But Our Lord was as gentle as they were fierce, and, rebuking them sternly for such a spirit, told them to go on quietly to another village.

Yet even in Samaria some were kindly disposed to him and wished to follow him. But he knew the troubles of the near future, and instead of encouraging any to join him, held out a prospect so gloomy that the intending disciples appear to have turned away.

Months had passed since the Twelve had been sent out to preach through the strictly Jewish parts of the country. There were more disciples now, and it was desirable to make known the "good news of the kingdom" to Samaritans as well as Israelites, for Christ was the Saviour of mankind, and not of Jews only. Besides, it may have been advisable to lessen the number of his followers before entering Jerusalem, that he might do so with less notice. No fewer than seventy disciples were, therefore, selected by him—perhaps because the Jews fancied there were just seventy nations in the world—and sent out with the widest commission to preach to all classes. Nothing could more strikingly show the difference between Christ and the Rabbis, for, to these, the only end of any mission was to make Jews of their converts. Jesus could offer them no money for their journey, but they were ready to set out without it. Indeed he expressly told them, as he had told the apostles, to take neither money nor a wallet for food, but to trust to the goodwill of the people for shelter and food, which were to be their only wages. Their very appearance was also to show their poverty, for they were to wear only the cheap sandals of the poor, while
they were to omit the tedious and empty salutations of passers-
by, which caused great delay, and were mere idle forms. As
Jews, they had hitherto refrained from entering the house of any
one not of their nation, but now they were free even to become
guests of any one who would receive them. It was the first
great lesson that the new faith was a religion for all mankind.

The refusal of the Samaritan villagers to receive Our Lord
had caused him to cross the Jordan and go south along its
eastern border. At one of the villages on the road, ten men,
hideous with leprosy, hearing of his approach, rose from the
spot where they had been sitting for alms, and standing at a
distance, as the law required, their mouths covered, their faces
and forms disfigured by their terrible disease, cried out,
"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Without stopping, the
All-merciful sent hope to them by the words, "Go, show your-
selves to the priest," a command which could only mean that
before they reached Jerusalem to do so they would be healed.
Obeying the cheering order, all forthwith set out, to find, as they
went on, that the leprosy was gone. That they should have
returned to thank their benefactor might have been expected,
but only one of the ten had the good feeling to do so, and he
was a Samaritan. Throwing himself at Our Lord's feet,
he poured out his thanks, and had the joy of being told to
"rise and go his way, his faith had made him whole." As
a Samaritan he would need to show himself to a priest at
Gerizim; but his faith was none the less accepted, for the
 Samaritans worshipped God as fervently as the Jews, and he
had shown that he had more true gratitude than the nine
who were of Jewish blood.

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three great feasts
which every Hebrew was required to attend, though, in fact,
most seem to have gone up only once a year. It commemorated
the tent life of Israel in the wilderness by the erection of
countless booths of green boughs in the streets and yards,
and on the flat roofs, as is still done at this feast by Jews
in every part of the world, including even the slums of
the east end of London. Living in these, the throngs of
pilgrims enjoyed under the warm skies a week of special
holiday, going up to the Temple at stated times. On the
"great day of the feast" they did so with a citron in one hand,
and a branch of palm, twisted round with willow and myrtle,
in the other, to see the priests, amidst great rejoicing, bring
up water from the Pool of Siloam in the valley below, to be
poured out over the sacrifices. Through the week, illumina-
tions by night, and dancing of men and women apart, concluded
each day.

The authorities were disappointed during the first days of the
feast to find Jesus absent. Suddenly, however, when the re-
joicings were at the highest, he appeared in the Temple porch,
where the Rabbis taught, and having sat down, began to teach
the pilgrims who thronged to hear him. Astounded at his
boldness, after the steps they had taken against him on his
previous visits, the priests were at a loss what to do.
Some added to the perplexity by reporting that he taught like
one of the prophets; speaking as if directly for God. Still more,
instead of the dry hair-splitting about matters of no importance,
in which the Rabbis delighted, he spoke only on the highest
themes. The gracious goodwill of God to man, the conditions
in which it could be secured, were subjects appealing to all.
Nor was it less striking that while urging the loftiest personal
claims, he did so with such humility that all he said seemed
only what became him. His knowledge of the Scriptures and
his skill in their use were no less astonishing, for he expounded
them with a force and clearness all his own. "How could a
common man like this," asked the officials—"a man never
trained in the schools of the Rabbis, understand the Scriptures
thus?"

A deputation from the chief priests, filled with hostility, at
last approached, challenging his right to teach as he did with-
out a licence. They only obtained, however, the answer that
while they were taught of men, he was taught directly by God; the proof lying in his words and life. If they were in communion with God they would recognise his doctrine as divine. Then, turning on them, he boldly told them that while they charged him with not knowing the Law, they did not keep it. They had, as they knew, wished to put him to death for healing a blind man on the Sabbath, as a violation of the Law, when they ought to have known that love to our neighbour is set above the Sabbath by the Law itself. But, now, the crowd, ignorant of the designs of the authorities against him, and prejudiced by their charging Our Lord as working through the power of Beelzebub, turned against him. He must really be under the power of a devil. The Rabbis were right. Who had spoken of killing him?

Without noticing their interruption, however, Jesus repeated the statement that their leaders were plotting his death for doing an act of mercy on the Sabbath. They forgot that they themselves did many things on the Sabbath which had no such justification as his kindness to the blind man. For example, they circumcised children on the Sabbath. They should judge righteously, not by mere quibbles. Some now came up who fancied it possible that the authorities, doubting at last whether he might not, after all, be the Messiah, had given him liberty to teach. The mere suggestion, however, at once raised a hot discussion. Did not the Rabbis say that the Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem and then spirited away no one knew whither? But this man was from Nazareth. They knew whence he came.

Hearing this, Jesus broke off his discourse, and turned to the noisy disputants, telling them that though he was from Nazareth, he had come forth from the Father above, who alone had the right to appoint any one as the Messiah; and thus, after all, they really did not know whence he came. But such words, implying his pre-existence with God, roused

1 John vii. 1-52.
the fanaticism of his hearers to the utmost, for he had claimed Jehovah as in a special sense his Father—a sense which made him equal with God. For a moment it seemed as if they would hurry him outside the city and stone him, there and then, for blasphemy; but his hour had not yet come, and their rage died away in angry words.

The fame of his miracles, which could not be denied, was meanwhile spreading, and the number who believed in him daily increased. To stop this, the authorities, both Pharisee and Sadducee, mortal enemies at other times, issued a warrant for his arrest, and sent some of the Temple police to carry it out. The sight of these officials told the whole story to Our Lord. His death was clearly a matter of a very short time, and led him at once to speak of it. He would soon, he told them, return to his Father in heaven, who had sent him, and then woe to Jerusalem for rejecting him! They would long
A SHORT LIFE OF CHRIST.

for him in those days, but they would not be able to bring him back. The only meaning, however, drawn by the crowd was, that perhaps he meant to flee to some distant land and there hide himself.

No further attempt to lay hold on him was made during the rest of the week, so that he was still free to address the people. One of the days was marked, as I have said, by a procession of priests and Levites bearing water for the altar from the pool of Siloam, amidst the rejoicings of a great multitude, and the incident served as a text from which so ready a speaker as Christ drew a vivid lesson. "If any one thirst," cried he, "let him come to me, and I will give him living water, which shall flow from his lips and life in holy words and deeds!" He spoke of the Holy Spirit which would descend on those who became truly his followers.

Such discourses as they had heard left various impressions on the audience. To some he appeared to be the prophet expected to come before the Messiah, to others the Messiah himself; but this opinion led to fierce disputes, some asking if the Messiah could possibly come out of Nazareth when the Scriptures spoke of him as to be born in Bethlehem. Meanwhile the division of feeling ensured Christ's safety, for his enemies did not venture to touch him in the face of the strong support he was receiving from not a few. Even the Temple police, who had kept near, went back to their chiefs without disturbing him, declaring that no man ever spoke as he did. Nor were they moved by the taunts of the Pharisees, that respectable people of all classes held aloof from him, while the common rabble who followed him were already cursed of God—their position preventing them from keeping the laws of the Rabbis. One voice only was heard in the council offering a faint word for Our Lord—that of Nicodemus, who had come to him by night. "Was it right," asked the timid man, "to condemn any one before he was heard?" But he only drew on himself the insulting question whether he, also, was from Galilee. Did he
not know that no prophet had ever risen in that district. So bitter was the jealousy between south and north, that they forgot the names of Jonah, Hosea, and Nahum, who, while prophets, were also Galileans.
CHAPTER XXI.

TAKing advantage of the hospitality of friends on the Mount of Olives,¹ perhaps at Bethany, Christ slept under their roof each night while in Jerusalem, returning in the morning to the Temple. One day, as he sat amidst a crowd of listeners, a woman of the humbler ranks, who had been guilty of immorality, was brought to him, perhaps in the hope that he might commit himself against the Law respecting her case. It was usual to bring matters of all kinds before any Rabbi: they would hear what the Rabbi Christ had to say. It was for the husband to bring forward the charge, but they forgot this in their zeal to compromise Our Lord. If he insisted that she should be stoned to death, it would hurt his popularity, for this requirement of the Mosaic Law had long ceased to be carried out. If, on the other hand, he dismissed her, he would seem to treat the Law with disrespect. Besides, the Roman authorities, while granting the Jewish courts liberty to inflict all minor punishments, retained to themselves the infliction of capital sentences. But Our Lord was not to be snared by their craft. Stooping down for a moment and writing some words on the dust at his feet,—perhaps those he was just about to utter—he presently looked up at the accusers and smote them with the request that he among them who was free from sin of a like kind should cast the first stone at her, as commanded by Moses to be done by the chief witness.² Conscience-struck, they could do nothing, but moved away, to the last man, leaving Jesus alone with the woman, in the midst of

¹ John viii. 1–4. ² Deut. xiii. 9, 10; xvii. 7; Acts vii. 58.
the crowd. "Woman," said Christ, on seeing this, "where are thine accusers? did no one condemn thee?" "No one, Lord," answered the poor creature. "Neither shall I," replied Our Lord. "I do not come to be a judge in matters of law. It is their part, not mine, to carry out the case against thee. Go, repent of thy guilt, and sin no more."

Some fragments of his addresses in these days, which have been preserved, show that, as his end approached, he spoke ever more plainly of his spiritual dignity and claims. In one, pointing, perhaps, to the sun rising over the hills of Moab, in the East, he told his audience that he was the Light of the World—the Fountain of Divine Truth—by whom alone men could be guided in the path of eternal life. His teaching, his life, and his deeds showed this, if those to whom he spoke had not been blinded by their sins. No proof could be more clear that he was not alone, but had his Heavenly Father always with him. This he seems to have often repeated, adding in one case, that God was ever with him, because he did, always, the things that pleased Him: words which none of his followers, even the best, would have dreamed of using, but so appropriate on the lips of one so meek and lowly as Our Lord, that they created a deep and wide impression in his favour.

"If you accept the truth," said Christ, as the approving murmur swelled round him, "it will make you free." He meant, of course, free from the sins to which they had hitherto been slaves; but they were too self-righteous to understand him, and thought at once of ordinary freedom. The nation was helplessly subject to Rome, whose soldiers garrisoned Jerusalem at the feasts; but they shut their eyes to this, and spoke as if they were still independent. "Whoever commits sin," con-
tinued Christ, "is its slave. To be descended from Abraham does not help you in this matter. I, God's Son, must make you free, if you are to be free indeed. You call yourselves sons of Abraham, but, in reality, you are not, for God looks not to national descent, but requires spiritual likeness." In that
respect, said he, they had no connection with the patriarch. Their spiritual father, in fact, was the devil, not Abraham. If they were, as they claimed to be, children of God, they would love him who spoke. Instead of this, they shut their ears against him. "You are an enemy of the children of God," cried his opponents, "a Samaritan, and, as the Rabbis tell us, are certainly possessed by a devil, else you would not speak thus." "I have not a devil," replied Jesus, "and you dishonour God who has sent me and honours me, by saying so. I tell you again, that he who believes on me and obeys my voice, shall never taste death." "Whom do you make yourself?" shouted the crowd. "Abraham and the prophets are dead, are you greater than they?" "Abraham," quietly continued Christ, "rejoiced to see my day afar off." "It is 2,000 years since Abraham's day," broke in a voice, "and you are not fifty years old yet; do you mean to say that you have seen Abraham?" "I mean to say," replied Jesus, "far more than that—before Abraham was born, I AM." This was the very phrase in which Jehovah had spoken of himself in Egypt, and could only mean a claim to be no less than God. His hearers instantly felt this, and rose in wild fury against one who appeared to them such a blasphemer. Snatching up stones from the rubbish of the unfinished parts of the Temple round, they would fain have killed him on the spot, but he hid himself among the crowd, and in the confusion passed safely out of the throng.

In these closing weeks of his life, Our Lord found a home, from time to time, with a family at Bethany, on the east side of the Mount of Olives. He may have known them on former visits to Jerusalem, and perhaps they formed the household of Simon, the leper, whom he had healed on his first journey to these parts. Bethany is now a wretched hamlet of mud houses, on the slope of the hill, with a few rough enclosures of fig-trees and the like beside it. Nothing could exceed the poverty of its few present inhabitants, but it was evidently a much more
prosperous spot in Christ's day. Its homes then lay, flat-roofed and whitewashed, amidst fields and trees which relieved the bareness of the hill, above and below. Here lived two sisters, Martha and Mary, who, with their brother Lazarus, welcomed him always with a friendship delightful to his soul. Both sisters were worthy women; but while Martha, the elder, more practical than Mary, busied herself with womanly diligence and interest in the humble affairs of the household, the other was eager to catch all she could from the lips of Our Lord, and lovingly sat at his feet whenever she could. To one whose wants were so simple as those of Our Lord, this did not cause any inconvenience; but Martha, anxious to show all possible hospitality, thought it unkind, till quietly told that her busy care, while lovingly owned, was not required to be so engrossing.

In one of his journeys to or from the Holy City, Our Lord, was accosted by a Rabbi, who inquired how, in his opinion, one might secure eternal life. Christ at once referred him to the Law, but he was ready with the very fitting answer that it told him to love God with all his heart, soul, strength and mind, and his neighbour as himself. "Quite right," replied Our Lord; "this do and you shall live." The questioner, however, was unwilling to take this brief answer, wishing to show how fully he did all he had said. "Who is my neighbour?" asked he, therefore. To a Jew no one was so but a brother Jew. A man of another faith or race was an enemy. Knowing this well, Jesus replied by a parable.

"A certain man," said he, "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho—a wild, steep road, dangerous from frequent robberies and murders. On the way, some men rushed out on him from the hills at the side, stripped him, for he was a poor man, whose clothes were all they could take from him, beat him when he resisted, and in the end left him half dead. As he lay bleeding and naked on the rough stones, a priest going down to Jericho

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1 Luke x. 25-37 (paraphrased).
went past; but when he came near, he hastily crossed to the other side of the road, to keep himself from being defiled by blood, or by touching a person perhaps Levitically unclean, and hurried on. Soon after, a Levite coming by, when he saw the poor man, stepped over to him, and stood coldly looking at him for a time, but presently went on, leaving him as he lay.

A Samaritan, however, travelling that way, and seeing the man, went to him, took out from his saddle-bag wine and oil, to cleanse and soothe his wounds, and having bound them up, set him on his own beast, never thinking whom he might be helping, whether Jew, heathen, or fellow-countryman, but seeing only a fellow-man in distress, and never troubling himself about defilement, or the danger of such a place. Nor did he leave him till he had conducted him to the khan, or shelter for travellers, which stands on the roadside three hours from Jerusalem. There he made him over to the man in charge, giving him two denarii 1 to meet any expenses, and telling him if that was not enough he would pay him what was needed besides, on his return.

"Which of these three," asked Christ, "do you think was neighbour to him that fell among thieves?" The Rabbi, true to his national hatred, would not utter the word Samaritan, but was forced to say, "He that had mercy on him, I suppose." "Go thou and do likewise," replied Jesus.

Among other fragments of the teaching of Our Lord in these days, we find a parable to show the benefit of perseverance in prayer. "Suppose a man," said he, "come to a neighbour after the house door is shut for the night, and ask him to lend him three of the round, flat loaves you use, as a stranger has come unexpectedly and there is nothing to give him. Very likely he will refuse for a time to get up, yet, if the borrower perseveres, he will rise in the end and give him what he asks. Now, if selfish man be thus, how much more readily will the gracious

1 Equal to 6s. or 7s. of our money. Five denarii, worth, nominally, 7½d. each, were the grant for wheat for a man for a fortnight at Rome.
God grant their petitions to those who earnestly pray unto him?" ¹

About this time the seventy disciples returned in great joy at their success, even the devils having been subject to them. Such a report must have been cheering to the worn heart of the Master; and, indeed, for the moment, it seemed to put away the gloom that oppressed him. Satan appeared to have fallen from power, as a lightning flash rushes from heaven to earth. Yet it was necessary to caution them against pride. Their greatest joy should not be in their power to work miracles, but in the thought of their names being written in heaven.²

The idea that every misfortune in life was a direct punishment for sin, committed either by the sufferer or his forefathers, was then universal. Hence, on one occasion, a man born blind having passed, the question was raised whether he or his "parents" had brought this calamity upon him.³ Jesus, however, told them that suffering was not to be regarded as a punishment for particular sins in any one, and in this case had been so ordered that the goodness of God might be shown in the cure of the blind man. Stooping, therefore, and mixing some of the dust with saliva, so as to make clay of it, he touched the man's eyes with the wet earth, and then sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam, under the east wall of the Temple. Neither the clay nor the pool could restore eyesight, but obedience to the divine command had a mighty power, so that the blind man had no sooner washed than his eyes were perfectly restored.

Such a miracle could not be hidden, nor could it be expected that he who was thus wondrously cured would be silent. It chanced, however, that it was the Sabbath when Christ had opened his eyes, and in doing so had made clay of the moist dust. This was working on the holy day, and must be punished! Hearing the tale, therefore, the authorities of the

Law and Temple, doubly furious that Christ should once more have broken the Sabbath, summoned the formerly blind man before them and demanded from him an account of his cure. "He who gave him his eyesight," said they, "could not be from God, for his making the clay was a breaking of the Sabbath." But they had to deal with a sturdy, brave-hearted man. "How could God give such power to any one who commits open sin," asked he. "It could not be a sin to make the clay, else God would not have blessed the act by opening my eyes after it."

Such an answer threw his accusers into confusion; some hesitating to go farther in the matter. Finally, as a compromise, they determined to examine the man again. "What did he really think of one who thus openly broke the Sabbath?" "Why," said the brave fellow, "I think him a prophet." But this only made things worse. The parents must be called. What did they think? They knew the danger of frankness in such circumstances, however, and were cautious. "Their son was of age, let them ask him. They could say nothing." They did not wish to be put out of the synagogue. Once more therefore the man was brought forward. "Let him give God the glory; as for him who cured him, his making clay on the Sabbath showed he was a sinner." "Very strange," stoutly replied the man. "I know nothing about his being a sinner, but I know that I used to be blind and that I see now." Having failed to get any admission from him, some of them fell back on their first question, and asked him to go over his story again. "I have told you the whole already," replied he, "and you did not listen. Do you also wish to become his disciples?" "His disciples!" shouted the judges, forgetting their dignity. "We are disciples of Moses, who spoke for God; as for this fellow, we know not who has sent him: Beelzebub, we suppose." "Still more strange," answered the man. "You don't know whence he is? and yet he has opened my eyes! Who but God could give him such power?" "What," screamed
the bench, "do you, a wretch branded from your birth with the mark of God's anger for sin, dare to teach us? You are excommunicated." And they cast him out of the synagogue, there and then.1

Meeting him soon after, Christ, having commended his fidelity, asked him if he believed on the Son of God? "Who is he, Lord," answered the man, "that I may believe on him?" "I that speak to you am he," replied Our Lord. It was enough, "Lord," said he, "I believe."

A crowd had gathered, and Jesus turned to them with a warning not to follow such blind guides as those who had condemned the poor man and himself.2 "You know," said he, "how the shepherd on the hills cares for his flock, and how the wolf scatters and tears it. I am the good shepherd: my accusers are wolves. I lay down my life for the sheep. But the hireling, who has no love for the sheep, flees before the wolf, and leaves the flock to perish. I know my sheep, and they know me, and, as I said, I am ready to die for them. Yet I have other sheep than Israel. Them also will I bring together, that there may be one fold and one shepherd."

But neither his disciples nor the crowd around could understand the wide charity of such words. Salvation, they thought, was limited to the Jew. Any hint of mercy to the Gentiles woke bitterness. "He has a devil and is mad," cried some; "who would listen to him?" Others, however, were thoughtful enough to remark that "these are not the words of one who is possessed, nor could a devil open the eyes of one who had been born blind."

It was now winter, when the Dedication Festival was held, in commemoration of the re-opening of the Temple, after it had

1 This cut him off from attending his church (synagogue) and boycotted him in the community. During his excommunication, he could not shave his head like other Orientals, and he could enter the Temple only through a particular gate. If, moreover, he died excommunicated, every one threw a stone on his grave as that of one who had passed away under a curse.

2 John x. 1-21.
been closed and defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian. Christ had been nearly three months in or near Jerusalem, and was present at this feast. The weather proved wet and rough, so that he was glad, like the crowd, to shelter himself, in the Temple porches, when addressing the people. Curiosity respecting him was unabated; not a few hoping he would even yet declare himself the Messiah in their sense of the word. One day, therefore, some of the Pharisees plainly asked him what they were to think.\(^1\) Was he the Messiah, of course in their meaning, or not? Christ, however, refused to be snared by any such question, but appealed to the evidence given by his miracles and his teaching, adding that if their hearts were right they would believe such testimonies. All, who were his, however, were so for ever, here and hereafter. Given to him by God, none could take them from him, for he and the Father were One. At such words, which claimed oneness with Jehovah, the crowd once more rushed about for stones with which to kill him, but the meek question—for which of his many acts of mercy done before them would they thus kill him?—checked their fury. "We say nothing against your good works," cried some, "but will stone you because you make yourself God." Instead of withdrawing the awful claim, however, he repeated it. Instantly a rush was made to seize him and drag him outside the city to stone him to death, but he shrank back into the crowd, and passing through it, escaped.

Jerusalem and Judea were now closed against him, as Galilee had been for some time past. Only one district—that beyond the Jordan—seemed any longer safe, and to this, therefore, he retired, preaching to large numbers in the region where John had formerly appeared.\(^2\) But his comparative quiet was soon disturbed, for a message came to him, in hot haste, from Bethany, that Lazarus, his friend, lay dangerously ill.\(^3\) There could be no doubt of his affection for the sufferer or his sisters, yet, instead of setting off at once to restore him,

1 John x. 22–42.  
2 John x. 40–42.  
3 John xi. 1–46.
he astonished his disciples by remaining two days where he was, though it had taken a day for the messenger to reach him, and would require another to get to Bethany. To his disciples it seemed as if he hesitated on account of the violence lately offered him at Jerusalem. On the third day, however, he surprised them by proposing to return forthwith to the scene of danger. His time had not yet come, he said, and till it had, he was safe. He was going to Bethany that he might show forth the glory of God by raising Lazarus from the grave, for he was dead. For that end there had been the delay. It seemed a wild risk to go back to the very spot where he had so recently been in such peril, but the Twelve, however reluctantly, followed him. "We can at worst," said Thomas, "only die with him. Let us go."

As he approached the village, to reach which he had gone round by Jerusalem, as the easier road, word was carried to the house that he had at last come. The two sisters had been sitting in a darkened room, veiled and unsandalled, amidst neighbours and mourning women, who were ever and anon breaking the awful silence by screams and lamentations for the dead. Martha, however, on hearing of Our Lord's arrival, at once rose and went off, in black, and deeply veiled, to meet him. "Had you been here," said she, "my brother would not have died! Yet," added she, "though he be dead, I believe that God will hear your prayer, even if you ask that the corpse be brought back to life." "Your brother will rise again," replied Christ. "At the last day, he will, I know," sobbed Martha. "I am the Resurrection and the Life," replied Christ, in words which have since brought hope and comfort to untold millions. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" "Yes, Lord," sobbed Martha, "I believe that thou art the Messiah, the Son of God, who should come into the world," and having thus spoken, left, to call her sister. A few minutes more and Mary was at his feet
in tears, repeating Martha's regret at his delay in coming. Meanwhile, as at all such gatherings in the East, loud sobbings and wails broke forth from the crowd. Their sympathy was roused for the afflicted household, and yet they were from Jerusalem, which had rejected Christ. Our Lord's cheeks flushed for a moment at the thought of their hardness towards God when so tender towards their fellow-man, but, the next, his face was wet with tears at the sorrow around. "How he must have loved the dead man," muttered some, while others thought it strange that one who could open the eyes of a man born blind should not have been able to keep so dear a friend from dying. They little knew his purpose or his power. Sighing as he went, Our Lord passed on to the grave, which was a small cave, either natural or hollowed out, in the soft limestone of Mount Olivet. I noticed several rock tombs on the under side of the road, not far from Bethany, and went into the largest. It had lain open and empty for ages, and was now green with maiden-hair fern and other wild growths. There was no place for a body, but simply a space in which more than one corpse could have been laid. Was this the very tomb that had held Lazarus? It may have been. A large stone laid on the opening would have blocked it up entirely, as it did the tomb in which the dead then lay. "Take away the stone," said Christ, to those standing by. "Lord," broke in Martha, "he has been dead four days, and his body must be corrupt before this." A few words from Our Lord, however, removed any unwillingness, and now the dead Lazarus lay there visible in his white wrappings. Presently the voice of Christ was heard amidst the silence that had fallen on all—"Father, I thank Thee that thou hearest me. And I knew that Thou hearest me always; but because of the multitude which standeth around, I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send me." Then, with a loud voice, rose the command, so strange when thus spoken into the ear of death, "Lazarus, come forth!" It was enough. Life came back at once to the
wasted frame, and it stirred in its grave clothes which bound it from head to foot, striving to move towards the door of the tomb. "Loose him," said Jesus, "and let him go." No wonder that many present believed from that moment.

All, however, were not thus softened. Not a few were too embittered against Our Lord for opposing the Rabbis to let the truth have its due effect on them. Hurrying off to Jerusalem they told his enemies, the chief priests and Pharisees, what he had done, and they, fearing the additional influence he would gain by such a miracle, resolved, if possible, to get up some charge against him, on the strength of which they might yet procure his death. Nothing was left, therefore, but that he should once more flee to a safer district, and this he found only on the other side of the Jordan.
CHAPTER XXII.

We are not told to what part east of the Jordan Our Lord betook himself at this time, but some of his miracles while he was thus in hiding are related. One day as he was teaching in a synagogue, or Jewish church, on the Sabbath—that is, on our Saturday, a woman who entered, on her way to the part shut off for her sex, drew on her the notice of Our Lord, for she was bent double, perhaps by rheumatism, which is very common in the East. For eighteen years she had not been able to straighten herself. But she was now to be freed from this long suffering. Laying his hands on her, after calling her to him, Christ quietly said, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity," and forthwith she stood erect, before all, thanking God for his wonderful goodness in curing her.

To see a poor creature thus made whole, might well have given pleasure to all; but some think more of exactness in outward forms than of the spirit of religion. It was Sabbath, and to the narrow-minded ruler, the head man of the synagogue, making the poor woman straight seemed a kind of work, and as such a desecration of the day, on which no one had a right to work. Proud of what he thought his special religiousness, this champion of mechanical orthodoxy could not let the matter pass. "It was very wrong," said he, "for any one to come on the Holy day to be healed. There were six days in which men ought to work. Let them come, therefore, on these." "He is

1 Synagogue is a Greek word meaning "a bringing together," "a gathering," or "a congregation."
right,” muttered the formalists addressed. “Right!” broke in Our Lord, “you are a set of hypocrites—pretending to be religious but only playing a part. Do you not each loose your ox or ass from the stall on the Sabbath, and lead him away to water? And should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound with disease for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” There was no answer to this: his enemies could only bear his rebuke in silence; the despised common people rejoicing at their discomfiture and at the proof of God having sent a prophet among them.

Another Passover was now approaching, and Jesus had resolved to go up to Jerusalem once more, knowing that he would die, but freely giving himself up for our good. He went on, therefore, slowly, through the different towns and villages, towards the Holy City, teaching in each as he passed. People of all kinds gathered round, some from honest desire to get good, others from mere curiosity, and not a few with ill-will in their hearts. “Lord,” said a hearer, one day, “are they few that be saved?” But Christ gave him, for answer, a caution to strive that he, at least, should not be lost, for many would seek to enter into heaven when it was too late. Nothing would then help them; even if they could say that they had sat at table with him, or heard him teach in their streets. If they did not take heed they would be shut out from the Kingdom of God, while many of the heathen whom they so despised, would sit down with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets, in glory.

To speak thus of the heathen being put before his race by God was intolerable to a Jew. To hasten his going on, the Pharisees, therefore, hinted that he was in danger, as Herod Antipas, tetrarch of the district in which he then was, as well as of Galilee, was seeking to kill him. He had already killed John the Baptist and was no doubt ready to kill Jesus also; but man is immortal till his work is done. “Go and say to
that fox," was the only reply—"Behold, I cast out devils and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day my work here will be completed, but till then I must work." He added that he was safe outside Jerusalem, and would die only there, like all the prophets before him. Then bewailing the blindness of the fanatical city he broke out into a touching lament and reproach—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. (God will forsake you, and I will no more appear as your Saviour. You shall not see me till I come to set up my Kingdom, and then), ye shall say—as to the Messiah—'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

About this time he accepted the invitation of one of the chief Pharisees to eat with him on a Sabbath, though the courtesy proved no more than a hollow one; the other guests invited showing only too clearly their ill-will to him. The street door always stands open in the East, and it is free to any one to come in, even during a meal. On this occasion a man ill of the dropsy entered, silently appealing to his compassion. Seeing him, Jesus turned to the Pharisees and teachers of the Law present, and asked whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath? They had not the honesty, however, to express any opinion, for though their conscience and natural sympathies demanded an affirmative answer, they might be brought, by giving it, into conflict with the teachings of the Rabbis. Christ, however, always true to what was right, even when apparent self-interest or the loudest public opinion, or the danger of being misunderstood and slandered stood in the way, at once healed the sufferer and sent him home, silencing any remark by the pointed question he had often asked before, whether, if any of them had an ass or an ox which had fallen into a well, he would not straightway draw him up on a Sabbath day?
The pride and vanity shown by members of the company as they took their places on the dining couches, ere long attracted the attention of Our Lord. Persons invited to a feast should not, he told them, take, of their own accord, the most honourable seats, lest a person of higher position had been invited, to whom they would have to give way. How much better to sit even in the humblest place, that the host might come with an invitation to go higher. A lesson capable of varied use.

To make a feast simply for display, or to entertain those from whom a return was expected, was no less contrary to the ideas of Christ. "Instead of asking to a dinner or supper, your friends, brethren, kinsmen, or rich neighbours," said he, "it would be well to bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, who cannot repay you. If done for love, there would be a blessed reward at the resurrection of the just."

Such was the conversation as the meal advanced. At last one of the company, wishing to say something in the same strain, exclaimed, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God," flattering himself and the guests that he and they, at least, were sure to do so. This, however, Christ presently showed was open to question. "The Kingdom," said he, "is like a great feast given by a nobleman, to which large numbers were invited. When the night came, a servant was, as usual, sent out to remind those bidden that the supper was presently to begin. Each, however, was found ready with some excuse. The first had bought a field, and could not avoid going to see it; another had bought five yoke of oxen, and was going off to prove them; while a third had no better apology than that he had married a wife, and was thus kept away. Slighted thus, the nobleman, justly indignant, resolved that his preparations, in any case, should not be lost, and ordered his servant to go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, and maimed, and blind, and lame. Having done so, he announced that there was still room for
more guests. 'Go out then,' said the lord, 'into the highways and hedges, and force the poor creatures you find there to come in, that my house may be filled. For none of those who were bidden shall taste of my supper.'" There was no mistaking the meaning of such a parable. The chiefs of the Jewish Church and their followers had been invited by Christ, the servant sent by God for the purpose, to come to the great feast he had prepared—the setting up among them of the new Spiritual Kingdom he was founding, and they had with one consent refused. But guests would not be wanting. Since they had shut themselves out, God would bring in the common people, the publicans and sinners whom they despised, and even the heathen. Confident that they would sit down in the Kingdom of God with the patriarchs and ancient saints, nothing could have touched such men as the company present more to the quick, than to hear themselves spoken of as giving place to classes whom their self-righteousness regarded as under the curse of God.

A last gleam of popularity was enjoyed by Christ during this journey. Great multitudes going to the feast accompanied him as he went slowly forward to Jerusalem. Some of them even expressed a wish to be his disciples, but he was slow to receive them, knowing the dark future before his followers. "If any one came to him," said he, "who did not, in comparison, hate every earthly tie, and even his own life, he could not be his disciple." He must be willing to go to the cross, if needs were; and indeed his life would be doomed, like that of the unfortunates who had to bear their own cross on their shoulders, on their way to execution. He must, therefore, count the cost before joining him, as a man wishing to build a tower first reckons whether he has the means to complete it, or as a king going to war makes sure that he is able to meet his enemy. Only the cross stood before himself, and his followers could expect nothing better. "If they were sincere," said he, repeating an illustration already introduced in the Sermon or
the Mount, "they would be like salt amidst the corruption around; but without perfect sincerity they would be like the salt earth of these parts, from which the rain had washed away the saltiness, so that the earth was good for nothing but to be thrown out."

It was touching to notice now, as at other times, that while the self-satisfied were ruffled and soured by the addresses of Christ, the weary and heavy laden, well-nigh hopeless for both this life and the next, delighted to gather round him. There must have been something in his looks and bearing, and even in his voice, which, with the sweetness of his discourse, made the wretched feel, by a natural instinct, that he was their friend. That he treated them as men, and did not demand the intolerable slavery to forms and commands imposed by the Rabbis, drew to him the hearts of not a few, till then reckless and desperate in their hopelessness and social proscription. I have already given some examples of the "burden" laid on all by the Law, as expounded by the Scribes, but a few more may be added. Thirty-nine principal forms of work were forbidden on the Sabbath, but under each of these there were countless prohibitions. For instance, it was unlawful to make or untie a knot on the Sabbath, but to this there were various exceptions. Thus, while it was unlawful either to tie or untie a sailor or a camel-driver's knot, another which could be untied with one hand might be so. A woman might run together a slit in her dress, or tie her shoes or sandals, or the mouth of a skin of wine or oil. A jar could be let down into a well by a rope tied to a sash, but not by one tied to another rope. To write two letters of the alphabet on the Sabbath, either with the left or right hand, whether at once, or separately, or with the same ink, or different, or if the letters were of two languages, was not lawful, nor did it matter on what material the letters were written. Further, it was unlawful to write anything on the two walls of a corner or the two leaves of an account-book, if they could be read
together, or upon one's own body; but if one wrote on anything
which did not preserve the characters, it was not unlawful; as,
for instance, if one wrote on the dust of the road, or on sand,
or in fruit juice. But if one wrote with his foot, mouth, or
elbow, or if he wrote one letter on the ground and one on the
wall, or on two walls of the house, or on two leaves of a book,
so that they could not be read together, it was lawful. To
carry a handkerchief in the pocket on the Sabbath was sinful,
but it might be carried if tied round the waist as a girdle.
Similar minuteness in every detail of daily life imposed
a mental and moral slavery beyond the endurance of the mass
of mankind. The common people could not, of course, observe
such a world of rules, and the publicans and "sinners" did not
trouble themselves about them; yet whether the "Law" was
neglected through inability to get time to keep it, or because
a man's calling made it impossible to do so, or from any worse
reason, strict Jews like the Scribes and Pharisees admitted
no excuse. But Jesus had no feeling towards even the worst
but pitying love.

"What man of you," he asked, "having a hundred sheep
pasturing on the hills, and having lost one of them, does not
leave the ninety and nine in the safe open country, and go
after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he has
found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing; and when he
comes home, calls together his friends and his neighbours,
saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was
lost.' I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven
over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety-nine too
self-righteous to think they have need of repentance."

"Or," he went on, "what woman, having ten pieces of silver
in her head ornament—and the poorest have that number—if
she lose one piece, does not light a lamp in her dark, window-
less house, and sweep the floor, and seek diligently till she
find her lost coin? And when she has found it, she calls to-
gether her friends and neighbours, and says, 'Rejoice with
me, for I have found the piece which I had lost.' Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents."

Then came the wonderful parable of the Prodigal Son. "A certain man," said he, "had two sons. Of these, the younger, said to his father, 'Father, give me now, while you are still alive, the portion of your substance which you intend me to have hereafter.' And the kindly father, yielding, divided to his two sons his living. Not long after this, the younger son gathered all together, turning his portion into money as best he could, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there rose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the heathen citizens of that land; and he sent him in his fields to feed swine, a shameful occupation for any Jew. No one, however, gave him even food; not even his master, so that he envied the very swine the pods of the carob tree on which they were feeding."

"Such misery, however, ere long, brought him to serious thoughts, and when he came to himself, he said, 'How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight; I am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me like one of thy hired servants.'" And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring forth quickly the best robe I have, and put it on him, instead of his rags; and put a ring on his finger, becoming my son, and put shoes on his naked feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, for though I would not kill it for
any one else, I will do so for him, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found!’ And they began to be merry.

"Now his elder brother was out in the open field, and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called to him one of the servants, and inquired what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother is come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and would not go in; therefore his father came out and entreated him. But he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I have never disobeyed thee, and yet thou never gavest me even a kid, that I might make merry with my friends; but when this fellow came; forthwith, as if he were your only son,—though he has devoured thy living in bad company,—thou killest for him the fatted calf—the greatest honour thou couldst pay any one.'

"But the father said, 'Son, thou art always with me, and all that is mine is thine. It was meet to make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.'"

Such a parable must have cheered the hearts of the poor publicans and sinners, as much as it reproved the self-righteous Pharisees, who, like the elder brother, grudged the returning prodigals the welcome vouchsafed them.

Having thus defended himself for his sympathy with the outcasts of his people, Our Lord presently added a parable to set principles before these classes for their future guidance amidst the temptations of their position. "A certain rich man," said he, "had a steward, to whom he left the charge of all his affairs. After a time, however, this person was declared by some one to be acting dishonestly in his office, and in consequence was called by his master before him, and told what had been said. Orders, moreover, were given him to make out and settle all his accounts, as he could no longer be steward.
"Knowing that he was guilty, the accused man was at a loss what to do. 'I cannot dig,' said he, 'for I have not been accustomed to it, and I am ashamed to beg.' At last he hit on a plan which he thought would serve his end. Going to all his master's tenants, one by one, he asked each how much rent or dues he had to pay, though, in fact, he knew all this beforehand, and told them to make out an account by which they would seem in each case to owe much less. In this way he made sure of friends who would open their houses to him when he had been dismissed.

"When his master heard how cleverly he had secured his own ends, he could not help admiring his shrewdness. And, in truth, it is a fact, that bad men like this steward—the sons of this world, not of the next—are wiser in their dealings with their fellows than the sons of light, my disciples, are in theirs.

"As the master of that steward commended his prudence, though it was so worldly and selfish, I commend to you a higher prudence in the things of this life. By becoming my disciples, you have another master than Mammon, the god of this world, whom you have hitherto served, and my service is so utterly opposed to his that, if faithful to me you cannot be faithful to him. He will, in consequence, take this world's goods from you, as I have often said, and therefore I counsel you so to use the worldly means still at your command, that, by giving them to your needy brethren, my disciples, you may make friends for yourselves, who, if they die before you, will welcome you to heaven after death.

"If thus faithful with the little you have on earth, you will be entrusted by God with infinitely more hereafter; for he that is faithful in this world, has shown that he can be entrusted with more, in heaven. If you have proved faithless in the stewardship of the worldly means lent you for a time by God, how can you hope to be honoured with the great trust of eternal life? It is impossible for any man to serve two masters. You must choose between God and Mammon."
Such counsels were received with ridicule by the Pharisees standing round. They were known for their love of money, and it seemed to them wild folly to advise the rich to use their wealth in making friends for the future world, instead of enjoying it here.

Patient as he was in the endurance of personal wrongs and insults, the indignation of Jesus was roused at such sneers at genuine religion, and he, at once, with calm fearlessness turned upon them.

"You hold your heads high," said he, "and affect to be such saints that you judge all men by yourselves.

"Yet God knows how different you are from what you make men believe. Your pretended holiness is an abomination before him. You explain away the commands of his Law when they do not suit you, and thus are mere hypocrites or actors.

"That which Moses and the Prophets announced—that to which all the Scriptures point, the Kingdom of the Messiah—has come. From the time when the Baptist preached, that kingdom is set up in your midst, and many press with eagerness into it. You charge me with breaking the Law; but, so far from doing so, I require that the whole Law, in its truest sense, be obeyed by every one who thus seeks to enter the New Kingdom. Believe me, it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the Law to lose its force. But how different is it with you! Take the single case of divorce. What loose examples do not some of your own class supply? What conflicting opinions do you not give on the question? I claim that the words of the Law be observed to the letter, and maintain that any one who puts away his wife, except for adultery, and marries another, himself commits adultery, and that he who marries the woman thus divorced is also guilty of the same crime. Judge by this whether you or I most honour the Law—whether you or I are the safer guides of the people.
A SHORT LIFE OF CHRIST.

"But that you may feel the truth of what I have just said as to the abuse of riches, hearken to a parable.

"There was a certain rich man, who dressed in robes of fine purple—the raiment of princes—over-garments of the costliest Egyptian cotton, which only the wealthiest can buy.

"There was also, in the same place, a diseased beggar named Lazarus, who had been set down, as an object of charity, before the great man's mansion, where he lay helplessly, day after day; so poor that he longed to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. But the rich man, though he often saw him, and knew his case, showed him no kindness, and instead of relieving him, and thus making with his money a friend who should help him hereafter, as I advise, had no thought except of his pleasure. The poor man's case was indeed pitiful; he could not even drive away the unclean dogs, which, day by day, came and increased his pain by licking his sores.

"But it came to pass, after a time, that Lazarus died, and was carried by the angels to Paradise, and there laid down next to Abraham, at the feast in the Kingdom of God, with his head in the great patriarch's bosom—the highest place of honour.

"Soon after, the rich man, also, died, and, unlike Lazarus—whom men had left uncared for, even in his death he was honoured with a sumptuous funeral.

"He, also, passed to Hades; not, however, to that part of it where Paradise is, but to Gehenna, the place of pain and torment. And there he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off, in bliss, with Lazarus reclining next him, in his bosom, as his most honoured friend. And he knew them both, and remembered how Lazarus had lain at his gate, and thought of this as a bond between them. 'O Father Abraham,' cried he, in his torments, 'have mercy on my agony, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.' He would fain.

1 Luke xvi. 19 ff. 2 God (is my) help.
make friends with Lazarus now, but could not think of any
kindness he had ever shown him, to urge on his behalf.

"Of this Abraham reminded him. 'Son,' said he, 'wonder
not that you and Lazarus have such opposite lots here from
those you had in life. You, then, had as much happiness as
you could enjoy, and you lived only for yourself. Had you
used your wealth as a godly man, in doing good to those who,
like Lazarus, needed pity, you would have had good laid up
for you now. But you lived only for the world and the good
you chose has been left behind you. You had your portion in
your lifetime, and have none here. But Lazarus endured suffer-
ings, and has none here. He bore them patiently, as a child of
God, and is now receiving the reward of the poor in spirit.

"'Besides all this,' added he, 'between this happy abode
and yours, there is a great space, across which no one can pass,
either from us to you, or from you to us, so that it is impossible
that you should have any share in our joy, or that we can in
any way lessen your pain.'

"Now, for the first time, the rich man saw the full extent of
his misery, and its cause. 'Would that I had acted differently,'
cried he, 'when in life. Would that, instead of living for my-
self, I had used my wealth as God enjoined, in blessing the
wretched. I should then have been welcomed by Lazarus, and
such as he, into the everlasting habitations of Paradise!

"'But, O Father Abraham,' he continued, 'let me be the only
one of my race to come into this doleful place. Send Lazarus,
I beseech thee, back to earth, to my father's house, for I have
five brethren, who live as I lived. It would add unspeakably
to my pain if they also came to this abode of woe. Oh! let
Lazarus go and warn them of what has befallen me, their
brother.'

"'To escape your sad doom,' replied Abraham, 'they must
needs repent, and live the life of the godly. But for this the
Law and the Prophets are the appointed means; let them
listen to them.'
"'Nay, Father Abraham,' answered the lost one, 'that is not enough. It did not move me to repentance. But if a dead man returned again from the grave and came to them, and told them how it was with me here, they would be alarmed, and reform.'

"'You err, my unhappy son,' said Abraham, closing the scene. 'It would not move them in the least, for the Scriptures are so fitted to persuade men to repentance, that those whom they do not win to it would not be persuaded even if one rose from the dead.'"

The Rabbis had listened to the parable, but it touched their own failing too pointedly to make them care to continue the conference longer. When they were gone, Jesus noticed that the words and bearing of his opponents, respect for whom, as the teachers of the nation, was instinctive with every Jew, had not been without their effect even on his disciples. It was evident, moreover, that the trials and persecutions to come, and the weakness of human nature, would try the loyalty of not a few.

By way of caution, therefore, he now warned them on this point.1 "It is impossible," said he, "to prevent divisions, disputes, and even desertion, on the part of some, in the evil times to come. My Kingdom will, I foresee, suffer more or less from this cause; but it cannot be avoided. Yet, woe to him who thus hinders the spread of the Truth. It were better for him, if, like the worst criminal, he were bound to a heavy millstone, and cast into the sea, than that he should cause a single simple child-like soul, who believes in me, to stumble. Take heed that you neither mislead nor are misled! To further my Kingdom when I am gone, strive above all things for peace and love among yourselves. If any one sin against you, and turn away from you, rebuke him for his sin; but if he see his error and repent, and come back, forgive him; ay, even if he wrong you seven times in a day, and acknowledge his error and promise amendment as often, you must, each time, forgive him freely."

CHAPTER XXIII.

The lofty demands of Jesus from his followers had already led them to ask that their faith in him as the Messiah, able to aid them in all their trials, might be strengthened. The expression of that faith in prayer was no less necessary to obtain the help needed to bear them through difficulties. Lest they should grow slack in this great duty, he reminded them that they must not be faint-hearted, or give way before the trials they might have to suffer, or at the seeming delay in his coming.

"There was in a city," said he, "a judge who neither feared God nor reverenced man.1 And there was also a widow in that city who had an enemy from whom she could hope to get free only by help of the judge. So she came often to him, asking him to do justice to her, and maintain her right. But he paid no attention, for a long time, to her suit. At last, however, he could bear her constant coming no longer, and said within himself, 'Though I should do it as my duty, that does not trouble me, for I do not pretend to fear God, and care nothing for man; yet this widow torments me. I shall therefore do what is right in her case for my own sake, for otherwise she will weary me out.'

"So the widow thus obtained her end at last.

"Hear what the unjust judge says! But if men thus get what is right, even from the worst, if they be persevering, how can any one doubt that God, the Righteous One, will give heed to the cry of His saints? Will He not much rather than the

judge avenge their wrongs if they fervently pray to Him? He is not wearied with their cry, as the unjust judge was with that of the widow; and He will deliver them and give them a portion in the Kingdom of the Messiah."

To one of these days we are indebted for the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Jesus had spoken much of prayer, but there was a danger of mistaking the outward form for the substance. To show its true nature he related the following parable:—

"Two men," said he, "went up to the Temple to pray at the same time, the hour of prayer. The one was a Pharisee, the other a Publican. The Pharisee, who had seen the Publican enter the Temple with him, stood apart, his eyes towards the Holy of holies, and began to pray thus: 'O God, I thank Thee that I do not belong to the common multitude of mankind whom Thou hast rejected—to the covetous, the unjust, the adulterous. I thank Thee that I am not what so many men are, what this Publican here before Thee is. He knows nothing of fasting or of tithes, but I fast every Monday and every Thursday, and I give the priests and Levites the tenth not only of all I have, but of all I may gain, which is more than the Law requires.'

"The Publican meanwhile, feeling that he was a sinner, stopped far behind the Pharisee, coming no farther into the sacred court than its very edge; for he shrank from a near approach to God. Nor could he dare, in his lowly penitence, to lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, far less his head and his hands, but, bending humbly, smote on his breast in his sorrow, and said, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

"The Pharisee had spoken only of his own merits; the Publican uttered no more than a humble cry for mercy.

"Believe me, this Publican's prayer received favour from God, and he returned to his home forgiven and accepted; but the Pharisee went away unblessed. For, as I have often said, every one who thinks highly of himself in religious things
will be humbled before God, and he who humbles himself will be honoured before Him."

Among the questions of the day fiercely debated between the great rival schools of Rabbis, no one was more so than that of putting away a wife. One school contended that a man had a right to divorce his wife for any cause; if it were simply from his having ceased to love her, or his having seen one he liked better, or her having cooked a dinner badly. The other school, on the contrary, held that divorce could be issued only for immorality. If it were possible to get Jesus to pronounce in favour of either school, the anger of the other would be roused, and he would be brought into trouble.

Some of the Pharisees, therefore, took an opportunity of raising the question. "Is it lawful," they asked, "to put away one's wife, when a man thinks fit, for any cause he likes?"

There could be no doubt that Jesus would condemn a custom which was corrupting the whole life of the nation, and undermining all honour, purity, and love. He had already answered the question fully, in the Sermon on the Mount, but that was long since, and he was now in a different part of the country. In was quite in accordance with the habit of the day to appeal to any Rabbi like him on a disputed question, yet the questioners gained little by trying their skill on Jesus.

"Have you never read," answered he, "that the Creator of men made man and woman at the same time, in the very beginning of our race, and gave them to each other as husband and wife? ¹ And do you not know that God has said that a son who, before, was under his parents, is to separate himself from his father and mother when he marries, and to form a still nearer relationship with his wife—such a relationship that the two shall become, as it were, one. But since it is God who has joined them thus, divorce is the putting asunder by man of what God has joined together. Marriage is sacred, and we are not to regard it as something we can undo at our pleasure."

¹ Matt. xix. 3–12; Mark x. 2–12.
To this the objection lay ready, that the Law of Moses was less strict, and this gave them a chance of forcing Jesus either to contradict himself, or to pronounce openly against the great founder of the nation. "If it be so," said they, "how comes it that Moses permitted a man to put away his wife? for you know that he says writings might be given where this was wished, and these dissolved the marriage."¹

"Moses," replied Our Lord, "did, indeed, suffer you to put away your wives, to prevent a greater evil, but he did so because in the age in which he lived he could do no more. But it does not follow from this that his action was the original law of the Creator, or that religion now sanctions it. I say, therefore, that whoever puts away his wife, except for impurity, and marries another, commits sin; and whoever marries her who is put away for any other cause is equally guilty, because the woman is still, in God's sight, wife of him who has dismissed her."

This statement swept away for ever the right to treat woman as a mere toy or slave of man, and raised her to her true position. For this nobler position in the Christian era, compared with that granted her in antiquity, she is indebted to Jesus Christ.

When an opportunity offered, the disciples asked fuller instruction on a matter so grave. Customs or opinions, the rightness of which has never before been doubted, are hard to uproot. Hence, even the Twelve felt the strictness of this new law respecting marriage, and frankly told him, that if a man were bound to his wife as he had said, it seemed to them better not to marry.

"With respect to marrying or not marrying," replied Christ, "your saying that it is good for a man not to do so is one on which men differ. Let him among you who is willing to live single, that he may give himself to my service, do so." But even his apostles were left free to marry or remain single, as they chose.²

¹ Matt. xix. 8–12; Mark x. 2–12. ² 1 Cor. ix. 5.
In the South, as in Galilee, mothers of households turned with peculiar tenderness and reverence to the new Prophet and Rabbi. They were doubtless encouraged to do so by the sight of the women who now, as always, accompanied him on his journeys; but the goodness that beamed in his looks, and breathed in his every word, drew them still more. Caring nothing for worthless disputes and questions, they sought only a blessing on the loved ones of their hearts and homes, contented if Jesus would lay his hands on their infants, and utter over them a word of benediction.¹

A beautiful custom led parents to bring their children at an early age to the synagogue, that they might have the prayers and blessings of the venerated elders. After the father, therefore, had laid his hands on his child's head, he led him to them, one by one, and they also blessed him, praying that he might grow up famous in the Law, faithful in marriage, and abundant in good works. Children were thus brought, also, to any Rabbi, and hence they had been presented already, more than once, before Jesus. Now, on this, his last journey, little children were again brought to him that he might put his hands on them, and pray for their welfare in their future life. To the disciples, however, this seemed troubling their Master, and they chid the parents for bringing them. But the feeling of Christ to children was very different from theirs. To look into their innocent eyes must have been a relief after enduring those of spies and enemies. He delighted to see his own image in such little ones, and the apostles needed the lessons their age impressed.

"Let the little children come to me," said Jesus, "and do not forbid them, for the Kingdom of Heaven is given only to such as have a childlike spirit like theirs." Instead of being too young for his blessing, he saw in their simplicity and innocence the earnest of the character he sought to create in mankind. His disciples must become like them by change

¹ Matt. xix. 13-15; Mark x. 18-16; Luke xviii. 16-17.
of heart and lowly life. Stooping down, therefore, he took them up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them.

The need of this childlike spirit must have been brought home to the apostles by an occurrence in their next day’s journey. Starting southwards, on the way to Jerusalem, a young man, whose excellent character had already made him a ruler of the local synagogue, came running after him, and kneeled before him, as was usual before a venerated Rabbi. “Teacher,” said he, “I shall greatly thank thee if thou wilt ease my mind. I have laboured diligently to do good works of all kinds ordered by the Law, but I do not feel satisfied that I have done enough; I am not sure, after all, that I shall inherit eternal life. Pray, tell me what special good work I can do to secure this.”

“Why do you ask me what is right to do?” answered Jesus. “Your question answers itself. There is only One wholly good—that is, God. If you really would enter into life eternal, you must keep the commandments given you by Him.”

The young man expected to hear some new injunctions, requiring unwonted pains, and securing correspondingly great merit by faultless obedience. The answer of Jesus was too general to help him in this. He, therefore, asked what commands Christ particularly meant.

To his astonishment, instead of naming some ceremonies or rites as the Rabbis would have done, Jesus simply quoted some of the well-known commandments of the Second Table: “Thou shalt not kill,” “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” “Thou shalt not steal,” “Thou shalt not bear false witness,” “Honour thy father and thy mother;” closing the list with the greatest of all: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” which was thus put last, as the one by which he intended to bring the young man to the test.

His upright and honest life brought no blush as he listened.

1 Matt. xix. 16-30; xx. 1-16; Mark x. 17-31; Luke xviii. 18-30.
Humbly, except for the secret pride of self-righteousness, and with all reverence, he replied:

"I believe I can say that I have strictly kept all these commands. In what respect am I still wanting?"

The question itself showed in what he came short, and that, however sincere in his efforts after such a life as would secure heaven, he had not risen to a due sense of what keeping the commandments implied. Had he seen this, he could not have given such an answer.

Jesus read his heart in a moment, and was won by the honesty of his answer and question, and by his evident worth. As he looked at him, so earnest, so humble, so admirable in his life and spirit, he loved him. If he could stand the demand that must now be made, he would show that he was indeed a true child of God.

"You lack one thing yet," said Jesus, therefore, "if you really wish to be perfect. Had you understood the commands of God in their depth and breadth, you would not have asked if you could do anything more than you had done; they would have shown you continually fresh duties. When you ask me to tell you what next to do, it shows that you think only of tasks required, and do not act from the love of good in itself. If you really desire eternal life, go home, sell all you have, and give what you get for it to the poor, and instead of your earthly riches you will have treasure in heaven. Then come to me, be my disciple, and bear your cross after me, as I bear mine."

The demand, great though it seems, was exactly suited to the particular case. He had thought he cared for nothing in comparison with gaining heaven; he could now judge for himself if he had not erred.

It might have been hoped that this counsel would have so roused one thus earnest, that all lower thoughts would have lost their power. The love he had inspired in Jesus must have shown itself towards him in every look and tone; there must have been every desire to attract and win, none to repel.
But, rich as he was, and already a magistrate—for Church and State with the Jews were identical—the demand staggered and overwhelmed the young man. His broad acres and social position, which he must give up, raised a whole army of hindrances and hesitations. He had been touched where weakest, but this was exactly what his repeated request demanded. Why should Jesus have asked less from him than from other disciples? It was, doubtless, harder for a rich than for a poor man to leave all, but there must, in no case, be room for doubt of the entire sincerity of those admitted as disciples, and this could be tested only by their readiness to sacrifice all to become so. It was less, besides, to demand this, as things were, for discipleship would only too surely involve, very soon, not only loss of all earthly goods, but life-long trials, and even death.

But the world got the better in the young man’s heart, and he went away sorrowful. His wide fields, his rich possessions—how could he give them up?

“How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!” said Jesus, as the candidate for discipleship went away, evidently in great distress. “It is easier,” continued he, “to use a proverb you often hear, for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.”

The words fell with a perplexing sound on the ears of the apostles. Like all Jews, they regarded worldly prosperity as a mark of the favour of God—for their Scriptures always connected the enjoyment of earthly blessings with obedience to the Divine law.

“Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God,” repeated Jesus, seeing their uneasiness. “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle 3 than for a rich man, who clings to his riches, to enter into the Kingdom of God.”

1 Matt. xix. 22–30; Mark x. 22–31; Luke xviii. 23–30. 2 Deut. xxviii. 1–14. 3 Eastern grain bags are sewn with needles large enough to let rope through their eye.
"Who, then, can be saved?" asked some of them.

"With men it is impossible," replied Jesus, fixing his eyes earnestly on them, "but not with God; for with God all things are possible. He can bestow grace to wean the heart from riches."

Peter, especially, had listened with deep attention to all that had passed, and had been applying it to the case of his fellow-disciples and himself. When Jesus summoned them to follow him, they had been exactly in the young man's position, though they had not had so much to surrender. They had given up everything for him, at his first invitation—their families, houses, occupations, and prospects. However little in themselves, these had been the whole world to them. Hence it seemed only natural that they should have some of that treasure which Jesus had promised the young man, if he forsook all for his sake. Peter, therefore, now asked Jesus directly what he and his fellow-apostles would have for their loyalty to him?

Knowing the honest simplicity of the Twelve, their master, instead of chiding this boldness, cheered them with words which must have sounded very grand to Galilean fishermen.

"Be assured that when I shall come again, seated on the throne of my glory, you who have followed me here shall sit, each of you, on his throne, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. Still more; every one who gives up his brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, or houses, that he may spread my Gospel and honour my name, will be rewarded a hundredfold. Even in this present life he will receive back again richly all he has left—houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children; for he will find all these among those who believe in me; he will be allowed freely to use their means as his own, and be welcomed by them with brotherly friendship. But, with all this, he will have to bear trouble, yet in the future world he will have a great reward, for there he will inherit everlasting life."

1 Acts iv. 32.  2 Matt. xix. 27–30; Mark x. 28–31.
"But," added he, by way of warning, "do not trust to your having been the first to follow me. For the rewards of the kingdom of heaven will be like those given by a householder who had a vineyard, and, needing labourers for it, went out early in the morning to hire them.\(^1\) Having found some, he agreed to give them a denarius\(^2\) a day, and sent them into the vineyard. Going out again about the third hour—nine o'clock—he saw others standing idle in the market-place, and sent them also into the vineyard, making no bargain with them, however, but bidding them trust him that he would give them what was just. He did the same at the sixth and at the ninth hours. Finally, he went out at the eleventh hour, and, finding still others standing about, asked why they had stayed there all the day, idle. 'Because no one has hired us,' they replied. 'Go ye also into the vineyard,' said he, 'and you shall receive whatever is right.'

"When the evening was come, the lord of the vineyard bade his overseer call the labourers, and pay them all the same sum—the denarius, for which he had agreed with the first. He was also to begin with those who came into the vineyard last. "When they came, therefore, who were hired at the eleventh hour, they received each a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; but they also were paid, each, only the same amount. When, however, they saw this, they murmured against the householder, saying, 'Those who came in last did only one hour's work, and thou hast made them equal to us, who bore the scorching wind from the desert at sunrise, and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst not thou agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours, and go; I desire to give the same to those who came in last, as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will in my own affairs? Is thine eye evil because I am good?"

"The householder thus made the first last, and the last first,

\(^1\) Matt. xx. 1-16.  
\(^2\) About sevenpence-halfpenny.
because the first had been working for hire, while the others
had trusted his promise. He who serves me for the sake of a
reward hereafter, may do his work well, but he honors me
less than those who trust in me without thinking of future
gain. The spirit in which you labour for me gives your ser-
vice its value."

They were now approaching Jericho, at which the road
struck directly west to Jerusalem. Nisan, the month of the
Passover, had already come, and only a few days more remained
of Our Saviour’s life. Nature was putting on its spring beauty,
and throngs of people were going up to the Holy City. All
around was joy and gladness, but a deep gloom hung over the
apostles. Everything on the way—the disputes with the
Rabbis, the warning about Antipas, the solemnity of the recent
teachings—combined to fill their minds with terror. They had
shrunk from visiting Bethany, because it was near Jerusalem;
for they knew that the authorities were on the watch to arrest
their Master, and put him to death. He had had to flee from
that village, first to Ephraim, and then, over the Jordan, to
Perea, and yet he was now deliberately walking into the very
jaws of danger. They had marched steadily southwards
through the woody highlands of Gilead; they had passed the
rushing waters of the Jabbok and its tributaries, and seen, for
a moment, once more, the spot where John had closed his
mission. To the south lay the frowning castle where he had
been put to death. Mount Nebo, where Moses was buried, and
the hills where John’s corpse had been laid, were within
sight. Everything was solemn, and they knew their national
history too well not to fear that, for Jesus to enter Jerusalem,
would be to share the sad fate of the prophets of old, whom it
had received only to murder. It was clear that he was volun-
tarily going to his death. The calmness with which he thus
carried out his purpose awed them; for, so far from showing
hesitation, he walked at their head.

Yet their ideas were sadly confused, and they could not give
up the hope that things might result very differently, and that he would, still, establish himself as a great monarch.

He had already told them, twice, exactly what was before him; but to prepare them, if possible, for the shock now so near, he once more repeated what awaited him in Jerusalem.

"Behold," said he, "we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death,¹ and then deliver him to the Romans, to mock, and scourge, and crucify, but the third day he shall rise again." Yet in spite of such repeated warnings, not only the Twelve, but the others who followed him, did not understand what he meant. He had said that the apostles would sit on twelve thrones, at his coming in glory, and this had made them think little of the announcement of his death.

Dreams, thus kindled, had risen, especially in the minds of James and John, who, with Peter, were the most honoured of the apostles. They had been in a better position than many of their brethren, and, with Salome, their mother, had freely given all they had to the cause of their Master. Ashamed to tell him their thoughts directly, they approached him through her, whom, perhaps, he might the more readily hear, as older than they; as a woman; perhaps his mother's sister, and as one who had shown herself, like her sons, his true friend.

She now came, therefore, with them, in secret, and, falling on her knees, as was the custom where reverence was intended, and as was especially due to one whom she regarded as the future Messiah, told him she was about to ask a surpassing favour.² "What is it?" asked Jesus. "Say," answered she, "that these, my two sons, may sit, like the chief ministers of other kings, at thy feet, on thy right hand and thy left, on the first step of the throne, when thou settest up thy kingdom."

"You do not understand what your request implies," an-

¹ Matt. xx. 17-19; Mark x. 32-34; Luke xviii. 31-34.
² Matt. xx. 20-28; Mark x. 35-45.
swered Jesus. "The highest place in my kingdom can only be gained by drinking the cup of sore trial, of which I, myself, shall drink presently, and enduring the same fierce baptism of sorrow and suffering, even to death, in which I am to be plunged. Do you think you are able to bear all that?"

In simple true-heartedness, both answered, at once, that they were.

"You shall, indeed," replied Jesus, "drink of my cup, and be baptized with the same baptism as I; but, in my kingdom, no honours can be given from mere favour, as in kingdoms of the world. They can be obtained only by those fitted for them by true goodness. They are given by my Father to those alone who thus show themselves worthy. For such, indeed, they are prepared by him already."

John and James had striven to hide their selfish request, by coming to Jesus when he was alone, but the Ten soon heard of it, and were indignant at such an attempt to forestall them in their master's favour. Their own ambition broke out, afresh, in a fierce storm of jealous passion. Such weakness was sadly out of place at any time among the followers of the meek and lowly Son of man, but still more so now, when he stood almost under the shadow of the cross, and it must have caused him the keenest pain. Calling round him, therefore, the whole Twelve, offenders and offended, he pointed out how utterly wrong they were in every point of view.

"You are disputing about my Kingdom," said he, "as if it were like the kingdoms of the world. Once more, let me warn you that it is wholly different. He who wishes to be great in it can only be so by becoming the servant of others; and he who wishes the very highest rank, can only be so by becoming the servant of all. You may see that it must be thus, from my own case, your King and Head—for I, the Son of man, came not to be ministered unto, as other kings are, but to serve, and to give up even my life as a ransom for many."

The upland pastures of Perea were now behind them, and the
road led down to the sunken channel of the Jordan and the
district of Jericho. This small but rich plain was then the
most luxuriant spot in Palestine. Sloping gently upwards from
the level of the Dead Sea, 1,350 feet below the Mediterranean,
to the hills of Judea, it had the climate of Lower Egypt, and
the vegetation of the tropics. Its fig-trees were magnificent; it
was famous for its groves of palms; its crops of dates were
a proverb; the balsam-plant, which grew principally here,
furnished a costly perfume, and was in great repute for healing
wounds; maize yielded a double harvest; wheat ripened a
whole month earlier than in Galilee, and innumerable bees
found a paradise in the many flowers and plants, not a few
unknown elsewhere, which filled the air with odours and the
landscape with beauty.

Rising like an amphitheatre from amidst this scene, lay
Jericho, the chief place east of Jerusalem, on swelling slopes,
seven or eight miles distance from the Jordan, and seven
hundred feet above the river bed, from which gardens and
groves, thickly strewn with mansions, and covering eight
miles from north to south, and two and a half from east to west,
were divided by a strip of wilderness. The town had had an
eventful history. Once the stronghold of the Canaanites, it
was still, in the days of Christ, surrounded by towers and
castles. Two of them, at the entrance of the city, lay in ruins,
but the old citadel towered aloft—dark with the recollection
that its heroic builder, Simon the Maccabee, and his two sons,
had been murdered in its chambers. Kypros, the last fortress
built by Herod the Great, who had called it after his mother,
rose white in the sun on the south of the town. The palace
of the Jewish kings stood amidst gardens, but it had been
deserted by royalty since the evil genius of her house,
Alexandra, the mother-in-law of Herod, and mother of Mari-
amne, his favourite wife, whom Herod had murdered, had
lived in it. The great palace of Herod, in the far-famed
groves of palms, had been plundered and burnt down in the
tumults that followed his death, but in its place a grander structure, built by Archelaus, had risen amidst even finer gardens, and more copious and delightful streams. A great theatre and spacious circus, built by Herod, scandalized the Jews, not less by their unholy amusements than by the remembrance that the elders of the nation had been shut up in the latter by the dying tyrant, to be cut down at his death, in revenge for the hatred borne him. A great stone aqueduct of eleven arches brought a copious supply of water to the city, and the Roman military road ran through it. The houses themselves, however, though showy, were not substantial, but were built mostly of sun-dried brick, like those of Egypt; so that now, as in the similar cases of Babylon, Nineveh, or Egypt, after long desolation hardly a trace of them remains.

A great multitude accompanied Jesus as He drew near Jericho—pilgrims, on foot, or on asses, or camels—who had come from all the side passes and cross roads of Perea and Galilee. They met at this central point to go up to the Passover, at Jerusalem; not a few with an eye to the trade with foreign pilgrims, driven so briskly, in the Holy City at this season, as well as for devotion.

Near the gate of the town one of the last miracles of Our Lord was performed. Like the Temple itself, all the roads leading to Jerusalem were much frequented at the times of the feast by beggars, who reaped a special harvest from the charity of the pilgrims.

Blindness is remarkably frequent in the East. While in northern Europe there is only one blind person in a thousand, in Egypt one in every hundred is sightless: indeed, very few persons have their eyes quite healthy.

Among the beggars who had gathered on the sides of the road at Jericho were two who had thus lost their sight: only one of whom, however, by name Bar-Timæus, is particularly noticed in the incident that followed.¹

¹ Matt. xx. 29-34; Mark x. 46-52; Luke xviii. 35-43; xix. 1.
They had probably heard of the cure, at Jerusalem, of the man who had been born blind, and learning now from the crowd that the great wonder-worker was passing, at once appealed to him as the Son of David—the Messiah—to have mercy on them. The multitude tried in vain to silence them: they only cried the louder. At last, Jesus came near, and, standing still, commanded them to be brought. In a moment their upper garment, which would have hindered them, was cast aside, and, leaping up, they stood before him with their artless tale; that they believed he could open their eyes, and they prayed he would do so. A touch sufficed: immediately their eyes received sight again, and they joined in the throng that followed their healer.

Jericho was the residence of a great many priests; its position as the centre of a very rich district, and the trade between the two sides of the Jordan, made it, also, the home of a strong force of customs and excise collectors or “publicans,” under a local head, named Zacchæus. The transit to and fro of so much wealth brought with it proportionate work and harvest for the farmers of the revenue. To be friendly with any member of a body so hated was not the way to secure the favour of the people at large.

Zacchæus, especially, was disliked and despised, for, though a Jew, he had grown rich by his profession, and was, in the eyes of his fellow-townsmen, not only an extortioner, but, by his serving the Romans, a traitor to his race, and to their invisible King, Jehovah. His personal character, moreover, seems to have been bad, for he owned to Jesus that he had, at least in some cases, wrung money from his fellow-townsmen by swearing falsely against them before the magistrates.

Jesus had seldom passed that way, and hence his person was little known, though report had spread his name widely. Among others, Zacchæus was anxious to see him, and being a little man, had run before the caravan with which Our Lord

was entering the town, and had taken his station in one of the ever-green sycamores—of which some grew at the wayside, of great size; a few even fifty feet in circumference. They were easy to climb, from their short trunks, and wide branches forking out in all directions.

He had never seen Jesus; and having no idea that he was known to him, must have been astounded when the Great Teacher, as he passed the spot, looked up, and, addressing him by name, told him to make haste and come down, as he intended to be his guest that night, for though all others shunned him, he was chosen in loving pity by Jesus, as his host. The word was enough; in an instant he was in the road, and pressingly welcomed Christ to come to his house. That he, so hated and despised, should have been thus favoured, in a moment won his heart, and waked a new and better life; but it also raised the hostile feeling of the multitude. Voices on every side were heard murmuring that “he was gone, contrary to the Law, to lodge with the chief publican.”

They little knew the mighty change his having done so had wrought in one hitherto degraded by an ignoble life, and by the contempt and hatred of his neighbours. Christ had completely won him, for he had treated him with respect, as a man, and had shown him that the way still lay open, even to him, to a new and better life. The two had meanwhile, apparently, reached the court of the publican’s house, and the crowd pressed closely round, as Jesus was about to enter a dwelling the threshold of which no respectable Jew would cross. He was incurring the bitterest hatred by treating with honour one whom the Rabbis held to be under the curse of God. Zacchæus felt overpowered with a sense of the unselfish bravery of such treatment of one who had no claim to it. Standing before the crowd, therefore, he addressed Christ: “Lord, I feel deeply the honour and loving service you do me, and I hereby vow that I shall give one-half of my goods to the

1 Luke xix. 6.
poor, to show how much I thank thee. And still more, if, as I lament to think has been the case, I have ever taken money from any one by false accusation, I promise to repay him fourfold—the highest fine that even Roman law demands from one guilty of such an offence."

"This day is salvation come to this house," said Jesus, as he heard such words, "for this man, sinner though he be, is, nevertheless, a son of Abraham, and now shows himself humbled and penitent. I came to seek and to save that which was lost, and I rejoice to have won back to the fold of God, a child of Israel who had wandered so far from him."

"Before you leave," he continued, addressing the crowd, "let me tell you a parable. You see that I am near Jerusalem, and suppose I shall take advantage of the Passover, when such vast throngs of Jews are in the Holy City, to proclaim the Kingdom of the Messiah in the way you expect, by insurrection and force. Let me set before you the truth."

He proceeded to repeat a parable borrowed, in many particulars, from facts in their recent national history. Herod's son, Archelaus, had set out for Rome, most likely from Jericho itself, not many years before, to obtain the kingdom left to him by the will of his father, and the Jews had sent a fruitless embassy after him, to prevent his getting it. All the princes of the house of Herod, indeed, were only vassals of Rome, and had to go to the imperial city, in each case, to seek their kingdom as a gift from the Roman senate.

"A certain man, of noble birth," said Christ, went to a distant country to receive for himself the dignity of king over his former fellow-citizens, and then to return. Before starting, he called ten of his servants, from whom, as such, he had the right to expect the utmost care for his interests in his absence. He proposed, in his secret mind, to trust them with a small charge, by their execution of which he could judge, when he returned, of their fitness and worthiness to be put into positions
of greater consideration; for he wished to choose from them his future chief officers.

"In the meantime he gave them, each, only a 'pound,'—[worth about three pounds of our money]—and said to them, 'Trade with this, on my account, till I return.' If they proved to be faithful in this small matter, he would be able to advance them to something higher.

"It happened, however, that he was so unpopular, that his fellow-citizens sent an embassy after him, complaining against him, and declaring that they would not have such a man to rule over them. But their embassy failed; for, in spite of it, he obtained the province, and was appointed their king.

"On his return, after he had thus received the government, he ordered the servants to whom he had given the money, to be called before him, that he might know what each had gained by trading. The first came and said, 'Lord, thy pound has gained ten.' 'Well done, good servant,' replied his master, 'because thou wast faithful in a very little, be thou governor of ten cities.' The second came, saying, 'Lord, thy pound has gained five.' 'Be thou governor of five cities,' replied his master. But another came, and said, 'Lord, here is thy pound, I have kept it safely tied up in a napkin; thou wilt find it just as I got it. I did not know what to do with it, and I was afraid of thee; for I know thou art a hard man in money matters, looking for great profits where thou hast laid out next to nothing,—taking up, as they say, what thou hast not put down, and, if needs be, reaping where thou hast not sown,—making good thy loss, if there be any, at his expense who caused it,—and so, to keep myself safe, I thought it best to run no risks one way or other.'

"'I will judge you out of your own mouth, wicked servant,' replied his master. 'You say you knew I was a hard man in money matters, seeking gain where I had laid nothing out to secure it, and reaping where others had sown; why then did you not at least give my money to some exchanger, to use at his
table, that thus, on my return, I might have got it back with
interest?' Then, turning to the servants standing by, he
continued, 'Take from him the pound, and give it to him that
has ten.' 'He has ten already,' muttered the servants, half
afraid. But the king went on in his anger, without heed ing
them: 'I tell you, that to every one who shows his fit ne s
to serve me, by having already increased what I at first
gave him, I shall give more; but I shall take away what I
at first gave, from him, who, by adding nothing to it, has prov ed
his unfitness to use what might be put in his hands.

"'As to my enemies, who did not wish me to reign over
them, bring them hither, and put them to death in my
presence.'"

To the Jewish people, who would not receive him as the
Messiah, this parable spoke in words of warning alarm; but the
Twelve, themselves, heard a solemn caution. They had each
received a sacred trust, to be used for his master's interests.
Well for him, who, when his Lord returned to reckon with
them, could give a good account of his stewardship; woe to him
who had neglected his duty! As to the Jews who rejected
him, his coming would be the signal for the sorest judgments.

Having finished his brief stay in Jericho, Jesus set out, once
more, on his journey to Jerusalem, going on before the multitude.
Many had already gone up to the Holy City, for not a few
needed to be there some time before the feast, to prepare
themselves to take part in it, by purifications necessary from
various causes. Lepers, for example, who had been cured, but
were not as yet pronounced clean by the priests, were, with
many others, in this position. Great numbers, moreover, we
may be sure, went up early for purposes of trade with the first
arrivals of pilgrims from abroad.

Meanwhile, all classes alike, in Jerusalem, wondered whether
Christ would come to the feast.\(^1\) The excitement was evident,
and increased the alarm of the priests, who were afraid the

\(^1\) John xi. 55-57.
people would take his part. Orders had therefore been issued that he should be instantly arrested, when found. It was even required that any one who knew where he was should report it, with a view to his apprehension.

In the midst of this commotion, Jesus quietly entered Bethany,¹ on the sixth day before the Passover. It was, however, impossible for him to remain concealed. The news passed from mouth to mouth, and the streets of the village soon became thronged with visitors, who came, not only to see him, but to see Lazarus also, whom they heard he had raised from the dead. For this reason the high priests began to question whether they could not manage to put Lazarus, also, to death. The sight of him was winning many disciples to Jesus. They would try if they could not destroy him.

¹ John xii. 1, 9-11.
CHAPTER XXIV.

The long caravan of pilgrims that had accompanied Jesus up the wild gorge of the Kedron, from Jericho, had been left at Bethany; some pressing on to Jerusalem, others pitching their tents as fancy pleased them, in the pleasant dell below the village, or on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, where they could feast their eyes with a sight of the city. It was the eve of the Sabbath, and that night and the next day were sacred. The journey from Jericho had been exhausting. A steep and narrow bridle-path, threading the precipitous defile, had been the only road. It was the scene of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The khan, or "inn," where the wounded man was sheltered, had been passed half way. Lonely ascents, between bare rocks, with the worst footing, had been left behind only when Bethany and Bethphage,\(^1\) on the eastern spur of the Mount of Olives, came in sight. The journey was over before three in the afternoon, for it was the rule to have three hours of rest before the Sabbath began, at six. In Bethany, Jesus was at home. It was the village of Lazarus and Martha and Mary. The fifteen miles from Jericho had been a continual climb of over three thousand feet; but he could now rest with his friends, through the Sabbath.\(^2\) Before the next he would be crucified. And he knew it.

\(^1\) Matt. xxi. 1-11, 14-17; Mark xi. 1-11; Luke xix. 29-44; John xii. 12-19.
\(^2\) Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, 9th Nisan (30-31 March).
This glimpse of sweet rest over—the last he would enjoy before the awful end; the first act in the great tragedy, his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, fitly led the way to the great consummation.

In these last months he had more and more openly assumed the supreme dignity of Messiah, with wise caution. Refraining at first from publicly claiming his dignity, he had shunned even the publication of his miracles, that his teaching might get time to root itself and bear fruit among the people, before the opposition of the priests and Rabbis brought his work to a close. He had never, however, refused the title of Messiah when given him, or the honours from time to time paid him as "the Christ." As yet, however, he had made no public claim to be the Messiah, and till this was done there still wanted a formal proclamation of his Kingdom. Till then, moreover, the heads of the nation could not be said to have had the choice openly given them to accept him as the Messiah, or finally to reject him.

He determined, therefore, to enter Jerusalem publicly, in such a way as would openly announce his claim to be the Christ. He would enter it as a king, but as the Prince of Peace, giving no pretence for any complaint by the authorities. He had no longer any reason to conceal from them what he really was, and felt himself to be.

The bands of pilgrims from the various districts of Palestine, or from Jewish settlements abroad, were wont to make public entries into the city before the great feasts. Such an entry Jesus would make, himself its central figure. It would be a day of joy and gladness to him and to others, as when a king enters on his kingdom. He would no longer check the popular feeling in his favour. His last entry to the Holy City, at the Feast of Tabernacles, had been secret; but this should be in exact contrast. Israel should now see him come openly,

1 Saturday sunset to Sunday sunset, 10th Nisan (31st March and 1st April).
as he, who alone, if they frankly accepted him, could save them. He knew beforehand that they would not; but his work could not be said to be completely ended till he had given them and their leaders this last public opportunity.

Hitherto he had entered the Holy City on foot; this day, like David and the Judges of Israel, he would ride on an ass, the creature on which the kings of Israel had formerly ridden. In the East the ass is in high esteem. Statelier, livelier, swifter than with us, it vies with the horse in favour. Among the Jews it was equally valued for work on the road, in the field, at the mill, or for riding. The horse had been introduced by Solomon from Egypt, and was used especially for war, but the ass was the emblem of peace. To the Jew it was peculiarly dear, for Moses had led his wife, seated on an ass, to Egypt; the Judges had ridden on white asses; and the ass of Abraham, the friend of God, was mentioned in Scripture. Every Jew, moreover, expected that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem, poor, and riding on an ass.

On the early morning of Sunday, the tenth of Nisan—the Jewish Monday, Jesus and the Twelve left their hospitable shelter at Bethany, and passed out to the little valley beneath, with its clusters of fig, almond, and olive trees, soon to burst into leaf, and its evergreen palms. Somewhere near lay the larger village of Bethphage; like Bethany, so close to Jerusalem as to be reckoned legally a part of it. Secret disciples, such as the five hundred who afterwards gathered to one spot in Galilee, and the hundred and twenty, who met, after the resurrection, in an upper room in the Holy City, were scattered in many places. At least one such lived in Bethphage. Jesus, therefore, now sent two disciples thither; telling them that, immediately on entering it, they would find a she ass tied, and her colt standing by. "Loose them and bring them to me," said he, "and if any one make a remark, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them at once." He had rightly directed

1 1 Cor. xv. 6; Acts i. 15.
them. The ass and its colt were found, and the permission of their owner—no doubt a disciple—for their being taken for his use was obtained at once.

Meanwhile, it had reached Jerusalem that he was about to enter it, and great numbers of the pilgrims from Galilee, proud of him as a prophet from their own district, set out to meet and escort him, cutting fronds as they came, from the palm-trees that then lined the path, to do him honour. The disciples were no less zealous in his favour, and their enthusiasm was forthwith caught by the crowds around. The former hastily threw their outer coats on the back of the colt, to deck it for their master, and set him on it, the mother walking at its side; while the pilgrims, not to be behind, spread theirs on the road, or cut off the young sprouts from the trees, and strewed them before him. So, myrtle-twigs and robes had been strewn by their ancestors before Mordecai, when he came forth from the palace of Ahasuerus, and so the Persian army had honoured Xerxes, when about to cross the Hellespont, and so it is still sometimes done in Palestine, as a mark of special honour.

There were three paths over the Mount of Olives; on the north, in the hollow between the two crests of the hill; next, over the summit; and on the south, between the Mount of Olives and the Hill of Offence; still the most frequented and the best. Along this Jesus advanced, preceded and followed by multitudes, with loud cries of rejoicing, which took the form of a kind of chant, long used in the early Church as the first Christian hymn:

"Give (Thou) the triumph (O Jehovah), to the Son of David!
Blessed be the kingdom of our Father David, now to be restored in the name of Jehovah!
Blessed be he that cometh—the King of Israel—in the name of Jehovah!
Our peace and salvation (now coming) are from God above!
Praised be he in the highest heavens (for sending them by him, the Son of David)!
From the highest heavens, send thou, now, salvation!"

It was a scene in wondrous contrast with the triumphal processions of earthly monarchs. No spoils of towns or villages adorned it; no trains of captives destined to slavery or death; the spoil of his sword and his spear were seen only in trophies of healing and love—for the lame whom he had cured ran before, the dumb sang his praises, and the blind, sightless no longer, crowded to gaze on their benefactor. The Pharisees among the multitude in vain tried to silence the acclamations. In their mortification they even turned to Jesus himself, to ask that he should rebuke those who made them. "No," replied he, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the very stones will cry out."

As they approached the shoulder of the hill, where the roads bend downwards to the north, the sparse vegetation of the eastern slope changed, as in a moment, to the rich green of gardens and trees, and Jerusalem in its glory rose before them. It is hard for us to imagine, now, the splendour of the view. The City of God, seated on her hills, shone at the moment in the morning sun. Straight before stretched the vast white walls and buildings of the Temple; its courts, glittering with gold, rising one above the other; the steep sides of the Hill of David crowned with lofty walls; the mighty castles towering above them; the sumptuous palace of Herod in its green parks, and the picturesque outlines of the streets. The crusaders, long centuries after, when the only glory left to the Holy City was its wondrous memories, burst out into a loud cry—Jerusalem! Jerusalem!—when they first saw it, and the feelings of the Jew could not have been less deep.

The whole scene was overpowering, even to Jesus himself. He was crossing the ground on which, a generation later, the tenth Roman legion would be encamped, as part of the besieg-
ing force destined to lay in ashes all the splendour before him. Knowing the future as he did, his heart was filled with indescribable sadness, for he was a patriot and man, though also the Son of God. Looking at the spectacle before him, and thinking of the contrast a few years would show, tears burst from his eyes, and his disciples heard him saying—"Would that thou hadst known, thou, Jerusalem, in this thy day, when I come, who alone can bring it—what would give thee peace and safety! But now, thou seest not what only could make them thine—the receiving me as the Messiah! Days will come upon thee, when thine enemies will raise a mound about thee, and compass thee round, and invest thee on every side, and level thee with the ground, and bury thy children under thy ruins, and leave not one stone in thee upon another, because thou knewest not the time when God, through me, offered thee salvation!"

Sweeping round to the north, the road approached Jerusalem by the bridge over the Kedron, to reach which it had to pass Gethsemane. The myriads of pilgrims on the slopes of Olivet, and the crowd at the eastern wall of the Temple, thus saw the procession winding in slow advance till it reached the gate, now St. Stephen's, through which Jesus passed into the new town—riding up the valley between it and Mount Moriah, through narrow streets hung with flags and banners for the feast, and crowded, on the raised sides, and on every roof, and at every window, with eager faces. "Who is this?" passed from lip to lip. "It is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, in Galilee," shouted back the crowd of northern pilgrims and disciples, proud to honour their province before the proud sons of Jerusalem.

Leaving his beast, and entering the Temple, after removing his sandals, the crowd with him, who had walked and not ridden having to stop behind to cleanse their dusty feet, take off their shoes or sandals, and lay aside their walking staves, before entering a place so holy,—he closed the day by a long
survey of all around. Earnest, sad hours thus passed; but they were filled with works of pitying goodness, for the blind and the lame had heard of his coming, and hastening to him, were healed. The courts and halls of the Sacred House re-echoed, to the intense mortification of his enemies, with the shouts that had accompanied his entry to the city, the very children joining in the cry of “Hosanna to the Son of David!”

“Do you see how powerless we are against him?” muttered the Pharisees; “the whole people have gone after him.”

His bold appearance in the Temple itself filled the priests and Rabbis with indignation, which was all the deeper because they dared not arrest him for fear of the crowds, even when now in their very hands. That the children should hail him as the Messiah, also enraged them. “Hearest thou not what these say?” asked some of them. But he only replied that he did, adding, “Have ye never read in your own Scriptures—‘Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, Thou (Jehovah) hast perfected praise,\(^1\) that Thou mightest put to shame Thine enemies, and silence Thy foes, and those who rage against Thee.’”

It was now late afternoon. The end proposed had been fully attained. The crowds had begun to retire after evening prayers, and he, too, with the Twelve, passed out among the throng, and betook himself once more to the well-loved cottage at Bethany.

The day in which he had thus virtually given himself up to death was that on which the paschal lamb was selected!

Neither the Twelve nor the disciples at first saw the importance of what had happened. In later times, however, after he had risen and ascended to heaven, they remembered the striking words of the prophet Zechariah, which showed that the triumphal entry in which they had taken part had been the fulfilment of ancient prophecy.\(^2\)

The events of Palm Sunday, though, for the moment, a bitter annoyance to his enemies, were soon made use of by them to

\(^1\) Ps. viii. 2. \\
\(^2\) Zech. ix. 9.
the hurt of Our Lord. His public entry into Jerusalem, as the Messiah, amidst the shouts of the people, seemed to give them, at last, the means of charging him with claiming to be king instead of Cæsar. The Romans dreaded nothing more than any one aspiring to be the Messiah, for it had often cost them dear to quell the insurrections to which it led, and they sternly punished any attempt to dispute the emperor's authority. But the peaceful bearing of Jesus throughout, the quiet dispersion of the crowds, and the utter absence of anything revolutionary in his whole life and words, were fatal to the hope of getting him put to death as a political agitator. They would not, however, let such an accusation slip, and could accuse him to Pilate, if other charges failed, of "perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he, himself, is Christ, a king."

Morning² saw Jesus once more on his way to the Temple. He had not as yet eaten, for he seems to have looked forward to doing so at the home of some disciple in Jerusalem, and the keen air of the early hours made him hungry. The little valley of Bethany was famous for dates and figs; the very name Bethany meaning "the place for dates," while Bethphage is "the place for the green or winter fig"—a variety which ripens only after the leaves have fallen.

It was not yet the time of the fig harvest,⁴ but some of last year's fruit might, perhaps, be found on the trees growing about. One tree, especially, attracted the notice of Jesus. It grew at the road-side, as common property, and, even thus early, when other fig-trees had scarcely begun to show greenness, was covered with young leaves. When he came to it, however, they proved its only boast; there was no fruit. It might readily be used as a type of hypocrisy, which has only

¹ Luke xxiii. 2.
² 11th Nisan, Sunday sunset to Monday sunset (1st and 2nd April).
³ Sunrise on Monday morning, 5.49 a.m.
⁴ Matt. xxii. 18, 19; Mark xi. 12-14.
leaves, and no fruit. Such a lesson could not be passed in silence by One who drew a moral from everything in life and nature. "Picture of boasts without deeds," said he loud enough for the disciples to hear—"let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever," and passed on. They were to learn that profession, without performance, found no favour with their Master.

Reaching the city, he once more went to the Temple, as his Father's house. Two years before, he had purified its outer court from the abuses which love of gain had brought in, under the pretence of serving the requirements of worship. Since then they had been restored in all their hatefulness. The lowing of oxen, the bleating of sheep, the cries of the money-changers, and the noisy market chaffering of buyers and sellers of doves filled the air with the sounds of the outside world, which had no right in these sacred bounds. The scene roused the same deep indignation in Jesus, as when he formerly saw it, and the same zeal again dismayed opposition. His command sufficed to clear the spacious court of its motley crowd: the sellers of doves, at his order, bore off their cages; the ex-changers gathered up their coin, and while he made the one remove their benches and counters, he overturned the empty booths of the others. Nor would he suffer laden porters and others to shorten their journeys by crossing the Temple spaces, as if they were public streets. They might carry them round by what way they chose, but must not make a thoroughfare of the sacred courts. "Jehovah has written," said he, "my house is the house of prayer for all nations, but ye have made it a den of thievish traders."

The importance of such an act to himself, was known to none better than to Jesus. He felt that his hour had come, and that he would perish, a martyr to his fearless attacks on whatever he saw unworthy around him. He knew that he had against him the vast power of interested bodies, who passed off their

selfish aims as zeal for Church and State, and thus won support from unthinking thousands. He knew, moreover, that the effect of his teaching was spreading daily, and must be checked by any measures that promised success, if his enemies were to stand. But, in the face of all this, he went forward calmly towards death, for the souls of men.

The day, which had begun with the cleansing of the Temple, was given, in its later hours, to teaching all who would listen. The people, thronging the court where he sat—for he taught in the Temple—were greatly moved by his words; so new, so earnest, so searching and practical. It was vain to attempt to arrest him while he was thus in favour, for all the people rallied to hear him, and no one knew how far they might be disposed, with their fiery eastern natures, to rise on his behalf, if he were seized.

This day, therefore, passed as safely for him as the last, and in the evening Bethany once more received him. He had entered the city with loud rejoicings, but he felt it wise to retire unnoticed. Leaving therefore by the flight of steps to the Kedron, he crossed Olivet with only his disciples.

Next morning\(^1\) found him once more on the way to the Temple. "Rabbi," exclaimed Peter, in wonder, as they passed the tree on which Jesus had sought figs the day before, "The fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away." It had already shrivelled up.

"See," replied he, "that you learn from this tree to have firm trust in God. Believe me, if you have strong enough faith, you will be able hereafter to do not only such things as you have seen done to this tree, but—to use the expression you so often hear from the Rabbis, when they speak of overcoming the greatest difficulties, or achieving the most unlikely ends—you will be able, as it were, to bid this mountain rise and cast itself into the sea. He who has child-like trust in God, may confidently expect his prayers to be heard. When you pray,

\(^1\) 12th Nisan, Monday sunset to Tuesday sunset (April 2–3).
believe that prayer is, in very deed, answered, and your faith will be honoured by God granting what you seek; since as his children, and my disciples, you will ask only what is in keeping with his will. But when you pray, you must have no anger or revenge in your hearts, else you will not be heard. You must, beforehand, have forgiven all who have injured you. For how can you hope that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins against him, if you do not forgive offences against yourselves?"

But the moments were precious, for his hours were numbered. Each morning saw him in the Temple, as soon as it was opened. He would devote his last hours, as he had all his public life, to teaching.

He had not been long instructing the people, who flocked to see and hear him,¹ before some of the Temple authorities arrived, determined to bring him to account for his act of the day before; and for his assuming to teach as a Rabbi, without any license from the schools,² which was contrary to established rule. They seem to have been sent officially, and consisted of some of the higher priests—heads of the different courses—some Rabbis, and some of the "elders" or representatives of the people, who, as a body, had existed from the days of Moses. Interrupting Jesus as he taught, they abruptly asked him by what authority he acted as he had done, and was doing.

They doubtless hoped he would claim Divine authority, and that they, thus, might have ground for a charge against him. But he was not to be snared. He showed himself ready to turn defence into attack. Instead of answering their question, he asked one in his turn. "Before I answer you," said he, "let me ask you—did John the Baptist act by direction of God or not?" To be themselves questioned, in turn; to be forced to give a reply, instead of listening to one, was annoying; but the question itself was still more so.

Yet, what could they do, for it was clear to all men not blind

to the truth, that John had been a noble servant of God. To own that he was so, however, would bring down on themselves the crushing question, "Why then did you not believe what he said respecting yourselves, and what he said of me? for his witness, alone, is enough to prove that I come from God." On the other hand, to call him an impostor was dangerous, for his memory was cherished by the people as that of a national hero, the last of the mighty line of prophets. They were therefore driven to the feeble reply—that they could not tell whether John's mission was from God or not.

"If so," replied Jesus, "then clearly he did not need your sanction, since you never thought it worth while to decide respecting him, and you can have no claim to authorize me, or to withhold authority from me. I decline therefore to tell by what authority I act."

He had silenced his opponents, but would not let them leave without once more trying to open their eyes to their false position.¹

"Let me tell you a parable," he continued. "A certain man who had two sons, came to the first and said, 'Son, go work to-day in the vineyard.' But he answered, 'I will not;' yet afterwards, he repented and went. And he came to the second son, who, on receiving the same command, at once answered, 'Yes, sir.' But he did not go. Let me ask you which of the two, do you think, did the will of his father?"

An answer could not be refused, but the question was framed in such a way that they could give none except the one which Jesus required for his complete justification, and their own condemnation. Hardly seeing what it implied, they readily answered, "The first." They were now in his hands. "You say rightly," replied he, "for when John came calling you, in the name of God—you priests, scribes, and elders—to repentance and righteousness, you honoured him by ready professions and smooth compliance, promising the good works

¹Matt. xxi. 28-32.
of a pious and holy life, and yet you held aloof after all, and showed, by your neglect to obey him, that you disbelieved his message. You are the second son, who said, Yes, but did not go into the vineyard.

"On the other hand, the publicans and harlots, whom you despise, the common people at large, whom you reckon cursed of God; who had roughly and wickedly refused to do right, and had even gone to the utmost in sin, repented at the summons of John, believing his words, and sought earnestly to enter into the Kingdom of God. They, therefore, condemn you, O ye leaders of the people; for, by your own showing, they have done the will of their Father in heaven, but you have not.

"It has, indeed, been always the same. As in John's day, ye would not hear him, but persecuted him to the death, so have both you and your fathers done in all generations. You, indeed, are more guilty than they all, for you seek to do even worse. Hear another parable.

"A certain man planted a vineyard and set a hedge about it, and hewed out a cistern in the hill-side, in which to press the wine, and built a tower for the watchers, to guard the vineyard, and agreed with husbandmen to work it on his behalf, and went into a far country for a long time. And when the fruit season drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive for him his fruit.¹ But they took them, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. He then sent other servants, more numerous than the first; but the husbandmen treated them as badly, for they beat one, cast stones at another and wounded him in the head, and sent him away not only empty-handed but shamefully treated. Some of the rest they beat, others they killed, and they refused to pay the fruits they owed.

"Having yet, therefore, a son—his only and well-beloved,—

¹ Isa. v. 1 ff; iii. 14; Matt. xxii. 43-46; Mark xii. 1-12; Luke xx. 9-19.
he determined to send him to them, thinking that, though they
had treated his servants so badly, they would be sure to show
his son respect. But instead of this, when they saw the son,
they said among themselves, 'This is the son, come, let us kill
him, and the vineyard, which he should have inherited, will be
ours.' So they took him, and cast him out of the vineyard,
and slew him.

"Let me ask you now, what will the lord of the vineyard do
to these husbandmen?"

The dignitaries thus addressed could not, in the presence
of the crowd listening to all that had passed, refuse the only
possible answer. "He will come and miserably destroy these
wretched men," said their spokesman, "and give the vineyard
to others, who will render him the fruits in their season." The
meaning of the parable had already flashed on the minds of
some of them, and the answer was followed by a deep 'God
forbid!' from several voices.

Looking steadily at them, Jesus now kept them from re-
tiring by a further question.

"Did you never read in the Scriptures," said he, "this text,
'The stone which the builders rejected is made the chief corner-
stone—the main foundation; Jehovah hath done this; marvell-
ous is it in our eyes'?'\(^1\)

The meaning was clear. The corner-stone was, in their own
mode of speech, only a figurative name for the Messiah. The
Psalms quoted had been sung by Israel, on the first Feast of
Tabernacles after the return from captivity. It referred pri-
marily to the Jewish nation—rejected by the heathen, yet
chosen by God as the foundation of His earthly kingdom. In a
higher sense, however, the Rabbis understood it of the Messiah,
and thus there could be no doubt in the mind of any Jew that
it meant this when now applied by Christ to himself.

"You know this verse, do you not?" continued Jesus.
"Well, then, because you have rejected me, the stone chosen

\(^1\) Ps. cxviii. 22; Matt. xxI. 42.
by God as the foundation of his new Spiritual Kingdom, every
one who shall reject me will perish; and he on whom I, as the
Messiah, will let loose my wrath, for his rejection of me, will
be crushed to pieces, small as the dust or chaff that is scattered
to the winds.

"Therefore I say to you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken
from Israel, and from you, its present heads, and given to a
nation who will render to God the fruits He has a right to
claim from it."

The first open attempt at violence followed this parable.
The priests and their party felt that they were meant, and that
Jesus had dared to call himself the chief corner-stone of the
future Kingdom of God, which was to rise in the place of that
with which all their dignities and interests were bound up.
With wild Eastern frenzy they sought to arrest him on the
spot. But the crowds around would not permit him to be
taken, counting him, if not the Messiah, at least a prophet.
Some, bolder than the rest, possibly laid hands on him, but if
so, they were forced by the multitude to let him go. They had
to leave the place, and suffer Jesus to escape.

Left in peace, he once more calmly betook himself to his
task of teaching all who would hear.

The die had finally been cast, and the open breach between
him and the Jewish authorities had been shown in his last
parables. Indignant at the hypocrisy and wilful blindness
of his adversaries, and filled with compassion for the multitude,
the thoughts which the last hours raised in his soul found
expression in additional parables.

"The Kingdom of Heaven," he began, "is like a king who
made a marriage-feast for his son,¹ and sent forth his servants,
as the custom is, to tell those who had already been invited
that the time had now arrived. But, though once and again
summoned, they would not come. Yet, the king, unwilling, in
his goodness, that they should not enjoy the feast; in spite of

¹ Matt. xxii. 1-14.
this, sent other servants to invite them again. 'Come,' ran his message, 'for I have prepared the first meal of the feast; my oxen and fatlings have been killed, and all things are ready: come to the marriage.' But they made light of this fresh invitation as well, and went off, one to his farm, another to his merchandise, while still others took his servants and ill-treated and even killed them. Then the king was angry, and sent his soldiers, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Meanwhile, he said to his servants, 'The marriage feast is ready, but those who have been called were not worthy. Go, therefore, to the highways, where the roads cross and there are most passers-by, and invite to the feast as many as ye find.'

"So the servants went forth from the palace of the king, to the roads and cross-ways, and gathered together all, both evil and good, who were willing to accept their invitations, and the feast-chamber was filled with guests.

"The king had made all preparations for these being nobly arrayed in festal robes, so as to be worthy to appear before him.

"But, now, when he came in to welcome them, he saw among them a man who had not put on a marriage robe. 'Friend,' said he to him, 'how is it that you have come in hither without a marriage garment? You must needs have known that I provided robes fit for my presence, for all my guests, and that to refuse or slight what is thus offered is to show me the worst affront. You know that to do so is to raise the severest indignation in a king thus offended.'

"But the man was speechless, for he could not excuse himself.

"Then said the king to his attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into the thick darkness outside.'

"Ye know," added Jesus, "how dark our streets are in the night; no windows opening on them, and no lights illuminating them. That darkness is like the awful night into which he

1 Matt. xxii. 13.
will be cast out who appears at the marriage feast of my kingdom, hereafter, without the marriage-robe provided by my Father. In that darkness there will, indeed, be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for though multitudes are invited to the feast of the heavenly kingdom, many neglect to secure the marriage-robe, without which no one can see the king!"
CHAPTER XXV.

It was still Tuesday, and Jesus had not yet left the Temple courts.¹ The Temple authorities had come to him in the early morning, only to go away mortified and silenced, and all parties fancied their interests were threatened by the new teaching. All alike, therefore, however opposed at other times, made common cause in trying to get the hated reformer into their power.

Plot thickened on plot. Having themselves failed, the authorities sent some of the Pharisees, in company with Herodians, their deadly enemies, to try to entangle him by the answers he might give to treacherous questions. Obscure men, unknown to Jesus, were chosen. They were to pretend themselves anxious, as sincere Jews, to get his counsel on a point much disputed.

The Pharisees and Herodians, though on different grounds, were equally disloyal to the Roman Emperor. The extreme Pharisees had become blood-thirsty enemies of Rome;² the Herodians were Jewish royalists, who sighed for the old days of Archelaus and the dynasty of the Herods. The two parties now united to tempt Jesus, if possible, to some rash opinion on the payment of the Roman poll tax, which had already excited fierce insurrections. If he held that payment should be refused, he would offend the Romans; if he allowed it, he would set both Herodians and Pharisees against him. Danger lay on

¹ Matt. xxii. 15-22; Mark xii. 18-17; Luke xx. 20-26. 12th Nisan, Monday at sunset to Tuesday at sunset (2-8 April).
² Jos. Ant., xviii. 1. 1.

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each hand. On the one, the fierce eyes of the multitude; on the other, the bailiffs of Herod; here, the cry, “Publicans, and sinners”; there, a Roman dungeon. To disarm suspicion, they used

“Smooth dissimulation, taught to grace
A devil's purpose with an angel's face.”

“Teacher,” said they, with soft accents and humble looks, “we know that thou teachest what God requires of man in all matters, truly and rightly, and troublest not thyself about the opinions of men, but fearlessly and nobly speakest what truth demands, without caring who hears thee, whether rich or poor, learned or simple, powerful or lowly. Is it lawful for us Jews to pay tribute to Cæsar, or not? We are the people of God; God is our King; is it in accordance with the duty we owe Him, as such, to own any other king, as we must do if we pay taxes to Cæsar?”

This mode of approach adopted was well fitted to throw Jesus off his guard. Frankness demanded frankness. The courage of the question called for as much in the reply. Jesus knew, besides, that such ideas were active in the mind of the Pharisee youth, and that the Herodians, instead of being friends of Rome, anxiously desired a change. Why, therefore, should he distrust the new allies? The strict Jew recognised no ruler but Jehovah, and since Jesus had devoted his life to founding a “Kingdom of Heaven,” it seemed only natural that he should hold his followers free from obligations to the Empire of Rome. If they could only bring him to say something, his death at the hands of the Romans, as a conspirator, was certain, and they would get their revenge against him without seeming to have acted in the matter.

But Christ’s answer scattered their plans to the wind.

“You hypocrites!—you actors!” replied he; “I see through your designs, and value your flatteries at their worth. Why do you thus seek to entrap me, under pretence of religious
scruples which you wish me to solve for you? Bring me the
coin you pay as the Roman tax.” A Roman denarius was
presently brought him—a coin which the Jew hated intensely,
for it was that in which the poll-tax was paid, and was, thus,
the sign of slavery to the heathen. Besides, it bore the
idolatrous image of the reigning Cæsar. The emperors, till
Vespasian’s time, to spare Jewish feeling, had a special coinage
for Judea, without a likeness on it, but only the name of the
emperor and some Jewish emblems. Other coins, however,
stamped with the image of Augustus or Tiberius, found their
way to Jerusalem, especially at the feasts. Such a piece was
now handed to Jesus, with the hope, doubtless, that the
idolatrous image on one side, and the signs of Jewish subjec-
tion on the other, might provoke him to some treasonable
expression.

“Whose image and inscription is this?” asked he.
“Cæsar’s.”

“Render then to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and to
God the things that are God’s.”

Nothing could be said after such an answer. The head of
the emperor on the coin, and the words round it, were proofs
of the existing state of things, and, thus, of the right of the
imperial government to levy taxes. Hence it was not only
lawful, but fitting to pay what was thus due, since the very
coin they had brought to him showed, on its face, that the
claim was a lawful demand of the ruling power. “But,” added
he, “your duty to God is as binding. Pay also what you owe
Him as your spiritual king, the Temple tax and all that He
asks besides.” The question was thus answered with a clear-
ness and wisdom which could not be surpassed.

Such a reply filled the messengers of the priests with
astonishment. It was not only not treasonable, but pressed
on the nation the discharge of its duties to Rome.

All the Jewish parties had now united against Christ as a
dangerous reformer and an enemy of the legal forms and rites
which were the essence of the religion of the day. If tolerated longer he might win over the people. The Pharisees and Herodians had hardly left him when some Sadducees, a small but dignified body, which held all the highest offices in the priesthood, though they were infidels at heart, for they believed neither in the future life nor in the resurrection, nor in spirits,\(^1\) renewed the attack. The clergy of all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, were thus against him. His support was among the people. His appearance in the Temple, his exercising authority in it, and his lofty claim to be the Messiah, filled the official world with alarm, and united them to crush him. But the Sadducees had none of the earnestness of the Pharisees. Few, rich, dignified; the primate and bishops of the day—they affected at first only to despise the Galilean, who, like so many before him, had stirred up commotion for the time. Even now, in Jerusalem, they were disposed to look at him and his followers with a lofty contempt, and to laugh at the foolish rabble who listened to him. His claims were, in their opinion, more silly than dangerous, and they would, therefore, bring the whole matter into contempt, by making it ridiculous.

For this end they had carefully selected, from the cases invented by the Rabbis, that of a wife who was supposed, in accordance with the Mosaic law, to have married in succession seven brothers,\(^2\) each of whom died without children. It was a possible case, and the Law enacted that, if a husband died without leaving a son to perpetuate his name, his brother must marry the widow, and the first-born son of the second marriage was to be entered in the public register as the son of the dead man.\(^3\)

Not themselves believing in the doctrine of the resurrection, and supposing that Jesus, who, they had heard, taught it, held the same notions as they ascribed to the Pharisees, they fancied

\(^1\) Acts xxiii. 8.
\(^2\) Matt. xxii. 23—33; Mark xii. 18—27; Luke xx. 27—40.
\(^3\) Deut. xxv. 5.
they could cover him and it with ridicule, by a skilful use of this case. Some of the Rabbis, indeed, had purer conceptions than others, teaching that in the kingdom of the Messiah, after the resurrection, or at least in the future world, the just would neither eat, drink, nor marry. But the popular belief, as expressed by the Rabbis generally, was gross and unworthy in the extreme. The resurrection would not only restore men to their former bodies, but to their appetites and passions; they would not only eat, drink, and take wives, but would rise in the clothes they wore in life, if buried with them, and with all their bodily blemishes and defects, "that men might know them to be the same persons as they knew in life." Even the case supposed by the Sadducees had been settled,—"for the woman who had married two husbands in this world," it was said, "in the world to come will be given to the first."

Coming to Jesus, with a well-bred politeness, they put their question softly, addressing him respectfully, in imitation of the Pharisees and Herodians, as "Rabbi."

"Your ideas respecting these things are wrong," replied Jesus, "from your not understanding correctly the Scriptures which refer to them. The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage. But those who shall be counted worthy to enter the Heavenly Kingdom, and will be raised from the dead to do so, neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more, for they will be immortal, like angels; and hence there is no reason for their marrying and raising children to take their place, as with men in this world. As sons of the resurrection, they are sons of God, and, like the angels, they will live for ever.

"As to the resurrection of the dead, even Moses shows, in the passage in which we are told of the vision at the burning bush, that the dead are raised. For he calls Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now, God cannot be the God of persons who do not exist, and, therefore, the patriarchs, though their bodies were dead, must themselves have been still
living and awaiting the resurrection. Thus, God regards all the dead as still alive, and, if this be the case, how easy for Him to raise them hereafter!"

"Rabbi, thou hast spoken well," said some scribes, as he closed. They were, for the moment, won to his side by his triumph over their Sadducee enemies. Meanwhile, the people were more than ever astonished at his teaching, and disposed to think him a prophet.

It soon spread abroad that the Sadducees had been silenced; but the Pharisees had already prepared a new attempt to entrap him. One of them, who had listened to the dispute—a scribe, or master of the Law—had been selected to be their spokesman, but, as it proved, was only half-hearted in his task. The Rabbis taught that there were great and small commands—the one hard and weighty, the other easy and of less moment. Their idea of greatness, however, was fixed by their own fanciful rules. Thus, commands were especially called great, to the transgression of which excommunication was attached; such as observance of the Sabbath in their sense, of circumcision, of the minutest rites of sacrifice and offering, of ceremonial purity, and the like. The precepts respecting the structure of the booths at the Feast of Tabernacles, and of the washing of the hands, were, on the contrary, counted small. But, in spite of this difference, obedience to all was alike required, and in practice, both classes were treated as equally weighty. To honour one's parents and to let a mother-bird fly when the young are taken; not to kill; and to wash the hands, were put on a level, and had an equal reward. Even the injunctions of the Rabbis respecting the tassels at the corners of their scarves, were "great." Any answer of Jesus on a subject so delicate, might perhaps once more commit him, as an enemy of the Rabbis, and expose him to new charges.

His reply, as always, goes to the root of the matter. He avoided the least approach to anything that could offend the

1 Matt. xxii. 34-40; Mark xii. 28-34.
most zealous faith in Scripture, and, at the same time, gave no
ground for accusing him of any slight of the legal rules they
so greatly honoured.

"Teacher," said the scribe, "which is the first and great
commandment in the Law?"

No one could take Jesus by surprise at any time, but here
he was, if we may so speak, especially at home, as he had shown
a few days before, in his conversation with the young ruler
near Jericho. Conscious of the peril of his position, he
answered with more fulness than usual, making his opinion
quite clear, but giving no pretext for offence. To the young
ruler he had named only one command—the love of our neigh-
bour—as great, but to the scribe he gave two, as forming, to-
gether, "the great and first commandment." With sure hand,
he turned first to the fifth book of Moses, then to the third,
for the two great guiding stars which all the lesser commands
followed. "Hear, O Israel," said he: "Jehovah, our God, is
one Jehovah"—words in which every Israelite, night and
morning, confessed his faith—"And thou shalt love the Lord
thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all
thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and
great commandment. The second is like it. Thou shalt love
thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment
greater than these. On these two hang all the Law and the
prophets."

He had once more shown his greatness as a teacher, by
summing up our whole duty in love to God, which is also love
to His children, our fellow-men. Nor were the commands of
any part of the Scriptures overlooked in this answer; the
religious and moral precepts of the prophets, no less than of
the Law, were honoured and made binding for ever.

"Thou hast spoken well and truly," broke in the scribe,
"for God is One, and there is no other but He, and to love Him
with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all

1 Deut. vi. 4, 5; Lev. xix. 18.
the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbour as one's self, is of greater consequence than all the whole burnt-offerings of the Law, the morning and evening sacrifice, and all other sacrifices besides."

"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God," replied Jesus, as he heard words which showed that the speaker was no mere man of his party. The answer of Christ had not only silenced his enemies, but had half won some of them to his side. Henceforth, all alike kept aloof from one who sent away chief priests and Rabbis equally humbled and silenced.

As on the day before, the defeat of all the attacks on him was followed by his taking the offensive.

Turning unexpectedly to a knot of Pharisees, who hung near, to watch as he was teaching, he asked them—

"What is your opinion about the Messiah—whose son is he?"

"The Son of David," answered they at once.

"How is it, then," replied Jesus, "that David, in the hundred and tenth Psalm, which you justly refer to the Messiah, says, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, the Messiah, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? Thy mighty sceptre will the Eternal stretch forth out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thy foes.' If he be David's Lord, how can he be also his son?"

Not knowing what to say, they were silent. The true answer was one which had not entered their thoughts. It would have been—he is David's son by his human descent, but, as the Son of God, proceeding from the Father, he is exalted far above David and all mankind, and therefore was rightly called by David, his Lord.

A new scene now opened. Day after day the hostility of his enemies had shown itself more fierce, as they found it increasingly hopeless to overcome him by argument. The people, however, were more friendly, and regarded him as at least a prophet, if not the Messiah. He had hitherto maintained only

1 Matt. xxii. 41-46; Mark xii. 35-37; Luke xx. 41-44.
a defensive attitude, but the clear purpose shown to put him out of the way made all further reserve or caution useless.

He now, therefore, broke out, before the multitude, in a last terrible denunciation of the moral and religious shortcomings of his enemies. These he summed up under the two great heads of hypocrisy and selfishness; they made a pretence and a gain of religion. Yet their doctrines were mostly right; it was their practice he condemned.

"The scribes and Pharisees," said he, "have taken possession of the seat of Moses, to continue his office as law-giver, by explaining and teaching the Law.\(^1\) They are his successors; therefore obey their decisions. But do not imitate their lives, for they teach what they do not practice. They heap together their rules and demands into heavy burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they will not help those whom they thus load, by so much as the touch of a little finger. They shirk many rites and forms which they demand from others as sacred duties. Their requirements are a weight on the conscience, which deadens and destroys it. To exalt their order they make slaves of the people, paralyzing, by their countless laws, all true virtue, freedom and love. They act only with an eye to effect; to be thought more religious than others, and reap consideration and profit. They come out to pray in their most pious robes, especially now, at the feast, and wear phylacteries\(^2\) of extra size on their forehead and arm, that they may be noticed; while the very tassels hung, in honour of the Law, at the corners of their scarves, are larger than those of others. To get honour, they strive for the highest places at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and court salutations in the crowded marketplace, and the sounding title, Rabbi. Have nothing to do with such proud names, for I, only, am your Rabbi, or teacher, and all ye are brethren. They like to be called 'Father,' but call

\(^1\) Mark xii. 38, 39; Luke xx. 45, 46; Matt. xxiii. 1-12.

\(^2\) Phylacteries, or protectors, were small leather boxes with texts on them, tied by leather bands on the forehead and the arm. See illustration, p. 181.
A SHORT LIFE OF CHRIST.

no teacher on earth your father, for one only is your Father; God, in Heaven. And do not, like them, be called leaders, for you have only one Leader, me, the Messiah. The highest place among my disciples is quite otherwise obtained than among them, for he who seeks to be great among you can become so, as I have said before, only by being the servant of the rest. This lowliness is itself his greatness. For he who exalts himself shall be humbled at my coming, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Rising, as he proceeded, he now broke out into lofty indignation at his enemies.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, actors! Ye plunder the houses of desolate widows, left without protectors, and to hide your doings make long prayers! For you say in your hypocrisy, 'Long prayers make a long life,' and some of you boast that you pray nine hours a day! Believe me, you will receive for all this the greater condemnation hereafter.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, actors! Ye stand in the gate of the Kingdom of Heaven—that Kingdom I have come to set up—and not only do not yourselves enter, but even close the doors I have opened, that you may keep those from entering who wish to do so.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, actors! Instead of helping men into the Kingdom of the Messiah, ye compass sea and land to make one convert, that your party may profit by him, and when he is gained, what do you make of him? A son of hell, by your example, and that twofold more than even yourselves.

"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If any one swear by the Temple, it is not binding; but if he swear by the gold which belongs to the Temple—the gilding, the golden vessels, or the treasure—he is bound by his oath.' Fools and blind! for which is greater, the gold, or the Temple that makes the gold sacred? You say, in the same spirit, 'If any one swear by the altar, his

1 Matt. xxiii. 18-39; Mark xii. 40; Luke xx. 47.
oath is not binding on him; but if he swear by the gift that he has laid on the altar, he must keep his oath. Fools and blind! for which is greater, the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? He who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all the things on it; and he who swears by the Temple, swears by it and by Him that dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, actors! for ye affect to be so strict in observing the Law that you pay to the Temple a tenth of even the sprigs of mint and anise and cummin in your garden borders, and yet at the same time neglect the great commands of the Law,—to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. You ought certainly to attend to the lighter demands of the Law, but surely not to leave the far greater neglected. Blind guides, who strain out the gnat from the wine and swallow a camel! Sticklers for worthless trifles, regardless of matters of moment.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, actors! Ye make clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but, within, they are full of robbery and lust. Blind Pharisees, clean first the inside of the cup and dish, that the wine taste no more of plunder and vice, and that the outside may not only seem clean by your washing, but be clean, by the taking away of that defilement which your life gives it, in spite of your cleansings.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, actors! You are like the whitewashed tombs all over the land—fair outside, but full, within, of the deadliest uncleanness, the bones of men, and all corruption. You pass yourselves off as religious, but in your heart you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

Over against the eastern hall in which Jesus now stood, and from which he looked down into the Valley of the Kedron, lay, on the slope of the Mount of Olives, the so-called tombs of the Prophets, the southernmost of which is yet known as the tomb of Zechariah. In sight of these monuments, glancing his eyes from grave to grave, he burst out afresh—
"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, actors! Ye build fine tombs over the old prophets, and beautify those of the saints, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in the martyrdom of these holy men.' But when you call their murderers 'your fathers,' you bear witness that you are their sons, and you are so, not only in natural descent, but in your spirit. You are of kin in heart to them! Fill up, therefore, the measure of their iniquity by slaying me and those I shall send to you! Serpents! brood of vipers, for vipers your fathers were, and vipers are ye; how can ye escape the judgment of hell! That ye may not do so, behold, I send to you prophet-like apostles, and rabbis and scribes. Some of them ye shall kill and crucify; some ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city—that on you, the leaders of the people, may come the punishment of all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel to that of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, who was stoned by command of King Joash, in the court of the Temple, between the shrine and the altar. Believe me, all these things will come on this generation." Zechariah, of old, had denounced the sins of Israel, as Jesus had those of the priests and Rabbis. "Why transgress ye," he had asked, "the commandments of the Lord? Ye cannot prosper! Because ye have forsaken Jehovah, He hath forsaken you."

"O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" he continued, "that killest the prophets, and stonest those sent in love to thee; how often have I desired to gather thy children, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, and ye refused to accept me as the Messiah, and thus come under my loving protection. Behold, your house is left to you desolate! I go from it. The time of the Divine help and guard over you and your city, which I was sent to offer, is past.

"I tell you ye shall not see me henceforth, after my death, which is near at hand, till I appear again in glory. Then you

1 2 Chron. xxiv. 20.
will be only too eagerly ready to hail me as the Messiah, though now ye refuse even to let others thus honour me. Then, when too late, ye will cry, as the crowds did as I entered your city, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

Thus the breach between Christ and his enemies was at last complete. The whole Church-world, from the high priest its primate, to the Levite its curate, and the Rabbi its professor or tutor, had been denounced before the people, in language which they must resent if they were to retain any authority at all. Either Jesus, or the Church as it was, must perish.
CHAPTER XXVI.

AFTER his terrible parting charge against the religious leaders of the nation, Jesus passed into the spacious Court of the Women, fifteen steps below that of the men. It was a wide space of about two hundred feet in length and breadth, and was open to the people at large. Popular assemblies, indeed, were at times held in it, and it was the scene of a torch-dance at the Feast of Tabernacles. It was especially frequented, however, by both sexes, because the building in which the pious presented their offerings formed part of one of its sides.

After the excitement of the past hours, Jesus had sat down to rest over against the treasury, where the continuous stream of persons casting in their money attracted his notice. As each came, he could judge by his appearance how much he threw in. The poor could only give paltry copper coins, but the rich cast in gold and silver; some, doubtless, from an honest zeal for the glory of God; others, because alms, in the opinion of the day, had their value in the future world.

Among the rest came a poor widow, with two lepta—one-twelfth of our penny, each the smallest of copper coins. She could not have cast in less, for one lepton was not received as an offering. The sight touched the heart of Jesus. "Believe me," said he, to those around him, "this poor woman has cast in more than any one, for they have only given of their abundance, but she in her need—for she has less than enough—has thrown in all she had for her day's living."

1 Mark xii. 41-44; Luke xxii. 1-4.
Among the multitude of festival pilgrims, then in Jerusalem, were many foreign converts to the Jewish religion. That they should have come, though heathen by birth, showed real earnestness, for it exposed them to ridicule, and even worse, from their own countrymen. The spread of the Jewish population in all countries, and the favours they enjoyed, had resulted in the conversion of great numbers of Gentiles, who were willing to pledge themselves to what were called the seven commands of Noah—the avoidance of murder, bloodshed, or robbery; obedience to the Jewish courts in matters of religion; the rejection of idolatry, and the worship of Jehovah; and to eat no still bleeding flesh. They were received as "strangers within the gate" of Israel, and could attend the synagogues, but could not pass beyond the Court of the Heathen, in the Temple.

Of this class, some Greeks, then at Jerusalem for the feast, had heard much of Jesus; perhaps had seen him and listened to his discourses, and were anxious to know him. Too modest to come direct, they applied to Philip, the only apostle bearing a Greek name. Philip forthwith mentioned the circumstance to Andrew, and the two having communicated it to Jesus, it filled his heart with much-needed joy, to welcome men who must have seemed to him an earnest of his future triumphs among the great heathen nations.

He went out, therefore, to the Court of the Heathen, where they were standing, and cheerfully joined them. The meeting brought to his mind, with fresh force, the nearness of his death, through which salvation was to be brought to the heathen world at large,¹ and his emotion broke forth in words full of sublimity.

"The hour has come," said he, lifting his face, as we may believe, to heaven, "the hour appointed by my Father, from eternity, when the Son of man shall enter into his glory by death."² For it must be that I die, that my work may bear its due fruit—as the grain must fall into the ground and perish,

¹ John x. 15, 16; xii. 20–36. ² John xvii. 5; vi. 62; 1 Pet. i. 11.
that it may bring forth the harvest. Verily, verily, I say unto you, it must be so. My life remains bound up in myself, as the life is in the seed, till I die. It cannot, till then, pass beyond me to others. But when I die, I shall be like the corn, which, in its death, imparts its life to what springs from it.

As it is needful for me thus to die, to make my work triumph, so also is it needful for you, my followers, to be willing to die daily. He who so loves his life as not to be ready to yield it for me, will lose eternal life hereafter; but he who, in this world, cheerfully gives up life itself for me, will gain life everlasting. If any man wish really to serve me, let him imitate me in my readiness even to die; and he will receive, as his reward, that where I go, to the right hand of my Father in heaven, there, also, will he follow, and dwell with me; for if any one thus truly serve me, my Father will honour him by giving him the glory of the life hereafter.”

The awful vision of the immediate future, meanwhile, for a moment, crossed his thoughts. It was the foreshadowing of Gethsemane.

“Now is my soul troubled,” cried he, with a voice of infinite sadness. In his agony of soul, he faltered for a moment at the thought of all through which he had so soon to pass, as if he were even now enduring it. “What shall I say?” he added, as if communing with himself; “shall I pray—Father, save me from this hour of darkness; take this cup from me? No, let it not be; all the past has only been a progress towards it, that by it I might glorify Thy name!” The momentary shrinking from the Cross had passed away as soon as it had risen. The cloud that dimmed his spirit had disappeared. His trouble of soul gave place, on the instant, to victorious joy. Then, as if he were repeating aloud his inward thoughts, he cried aloud, “Father, glorify Thy name, through my death for man. I come to do Thy will, O God; I give myself up to Thee!”

Forthwith there sounded a voice from the cloudless April

1 John xii. 27 ff.
sky with a volume that filled the heavens, and the words were heard—"I have glorified My name, already, in having sent thee, and in all thy sinless and gracious life, till now; and I shall glorify it again, by thine entrance on thy heavenly glory through the gates of death!"

"It thunders," muttered some, whose souls were least quick to realize what had happened. "No," said others, "it was an angel speaking to him. He is a prophet, at least, if not the Messiah, and God speaks thus to him by a heavenly messenger." But the disciples around, and Jesus himself, knew whence it came.

"You may not understand," said Jesus to the disciples and the crowd, "whence this voice comes, and why it is sent. It is the voice of my Father in heaven, and comes, not for my sake, but for yours, to take away your unbelief, and to strengthen your faith. The time presses for your decision regarding me. Even now the judgment of my Father is being given forth against those who reject me as the Messiah. Through the victory of my kingdom,—which my death will secure, and the spread of my name over the earth proclaim,—the weakness of my enemies will be shown, and their guilt before God be made clear. He, especially, whom even you call the ruler of the world—the prince of evil—will feel the greatness of my triumph, for his kingdom must yield to mine. My death will deliver from his power, and place under my protection, all who believe in my name. Nor will that triumph cease as time rolls on; age after age, it will subdue all things under me, and drive the kingdom of darkness from the world.

"So it shall be; for I, if I be lifted up from the earth by the death of the cross, as I know I shall be, shall draw all men to me; for the power of my cross will be universally-felt, and the Holy Spirit, whom I shall send from the Father will turn men's hearts to love and serve me. The prince of this world has, in me, his conqueror; for I must reign till all things are put under my feet, and the world be won back to God."
The people round, accustomed to speak freely with the Rabbis on the subject of their addresses, had listened to him respectfully, but were at a loss to reconcile his words with their ideas of the Messiah.¹ In the synagogue, they had heard passages read from the Scriptures, describing him as a priest for ever, and his dominion as one which should never pass away or be destroyed, but stand for ever and ever,² and had come to expect, in consequence, an everlasting reign of the Messiah on earth. They were at a loss, therefore, to reconcile Christ's use of the name, Son of man, which they applied to the Messiah, with the statement that instead of dwelling on earth for ever, as a king over all nations, he should suffer the shameful death of crucifixion.

"We have heard out of the Law," said they, "that the Christ is to live for ever, on earth. What dost thou mean, then, by saying that the Son of man—a name by which we understand the Christ—must be crucified? Who is this Son of man to whom thou referrest? What dost thou mean by using this name, when thou speakest so contrary to Scripture?"

"If you wish to comprehend what I have said about my being lifted up,"³ said he, "let me tell you how all your questions and difficulties about it may be solved. I shall be with you only a very little longer; make right use of that time to believe in me, the Light of the World, as the traveller makes use of the last moments of the day, to reach safety, before darkness overtake him. With me, the truth, which now lights you, will be gone, and you know that he who walks in darkness, cannot tell which way to go. While ye have me, the Light of Men, believe in the light, that ye may receive illumination from it."

It was still early in the afternoon, and he might have stayed in the Temple till it shut at sunset, then a few minutes after six in the evening. But these were almost the last words he was to speak as a public teacher. His mission to his nation was ended. There remained only a brief interval of com-

¹ John xii. 34. ² Ps. cx. 4; Dan. vii. 14; ii. 44. ³ John xii. 35-43.
munion with the loved ones round him, and then would come the scenes of Calvary. His work was over, except its final and greatest act. Casting a last sad look of pity on all, he turned away to Bethany, to seek seclusion, till the time came for his death.

Once more, only, was the pleading voice raised. A number of those near followed him as he retired, and he could not tear himself from them, without a final outburst of yearning desire for their salvation. Turning round, and raising his voice till the sound rang far and wide, he cried—

"Think not that the faith I demand in myself in any way lessens the faith that is due to God. To believe in me, and to believe in God, are the same thing. He who has faith in me, believes not so much in me as in Him who sent me. I came into the world to enlighten men, that every one who yields himself to my guidance, may be as when one walks after a light, and thus no longer remains in darkness. The end of my coming is not to judge the world, but, rather, to save it. He who rejects me, has in his own breast a judge that will condemn him hereafter. The truth I have spoken, in the name of God, which he has refused to receive, will condemn him in his own conscience at the last day, and will condemn him also from the lips of the great Judge. For I have taught only that which I was sent by my Father to speak, and my teaching, if obeyed, secures everlasting life to men. I am he whom God hath sent, and my words are the words of God."

Nothing in these last discourses of Jesus had seemed more strange to the Apostles than his prediction of the early destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Temple itself. As they now passed with him through the forecourts to the outer gate, and down the eastern steps to the Kedron Valley, they could not refrain from speaking to him respecting his strange words.

"Master," said they, "see what a wondrous structure this is. What stones! what buildings! what splendour! what wealth!"

How the whole Temple rises, terrace above terrace, from the
great white walls, to the Holy Place, shining with gold! and
it is not finished even yet!"
The Temple was built of white stones of great size—the
length of each about thirty-seven and a half feet, some even
forty-five feet, the thickness twelve feet, and the breadth
eighteen.
But Jesus looked at all this strength, wealth, and magnifi-
cence, with very different eyes. To him the Jewish Church
had outlived its day, and had sunk into approaching death,
which the splendour of its Temple could not hide. Israel, in
rejecting, him, had shown itself ripe for Divine judgment.
His death, now close at hand, would seal the fate of the nation
and its religion.
"Yes," said Jesus, in utter sadness, "I see all: they are very
great buildings; but I tell you solemnly, the day will come
when there will not be one stone of them all left on another."
He said nothing more, but went out of the city by the
blossoming Kedron Valley, with its gardens and stately man-
sions, a picture of peace and prosperity, to the Mount of Olives.
Sitting down on a knoll, to enjoy the magnificent view, the
apostles had Mount Moriah once more before them, crowned
by the marble Temple, like a mountain with snow.
In the group around, Peter and James, and John and Andrew,
sat nearest their Master, and as they looked at all the splen-
dour of the sight—splendour so great, that it was often said, he
who had not seen it had missed one of the wonders of the
world—their thoughts still ran on the words in which he had
doomed it to destruction. They had heard him say that the
nation would not see him again, till they received him as the
Messiah, and that, in the meantime, the city and Temple
should be utterly destroyed. Their only idea of the Messiah,
even yet, however, was that of a deliverer of their race, who
would raise Israel to world-wide supremacy. They could not

1 Matt. xxiv. 2. 2 Matt. xxiv. 3.
imagine that the Holy City and its Temple would perish before the end of the world, and he must surely come sooner than that. The destruction of the city, therefore, could not, they fancied, be before the destruction of all things. They would fain know what sign, after this catastrophe, would precede his coming, that they might recognise his advent when it took place. Their ideas, in truth, were in a hopeless confusion.

"Tell us, Master," said a favoured one, "when shall these things, of which thou hast spoken, take place? And what sign will there be of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

Instead of giving them dates, which would have been useless, Our Lord, as usual, gave, rather, a striking succession of practical counsels. Troubles would first come: they would be sorely persecuted; false teachers would rise; it would be necessary to save themselves by flight. The great matter was that they should be found watching for his return. To impress this more forcibly, he threw his words into the form of parables.

"In that day of my final coming it will be," said he, "as when, at a marriage,\textsuperscript{1} the maidens invited to play and sing in the marriage procession, prepare to go out to meet the bridegroom and lead him to the house of the bride, where the marriage is to be celebrated. Let me suppose there were ten such maidens—five wise, five foolish. The five foolish ones took their lamps with them, to help the display and light up the path of the bridegroom, but they forgot to take oil with them, to refill the lamps when they had burned out. But the wise not only took their lamps, but oil in their oil-flasks \textsuperscript{2} as well. All the ten, thus differently prepared, went forth from the home of the bride, and waited in a house, on the way by which the bridegroom must come, to be ready to go out and escort him, when he passed.

"But he delayed so long that they all fell asleep. At last, at midnight, they were suddenly roused; for the people in the streets had heard the loud music and shouts, and had seen at a

\textsuperscript{1} Matt. xxv. 1-10.  \textsuperscript{2} Small clay bottles with a lip for pouring.
distance the light of the lamps and torches of the procession, and raised the cry—'The bridegroom is coming, go out to meet him!' Then they all arose, and trimmed each her own lamp, to have it ready. The foolish ones now found their lamps going out, the oil being exhausted, and asked the wise ones to give them some of theirs. But they answered, 'We cannot possibly do so, for we have only oil enough for ourselves'; go to the sellers, and buy what you need.

"While they were away buying it, however, the bridegroom came, and the five who were ready, joined the procession, and went in with the bridegroom to the marriage and the marriage-feast, and the door was shut. After a time, the other five came, and knocked at the gate with anxious entreaty, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'I do not know you. You were not among the other maids of the bride in the procession, and, therefore, have nothing to do at my marriage.'

"Learn from this parable that only those who patiently watch and wait, doing their duty, till I come, though they know neither the day nor the hour when I shall do so, will have a part in the joys of my heavenly kingdom. All my followers will then be, as it were, my bride, and I their bridegroom; but those who are not true to the end, will be shut out from the marriage feast."

The apostles and the others who followed Jesus had been sitting long, in the cool of the evening, on the pleasant slope of Olivet, listening to his discourse, but their Master's stay with them was now nearly over, and he was loath to bring his words to an end. He still went on, therefore, and next repeated to them the parable he had before delivered near Jericho—of the talents lent by the Lord to his servants. Its awful close, however, which represents the unprofitable servant as cast into the outer darkness, with its weeping and gnashing of teeth, brought before him all the terrors of the last judgment, and led him to close by a picture of that awful day.
"The parable of the talents," said he, "shows that everyone must needs make the utmost possible use of all the different gifts entrusted to him, for my service. For, at my coming, I shall reckon with you all, and those who have been faithful to me shall receive high rewards in heaven, but those who have left their gifts, however small, unused, will have those gifts taken from them, and they themselves will be thrust out of my kingdom."

He then proceeded, in words such as no mere man could ever dream of using, words which we seem to hear spoken with the light as of other worlds shining from the speaker's eyes:—

"I have told you how I shall return, invisibly, to earth, before this generation shall have passed away, to judge Jerusalem and Israel, when the cup of their iniquity shall be full; and how, also, I shall come again, unseen, to be with my servants in their warfare with the powers of darkness, till my kingdom comes.

"Then shall arrive the day when,¹ like the Lord who returned from the far country to reckon with his servants, I will come again as Head of the great kingdom of the Messiah, which will then embrace all nations.

"The Father has committed all judgment in this kingdom to me, His Son,² and has given me all power in it, in heaven and in earth.³ And at that day I shall come in my glory, as its Prince and Head, amidst the splendours of heaven, and with all the angels of God.

"Then will I sit on the throne of my glory, as kings of the earth when they sit to judge, and all nations shall be gathered together before me, by my angels,⁴ and I will separate them, one from another, as you have seen a shepherd separate the white sheep from the black goats, and I will set the sheep on my right hand, but the goats on my left.

"Then shall I say, as King, to them on my right hand

¹ Matt. xxv. 31-46.  ² John v. 22-27.  ³ Matt. xxviii. 18.  ⁴ Matt. xxv. 31, etc.
'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the earth.' For ye have proved that ye truly believed in my name, by your love towards me and mine. For I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and ye gave me welcome; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.'

'When, Lord,' they shall ask me, 'saw we thee hungry, and gave thee food; or thirsty, and gave thee to drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and gave thee welcome; or naked and clothed thee? Or, when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?'

'And I, the King, will answer them: 'Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye did it, for my sake, to one of these my brethren, even the least of them; the poor, the lowly, the outcast, the persecuted, the wretched, who believed in me, and are now round my throne—or to one of the least of all my brethren of mankind, for the love ye bore me—ye did it unto me.'

'When shall I also say to those on my left hand: 'Depart from me, accursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, but now to be shared by you. For I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye did not give me to drink; I was a stranger, and ye would not receive me; naked, and ye did not clothe me; sick, and in prison, and ye did not visit me.'

'Then they will try, vainly, to plead innocence. 'Lord,' they will say, 'when did we see thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to thee? Lord, we never saw thee thus, and, therefore, have never refused thee our service.'

'But I will answer them: 'Verily, I say to you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, my brethren, whom

1 Matt. v. 3-12.
you had with you and might have helped, ye did it not to me
Had ye truly, and not in name only, believed in me, ye would
have shown it in deeds of love for my sake.'

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but
the righteous into life eternal."
CHAPTER XXVII.

It was the twelfth day of the new moon,¹ now rounding to fulness, when the last words had been spoken in the Temple, and farewell taken of it for ever. Jesus had hitherto lingered in its courts till the gates closed, at sunset, after the evening sacrifice, but his soul was filled this day with immeasurable sadness. Israel would not hear the words which alone could save it, and had not only rejected him, but was even now plotting his death. He had left the Temple courts, therefore, in the early afternoon, to spend some hours with the little band of followers he was so soon to leave. He had passed quietly and unheeded through the stream of pilgrims and citizens, and had been resting, during his long discourse to his apostles, beneath one of the fig-trees of Olivet, gazing at all he had left for ever. Forty years before the destruction of the Temple, and, therefore, in the very days of Our Lord’s public life, the hindmost lamp of the sacred seven-branched candlestick in the Holy Place, one night went out; the crimson wool tied to the horns of the scapegoat, which ought to have turned white, had remained red; and “the lot of the Lord,” for the goat to be offered on the Day of Atonement, had come out on the left hand; and the gates of the Temple, duly shut overnight, had been found open in the morning. A generation later, it was to be told, with pale lips, among the heathen, that when the Temple was near its fall, a more than human voice had been heard from the Holy of Holies, crying “The gods have departed,” and that presently, a great sound, as of their issuing forth, had been heard.

¹ Tuesday at sunset to Wednesday at sunset, April 3–4 (13th Nisan).
But the true hour of Jehovah's leaving it, and that for ever was when His Son passed, that afternoon, through its gates, to re-enter them no more.

Rising after he had ended his discourse, he climbed the slope with his handful of followers, on the way to the well-loved cottage at Bethany.

As they went, he again spoke to those around him, of his approaching fate. "You know," said he, "that after two days is the Passover, and that the Son of man is appointed by God to be delivered over to be crucified."

Meanwhile, his enemies were not idle. It was now Tuesday evening, and nothing alarming had followed the preceding Sunday. The multitude, indeed, had lost their enthusiasm, and, in many cases, grown even hostile. There was less to fear than the authorities had apprehended. Yet, the crowd was fickle, and thousands of Galileans, the countrymen of Jesus, were at the feast, which was always so restless a time that the Roman governor kept a double garrison in Jerusalem while it lasted, and himself came up to the Holy City from Cæsarea. The fiery Galileans might rise if Jesus were apprehended during the feast-week, and any tumult would be certain to bring severe measures, at the hands of the Romans, on the community at large.

The heads of the priesthood and of the Rabbis were hence in a difficulty, and met to consult on the wisest course. The acting high priest, Joseph, known among the people as "Caia-phas," "the oppressor," was the soul of the movement against Jesus; for his memorable words, "Why not this one man die, rather than the nation perish?" had first given formal encouragement to the idea of putting him to death. Throwing himself into the plot, he put the court of his palace, in the Upper City, at the disposal of those engaged in it, and there they and he met, to scheme how they might get the Hated One into their power without the knowledge of the people, in order to hand him over to the Romans for crucifixion. The
meeting could not, however, come to any fixed plan, from dread of a popular rising. They could only watch, and take advantage of the course of events.

While murder was thus being discussed in the halls of the primate, peace and sacred friendship reigned in the pleasant home at Bethany. The house of Simon, once a leper, but cured by Jesus; now the abode of Martha, perhaps his widow, perhaps his daughter; of Mary, her sister, and of Lazarus, so strangely brought back from the unseen world—the one man raised from the dead of whose second earthly life we know anything—was a scene of tender respect and loving homage. To do Jesus honour, the family had invited guests to meet him at supper, and Lazarus reclined with him on the table-couch. Besides Christ and his immediate followers, the company consisted, doubtless, as in the case of the little household itself, of such as owed their health, perhaps their life, or that of some friend, to his miraculous powers.

It was, in itself, a tender proof of reverent love, that at such a time, when the life of their guest was sought by the authorities of the Temple and Schools, and every one was required, on pain of high displeasure, to help them to arrest him, he should have been thus honoured; for Bethany was close to Jerusalem, and the act might have brought disaster on a family like that of Martha and Mary. But a still higher tribute was paid him. The sisters had often pondered how they could show their gratitude for all he had been and had done for them. He had healed Simon, and had given not only him, but the sisters and their brother, the hope of Heaven, by winning their souls to himself, and, but now, he had shown how truly he was the Messiah, by bringing back Lazarus from the grave. They knew that the shadows of death were gathering over him, for the disciples, doubtless, repeated to them the last words he had spoken.

1 Matt. xxvi. 1-16; Mark. xiv. 1-11; Luke xxii. 1-6; John xii. 2-8.  
2 John xi. 37.  
3 John xi. 27.
MARY ANOINTS OUR LORD.
It was common to anoint the heads of the Rabbis at social parties, with fragrant oil, and special guests were sometimes similarly honoured. A grateful penitent had at an earlier period anointed even the feet of Jesus, washing them, moreover, with her tears, and wiping them with her hair, flowing loose, in self-forgetfulness. But now Mary outdid all former honour paid him. The costliest anointing oil of antiquity was the pure spikenard, drawn from an Indian plant, and exposed for sale throughout the Roman Empire in flasks of alabaster, at a price that put it beyond any but the wealthy.

Of this Mary had bought a bottle, containing about twelve ounces weight, and now, coming behind the guests as they reclined, opened the seal, and poured some of the perfume, first on the head and then on the feet of Jesus, drying them, presently, with the hair of her head, like her predecessor. She had rendered a tribute than which she could have given no higher to a king; but it was a worthy sign of supreme devotion to Christ, and, as such, was lovingly accepted by him. The act, however, raised different thoughts in some of the narrow minds around. As the fragrant odours filled the room, voices were heard muttering that expense so lavish for such an object was wrong. "This ointment," said one, "should have been sold for three hundred pence,¹ and given to the poor. That would have been a worthy act; but this——!" It was Judas Iscariot.

With the perfect gentleness which he always displayed in such circumstances, the answer of Jesus showed no resentment, and must have carried joy to the tender heart that had felt its highest offering too little to bestow on such a guest.

"Why do you blame and trouble her?" said he to the company, especially to Judas. "Let her alone. It is a good deed she has done in my honour. You have the poor with you always, and you can never want an opportunity of showing kindness to them, if you wish. But you have not me always

¹ About £9 13s. 9d. of our money.
with you. Mary, as if she knew I was soon to die, has chosen
the strongest way she could of showing how much she loved
me. She has done for me, as her Teacher, Messiah, and Friend,
while I still live, what she would soon have had to do to my
dead body—she has embalmed me for the grave. What re-
mains will do for the day of my burial. I tell you, wherever
the gospel shall be preached in the whole world, what she has
done will also be told for a memorial of her."

Judas, the only southern Jew in the Twelve—the one among
them brought up, as it were, under the shadow of the Temple
—must have listened with the bitterest feelings to such praise
of an act so hateful to him. He had been with Jesus before
the appointment of the apostles, and must, even then, have
been conspicuous as a disciple. The good seed of Christ’s words
had sprung up in his heart, as in those of the others in these
eye early days; but the evil had been let spring up ere long, and it
had grown to rank strength that slowly choked all else. Like
his brethren, he cherished gross and selfish views of the pros-
tspects to be opened for them by their Master. If some of them
were to be the high officials in the great monarchy they ex-
pected, he had trusted to get, at least, some post; profitable, if
less splendid. Indeed, the lowest dignity promised incon-
ceivable honour, for were not all the Twelve to sit on thrones
to judge the Twelve Tribes of Israel? In the minds of the
others, the dream did not hinder their love and duty to the
Master; in his, self seized and held, abidingly, the first place.
The mildew of his soul had spread apace. Trusted with
the common purse of the brotherhood, into which passed the gifts
of friends, to meet the humble expenses of each day, the
honour, sought at first perhaps in all uprightness, became a
fatal snare. His religion withered apace. Once a disciple
from honest anxiety, he continued one in outward form from
sordid motives. Gain became a passion with him, till, under
the very eyes of his master, he stole the petty funds in his
hands.
The entry to Jerusalem had kindled his hopes, after many disappointments, for the popular excitement promised to force Jesus to take the lead in a great rising. But, blind to his own interest, as Judas must have thought him, he had thrown away the opportunity. Instead of uniting with the dignitaries of Judaism, and heading a mighty Jewish revolt, with high priests and chief Rabbis as his supporters, he had assailed both Temple and School. Instead of a crown, he had spoken of a cross; instead of honours for his followers, he had foretold persecutions and martyrdom. To the mean and selfish heart of Judas, the bounty of Mary had sufficed to kindle smouldering resentment and disloyalty to a flame. If ruin were certain, he would profit, if he could, before all was over. If Jesus must fall into the hands of his enemies, he might as well get money by what was unavoidable. Had not Christ, he argued, disappointed him; led him about, for years, in hopes of gain in the end; and had he not, now, told him all that he could expect was poverty and suffering? He would go to the chief priests, and see what could be done.

Stealing out, therefore, with guilty thoughts, from the quiet cottage, perhaps when all its inmates were sunk in sleep; unmoved by the Divine love and purity of his Master; forgetful of all he had seen and heard through the last three years, he made his way, in the darkness of night, to the Temple. The watch was at its post at the gates, and on its rounds, but Judas found means to reveal his object to the captain in charge, and was admitted. The officers hastily gathered, to learn why the stranger thus rudely disturbed the night. "I come to betray Jesus of Nazareth," muttered Judas. "He had better be taken to the chief priests," replied those addressed. Some of the council were hastily summoned forthwith, and received his proposal with a joy that brightened their faces, even by the dull light of the night-lamps—for it was clear that a cause so righteous as that of our Lord, could never give them open and honest grounds for his arrest. Treason from within must come
to their aid. So they bargained with him; meanly enough, indeed; for they offered for his villainy, if successful, only thirty shekels of the sanctuary\(^1\)—the price of a slave. But the greed of an Oriental was not proof against even so paltry a bribe. He sold himself as their tool, and from that time sought a favourable opportunity to betray Jesus, when the people were not round.

The next day,\(^2\) our Thursday, was the fourteenth of Nisan, on which labour ceased at noon. Before then, all leaven was removed from every house, in preparation for the Passover in the evening. Towards sunset, the Passover lamb was killed in the forecourts of the Temple, by any one chosen to do so, and the blood and fat burned on the altar as an offering to God. The rest supplied the materials for the feast an hour or two later, after the beginning of the fifteenth day, at sunset. The fourteenth was, therefore, very busy for the whole of Jerusalem; for both it, the villages round it, and the open country, were filled with countless thousands, all intent on the same observances.

The Passover\(^3\) had been founded in memory of the departure from Egypt, but its date permitted the union with it of the feast of first-fruits, to celebrate the opening harvest, and it was also called, from rites connected with it, the feast of unleavened bread.

We are not told how Jesus spent Wednesday, for the supper in the house at Bethany was on Tuesday evening. He apparently stayed in privacy, awaiting the coming day.

On Thursday morning the disciples, taking it for granted that he would celebrate the feast with them, came to him early to receive instructions. Would he keep it, as he legally might, in Bethany, for the village was counted by the Rabbis part of Jerusalem for religious usages, and the lamb might be eaten in

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\(^1\) About 2s. 6d. each.

\(^2\) Wednesday at sunset to Thursday at sunset. April 4–5 (14th Nisan).

\(^3\) Matt. xxvi. 17–19; Mark xiv. 12–16; Luke xxii. 7–13.
Bethany, though it must be killed, at the Temple. It was generally bought on the tenth Nisan, according to the rule of the Law; and though this command was not strictly observed, Jesus was careful to fulfil all innocent duties.

No doubt the disciples expected that Bethany would be chosen, for he had solemnly turned away from Jerusalem, two days before, and to go thither again would be to put himself in the power of his enemies. But he had resolved once more to visit the city so dear to him. It was the place appointed by the Law for the feast, and he would there be in the midst of the rejoicing multitudes. He wished, also, to throw a greater sacredness over the institution he was about to found that night in place of the ancient Passover. It was well to link it in the minds of the apostles with the sacredness of the Temple, under whose shadow it was established, and with the City of the Great King, and the gathering of Israel.

Turning, therefore, to Peter and John, his usual messengers, he told them to go and prepare the Passover, that he and the Twelve might eat it together. "On entering the city," said he, "you will meet a man bearing an earthen jar of water; follow him into the house he enters, ask for the master, and say, 'The Teacher' told us to ask you 'Where is the room intended for me, in which to eat the Passover with my disciples?'" And he will himself show you his guest-chamber, on the upper floor, provided with couches, ready for us. Get the supper prepared for us there."

The two started at once, and found everything as Jesus had said, and by evening all was in readiness to receive him and the Ten. Who thus entertained him is not told us. It may have been John Mark, or perhaps Joseph of Arimathea, the early scholar and the friend after death. Universal hospitality prevailed in this matter, and the only recompense that could be given was the skin of the paschal lamb, and the earthen dishes used at the meal. Not fewer than ten, but often as many as

1 Exod. xii. 3.  
2 Thus in the Greek.  
3 Acts xii. 12.
twenty—enough, in any case, to consume the entire lamb—could sit down together; but Jesus wished to have none but his apostles with him, that he might bid them a final, tender farewell. Women were not commonly present, and indeed were excluded by many; but, apart from this, the evening was designed as a time of deepest communion with the trusted Twelve alone, and hence, neither the outer circle of disciples, nor the ministering women who had lovingly followed him from Galilee, were invited.

Peter and John had much to do beforehand. Perhaps the lamb had yet to be bought that morning, for its purchase on the tenth had rather fallen out of use. They had to choose, from the pens in which the victims were offered for sale, a male lamb of a year old, without blemish of any kind. In Galilee no work was done all day; but at Jerusalem it ceased only at noon. About two, the blast of horns announced that the priests and Levites in the Temple were ready, and the gates of the inner courts were opened, that all might bring their lambs for examination, and might satisfy the priest as to the number intending to consume each. Forthwith, the long lines of household fathers, servants, disciples of the Rabbis, and others, and, among the rest, the two Apostles sent by Jesus, pressed across the Court of the Men, which was gaily adorned, to the gate of the priests' court, the lamb on their shoulders, with a knife stuck in the wool or tied to the horn.

About half-past two the evening offering was killed, and about an hour after it was laid on the great altar. Forthwith, three blasts of the trumpets of the priests, and choral singing by the Levites, gave the signal for the slaughter of the Passover lambs, which had to be finished between the hours of three and five. As many offerers were admitted as the courts would hold, and then the gates were shut. Heads of families, or servants sent by them, killed the lambs, and the priests, in two long rows, with great silver and gold vessels of curious shape, caught the blood and passed it to others behind, till it reached
the altar, at the foot of which it was poured out. The victims, hung on the iron hooks of the walls and pillars of the courts, or on a stick between the shoulders of two men, were then skinned and cut open; the tail, the fat, the kidneys, and liver, set apart for the altar; the rest wrapped in the skin, being carried home from the Temple towards evening. As the new day opened, at sunset, the carcass was trussed for roasting, on two skewers of pomegranate wood, forming a cross in the lamb. It was then put in a hole in the ground, and having been covered with an earthen oven without a bottom, was roasted. The feast could begin immediately after the sun set and the appearing of the stars, which was proclaimed by fresh trumpet blasts from the Temple.

Judas had stolen back to Bethany before daylight, that his absence might not be noticed, and, after another day's hypocrisy, under the burning eyes of his Master, followed him, with the other apostles, to Jerusalem, in the evening. They must have breathed heavily in the troubled air, for dread of unknown dangers filled every heart. They still clung to their old dream of an earthly kingdom of God, under their Master, but their spirits must have sunk within them as they passed through the vast multitudes, wholly absorbed in the approaching feast, with no sign of preparation for a movement on Christ's behalf, and along the illuminated streets, in which no one took notice of them. That the priesthood had denounced Jesus was, itself, enough to fill their simple minds with dismay, for its splendour and power seemed reflected in the myriads assembled from the whole world, to honour the faith, and the Temple which was its great embodied symbol. And was not the turban of the high priest worn by a fierce Sadducee? Were not all the governing families of this party? As they passed under the shadow of the Temple, with its gleaming lights, its marble bastions, and its immemorial traditions, they must have felt that, unless Jesus chose at last to use his supernatural power in self defence and for self-advancement, they were hopelessly lost.
To himself the moment was unspeakably solemn. His scarcely founded kingdom was about to pass through the severest trial. All hopes of a worldly monarchy, so deeply rooted in the minds of his followers, were to be destroyed, and he, the head of the Kingdom, was to be apprehended, dishonoured, and crucified. The thoughts of his disciples were to be raised from the idea of a Messiah present with them, to a Messiah in heaven, to appear henceforth, no more, till he returned from the invisible world.

But Christ was in no degree turned aside by such dangers. While never courting death, and even wishful, if it pleased his Father, to escape it, he moved towards the foreseen end with sublime self-possession and holy peace of soul.

When the Twelve, with their Master, had entered the room, to take their places on the cushions, for the meal, the greatness of the change yet to be wrought on their minds was once more strikingly shown. It spite of all he had said, each strove to get for himself the most honourable place he could; position at table marking precedence in those times.

As the head of the group, Jesus naturally took the first place on the highest couch—the outermost, on the right of the hollow square; his face towards the second place; his feet outwards. Resting his left elbow and side on a cushion the whole breadth of the couch, his right hand was thus free, while the apostle next him reclined so that his head lay, as it were, in his Master's bosom. It had been the custom, in ancient times, to eat the Passover standing, but the Rabbis had changed this for the Gentile practice of reclining. It was like slaves, they said, to eat standing, and as Israel was not a race of slaves but of free men, they should eat the feast reclining; a flattery so pleasing that even the poorest adopted the new mode.

But this pride in the apostles, made still more fierce by selfish ambition, in prospect of the glory for which they still hoped, could ill brook to take a lower place than others. It was a grave matter for them, as for the Pharisees, who should

1 Matt. xxvi. 20; Mark xiv. 17; Luke xxii. 11-18, 24-30; John xiii. 1-20.
have the higher seats, for they fancied that it might affect their future position in the kingdom to be founded, as they dreamed, presently. So the strife that had broken out on the other side of Jericho, once more distressed their Master, and he could only still it by repeating the keen rebuke he then gave them. "In my kingdom," said he, "to be humble is to be great; the lowliest is, in it, the highest." No more was needed; the struggle, now, would rather be for the lowest place.

But he did not confine himself to words. Rising from the couch, when the supper was just about to begin, and girding himself with a towel, like a slave, after laying aside his upper garments, he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of his disciples. Pride and selfish ambition could not be more strikingly and touchingly reproved, than by such an act on the part of one who knew that all things had been given into his hands by God his Father, and that he had come forth from Him, and was about to return to Him.
No greater proof could be shown of his love than such an instance of humility. Had they all been true-hearted, it would have been amazing, but it was still more so, when he knew that one of them was already a traitor. He had proclaimed himself the Son of God, the future judge of the world, the Messiah in whose gift were the honours of heaven, and whose voice was to raise the dead, and they were simple Galilean fishermen. His demand for lowliness as the true ground of advancement in his Kingdom, could not be more vividly enforced than by his performing the humblest act of personal service to them all.

He seems to have begun with Simon Peter, his chief apostle, but the warm heart and impulsive nature of the man shrank from allowing his Master to abase himself thus. "Lord," said he, "dost thou wash my feet!" "What I do," replied Jesus, "thou understandest not now, but wilt know hereafter." "Thou shalt never wash my feet, Lord," repeated the apostle. "If I do not wash thee," said Jesus, "thou hast no part with me." "Lord, if that be the case," broke out Peter, "wash not my feet only, but my hands and my head." "It is not necessary," said Jesus. "He who, according to Jewish ways, has taken a bath before his meal, needs no more than to cleanse the dust from his feet, which has clung to them on the way from the bath. Except this, he is clean, and it is the same with all of you, but him who intends to betray me. By my word which I have spoken to you, and the faith kindled in you by it,¹ you are already clean in the sense I mean—right in the desire of your heart towards me. Yet, though thus clean, the dust still clings to you in part, and makes a last washing needful." The hour was at hand for his last crowning act of love—the shedding his blood for them for the remission of their sins—and he would now prepare them for it by this tender act, for it taught not only humility, but that he alone could take away their sin.

¹ John xv. 3; xvii. 17.
Having washed their feet, and resumed his garments, he once more took his place on the couch.

"Do you know," he asked, as he did so, "the meaning of what I have now done? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for I am both. Learn, then, that, if I, your Master and Lord, wash your feet, you, also, ought to wash one another's feet, for I have done this as an example to you, that you should do to each other as I have done to you. You know, and I would have you remember it, that a servant is not greater than his lord, nor an apostle than he who sent him forth, so that you may well imitate me, your superior, in my humility. If you understand what I say, take heed that, henceforth, you act on my teaching. I do not, indeed, speak of you all. I know your characters and hearts, but all has happened because the Scripture must be fulfilled, which says, 'He that eats bread with me, (craftily) lifts up his heel against me; to trip and overthrow me.' I tell you thus beforehand, that when it does take place, you may believe I am indeed the Messiah, and that no other is to be expected. That I should be betrayed by one of ourselves might have shaken your faith in me, but it cannot do so when I have foreseen and foretold it, as part of the counsel of God. But to cheer and encourage you in your faithfulness, I announce it, that you may go forth with joyful hearts to the mission on which I have sent you. He who receives you is as if he had received myself; and he who receives me receives God the Father who sent me, for He dwells in me, and I in Him."  

The supper now began, but the spirit of Jesus was still troubled by the presence of the traitor. At last his feelings broke out into words. "Verily, verily," said he, "one of you who eat with me, will betray me. His hand is with me on the table." They had never hitherto understood his hints, and to their honest and faithful hearts the very idea of treason was

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1 Ps. xii. 9. 2 John xiv. 10, 20; xiii. 20. 3 Matt. xxvi. 21–25; Mark xiv. 18–21; Luke xxii. 21–25; John xiii. 21–35.
almost beyond belief. They could not think who was meant, for Judas had managed to hide his character from them all. One by one, they began to ask, "Lord, is it I?" "It is one," replied Jesus, "who dips with me into the dish. The Son of man, indeed, goes from this world in this way, by the counsel of God, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed! It would have been well for him if he had not been born!" Words thus general only increased the pain of all. At last, Peter, not venturing to ask directly who it could be, beckoned to John, who lay next Our Lord, to ask him who could be so base. "It is he," whispered Jesus, "who is just about to dip the bitter herbs into this dish with me, and to whom I shall give some of it presently."

He then dipped a piece of bread into the dish,¹ and handed it to Judas. "Is it I?" asked the guilty man, conscience-stricken, and yet unmelted. He had not heard the words of John, but could not help stammering out the question, in a vain attempt to keep up the mockery of true-heartedness he had acted so long. The awful reply, that "it was," tore away the mask at once, and unveiled his heart. That all was known would have overwhelmed some in shame and contrition, but it only hardened the betrayer. The wild madness of evil was on him for the time. He could think only of himself: his fancied wrongs; his full resolve. Satan had entered his soul, and his whole nature was bent to the dark ends of the evil one. It may be that the exposure roused him to despair, as when the arch enemy bade hope farewell,

"and, with hope, farewell fear,
Farewell remorse: all good to me is lost;
Evil, be thou my good!" ²

It was vain for him to seek to hide the workings of his soul by an affected outward calm. He had long veiled falsehood

"under saintly show,
Deep malice to conceal, couch'd with revenge."

¹ Bread was eaten with the bitter herbs. ² Par. Lost., iv. 108-110.
A SHORT LIFE OF CHRIST.

But the eyes of the Master shone into the depths of his being, and saw the tumult of his worst passions, in their mastery. "What you have to do," said Jesus, "do quickly." He could not breathe freely till the miserable man had left. Judas knew the meaning of the command at once, and, having received the piece of bread, dipped in the dish, moodily took it, and silently withdrew. The eleven were too much confused to think of the end as so near at hand. Betrayal might come, but at some future, perhaps distant, time. They only fancied, therefore, that Judas had left either to buy what might be needed during the week of the feast, or for that special night; or that Jesus had bethought himself of some deed of mercy to the poor, and sent him to carry it out. The traitor gone, Christ felt free to speak, and, as if relieved of a load, broke out into a joyful anticipation of his fast-coming triumph. In the near vision of the cross, his work seemed already finished; his glory, as Conqueror of Death and Hell, and Redeemer of Mankind, attained, and that of God the Father shown forth.

"Now," said he, "the Son of man is already glorified. And God, who will be glorified in my death for the salvation of man, will assuredly crown me with His own glory, when I return to Him; the glory I had with Him, before I came to earth, to become man. The betrayer has gone to accomplish it!"

"I shall be only a little while longer with you, and you will feel the want of my presence, and wish for me; but, as I once said to my enemies, I shall be where you cannot follow and find me. Let me give you a last command—my very last; a new command, to be kept so much the more—that, henceforth, ye love each other because I have loved you all, and because you all love me. I have often, before, told you to be like God by your loving all men, but I now tell you to do so for the love I bear to you, and for that which you bear to me. You must, henceforth, be known by the love you show to each

1 John xiii. 26-37. 2 John xvii. 5.
other. And this love must be as great as mine has been towards you all."

As he thus spoke, Peter still dwelt, in his thoughts, on the sad words. "Lord," said he, "you speak of going away; pray tell us whither you are going? Will you leave us and go to the Gentiles?" "I go to a place," replied Jesus, "where you cannot follow me at present, however willing you may be to do so. Yet, do not fear. We shall not be separated for ever. You will, one day, follow me, in the same way, and then you will come to me." Peter's heart could not be silent. "I shall be glad to come to thee, Lord," said he, "even after a time, but why can I not go with thee now? Thou knowest me. I am ready to lay down my life for thee."

"Do you think so?" replied Jesus, with a look full of friendship, and yet of earnest sadness.1 "You little know your own heart. All of you will forsake me, and leave me to my enemies, this very night, as the prophet has foretold—'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered abroad.' But be not cast down with too much sorrow. After I have risen from the dead, I will go into Galilee, and gather you round me once more." The idea of forsaking his master, whom he loved so dearly, was too dreadful, however, to Peter, in the self-confidence of his affection, to allow him to accept it as possible. "Other men may, perhaps, be offended on account of thee, Lord," said he, "but if all the world were to be so, there is no risk of my failing. I, at any rate, will never leave thee."

"Simon, Simon," replied Jesus, using the old name by which he had known him long ago, "take care. Self-confidence will be your undoing. Satan has seen it, and has sought to have you and your fellow-disciples given into his power, as he once did with Job, to sift you as wheat is sifted. He would fain have it that your professions are only chaff, and he will shake and test you, to try to make you turn against me. But I am mightier

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1 Matt. xxvi. 31-35; Mark xiv. 27-31; Luke xxii. 31-38.

2 Zech. xiii. 7.
than your enemy, and I have prayed for you that, though you fall, you may rise again, and that your faith in me may not give way altogether and separate you entirely from me. Though you will assuredly fall, yet you will repent, and when you have done so, see that you strengthen the faith of your fellow-disciples, and become their helper, to support and confirm them, if they, like you, waver."

Peter was sorely distressed at such words. Conscious of his honest love and fidelity, it seemed as if Jesus doubted both. His warm heart was full. He felt as if his master spoke of his acting in a way of which he could not believe himself capable. "Lord," said he, "I am ready to go with thee to prison, or to die with thee, but I will never leave thee, or be untrue to thee." "Do you think so, Peter?" replied Jesus, with a voice full of tenderness: "I tell you that this very night, before the cock crow the second time, you will thrice deny that you know me." "If I were to die for it," answered the apostle, "no one will ever hear me deny thee." "I can say the same," added all the other apostles.

The evening was now somewhat advanced, according to Eastern notions, but the Passover meal, in its different rites, could not be hurried. Though we cannot tell how far the usual customs were followed by Jesus, the feast began thus in other circles.¹ A cup of red wine, mingled with a fourth part of water, to make it a pleasant and temperate drink, was filled by one of the guests, and given to the head of the company, who took it in his right hand as he rested on his left side and arm on the couch, and thanked God in the words—"Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, thou King of the world, who createdst the fruit of the vine." He then tasted the cup, and passed it round. Thanks for the institution of the washing of hands followed, and then the washing itself, which was merely formal. "Bitter" herbs, such as endives, lettuce, and the like, were next set on the table, to represent the hard life of Egypt.

¹ Matt. xxvi. 26–29; Mark xiv. 22–25; Luke xxi. 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 23–25.
Thanks were given for them also, and then they were passed round and eaten, after dipping them in a mixture of salt and vinegar. The unleavened bread—the bread of affliction—which gave one of its names to the feast, followed next, and then a bowl of “charoseth,” used only at this feast, and, finally, the Passover lamb. The head of the company now once more gave thanks to Him “who created the fruit of the earth,” the bitter herbs were dipped by each in the bowl, and a piece of the contents, “the size of an olive,” eaten with them by all. A second single cup of wine mingled with water, was next poured out, discourse on the lessons of the feast was held, and then the hundred and thirteenth and hundred and fourteenth Psalms, part of the Jewish “Hallelujah,” were sung. Another short thanksgiving followed, and the cup was once more passed round and tasted.

The household father now washed his hands again, and then took two of the unleavened cakes, and breaking one of them across, laid one piece on the other, and after pronouncing a thanksgiving—“Blessed be he who makes bread to grow from the earth,” wrapped some bitter herbs round a piece of the broken bread, dipped it in the bowl, and ate it, after another thanksgiving, and, with it, a part of the lamb: the others following his example. The supper had now only properly begun. Each ate and drank at his will; all, alike, in the patriarchal way of the East, lifting what they chose from the common dish, with their fingers. A third cup of wine and water passed round, marked the close of the feast as a religious solemnity.

The meal had advanced thus far, and was thus virtually finished, when the warning had been given of the approaching denial of their Master by Peter, and the weak-minded desertion of the Eleven. The solemn words, fortelling the dangers and trials before them, having been added, Jesus, now in the bosom of the little band, nearest and dearest to him on earth—his companions through past years—introduced by an
act befitting, in its simplicity, a religion like his, the institution which, henceforth, should take the place in his kingdom on earth of the feast they had ended.

He was about to leave them, and, as yet, they had no rite, however simple, to form a centre round which they might gather. Some emblem was needed, by which they should, hereafter, be distinguished; some common bond, which should outwardly link them to each other, and to their common Master. The Passover had, in the past, given the Jews an abiding remembrance of their relations to each other and to Jehovah. Jesus would now institute a special rite of a similar character to the members of his Church, in all ages and countries.

Nothing could have been more touching and beautiful in its simplicity than the symbol thus introduced. The Third Cup was known as "the cup of blessing," and had marked the close of the Passover meal. The bread had been handed round with the words, "This is the bread of affliction;" and the flesh of the lamb had been distributed with the words, "This is the body of the Passover." The feast having been honoured by these striking utterances, Jesus took one of the loaves or cakes before him, gave thanks, broke it, and handed it to the apostles, with words, the repetition, almost exactly, of those they had heard a moment before,—"Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me." Then, taking the cup, which had been filled for the fourth and last handing round, he gave thanks to God once more, and passed it to the circle, with the words, "Drink ye all of it, for this cup is the New Covenant" presently to be made "in my blood;" instead of the covenant, made also in blood, by God, with your fathers; "it is," in abiding symbol, "my blood of the Covenant" of my Father, with you,—the blood which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. This do, as often as ye drink, in remembrance of me."  

For himself, he declined to taste it. "I will not drink,

1 1 Cor. xi. 25.  2 Exod xxiv. 8.
henceforth,” said he, “of the fruit of the vine—for it was still only wine—till that day when, at the end of all things, my Kingdom shall finally triumph, and my followers be gathered to the great heavenly feast. Then, I shall drink it new with you and them.”

Such, and so simple, was the new rite. To those around him, there could be no doubt of its meaning and nature. The cup, he told them, was the symbol of the New Covenant, under which, as his followers, they had come, in distinction from that which for his sake they had left. It was to be a memorial of him, and a constant pledge of their faith in his atoning death; that death which was the seal of this New Covenant between his disciples and God, his Father. It witnessed before all ages the supreme virtue of his death. The apostles could have had no simpler or more unmistakable intimation that as the blood of the Passover lamb redeemed the Jews of old from the sword of the angel of wrath, his blood would be a ransom for man from far deadlier peril. Familiarity with the Passover meal made the new institution natural to the apostles, and the constant use of symbolical rites in Judaism prevented their mistaking the meaning of the one now introduced. They saw in it an abiding memorial of their Lord; a vivid sign of their dependence on the merits of his death; the need of intimate communion with him as the bread of life; and the bond of the new brotherhood he had established. It henceforth distinguished the assemblies of his followers from the world at large, and, excepting baptism, was the only outward form established in the Church by their Master.

Note.—Charoseth, p. 368, was a dish composed of dates, figs, etc., of a brick colour, in memory of the bricks and mortar of Egypt.
CHAPTER XXVIII.

JERUSALEM was the brightest and happiest of cities on the Passover night. But though universal rejoicing rose on every side, there was only sadness in the little band round Jesus. One of their number had proved a traitor, and their Leader had told them, once more, that he would very soon leave them. They were sore at heart at the baseness of Iscariot, at the dread of losing a Master they passionately loved, and at the utter miscarriage of all their half-worldly, half-religious expectations of earthly glory. Christ had instituted a rite to mark them out from all other men, but it looked as if there would be little use for it in the apparently near overthrow of his infant Kingdom.

As they reclined, sad and silent, Jesus read their thoughts, and to cheer them, by turning their minds from the gloomy present to the glorious future, began the lofty and tender farewell recorded in the Gospels. "They need not," he told them, "despond. He was leaving them to prepare a place in the many mansions of his Father, where he would gather them once more round him, to part no more. His death might seem a defeat, but it was in reality a triumph."

But before he went forth into the night, so big with fate, he could not break up for ever the communion he had had with them so long, through joy and sorrow, without gathering them round him in a parting prayer. While, however, he was thus tenderly bidding farewell to them in words of passing sublimity, all was bustle and excitement among the Church authorities, now on the track of his blood by the help of Judas.

1 John xiv. 1-31.
It was the great holiday of the year at Jerusalem. The citizens, from the highest to the lowest, were reaping a golden harvest from the myriads of pilgrims, who, on their side, had the excitement of numbers, novelty, and religious enthusiasm.

With the craft that habitually marked him, the tetrarch Antipas had come up from Tiberias, to show how devoutly he honoured the Law, and had taken his residence in the old castle of the Jewish kings, which still remained in the hands of his family. It was exactly opposite the Temple, to which he could cross by the upper bridge, between Zion and Moriah.

Pilate, also, had arrived from Caesarea, to secure in person the preservation of order. His quarters were in the new palace, built by Herod the Great, on Zion. It was the pride of Jerusalem. "The kinds of stone used in its construction," says Josephus, "were countless." Whatever was rare abounded in it. The roofs astonished every one by the length of their beams and the beauty of their adornment. Vessels, mostly of gold and silver, rich in chasing, shone on every side. The great dining-hall had been constructed to supply table-couches for three-hundred guests. Others opened in all directions, each with a different style of pillar. The open space before the palace was laid out in broad walks, planted with long avenues of different trees, and bordered by broad deep canals and great ponds, flowing with cool, clear water, and set off along the banks with innumerable works of art. It was the vast fortress-palace in which the tragedies of the family of Herod had been enacted. By right of war, the Romans had taken it, as the chief building of the city, for the residence of the governors, and had made it their headquarters. Its enclosure—large enough to permit a strong force to be gathered in it, if necessary—ran along the inner side of the first city wall, and was connected with the great castles of white stone which Herod had built; the whole constituting a vast fortification.

The high priest at the time of the Passover was Caiaphas. The real head of the priesthood, however, was the crafty
Hannas, or Ananus, without whom nothing of moment was done. As father of the greatest Sadducean family, he was notorious for his harsh judgments, and was presently to take the chief part in the death of Jesus, as his son afterwards did in that of St. James. He had been appointed high priest in the year A.D. 7, but had been deprived of the dignity seven years later. The singular honour was reserved to him, however, of seeing his five sons successively pontiffs—one of them twice—a distinction which, in later years gained for him, among his countrymen, the name of the most fortunate of men.

Intrigue and unwearied plotting were the very life of Hannas and his house. The gliding, deadly, snake-like smoothness with which they seized their prey was a wonder even to their own generation, and had given them a by-name as hissing vipers. No wonder, therefore, that John and Our Lord spoke of them in the same way. Hannas had managed to maintain his influence with three governors through difficult times. Under one he was forced to give way to Ismael Ben Phabi, but, after a year, had had him displaced, in favour of one of his own sons. He himself declined to hold the office again, on the same ground which Jonathan, another of his sons, afterwards pleaded. No one, they held, should resume the sacred vestments after having once laid them off. Hannas bowed to this rule, and chose, henceforth, to hold the reins only in safe obscurity, but with a firm hand.

But though his five sons successively became high priests, their cruelty and vices became so marked, when, at his death, the leading spirit was gone, that they speedily led to the ruin of his house.

Among the high priests who had interrupted the direct reign of this family, Caiaphas, son-in-law of Hannas, ruled longest. At the time of the condemnation of Jesus he had held the high priesthood for seventeen years, having given Pilate no excuse for setting him aside. He even retained it till after the great day, in the year A.D. 36, when the sacred vestments, so long held
from them, were handed over permanently to the Jews, instead of being given out to them by the Romans a week before each great feast, for the seven days' purifications, washings, and consecrations necessary to free them from defilement, before they could be worn. Caiaphas, however, had little to do with procuring this great favour, and was deposed almost immediately after; Jonathan, the son of Hannas, being appointed in his stead.

Thus at the time of the condemnation of Jesus, the acting high priest was only a puppet in the hands of a powerful family, at the head of which stood Hannas, his father-in-law.

Jewish tradition describes the grades of the ancient hierarchy as consisting of the high priest; his deputy, who had two assistants; seven priests, to whom were entrusted the keys of the Temple; and three treasurers, who gave out the sacred vessels. Of those holding these offices when Jesus was condemned, we can still darkly make out some. At the right hand of Caiaphas sat Hannas, the real head. Jochanan, called John in the Acts of the Apostles, and one Alexander, seem to have held the next dignities, and after them came the five sons of Hannas, already an old man — the five, perhaps, in the awful parable of Dives—and his five brothers, all to be high priests hereafter; Hannas, the younger, being destined to stain his pontificate by the murder of James, the brother of Jesus.

The names of some other members of what we may call the high ecclesiastical council, still survive. Among these were Joazer and Eleazar, the sons of that Simon Boethus of Alexandria, whose daughter, the second Mariamne, the belle of Jerusalem, was married by Herod. Simon, though well-nigh a heretic in the eyes of the national party, had been made high priest by his royal son-in-law, and his sons had succeeded him in the dignity, but bore an evil name. Their guard of spearmen, indeed, became an object of popular hatred. Simon, surnamed "the Quarrelsome,"—the murderer of St. James the
son of Zebedee—and his son, afterwards high priest, had a right to attend, and did so with a pomp which brought on the family the curse of the people—"Woe to your fine feathers, ye family of the Quarrelsome!" Ismael, the handsomest man of his day, was another mitred high counsellor, to be famed hereafter for the clubs and blows of his serving men, the greed of his bailiffs, and the Oriental luxury of his dress, one outer tunic of which cost a sum equal, perhaps, at this day, to eighteen hundred pounds. There were, also, Johanan, the persecutor of St. Paul, infamous in after times as a glutton, who seized even the holy sacrifices for his feasts: and Issachar, who, in his pontificate of a later day, would not sacrifice except in silk gloves, for fear of soiling his hands, but lived to have those hands barbarously cut off by King Agrippa. Such were the men about to seize Jesus. No wonder it is said that voices were heard from the Holy of Holies, crying, "Depart from the Temple, ye sons of Eli; ye defile the house of Jehovah!"

The elders of the people—who formed a Jewish senate—were in no less agitation respecting Christ; for they, also, sought the preservation of things as they were. One or two of them—Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathaea—were secretly in his favour, but they had not courage to take his part openly. The names of the rest have perished.

The college of Rabbis took an equally vigorous part, but its members at this time can only be guessed, though some who had met the boy Jesus, twenty years before, in the Temple school, doubtless survived.

It was late in the night of Thursday when Jesus had ended his last discourse and farewell prayer. According to the immemorial custom of the nation to mingle songs of praise to God with their feasts, the little band had already sung the first two of the six Psalms—the one hundred and thirteenth to the one hundred and eighteenth—which formed the great Hallelujah of the Passover and other feasts. The stillness of the night
had been broken by the sound at the time when the second cup had been poured out.¹ Now, at the close, they chanted, with slow, solemn strains, the remainder of the Hallelujah—responding with the word, Hallelujah, at the close of each verse. The anthem began fitly—"Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake," and closed with the words of the hundred and eighteenth Psalm—"Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah;" the Apostles responding—"in the name of Jehovah, Hallelujah!" And now all was over, and the Eleven, following their Master, went out into the night. They were on their way to Gethsemane.

The spirit of Jesus had, hitherto, been calm and serene. But the break with all the past, the shadow, deeper than that of Kedron, before them, for the time overwhelmed him. No wonder the Apostles had been cast down when even he who had been exhorting them to dismiss sorrow, was himself moved. Behind him lay life, before him death; he was about to leave friends, and the fair earth, which, as a man, he loved, and his infant Church, the hope of the world he had come to save. Before him lay, not only death, but shame, derision, misconception. He, whose whole soul was truth, was to be crucified as a deceiver; the one on earth absolutely loyal to God, he was to die as a blasphemer. Loaded with false charges and feeling their baseless wickedness, he was to be put to death on their strength. How might it affect the little band, to whom the future of his kingdom was entrusted? He had hitherto kept from using his supernatural power in his own behalf—would he still do so? He had but to speak, and all would be changed; for he who could calm the waves of the sea, could quell the tumult of the people, and what were Temple guards or Roman soldiers against legions of angels? Would he still put aside all thought of self? Would he, to the

¹ Isaiah xxx. 29; Matt. xxvi. 30, 36-46; Mark xiv. 26, 52-42; Luke xxii. 39-46; John xviii. 1.
and, let men do with him as they pleased, though he had at
his command all the powers of heaven?

Nor was even this all. He was to give his life a ransom for
man; to be made an offering for sin though he knew none; to
be repaid for infinite love and goodness by ignominy and
shame. Who can tell what it was to have left the right hand
of the Majesty in the heavens for Calvary!—for him who could
raise the dead to descend to the tomb! No wonder his soul
was for the moment clouded.

They passed, silent and sad, down the steep side of the Kedron
—for the town gate was open that night as it was Passover—
and, crossing by the bridge, were on the road which leads over
the Mount of Olives to Bethany. The noise of the multitude
had passed away, and the world lay asleep under the great
Passover-moon. The path wound between stone-walled orchards
and gardens, which Titus was, hereafter, to find so many
deadly battle-grounds, with the walls for ramparts. He had
gone each night to Bethany, but had no intention of doing
so now, for he knew that his hour had come. Always given to
solitary prayer, he had often turned aside to commune with
his Father on one part or other of Olivet, and this night chose
the stillness and shade of a spot which his presence made,
henceforth, sacred for ever. An olive orchard lay near, known
by the name of Gethsemane, or the "Oil-press." It was called
so from a rock-hewn trough in it, in which the olives were
trodden with the feet, the oil flowing into a similar trough
below. The new leaves were opening over the branches as
they passed, and the moonlight fell through their motionless
network on the tender spring grass. Stillness, peace, solitude,
filled earth and air; even the birds slept safely on the boughs
under the great sky; for they, too, had a Heavenly Father.
Moriah rose in richly wooded terraces behind, crowned with the
snow-white Temple in its magnificence, and, in front, the yellow
slopes of Olivet rising from their border of gardens and orchards,
swelled between Christ and the loved cottage of Bethany.
Amidst this quiet and beauty of nature he turned aside, and entered the enclosure of Gethsemane, to strengthen his soul for the coming crisis. It was a fitting place—amidst olives, the emblems of peace!

A square garden with plastered walls, close by the path to Bethany, under the shadow of the Temple hill, is still named as the spot. Venerable olive-trees are shown as the very witnesses of our Saviour's agony; but it is fatal to their claim
that Titus afterwards cut down all the trees round Jerusalem, for military use, and that the same fate has befallen the whole neighbourhood in later sieges. Yet the gnarled trunks, twenty to thirty feet high, the broad branches, and the still seclusion, at least reproduce the outward features of the scene, though the division of the garden into trim flower beds gives the place a sadly modern appearance.

When the soul is overwhelmed it seeks to be alone, and yet not too far from human sympathy and help. To take all the Eleven with him into the depths of the garden would have disturbed his retirement. Only three, the most trusted—his long-tried and early followers, Peter and James and John, knit to him by special tenderness—were allowed to go with him beyond the first few steps. The others were to sit down and rest, while he went into the deeper shade to pray.

Accompanied by the three friends, he passed out of hearing of the rest, and presently, leaving even them behind, with the words, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death—tarry ye here and watch with me;" he went on about a stone's cast alone. And now the great pent-up sorrow burst forth. It had been gathering, no one knows how long, but the excitement of action had repressed it as yet—as the wind keeps a heavy raincloud from breaking. But, here, instead of the city and its multitudes of men, there was silence and loneliness; instead of the distractions of conflict with enemies, or discourses with friends, he was face to face with his own thoughts, and with the past and the future, and that in the night, and in such awful isolation. For it seemed as if even heaven were as far from him as the sympathy of earth; as if even its lights had gone out, and he was treading the valley of the shadow of death in a horror of thick darkness. Must he bear all? Must the cup be drunk to the dregs? Was redemption possible only at the awful price that so oppressed his soul? Could the hour not pass? Was it not possible for the Eternal Father to save him from it?
The sacred writers labour to describe the agony that overwhelmed him. They tell us that he first kneeled, then fell on his face on the earth, and prayed with strong crying and tears, till his sweat became, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground. He was "exceeding sorrowful," "sore amazed," "very heavy." His soul, as it were, sank under the vision that rose before it. "O my Father," he cried, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but Thine, be done." But as long as there was a struggle of the frail human nature, and a cry, however reverent and lowly, for change, if possible, in the burden laid on him, there could be no peace. Rising from the ground, in his agony of spirit, human sympathy and presence seemed as if they would be a relief. He came therefore to the three, but only to find that, in his long wrestling supplications, even they, his nearest ones, overcome by weariness of body and spirit, lay sunk in deep sleep. Rousing Peter, lately so boastful, he gently reproved and warned him, and with him, the others. "What! could you not watch with me one hour? Watch, and pray as ye do so, that ye may not expose yourselves to temptation to be untrue to me, as I have said you would. The spirit indeed is willing to stand by me faithfully, but human nature is weak, and if you heed not, will make you fall!"

Leaving them again, he once more prostrated himself in prayer; but the clouds were already breaking. Every desire or wish of his own was fading like a troubled dream. "O my Father," cried he now, "if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." Perfect peace of soul can only be found in absolute submission to the Will of God, and that he was fast attaining. Returning to the Three—who knows what for?—he found them asleep again. They were losing, by their hour's sloth, the opportunity of cheering and helping their master in his sorest trial. Man had thus failed him, but the need of human comfort was passing away

1 Heb. v. 7.
Retiring, therefore, once more, and prostrating himself a third time, the same calm, child-like submission to his Father again rose from his lips. He had triumphed. He no longer craved a change, even if possible, in the ordered course of the Divine purposes; his earnest cry had passed into still submission. He thought no longer of himself, but of the perfect love and wisdom of the Father. He had ceased to have a wish; enough for him, henceforth, the all-holy, all-wise, all-loving will of the Father. His spirit had broken through the cloud that for a moment darkened it, and reposed once more in the calm light of the face of God. The tempter had fled, and, in his place, as after the victory of the wilderness, we are told by St. Luke, "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." 1

Meanwhile Judas had been busy. Exposed, and dismissed by his Master from the company of his apostles, he had only been the more set to carry out his miserable purpose. 2 Hastening through the streets, to the authorities, he had reported that the favourable moment seemed to have come. Jesus had once more ventured into Jerusalem, and though it might not be safe to take him in the city, it would be easy to come upon him outside the walls, as he was in the habit of going each night, for prayer, to a spot at the foot of the Mount of Olives. The traitor meant Gethsemane.

The authorities remained assembled till the arrest could be effected, sending part of the Temple watch, a body acting as the police of the Temple, and armed at most only with wooden batons or clubs, to make it. 3 The officers of the watch, and even some of the chief priests and elders, accompanied them. It had been thought unwise, however, to trust so grave a matter to an undisciplined and weak force, and the high priest had, therefore, communicated with Pilate, representing, doubtless,

3 Matt. xxvi. 55.
that he proposed the arrest of a false Messiah, dangerous to the
Roman power, and feared a rescue. A "band" had, therefore,
been told off from the troops in Antonia, and these, under a
superior officer, waited their orders. A rabble of the servants
of the upper priests and chief men, with lanterns and torches,
to discover Jesus should he try to hide himself, led the way,
behind Judas, who went foremost as guide. It was the full
moon of April, but the trees and recesses might aid an attempt
at escape.

Jesus had just returned from his third prayer, and was rous-
ing his disciples, when he heard the noise of the soldiers and
the crowd, and saw their lights approaching. 1 The disap-
pointment, at even his most trusted friends lying asleep when they
should have watched, and leaving it to himself to discover
Judas and his band, wounded his heart. With keen but gentle
irony, therefore, he told them that they might sleep on now
and take their rest, if they chose; their watching was no
longer needed. His hour had come. Then, speaking in a
serious strain, he bade them "rise and go out with him, for
the traitor was at hand."

Judas and his employers had utterly misjudged the character
of Jesus. Knowing all that was before him, and now perfectly
calm, he did not wait for his enemies, but, taking his disciples
with him, went out of the garden enclosure to meet them.
"Whom seek ye?" said he as they approached. "Jesus, the
Nazarene," answered the foremost. To their confusion, the
calm, self-possessed speaker presently told them that he was
Jesus. Not a few in the Jewish crowd gathered before him,
had heard him spoken of as a prophet, and had, perhaps,
even regarded him as such. They had all heard of his
mysterious power, and he might, possibly, now use it against
them, though hitherto he had never employed it for personal
ends. His composure and dignity, moreover, awed them.
From whatever cause, the crowd fell back in confusion, over-

1 John xviii. 2–12; Matt xxvi. 47–56; Mark xiv. 43–52; Luke xxii. 47–58.
turning each other in their alarm. "Whom seek ye?" asked Jesus again. "Jesus the Nazarene," muttered the boldest. "I told you," replied he, "that I am he; if you seek me, let these men, my disciples, go their way." He had said, that of those whom the Father had given him he had lost none, and even in an earthly sense he would now protect them.

Fear as yet paralyzed the crowd. Jesus had calmly owned himself, but no one dared to lay hold of him. Judas, still under the spell of evil, might well dread that all would miscarry. He had given a signal by which to know his late Master, reckoning on having to point him out, and now took the first step in further action. He had arranged that he should mark Jesus to them by going up to him and giving him the customary kiss of a disciple to his teacher. Stepping out, therefore, from the crowd, into the circle of the disciples, as one of their number, he approached, with a hypocritical "Hail, Rabbi," and kissed him tenderly. He knew, by long experience, that he might do so safely. To the calm and keen question of Jesus—"Good friend, for what have you come?"—he returned no answer; for what answer could he give? But he had gained his end; for those behind, encouraged by his remaining uninjured after such treachery, laid hold of Christ and bound him without the least resistance on his part.

Now followed the only act of violence; for Peter could not see his Master thus led away, a prisoner, without a word or act on the part of his friends. "Lord, shall we smite them with the sword?" cried he; and without waiting an answer or thinking of the hopelessness of a rescue, or of the odds against himself alone, he drew the sword he had hung by his side, and made a fierce cut at one of the servants of the high priest, fortunately only grazing the skull, but yet cutting off an ear. It was a splendidly heroic act, but sadly out of place under such a teacher. Turning to the wounded man, and at the same moment rebuking Peter, Jesus checked any evil

1 John xvii. 12; vi. 39.
results from the brave attack, by soft words and an effacement of the injury done. "Suffer thus far," said he, and then touched the ear, and healed it. Forthwith, turning to Peter, he told him to sheathe the sword. "He who uses violence," added he, "will suffer violence. If you use the sword, you expose your lives to danger. Shall I not drink the cup which my Father hath given me? If I wished to escape suffering, Peter, dost thou not know that I could ask my Father, and He would send me, instead of your help, twelve legions of angels—a legion for each of you—to protect me? But, then, that would not happen which the Scriptures have foretold I must undergo."

The disciples, after Peter’s rash stroke, had abandoned all idea of resistance; and as any attempt to rescue Jesus was clearly hopeless, since he did not put forth his power on his own behalf, and would not let them do anything; as, moreover, they themselves seemed in danger through the action of Peter—all took to flight as soon as they saw their Master fairly in the hands of his enemies.

Surrounded on all sides, and firmly bound, as if his captors still feared that he would escape or be rescued, Jesus now turned to the priests and elders present, and calmly brought home to them their shame. "You come out against me," said he, "as you might against a robber, or the head of a rising, with swords and clubs. I sat, day by day, in the Temple teaching, in the thick of the people. You had every opportunity for laying hold on me then, but you did nothing. The darkness of night is fitted for your designs; it is your hour; the powers of evil work, by choice, in the dark. But, in all this, there is no chance; it happens only in fulfilment of the words of the prophets." He said no more, and allowed them to lead him away. The disciples were scattered, but one form hovered after them, white—in the moonlight. It was that of a young man, who had, apparently, been roused from sleep by the tumult, and having thrown his white linen sleeping cloth,
round him in his haste, was following Jesus towards the city. Who he was must remain for ever unknown. Was it Mark himself, who alone relates it? Or one from the house probably attached to Gethsemane? Some have supposed him to have been Lazarus; others have had different conjectures; he was, at least, some faithful heart, eager to see what they would do with his Lord. The soldiers had let the apostles flee, having no orders to arrest them; but this strange figure attracted their attention, and they sought to lay hold on him. Casting off the cloth around him, however, he escaped out of their hands.

Yet there were friendly eyes following the sad scene, in the safe darkness of the night. Peter, and another of the apostles, who could only be John, had fled no further than safety demanded, and followed the crowd at a distance, unable to leave one they held so dear.

The great object with the authorities was to hurry forward the proceedings against their prisoner so quickly that they might hand him over to the Romans, as already condemned, before the people could be roused on his side. They had so far gained their point.

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus was first led to the mansion of Hannas, the head of the reigning priestly family, perhaps because, as the oldest high priest, he was still acknowledged as the rightful, if not legal, dignitary. He could see Jesus, and hear his defence, and advise his son-in-law how to act. His "snake-like" craft might help the less acute Caiaphas.

What passed before Hannas, or what hints he sent to Caiaphas, are not known. It may be that he simply passed on the prisoner to the legal high priest at once, hastening to follow him, and secure his condemnation.

In the East, the houses of the great are rather a group of buildings of unequal height, near or above each other, with passages and open spaces between; the different structures having independent entrances and separate roofs. Such a
house, or rather cluster of houses, has usually the form of a large hollow square, the four sides of which surround a roomy court; paved in some cases, in others planted with trees. Sometimes an underground cistern, a spring, or a bath offers the luxury of abundant water, and makes the court an agreeable spot for relaxation or refreshment. Porticos and galleries surround it, and furnish chambers for guests and entertainments. In some houses there is also a forecourt, enclosed from the street by walls, and, in all, the inner court is reached by an archway through the front building—"the porch," in the narrative of the Gospels.

A commission, consisting mainly of the chief priests, with Caiaphas at their head, had been appointed to await, in the mansion or "palace" of the high priest, the result of the treachery of Judas; though their taking any such steps was irregular, for they formed no legal court or recognised tribunal. They were simply gathered, at the summons of the high priest, in the blind excitement of fanaticism and passion, without any judicial standing. The chief Rabbis generally kept aloof from such violent proceedings, which were already too common, and left them to their humbler brethren, and to the Sadducees. The name Sanhedrim given in the Gospels to such assemblies, means, therefore, only "an assembly," not a legal tribunal. It was before a mob, not a "court," that Jesus was brought. Caiaphas, as high priest, was the only church official recognised by the Romans, and, therefore, the only one who could ask Pilate to put Jesus to death.
CHAPTER XXIX.

PASSING through the closed porch, or archway, into the inner court, his captors led Jesus to one of the chambers opening from it, where his judges sat, ready to go through the mockery of a trial. The Roman soldiers had been halted outside, for their presence would have been a defilement; but the Jewish serving men went in with the prisoner, though only the few required accompanied him to the inner chamber.

The priests were masters of form, and knew how to make a show of justice while mocking the reality. In imitation of ancient usage, the judges before whom Jesus was led, sat turbaned, on cushions or pillows, in Oriental fashion, with crossed legs and unshod feet, in a half circle; Caiaphas, as high priest, in the centre, and the chief or eldest, according to rank, on each side. The prisoner was placed, standing, before Caiaphas; at each end of the semicircle sat a scribe, to write out the sentence of acquittal or condemnation; some bailiffs, with cords and thongs, guarded the accused, while a few others stood behind, to call witnesses, and, at the close, to carry out the decision of the judges.

Nothing could be fairer, or more attractive, on paper, but on paper alone, than the rules for the trial of prisoners. The accused was in all cases to be held innocent, till proved guilty. It was a rule, that "the court was to save, not to destroy life." No one could be tried and condemned in his absence, and when a person accused was brought before the court, it was the duty of the president, at the outset, to admonish the

1 John vii. 51.
witnesses to remember the value of human life, and to take
care that they forgot nothing that would tell in the prisoner's
favour. Nor was he left undefended; a counsel was appointed
for his protection. Whatever evidence tended to aid him was
to be freely admitted, and no member of the court who had
once spoken in favour of acquittal could afterwards vote for
condemnation. The votes of the youngest of the judges were
taken first, that they might not be influenced by their seniors.
In capital charges, it required a majority of at least two to
condemn, and while the verdict of acquittal could be given at
once, that of guilty could only be pronounced the next day.
Hence, capital trials could not begin on the day preceding a
Sabbath, or public feast. No criminal trial could be carried
through in the night; the judges who condemned any one to
death had to fast all the day before, and no one could be
executed on the day on which the sentence had been pro-
nounced.

Rules so exact and so humane condemn the whole trial of
Jesus, before Caiaphas, as an outrage. No accuser presenting
himself, the judge himself took the office, in utter violation of
all propriety. Witnesses against the prisoner alone appeared;
for not a single witness in his defence was called, though the
law gave such the preference. No counsel was assigned him,
nor were any facilities provided, or even the possibility offered
for his calling witnesses in his favour. The "court," from the
first, sought to condemn; not as the law required, to acquit.
There was no attempt, as was usual, to ascertain the trust-
worthiness of the evidence, nor any warning, beforehand, to
those who gave it, of the gross sin of untruthfulness. So
keenly, indeed, has the murder of Jesus been felt by the Jews,
in later times, that the doctrine was afterwards invented that
any one who gave himself out as a false Messiah, or who led
the people astray from the doctrines of their fathers, could be
tried and condemned the same day, or in the night. Yet, in
contradiction to this, the monstrous fable has also been coined,
that a crier called aloud, for forty days, before Christ's con-
demnation, for witnesses in his favour to come forward.

Caiaphas now, at last, had his enemy face to face. He would
make him feel what it was to denounce the priesthood as he
had done, and to hold them up to the obloquy of the nation.
He had brought lasting odium on them by the contrast be-
tween his zeal and their neglect, in allowing abuses. The
reformer who would turn the world upside down, was now
standing bound before him, and he had him at his mercy.
The rest of the judges had their own injuries to avenge, for
had not they, the scribes and Pharisees, teachers of the nation,
been denounced with as unsparing contempt as the knot of
high caste Sadducees? Caiaphas had long made up his mind
what to do. The form of a trial might be necessary, but the
result was determined beforehand. He had already counselled
both Sadducees and Pharisees to lay aside mutual disputes,
and unite against Jesus, as one who endangered their common
interests, and to sacrifice him without hesitation. Policy, he
had urged, demanded that he be at once put to death, to pre-
vent his overthrowing the Church, with which their welfare
and dignity were identified. The sentence was thus proclaimed
before Caiaphas took his seat that night; the judge had already
openly said that he intended to condemn. The whole proceed-
ings were, in fact, simply a piece of acting needed to secure
the aid of the Roman executioner.

Deadly enemies at other times, the "court" were now on
the most amiable terms with each other, in their anxiety to
hunt down the common foe. The proceedings began by Cai-
aphas, as he glanced fiercely at his prisoner, asking him various
questions respecting his disciples and his teaching: Why he
gathered so many followers? What he had meant by sending
them through Galilee and Judea, announcing the coming of the
Kingdom of God? Why, a few days before, at his entrance
to the city, he had allowed the crowds to hail him as the
Messiah? What he meant by the Kingdom of the Messiah,
A SHORT LIFE OF CHRIST.

and why he did not formally and publicly proclaim himself as such?

Jesus carefully avoided any allusion to his disciples in his answer, for to have referred to them might have brought them into danger. As to himself, the questions needed no reply; his life spoke for itself. "I have taught frankly and without reserve," said he; "I have no secret doctrines; I have spoken everything I had to teach, publicly, in the synagogues and schools of the land, before friends and enemies, and here in Jerusalem, in the Temple, where I had for hearers the people assembled from all parts. I have taught nothing secretly—nothing except in these public places. Why do you ask me? ask some of the multitudes who have heard me. They know what I have said to them, and what they say will weigh more with you than any words of mine. The Law requires that witnesses should first be examined in any trial."

But an honest inquiry, though necessary by the Law, was no part of the plan of Caiaphas and his confederates. They sought only to get Jesus handed over to the Romans as soon as possible, that he might be beyond the hope of rescue when the people, among whom he had so many supporters, awoke in the morning. That he should dare to direct the high priest as to his duty, and should presume to throw on the court the task of proving his guilt, was a fresh offence, and provoked fierce looks and angry words from the bench. The defence was at once rudely interrupted, for one of the attendants standing by—whether of his own accord, because he saw the feeling of the judges, or at a hint from Hannas or Caiaphas—in utter violation of judicial rules or common decency, forthwith struck the prisoner on the mouth, with his hand, to silence him. "Answerest thou the high priest thus boldly?" said he. Nothing could have pleased the bench better, and they did not attempt to rebuke the offender. It failed, however, to disturb the calm self-possession and dignity of Jesus. "If I have spoken what is false," he replied, "prove that I have done so
but if what I say be right, why do you strike me thus? No one has a right to take the law in his own hands, much less a servant of the court."

The appeal to the known forms of trials had not been lost. Hostile witnesses had already been sought, to bring home to Jesus, if possible, some charge of false doctrine or dangerous language, but none had been found. The only evidence to be had would not suffice, even in such an assembly, to establish a capital charge which the Romans would recognise. There were many, doubtless, who had heard him use words which had given the Rabbis offence—such as, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" words regarded as blasphemy, and, therefore, punishable with death, by Jewish law; but they wanted to condemn him on a charge recognised by Roman law. They had tried by spies, for months back, to draw from him something they could twist into an attack on the Roman government, but had failed. It was hard to get a pretext for condemning him.

Such evidence as they had was now however brought forward, in the hope that it would at least prove him to be "a deceiver of the people," stirring them up, and exciting them against the laws of Moses, as defined by the Rabbis. But it was a rule of Jewish law, that condemnation could only follow the testimony of, at least, two witnesses. Some, however, who came forward, had nothing of moment to say, and others contradicted themselves. His final discourses were, doubtless, the special crime in the eyes of his accusers. Little could be said about what had happened on his last entering Jerusalem, nor was even the driving out of the buyers and sellers from the Temple brought up, for the spirit that led to it was evidently noble, however the act itself might be challenged. The strong language against the priests and Rabbis offered a safer ground for accusation. Unfortunately for the judges, suitable witnesses were not to be found. At the best, those who came forward garbled, or misunderstood his words; as the priest-

1 Matt. xxvi. 60; Luke xxiii. 2, 5.
hood themselves afterwards, before Pilate, twisted those respecting the tribute money into a directly untruthful sense. But even thus, the testimony amounted to nothing. Time was passing dangerously fast, without anything having been done.

At last one witness appeared, who alleged that he had heard Jesus say, "Pull down this Temple, it is only the work of man, and I will in three days build another, not made with hands." Others agreed that he had said words which seemed intended to bring the Temple into contempt; an offence so grave that it was afterwards made a capital charge against the first martyr, Stephen, that he had "spoken blasphemous words against this holy place;" but their statements did not tally, and their witness was therefore worthless.

Meanwhile, Jesus had stood silent. Even to charges so hateful to Jewish ears as contempt of the Temple, he had made no answer. He knew it would be idle to speak before such a tribunal, and kept a dignified silence. To the judges, on the other hand, they seemed of the greatest weight. Caiaphas could no longer preserve calmness. Springing from his couch, and standing up in front of it, he demanded if Jesus had nothing to say in his own defence against all this. What did his silence mean? Was it a confession of guilt? But he still remained silent. The matter spoke for itself; the testimony given against him was worthless. If his past life could not secure his acquittal, mere words were vain. To use his own earlier saying, they would be pearls cast before swine, who would turn again and rend him. He would let violence and falsehood run their course. He would not recognise the tribunal, nor do honour to its members, for he knew that they were determined that he should die, innocent or guilty, to serve their own ends.

Caiaphas might have closed the examination at this point, and have taken the votes of the "Court." But with ready

1 Luke xxiii. 2.  2 Mark xiv. 58.  3 Acts vi. 13.  4 Mark xiv. 60.
acuteness, he felt that the charge best sustained was an offence only in Jewish eyes; that the evidence in support of it was bad, and that the silence of the prisoner might not, after all, be an admission of guilt. His pride, moreover, was touched by such an attitude towards himself, the primate, and he would force an answer, if possible, to save his own dignity. It would, besides, be better to go no further into matters which might lengthen the sitting, and spoil the plot, by letting morning return before Jesus was in the safe hands of the Romans. True to the serpent-cunning of the house of Hannas, he determined to bring things to a head. He hoped to worm out what could be distorted into a civil offence; for his keen knowledge of men told him, that, while silent hitherto, his prisoner would give a frank reply, and reveal his secret thoughts when honour demanded it. He was evidently about to die, as he had been charged with living,—true to his conscience.

Looking straight at the accused, the mitred hypocrite, in his white robes, went straight to the heart of the matter, by the demand, uttered in Aramaic, which was used in the Jewish courts as the language of the nation, "I put you on your oath by the living God, whose curse falls on those who swear falsely by him, and require you to tell us whether you are the King Messiah—the Son of God—Ever Blessed?"

The long foreseen moment had come, when an open claim, which he had hitherto not so much formally stated as left to be inferred, would bring on him swift sentence of death. Caiaphas knew that many held him to be the Messiah; that he himself had not refused the awful name, but had, rather, in his discourses, justified its being given him; and that a few days before he had allowed the thousands of Galilean pilgrims, who greeted his entrance to Jerusalem, to salute him by it. But the Church authorities had decided that he was not the Messiah, and, hence, in their eyes, his claiming openly to be so would be high treason against Jehovah. He had hitherto evaded a direct

1 Matt. xxvi. 63.
answer, except in rare cases, because the time had not yet come for publicly declaring himself.

But the supreme moment had now arrived. With kingly dignity, in the face of certain death for his words, and in solemn answer to the appeal to "the living God" as to their truth, Jesus calmly replied: "If I tell you, ye will not believe, and if I ask questions that would prove my highest claims, you would not answer. You have said the Truth—I AM the Messiah—the Son of God, and Son of man. In my present guise ye will see me no more; but when ye have slain me, I, the Son of man, will forthwith sit on the right hand of the Majesty of God, and when ye see me next, I will be sitting there, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

This declaration might have seemed sufficiently clear, but the excitement of the judges had grown unanswerable. Rising on their cushions, one and all demanded, with loud voices, "Art thou, then, the Son of God?" "You have said it," replied Jesus, "AND I AM."

They had gained their end. Hearing witnesses would have required time, and their whole scheme would have failed, if Jerusalem woke and the Galilean pilgrims learned, while a rescue was still possible, the secret arrest through the night, of their fellow-countryman, whom many of them esteemed a prophet, if not the very Messiah.

Caiaaphas played his part well. Quivering with passion, and triumphant at his success, he forgot the practised coldness of the Sadducee, and once more springing from his couch with well-feigned horror at the words of Jesus, though they were precisely what he had wished, rent the bosom of his priestly robe of fine linen, as if it were too narrow to let him breathe after hearing such blasphemy. He forgot that it was the worst of blasphemy for his own lips to use the name of Jehovah as a mere cloak for crime and wickedness!

"He has blasphemed!" cried Caiaaphas. "What need is there to hear more witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy
from his own lips. He gives himself out as the Son of God. What seems good to you, my colleagues?"

In an irregular, illegal, self-constituted court, whose mem-
bers had already approved the cold-blooded counsel of Caia-
phae, to put the prisoner to death, guilty or innocent, and thus
quench in his own blood the fire he had kindled, no evidence
or want of it could have secured an acquittal. Too many
private and class grudges and too many vested rights, lent
weight to any pretext for a judicial murder. The very humility
and the purely religious aims of Jesus were, themselves, a
deadly offence; for their Jewish pride flattered itself that the
Messiah would make Israel the head of the nations instead of
hated Rome. Then, was he not a Galilean—one of a race they
despised? It might be true that he wrought miracles, but
one who wilfully broke the Law, as he openly did, by Sabbath
healing, must work them by help from Beelzebub, not Jehovah.

Besides, had not the high priest told them that it was no
great harm if a single man were sacrificed for the common
good, even if he were innocent?

All voted that, on his own confession, Jesus was worthy of
death.

They had, at last, their wish. Charges affecting the Temple,
or Judaism, would have raised only the contemptuous laugh of
the Roman governor. But now that Jesus had claimed to be
the Messiah, he could be represented to Pilate as a State
criminal, delivered up for treason against the emperor.

The first examination was over, but it needed to be confirmed
by a larger gathering of the Church authorities. It was about
three o'clock in the morning, and some hours must elapse be-
fore the sentence could be formally signed.

Meanwhile, Jesus was left in charge of the rough Temple
police, while the judges separated for an hour or two of sleep.
There was nothing, now, to restrain the coarse natures to whom
the condemned prisoner had been consigned. One under sen-
tence of death was always, in these rough ages, the sport and
mockery of his guards, and those in charge of Jesus, made worse than common by the example of the judges, vented their cruelty on him with the rudest brutality. They were fierce Jewish bigots, and since he was to die as a false prophet, they treated him as such, racking their ingenuity to invent insult and injury. Having blindfolded him, some struck him violently on the head with their fists, or perhaps with the vine-stick which Roman centurions and other officials carried as their sign of rank, and were wont to use on the face or head of the soldiers—for some of the captors of Jesus had such staves with them. Others struck him with their open hands, while still others, adding the greatest indignity an Oriental could offer, spat in his face; crying, as they insulted and tortured him, "Prophesy to us, thou Messiah, who was it that did it?" The hands they had bound had healed the sick and raised the dead; the lips they smote had calmed the winds and the waves. One word, and the menials now sporting with him at their will would have perished. But, as he had begun and continued, he would end—as self-restrained in the use of his awful powers in his own behalf, as if he had been the most helpless of men. Divine patience and infinite love knew no wearying. He had but to will it and he would walk free; but he came to die for man, and he would not shrink from doing so.

While his examination had been proceeding, the central court, which seems to have been paved, was the waiting place of the servants of the several judges, and of the underlings of the high priest, and the Temple watch. John and Peter, recovering from their first panic, and anxious to see what became of their Master, had followed at a distance, till he was brought to the house of Caiaphas. The door of the outer court, or porch, had been closed, to prevent the entrance of any one likely to spread an alarm and bring about a rescue; but John, happening to be known to the household, or, perhaps, to the high priest himself, was readily admitted. Meanwhile, Peter
remained shut out, but at John's request was admitted by the maid who kept the door.

A fire of wood kindled in the open court in the chilly April night, had attracted all round it, Peter among the rest, by its cheerful blaze. He sat by the light with weary heart, wondering what the end would be, and not without alarm for his own safety, in case he should be recognised, and charged with his violence in the garden. Meanwhile, the door-keeper, who, perhaps, had seen him in attendance on Jesus, sauntered like others, to the fire, and with a woman's abruptness, after gazing at him steadily, put the question directly to him: "Art thou, also, one of this man's disciples?" Confused and off his guard, he said nothing; but she would not let him go. "Thou, also, wast with Jesus of Galilee," she continued—repeating to those round her, "Certainly this man, also, was with him." "Woman," said Peter, stammering out the words in mortal terror for his life, "I do not know him; I do not know what you mean." But his conscience was ill at ease, and his fears grew apace. He could no longer hide his confusion, and went off into the darkness of the porch. His tormentor would not, however, let him escape. He had hardly come to the light again, after a time, than she once more scanned him, and, determined to justify herself, began to speak of him to the serving men and slaves. "He is one of them. He was with Jesus of Nazareth." Irritated and alarmed, and losing all presence of mind, he repeated his denial with an oath. "I do not know the man. I am not one of his disciples. I swear I am not."

His stout assertions gave him an hour's respite and peace, but his troubles were not over, for the maid had called attention to him, and his bearing had excited suspicion. At last, one of the slaves of the high priest, a kinsman of the wounded Malchus, renewed the subject by asking Peter directly, "Did I not see thee, as I was standing at the door of the garden, just as they were coming out?" "You never did," said Peter
"I was not there." "Why, your very speech shows that you are one of them—you were with him," cried angry, fierce voices; "you are a Galilean—we hear it in your words."

Peter now lost all control of himself. He had tried to strengthen his last denial by a solemn oath, but now burst into curses on himself, if he had not spoken truth, in saying that he knew nothing whatever about Jesus! In the midst of his excitement a cock-crow fell on his ears, and, at the sound, his Master, still before his murderers, in a room opening into the courtyard, turned and looked him full in the face, with loving, but now reproachful, eyes.

It was enough. The glance, like lightning revealing an abyss, brought back to its nobler self the honest heart that for a time had been alarmed into unfaithfulness, and threw an awful brightness into the depths of sin on whose edge he stood. All his unmanly weakness and wretched fear rose in his thoughts, and, with them, the remembrance of his boasts, so miserably belied. Christ's words, which he had so warmly repudiated—that, before the cock crew, he would deny him thrice—had come true. What a contrast between the grand strength of his Master and his own weakness!

Shame and sorrow, mingled on the moment with a yearning hope of forgiveness, overpowered him, and he did now, what he should have done earlier, went out, and wept bitterly. It is a touching and beautiful tradition, that all his life long the remembrance of this night never left him, and that, morning by morning, he rose at the hour when the look of his Master had entered his soul, to pray once more for pardon.

Towards the close of the fourth watch, and before daybreak, the heads of the Church, true to the rule which required that they should meet as a body, to ratify a sentence of death, had gathered in some suitable building. Thither Jesus was now led, under escort of Temple police and retainers of the high

priest, to appear before the notables of Israel. The chiefs of the priestly courses, and other dignitaries of the Temple, with a number of elders and Rabbis, had gathered in the fading darkness, old though most of them were, to take part in the condemnation of the Hated One. The proceedings were, however, only formal—to hear the sentence of the "Court" and to endorse it. This done, the way was clear for handing him over to Pilate.

In the eyes of those who thus confirmed the sentence, he was a criminal of the worst dye; for, in their opinion, he had blasphemed with audacious boldness, by claiming to be the Messiah. Proof more than enough to establish his highest claims offered itself in his life and words and works; but passion and prejudice had hardened their hearts and blinded their judgments. The worst among them would never have dared to proceed against him, had they believed him really the Messiah. "I know," says St. Peter, "that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers."¹ But it was an ignorance that had refused the light.

¹ Acts iii. 17.
CHAPTER XXX.

The decision of the Jewish authorities having been duly signed and sealed, and Jesus once more securely bound, he was led off, strongly guarded from rescue, to the official residence of Pilate, on Mount Zion. It was hardly day, but Eastern life begins very early, for the heat of noon requires rest during the hours busiest with us. The way ran from the West Hall of the Temple, over the valley, by a bridge, and across an open space surrounded by pillared porches. The palace of Herod, now Pilate’s head-quarters, lay just beyond—the proud residence of the Roman knight who held the government for the Emperor Tiberius. It was inhabited for only a few weeks or days at a time; but now, during the Passover, the governor took care to be present, to repress any popular movement for national freedom which the spring air, the feast itself, and the vast gathering of the nation, might excite.

Now, for the first time, Jesus entered the gates of a king’s palace—the home of “men in soft raiment”—entered it as a prisoner.¹ He was to stand before a man who has come down to us as one of the most unrighteous, cruel, arbitrary, and hateful; a man rightly named Pilate, the “Javelin-man,” for it seemed his delight to launch cruelties and scorn on every side, like javelins, among the oppressed people. What had Jesus to expect from one who hated the nation from his soul, and sported with their lives and possessions as if they were not

¹ Matt. xxvii. 1, 2, 11–14; Mark xv. 1–5; Luke xxiii. 1–5; John xviii. 28–38.
men, but a race of slaves. Yet, possibly, the hatred of Pilate towards the Jews might see in him a welcome instrument, in the absence of a better, for playing off his bitterness against them and their leaders. To favour a man who was in opposition to them was, itself, a pleasure. Calm and impartial, compared to Jewish passion and bitterness, and in some respects in sympathy with the accused, the hard, proud, heathen Roman was more open than the Jews or their leaders to the impression of Christ's innocence or harmlessness.

That he did not, in the end, protect him, rose, partly, from his character, and, partly, from his past history as governor. Morally weak, the petty tyrant was incapable of righteous firmness, and, besides, he dreaded complaints at Rome from the Jewish authorities, and insurrections of the masses. He had, in the past, learned to quail before the stubbornness of the Jews, so often, that he would permit, or do, almost anything, for quiet. This showed itself in his course towards Jesus. Protecting him for a time, half in sympathy, half in mockery, he finally gave him up, rather than brave the demand of a people he hated and feared. He would have set him free but for the popular clamour, and a bitter remembrance of the trouble similar incidents had caused him both in Jerusalem and at Rome.

There was a hall in the palace, in which trials were generally conducted, but the Jewish notables who had condemned Jesus, were much too holy to enter a heathen building during the feast, since there might be old leaven in it. It was Friday, and the Sabbath began that night, and in the evening, at this season, the priests and people universally held a feast on the flesh of the freewill offerings. It had, for centuries, been associated with the Passover, of which it was reckoned a part, and Levitical uncleanness would prevent the accusers joining in it. They were still true to the character given them by Jesus; careful of the outside of the bowl and platter, but willing that, within, it should be filled with wickedness. They had effected
their end, Christ was in the hands of the Romans before Jerusalem awoke.

Knowing the people with whom he had to do, Pilate made no attempt to overcome their scruples. Trials in the open air were common, for Roman law courted publicity. Roman governors, and the half Roman Herod and his sons, erected their tribunals before the palace, in the market-place, in the theatre, in the circus, or even on the highways. Pilate, therefore, caused his official seat to be set down on a spot known in Jerusalem as Gabbatha, "the high place," from its being raised above the crowd, and as "The Pavement," because, as was the custom with the spot on which Roman judges sat, it was laid with a mosaic of coloured stones. It was, very possibly, a permanent erection, square, or of crescent shape, of costly marble, in keeping with the splendour so dear to Herod, its builder, and seems to have been raised in front of the "Judgment Hall;" a doorway connecting the two. It was a maxim of Roman law that criminal trials should be held on a raised tribunal, that all might see and be seen.

The ivory chair of the governor—his seat of state and sign of office—or, perhaps, the old golden seat of Archelaus, was set down on the tribunal, which was large enough to allow the other members of the court—Roman citizens—to sit beside Pilate, for Roman law required their presence. On lower elevations sat the officers of the court, the friends of the governor, and others whom he chose to honour.

The priests and elders who appeared against Jesus, now led him up the steps of the tribunal, to Pilate, and placed him in his presence. Chairs for the accusers were generally set near that of the judge, and there was also, usually, a seat for the accused; but in Judea, despised and insulted, this custom was not now observed, at least in the case of Christ, for he had to stand through the trial. An interpreter was not needed, as the Jewish officials doubtless spoke Greek, and Jesus, brought up in Galilee, where the presence of foreigners made its use
general, also understood it. A detachment of troops from the garrison guarded the tribunal and kept the ground,¹ for a vast crowd of citizens and others speedily gathered, as the news of the arrest spread.²

Roman law knew nothing of the system which forces a prisoner to convict himself; it required that a formal accusation should be made against him. This office of accuser Caiaphas undertook, as the representative of the nation and its highest dignitary, to give the charges the greater weight,³ though a professional "orator"⁴ may also have been employed, as was usual.

Pilate, having taken his seat, began the proceedings by asking Caiaphas and his colleagues what accusation they had against the prisoner.⁵

"If he had not been a great offender," replied Caiaphas, as spokesman, "we would not have delivered him up to thee. We have authority, by our own laws, to punish ordinary offenders; but this man's crime goes beyond our powers in the punishment it demands, and we have, therefore, handed him over to thee.⁶ That we have done so, I submit, is proof that he deserves death. The presence of myself, the high priest, and of the notables of the nation, as his accusers, may suffice to prove the blackness of his guilt."

Pilate was not a stranger in Palestine, and Jesus had, doubtless, already been under his notice, through reports of his spies and officials. He had learned that he avoided all appeals to force; that his discourses had nothing whatever political in them, and that his zeal was mainly directed against the corruptions of the Jewish priesthood and public teachers, whom the Romans themselves despised for the same cause. The immense crowds that had followed him at his first appearance in Judea, three years before, and his subsequent course in Galilee, must have been the subject of many official communi-

cations to Caesarea, Pilate's usual residence; and they had uniformly represented him as peaceful and harmless. Pilate knew, therefore, that he was now delivered up by the priests and Rabbis, only from envy and for their own selfish ends. He could easily see how such a man might be dangerous to the vested interests and mock holiness of the Jewish magnates, while not at all so to Roman authority. Though ready to quench in blood any movement that threatened the peace, he saw no ground for apprehension in this instance.

The Gospels give only a brief outline of the trial, but even the opening address of Caiaphas, or the orator who spoke for him and his party, was, no doubt, full of compliments to Pilate, and of fierce words against the prisoner. It had, however, a different effect on the governor from that intended. The clamour for blood by a priesthood whom he despised as Jews, and still more for their superstition, bigotry, barbarous want of taste and refinement, restless greed, and restive opposition to Rome, was hateful and repulsive. He would not involve his court, which represented the majesty of the emperor, in any further details of a question about one who seemed a mere religious reformer. The accusers had, themselves, power to settle their own religious disputes.

Interrupting the speaker, therefore, Pilate told him, "If you have found him what you say, you had better, in my opinion, take him and judge him according to your own law." He did not, as yet, understand that they sought to have Jesus put to death.

Caiaphas had his answer ready. "It is a criminal charge," said he, "a charge of capital crime, and we cannot put any one to death without your confirming our sentence." He could not, however, do so in any case, without a trial, and thus the matter must proceed before him. They might have stoned Jesus for blasphemy, had he sanctioned their doing so, but they were resolved to leave the odium of the murder on him, and have their victim crucified.

1 Mark xv. 10. 3 John xviii. 31. 2 John xviii. 31, 32.
"What is your accusation then?" asked Pilate.

Craftily keeping out of sight Christ's declaration that he was the Son of God, because such a question was indifferent to the Roman, Caiaphas turned the religious offence into a political one. Our Lord's claim to be the Messiah was to be used to alarm Pilate and prejudice him against the prisoner, the word being equivalent in the mind of the Romans to a wild revolutionary leader.

Roman law permitted the questioning of a prisoner after formal accusation, and confession of the charge was held sufficient proof of guilt.

"The accused has been condemned by us as a deceiver of the people," answered the high priest.1

"How?" asked Pilate.

"In a double way," said Caiaphas, "He stirs up the nation against paying their tribute to Caesar, and he sets himself up as King of the Jews. He says he is the Messiah, which is the name we give our king, and he has led many to regard him as a descendant of David, and our lawful sovereign."

Rising from his chair, and ordering Jesus, who had been standing at his side, to be brought after him, Pilate retired into the palace, and calling Christ before him, asked him, "Art Thou the King of the Jews? Dost thou, really, claim to be so?" He evidently felt it almost beneath him to put such a question to one, in his eyes, so utterly unlike a king. Had he been firm and strong-minded, he would have seen the groundlessness of the charge, from the absence of all proof, but he weakly proceeded to put Jesus to examination.

Knowing that Pilate had nothing against him but the words of his enemies outside, Jesus, with a calm dignity that amazed the governor, replied by a counter question. "Do you ask this of your own accord, or have others told it you of me?"2 He would have Pilate remember the more than doubtful source of the accusation, and that, with all his official means of inform-

1 Luke xxi. 2.
2 John xviii. 34.
ation, no grounds of such a charge had ever suggested themselves to his own mind. It was, besides, essential to know if he spoke as a Roman, with a political use of the title "king," or repeated it in the Jewish sense, as equivalent to "the Messiah."

"Do you think I am a Jew?" answered Pilate, scornfully, feeling his false position in entertaining an accusation from so suspicious a source. "Your own nation have brought you before me; the charge comes from the priests and Rabbis. I have only repeated what they allege. Do you suppose I care for your dreams about a Messiah? Tell me, what have you done? Do you call yourself the King of the Jews?"

"In your sense of the word I am not a king," answered Jesus; "but in another, I am. But my Kingdom is not of this world 1—not earthly and political. If it were, my attendants would have fought for me, to prevent my being arrested and delivered up to my enemies by the soldiers you sent against me. But they made no resistance, or any attempt even to rescue me, and this, of itself, is enough to show that my Kingdom is not a political one."

"You speak of a Kingdom; are you really a king, then, in any other sense than the common?" asked the governor, awed.

"Thou sayest it; 2 so it is; I AM A KING," answered Jesus. "I was born to be a king; I came into the world that I should bear witness for the Truth. All who love and seek the Truth,—that is, who hear and obey my words—are my subjects." He had thrice claimed a Kingdom, and thrice told Pilate that it was not of this world.

"How these Jews talk!" thought Pilate. "They, barbarous as they are, think they have TRUTH as their special possession—TRUTH, which is a riddle to our philosophers! What have I to do with such things, fit only to confuse the head of a hungry Greek or a beggarly Rabbi?" But he had heard enough

1 John xviii. 36.

2 Matt. xxvii. 11; Mark xv. 2; Luke xxiii. 3; John xviii. 37.
to convince him that Jesus had no thought of treason against Rome, or of stirring up a disturbance in the country. Hardened, cold, worldly, he would fain have dismissed One so strangely different from other men—an enthusiast, willing to die to make men better! "What kind of a man is he?" thought the Roman. "If he only had not been so ready with his talk about being a king! But he will do nothing to help himself!" "What is Truth?" said he, and turned away without waiting an answer, for in Pilate's opinion, as in that of most men of his class in that age, no one could give a reply to the question.

Leaving Jesus to be brought out again after him to the tribunal, he returned to the accusers and the multitude. Touched by the prisoner's self-possession and dignity, half-afraid of One who spoke only of Truth, and of other worlds than this, and incensed that the Church authorities, for their own ends, should have sought to palm off on him a harmless enthusiast as a dangerous traitor, he threw the priests and Rabbis into fierce confusion, by frankly telling them "that he had examined Jesus, and found no ground for any punishment" in his thinking himself the Messiah, as they called it. One point in the accusation had failed, but it was necessary to hear what might be alleged besides. The accusers could easily see that, in spite of the admission of Jesus that he claimed to be a king, Pilate regarded him rather with pity than fear. More must be done to fix on him the crime of being dangerous to the State. The priests and Rabbis were greatly excited. One after another, they sprang up, with charge upon charge, to confirm their main accusation. In their fierce bigotry and unmeasured hatred, they had not scrupled to speak of a purely religious movement as a dark political plot, and now they were bold enough even to adduce proofs of this treason. "He has perverted women and children, and has stirred up the whole nation against Caesar; from Galilee to Jerusalem there is not a town or village in the land where he has not won over some, and filled them with

1 John xviii. 38.
wild expectations. He has appealed to the nation to join his Kingdom; he has spoken against paying the taxes; he is a second Judas the Galilæan, and you know what his career cost Rome in blood and treasure.” The hypocrites! They were hunting Jesus to death simply because he would not use his supernatural power to drive out the Romans, and set himself on the vacant throne.¹ They were demanding his death on the pretext that he had threatened to use force to establish his Kingdom, when the truth was, his real offence, in their eyes, was that he would not use force!

Such a storm of accusations might well have led Pilate to expect some denial or disproofs from Jesus. He doubtless attributed all the difficulty of the situation to his foolish claim of some dreamy kingship: and, on every ground, even for his own sake, to clear him from a business that grew more and more serious, hoped to hear some defence. But Christ knew with whom he had to do. He knew his enemies were determined that he should die, and would invent charge after charge till he was destroyed. They scrupled at nothing. He knew Pilate—fierce, and yet cowardly, with no moral force; the tyrant, and yet the sport of the Jewish authorities.² Looking down with pitying disdain on the moral worthlessness of judge and accusers alike, he would not utter even a word in his own behalf before them. They knew his life and work, and if the witness these bore were of no weight, he would add no other. “If I demand that he answer,” thought Pilate, “perhaps he will do so. Do you not hear,” said he, “of how many things they accuse you? Do you make no defence at all?” But Jesus remained silent, not uttering even a word. “A very strange man,” thought Pilate. He seemed to him, more than ever, a lofty enthusiast, blind to his own interests, and careless of life.

The word “Galilee,” in the wild cries of the priests and Rabbis, raised a new hope in Pilate’s mind. Antipas was now

¹ Luke xxiii. 4, 5.
² Matt. xxvii. 12–14; Mark xv. 35.
in Jerusalem at the feast. If Jesus were a Galilean, it would be a graceful courtesy to send him to be tried before his own prince, and might efface the grudge Antipas had at Pilate himself, for having let loose his soldiers lately on the Galilean pilgrims in the Temple, during a disturbance; some being cut down at the very altar. It would, moreover, get him clear of a troublesome matter, and, perhaps, it might even save the strange man—so calm, so dignified, in circumstances of such weakness and humiliation; with such a look, as if he read one's soul; with such a mysterious air of greatness, even in bonds, and in the very face of death by the cross. Antipas would hardly yield to the Temple party, as he himself might be forced to do, to avoid another complaint to Rome. He no sooner, therefore, heard that Jesus was a Galilean, than he ordered him to be transferred to Antipas, that he might become his judge.

The old palace of the Jewish kings, in which Antipas lodged, was not far from Pilate's splendid official residence. It lay a few streets off, to the north-east, within the same old city wall, on the slope of Zion, the levelled crest of which was occupied by the vast palace of Herod, now the Roman headquarters. Both were in the old, or Upper City, and through the narrow streets, the sides of which were higher than the middle, Jesus was led under escort of a detachment of Roman troops. The accusers had no choice but to follow, and the multitude went off with them, for it was no ordinary spectacle to see the high priest and all the great men of the city, thus in public together.

The vassal king was caught in Pilate's snare. The flattery of referring a Galilean case to him greatly pleased him, and his light nature was no less gratified by having one brought before him of whom he had heard so much. In his petty court, amidst all its affectation of grandeur and state, a drowsiness hung over all. He had never seen a miracle, and should like

1 Luke xxiii. 6-12.
to be able to say he had. It would break the dulness, and give an hour's talk. A prisoner, in danger of the cross, could not refuse to humour him, if he commanded him to perform one! He had been afraid of Jesus once, but a miracle-worker in chains, could only be, at best, a clever juggler.

Pilate had taken his seat on his tribunal in the grey dawn, and an hour had passed. It was shortly after six, when Antipas, early astir, like all Orientals, heard the commotion in the courtyard of his palace, and received word that Jesus had been handed over to his authority. A few minutes more, and the prisoner was led into a hall of the palace, and presently Antipas made his appearance.

The weak, crafty, worthless man, was disposed to be very condescending. He put question after question to Christ as his idle curiosity suggested, and doubtless commanded him to perform a miracle there and then. But Jesus was no conjuror. He was ready to save his life by worthy means, but he would not, for a moment, stoop to anything ignoble. The creature before him, clad in purple, was the murderer of John, the slave of a wicked woman, a mean adulterer, and would fain have had his life as well as that of the Baptist. He felt, therefore, only utter disdain for him, and treated him with withering silence. He might tire himself with questions, but not a word of reply would be vouchsafed. Antipas began to feel that it was no time to indulge his humour, and grew half-alarmed.

The high priests and Rabbis, Caiaphas at their head, would gladly have turned the annoyance of the tetrarch to their own account. When his questions had ceased, they broke out into vehement accusations, forgetful, in their rage, alike of their office and of their self-respect. But they, too, were met with the same contemptuous silence, which gave no chance of fastening anything on their enemy, by admissions of his own. Antipas was no less at a loss than Pilate what to do. One thing, alone, he had resolved—he would take no part in condemning so mysterious a man. Was he afraid of the large
following Jesus already had in Galilee? Was he spell-bound and awed by those eyes, that calmness, that kingly dignity? Was he afraid of the very power of which he had craved some exhibition? When there was no Herodias at hand to make him the tool of her revenge, he was rather a mere man of pleasure than cruel.¹

Treated so strangely before his courtiers; humbled and baffled, Antipas covered his defeat and alarm by a pretense of contemptuous ridicule. The harmless madman, who claimed to be a king, would make a fine butt for the humour of his guard. Let them trick him out as a king, and play at homage to him, and see how he would bear his shadowy dignities! It was a brave chance for the courtiers to show their manliness by mocking a helpless prisoner! Antipas knew, by this time, Pilate's opinion of the accused, and suspected why he had sent him. So, officer and common soldier set themselves to amuse their master, by trying their wit on this ridiculous pretender to a crown! Tired at last, nothing remained but to send him back to Pilate, and let him finish what he had begun. Antipas had no desire to meddle further in what might prove a very troublesome matter. Having, therefore, put a white robe—the Jewish royal colour—on Jesus, as if to show his contempt for such a king,² he sent him back to the governor.

Pilate had already made one vain attempt to save him, and now, anxious to end the matter, summoned the accusers once more to the tribunal. A great crowd had gathered, mostly citizens, hostile to the alleged enemy of the Temple by which they lived. Looking at Jesus again, standing before him in the humble dress of the people—for they had already stripped him of his robe of mockery—Pilate felt more convinced than ever that he was no rebel. “I have examined this man,” said he, “and nothing worthy of death has been done by him. Still more, I sent him to Herod, and he is of the same opinion, and

¹ Matt xiv. 9.
² Luke xxiii. 18–25; Matt xxvii. 15–26; Mark xv. 6–15; John xviii. 39, 40.
has sent him back again to me uncondemned. But since so much trouble has been caused by his fancies, he deserves some punishment. I shall, therefore, order him to be scourged and then dismissed. It will be a warning to him." The proposal was a mere salve to the pride of his accusers, wounded by the refusal of their demand for a sentence of death.

Meanwhile a cry, destined to have momentous results, arose in the crowd. It was the custom to carry out capital sentences at the Feast times, that the people at large might get a lesson; but it was also the practice of the governors, in compliment to the deliverance of Israel from the slavery of Egypt, commemorated by the Passover, to release any prisoner condemned to death whom the multitude might name.

Coming forward, therefore, and addressing both accusers and people, Pilate reminded them of their custom that he should release a prisoner to them at the Passover. Cries instantly rose, clamouring that, as hitherto, he would grant them this favour, and for once the shouts pleased him; for he fancied that, this time, there could be no question who should receive pardon. One who claimed to be their national king, and had attracted so much notice, would, he assumed, be gladly accepted. He called out to the people, therefore, whether they would like "Jesus, their king," to be the prisoner now released to them.

It happened that, at this time, there lay, awaiting execution, one Barabbas—the son of a Rabbi—who had, apparently, been concerned in one of the countless petty revolts which incessantly harassed the Romans. He was no common robber, but one, who, in mistaken ardour for the honour of the Law, had taken part in a tumult, during which some Roman sympathisers or soldiers had been killed.

The proposal of Pilate threatened to overthrow the scheme of the heads of the Church, and, unless opposed on the instant, might catch the popular fancy, and be accepted. Caiaphas and his party, therefore, with quick presence of mind, turned at-
tention from it, by raising a counter proposal flattering to local passion. "Ask him to release Barabbas, and not this man," shouted they to the mob. It was a clever stroke, for Barabbas had been condemned for an offence which made him a martyr in the eyes of the people. He had risen against the abhorred Roman. He was jealous for the Temple and the Law, while Jesus was the enemy of things as they were, opposed tradition and rites, and demanded reforms. Caiaphas had no sympathy with the revolutionary fierceness of Barabbas, but it was, after all, only an excess of zeal on the right side, whereas Jesus was the public accuser of the whole priesthood, and of the Rabbis.

The cry for Barabbas, therefore, was raised and repeated by the high priest and those around him, with such vehement urgency that, ere long, it was caught up by the whole crowd, who were presently wild with excitement to have "the patriot" released, instead of Jesus. Pilate was under no obligation to give the people their choice, but had fancied he might appeal to them from the priests and Rabbis, and play them off against their leaders. But the priests kept up the cry for Barabbas so fiercely, and, to Pilate's regret, the multitude echoed it with such a wild tumult of voices, that he saw he had failed. "Give us Barabbas," alone was heard. A popular tumult seemed rising. Everything promised another scene like that at Cæsarea, about the standards set up in Jerusalem, when the cries of the multitude were not to be silenced even by fear of death, and forced Pilate, in the end, to yield.

To add to the governor's perplexity, he had scarcely ascended the judge's seat to receive the popular decision, when a message came to him from his wife, which, under the circumstances, must have greatly impressed him. Since the time of Augustus, Roman magistrates had been permitted to take their wives to the provinces, and tradition has handed down the wife of Pilate—whose name it states was Procla—as a convert to the Jewish faith. She had evidently heard of Jesus, and, having taken a
lively interest in him, was greatly troubled at his arrest and present danger. Her messenger, hastening to Pilate, now whispered an entreaty from her, that he would have nothing to do with condemning this just man; she had suffered many things through the night in a dream because of him, and feared Divine vengeance if he were condemned.

Pilate was at a loss what to do. Unwilling to give way to the mob, and let loose a fierce enemy of Rome instead of a harmless and evidently high-minded enthusiast; certain that the high priests had accused him only from envy at his influence with the people, and hatred of him for his opposition to themselves; half afraid, moreover, especially after his wife's message, to meddle further in the matter; he once more turned to the crowd, who were still shouting "Not this man, but Barabbas," and attempted to carry his point, and save Jesus.

"Which of the two," cried he, "do you really wish me to release to you?" "Barabbas, Barabbas," roared the multitude. The cry raised by the priests had carried all before it. "What shall I do then," asked Pilate, pale before the storm, "with Jesus, whom you call the Messiah—the King of the Jews?" He hoped that the sound of titles so dear to their hearts, and so flattering to their pride, would have some effect. But he was bitterly deceived.

For now, for the first time, rose in answer to him, the fearful words, "To the Cross! Crucify him! crucify him!" the priests and Rabbis, prelates and doctors of the nation, on the raised platform of the tribunal, shouting first, and the mob below re-echoing the cry far and wide.

Pilate had failed twice, but he still held out. Appealing a third time to the excited crowd, he strove to reason with them:—

"Why shall I crucify him? What evil has he done? He has broken no law. I have found no cause, in anything he has done, to put him to death. I will, therefore, only scourge him, and let him go."

But he knew not the forces he was opposing. Behind the
passions of the priests and Rabbis and people, were the slowly self-fulfilling counsels of the Eternal!

The sea of upturned faces again broke into wild uproar, and a thousand voices yelled at their fiercest, "Crucify him! crucify him!"

The six days of Cæsarea, when the same crowds had besieged his palace, with an unbroken cry, which not even imminent death could still—the six days, when their stubbornness had forced him to humble himself before them and let them triumph—rose in Pilate's mind.

"It will be another uproar like that," thought he; "I must yield while I can, and save myself." Poor mockery of a ruler! Set by the Eternal to do right on earth, and afraid to do it; strong enough in his legions, and in the truth itself, to have saved the Innocent One, and kept his own soul, he could only think of what seemed best at the moment!

Not daring, in his weakness, to play the man and do right, Pilate was yet determined that even those at a distance, who might not hear his disavowal of any willing share in the condemnation of Christ, should be made to see it. To wash the hands in water is a symbol so expressive of having no share in an action, that it had been adopted by Jews and heathen alike. So long before as the days of Moses, the elders of a city near which the body of a slain man had been found, were required to wash their hands over a slaughtered heifer, and declare their innocence. To wash the hands in innocency was already a common expression in the days of David,¹ and it was familiar to both Greeks and Romans. Calling, therefore, for water, Pilate went towards his official chair, and with significant gestures, washed his hands, calling aloud as he did so, "That as his hands were clean before them, so was he himself, of all guilt in the blood of this man. It is on you; you may answer for it as you best can!"

"Yes! yes!" cried the furious priests and rabble, "willingly!

¹ Ps. xxvi. 6; lxxiii. 13.
We and our children will take the blame! His blood be on us and our children if he be slain unjustly."

"Then you may have his blood," thought Pilate; "I have done my best to save him!" So do men deceive themselves; as if they could wash their conscience clean as easily as their hands!

The Innocent One had gained nothing but evil by all the windings and doublings of Pilate. He had proposed to save Jesus by delivering him over to the shame and agony of scourging, though he had done nothing amiss. He was now to be both scourged and crucified.

Victims condemned to the cross first underwent the hideous torture of the scourge, and this Pilate, forthwith, commanded to be inflicted. "Go, bind his hands, and let him be beaten," was the order for the terrible prelude to crucifixion.

Roman citizens were still exempted, by various laws, from this agonizing punishment, which was employed sometimes to extort confessions, sometimes instead of death, and at others as the first step towards execution. It was in full use in the provinces, and lawless governors did not scruple to enforce it even on Roman citizens. Jesus was now seized by some of the soldiers standing near, and after being stripped to the waist, was bound in a stooping posture, his hands behind his back, to a post, or block, near the tribunal. He was then beaten at the pleasure of the soldiers, with knots of rope, or plaited leather thongs, armed at the ends with acorn-shaped drops of lead, or small, sharp-pointed bones. In many cases not only was the back cut open in all directions; even the eyes, the face, and breast, were torn, and the teeth not seldom knocked out. The judge usually stood by, to stimulate the executioners by cries of "Give it him"—but we may trust that Pilate, though his office required him to be present, spared himself this crime.

Under the fury of the countless stripes, the victims sometimes sank—amidst screams, convulsive leaps, and distortions—into

1 Matt. xxvii. 26-30; Mark xv. 16-19; John x x. 1-3.
a senseless heap; sometimes died on the spot; sometimes were taken away a mass of bleeding flesh, to find deliverance in death, from the inflammation and fever, sickness and shame.

The scourging of Jesus was of the severest; for the soldiers, employed in the absence of special officials, who were not allowed to local governors, gladly vented on any Jew the grudge they bore the nation, and they would, doubtless, try if they could not force out the confession which his silence had denied to their chief. Besides, he was to be crucified, and the harder the scourging the less life would there be left, to detain them afterwards on guard at the cross. What he must

Ancient Christian Representation of the Passion.
(From a Sarophagus in the Lateran Museum, Rome.)

have endured is pictured to us by one of the Fathers. "All around were horrified to see them (the martyrs)," says he, "so torn with scourges that their very veins were laid bare, and the inner muscles, and sinews, and even the very bowels, exposed."

The scourging over—Pilate, as his office required, standing by—Jesus was formally delivered over to a military officer, with the order to see him crucified. He had been scourged in the open ground before the palace gate, but was now led, still half-naked, with painful, bleeding steps, into the inner court of the palace, in which, as the trial was over, all the soldiers—no longer needed outside—were massed, to be ready for any
attempt at rescue. His guards next put some of his clothes on the quivering body. For this his own humble under garments contented them, in part; but the brutal humour of the guard-room was free to vent itself on a condemned man, and the lofty claims of Christ, as well as his hated nationality, excited it to the keenest. Instead of his plain tunic of linen, therefore, they threw over his shoulders a soldier's scarlet cloak, as a rough burlesque of the long and fine purple one worn only by the emperor. One of them, running to the nearest open space, heightened the coarse merriment by bringing in some of the tough twigs of a thorny plant, which he twisted into a mock laurel wreath, like that worn at times by the Caesars, and forced down, with the close sharp thorns, on our Saviour's temples. A last supreme touch, to complete the ridicule, was at hand, in one of the long reeds, used in many ways in Jewish houses, and hence easily procured. Placed in his hand, the mock king had a sceptre! It only remained to pay him a show of homage, and this they did on their knees, saluting him with mock oaths of allegiance, "Hail, King of the Jews." The courtyard rang with peals of laughter. Some of the more brutal could not, however, let things pass so lightly. He was a Jew; he had claimed to be a king, in opposition, as they fancied, to the emperor, and he was about to be crucified. They indulged their coarseness, therefore, by tearing the stout cane-like reed from his hands, and striking him with it over the face and head. Others struck him rudely with their fists: some, in their contempt, even spitting on him as they did so. The scourging had lasted till the soldiers had done their worst, and now, their unspeakable brutality was left to wear itself out.

This long passage of insult and mockery was one of the sorest trials of these last sad hours. Yet, through the whole, no complaint escaped his lips. He was being insulted, maltreated, and mocked, as a Jew, while already agonized by the scourging; but, if his tormentors had known it, he stood where he did, because the Jews hated him. They ridiculed his claim
as the Messiah; yet had the soldiery known the truth, he was being put to death because he had opposed the Jewish dream, that the Messiah would secure the universal political triumph of their nation.

No murmur rose from him. He might have spoken, or sighed, or implored the pity of the soldiery; he might have appealed to their honour and compassion. A heart beats even in the roughest bosom. But he was silent—not because the waves of his sorrows had overwhelmed him, but in triumphant superiority to them. He had been bowed and crushed in Gethsemane, but now he showed the serene joy of a conqueror. His silence was a mark of his perfect resignation to the will of his Father. He was fulfilling, by his calm endurance, the work of his life, in accordance with the eternal counsels of God, and in holy love for his nation and the world. His kingly spirit was clouded, to human eyes, by pain and agony, but the end of his life and death shone out the more triumphantly before him. He was dying to destroy for ever the worn out ritualism of the past; as the Founder of a religion of love and freedom and light, and as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, which would open the gates of mercy to man for evermore!

Pilate had, apparently, retired into the palace for a time, but now re-appeared; urged, perhaps, by his wife, to make one more effort to save Jesus. Yet he might have prevented the pitiless roughness of the soldiers had he pleased, and the scourging itself was an injustice, by his own confession. He now ordered him to be brought out once more, tottering with pain and weakness, wearing the scarlet cloak and the crown of thorns, and covered, besides, with the vile proofs of contempt and violence. Even the stony heart of Pilate was touched.

"Behold," said he, "I have brought him out to you again, that you may know, once more, that I have found no fault in him." Then, turning to the figure at his side, drawn together with mortal agony, and looking at the pale, worn, and bleeding

1 John xix. 4-16.
face, through which there yet shone a calm dignity that had
touched his heart, and might touch even the heart of Jews, he
added, "Behold the Man!" Would they let the scourging and
mockery suffice, after all?

But the priests were unmoved. The sight of their victim
redoubled their ferocity. Forgetful of their profession and
dignity, the chief priests—the primate and bishops of the day
—their servants and the servile crowd echoing their cry,
answered the governor's appeal only by loud shouts of "Crucify!
Crucify!"

"Take ye him, then, and crucify him, if it must be so,"
answered Pilate. "I have found him blameless of any offence
against Roman law." As if he wished to say, "I will not be
your mere tool!"

The first accusation had therefore failed, and was dropped.
But the priests were determined to have his life, and forthwith
demanded it on a new ground.

"He shall not escape!" cried their spokesman. "If he has
committed no crime worthy of death by Roman law, we have a
Jewish law which he has outraged, and by it he must die. He
has claimed to be the Son of God—the Messiah—which he is
not, and for that, by our law, which thou hast sworn to uphold,
he has been sentenced to death—by stoning, in any case; by
the cross, if thou allowest it."

Thousands were eager to put Jesus to death, with Pilate's
permission or without, now that the high priests had roused
their fanaticism.\(^1\) But such an outbreak Pilate dreaded. He
would, therefore, have yielded without hesitation, but even to
his frivolous soul there was an ominous sound in the name
"Son of God." Might he be braving the wrath of the gods,
and what, compared to that, was the utmost these wretched
Jews could do?

The irresolute man—with no force of character, and too
unprincipled to be an upright judge—was alarmed. Perhaps,

\(^1\) John xix. 15.
if he brought Jesus before him, privately, once more, a way out of the difficulty would present itself. There was also that dream of Procla to frighten him.

Retiring, therefore, into the palace, he ordered Jesus to be set before him again.

"What was that they said," asked he, "about thy being the Son of God? Whence comest thou? Art thou of human birth or more?"

The dignity of spotless innocence, outraged by Pilate's conduct, forbade a reply: Anything he might have said, however clear, would have been fruitless. Jesus therefore remained silent. Pilate had abundant means of judging from the past, and, besides, it was no question of birth or origin, but a simple matter of uprightness he was called on to decide. If his prisoner were innocent, he had a right to be set free, whoever he might be.

Pilate's pride was touched by the silence. His momentary tenderness turned into lowering passion; for power, when it feels itself guilty, is the more ready to drown conscience by violence towards the weakness it wrongs. "Do you refuse to answer Me?" he asked, in flashing anger. "Do you not know that your life is in my hands, and hangs on my nod? That I can crucify, or release thee, at my pleasure?"

Christ was now silent no longer. "You have indeed," said he, "power over me, but you would have none were it not given you from God above. But your sin, though great, in condemning me against your conscience, and exercising on me the power granted you by God, is not so great as that of others. The chief guilt lies on those who force you to carry out their will against me." Even now he is tender and pitiful to the man who has done him so much wrong. He has nothing to say of his own agonies or unjust treatment, but only of the sin that was being wrought by men against their own souls.

The words and the whole conduct of Jesus, struck the heart of the Roman. Presence of mind and dignity, even in the most
helpless victim of injustice, have power over the oppressor. How much more such a grandeur as diffused itself round Christ! Pilate was more than ever resolved to release him. Returning once again to the tribunal, Jesus at his side, he strove to bring the priests and the crowd to content themselves with what their victim had already suffered.

But the priests and Rabbis had hit upon a new terror for the unrighteous judge. Hardly waiting to hear his first words, they raised a cry, which they and the mob kept shouting till Pilate was thoroughly alarmed and unnerved. "If you let this man go, you are not true to Caesar. Any one that makes himself a king, as he has done, declares against Caesar."

Pilate knew the jealous, suspicious character of Tiberius, and feared his displeasure the more, because conscience told him how he had abused his office by every form of tyranny, so that an appeal to Rome might well be fatal to him. Should he expose himself to the displeasure of the emperor? He was ready for any act of weak unrighteousness, rather than brave his master's censure, far less his vengeance. He, perhaps, tried to believe that he could not, in any case, save Christ's life,¹ and flattered himself that he had acted with uprightness. He must, after all, look to himself first. Would he bring down on himself a recall, perhaps banishment, or even worse, to save a Jew, because justice demanded his doing so? "Who, in my position," doubtless thought he, "would dream of committing such a folly? Shall I sacrifice myself for any one? No!"

Furious at the priesthood and the rabble, who kept shouting that clemency would be treason to Caesar, Pilate once more took his official seat. It was now about nine o'clock, and he had at last given way. He would not, however, surrender without another effort to carry his point, for he was alarmed alike at Jesus and about the emperor.

Turning to Christ, still wearing the crown of thorns and the scarlet cloak, he cried, in a burst of unrestrained contempt

¹ John xix. 8.
against the Jews, "Behold your King!" The only answer was a hurricane of cries, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" What!" cried Pilate, with withering mockery, "shall I crucify your king?" As if to say that Christ was all the king they deserved.

Caiaphas and Hannas, and the group round them, were however more than a match for him. They had an answer ready which would force his hand, if he had any thought of still holding out. "We have no king but Caesar," rose all round him; "we want no other king!" "The hypocrites," doubtless thought Pilate, "with the souls of slaves. The mortal enemies of the emperor, priests too, pretending to be the heads of religion, pretend to pay him homage, without being asked, only to compel me to carry out their revenge against one better than themselves."

It was Friday, and Sabbath—on which nothing could be done—began at sunset. If the execution were delayed, new difficulties might rise from Jewish scruples about breaking the holy day, by the exposure of bodies on the cross during its hours. Who, moreover, could tell what might happen if the followers of Jesus rose against his enemies, to release their Teacher. Besides, Pilate felt he could not now save him, and wished the whole matter over as soon and as quietly as possible.

He therefore at last gave the final order for crucifixion.
CHAPTER XXXI.

Among the spectators of the trial and condemnation was one who was far enough from joining in the cries of the high priests and the mob,—Judas Iscariot. Whatever might have been his thoughts before, he had no sooner seen Jesus led away from the garden by the Roman soldiers than all changed. The whirlwind of evil, on which his spirit had for the time ridden, was spent, and in its place had come an awful calm. He was no longer needed by his employers, and found himself, though lately flattered and rewarded, now cast aside as a traitor. The great moon, the silent night, his loneliness after such agitation, the sudden breaking up of the past, the vision of the three years now so tragically ended; echoes and remembrances of the love and Divine goodness of the Master he had betrayed; the thought of the infinite future—with its throne, its unerring Judge, the assembled universe, the doom of the guilty, and the joy of the faithful—acted and reacted upon his heart and brain.

It may be he had stood, pale with remorse and anxiety, through all the incidents of the trial, hoping against hope that his Master would at last put forth his power, and deliver himself. It is quite possible that he acted as he had done, to compel Jesus, even against his will, to take the position of a political leader, and thus, after all, bring within the reach even of his betrayer, the position and wealth for which he had longed.

To his horror, he found all his plans miscarry. Perhaps after

1 Matt. xxvii. 8-10; Acts i. 18, 19.

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waiting amongst the crowd before Pilate, as well as outside the
palace of Caiaphas, he had heard the shouts of the priests and
the mob, the sound of the knout falling on the bleeding back,
the awful demand for crucifixion, and last of all, the fatal
utterance of Pilate, "Go, soldier, prepare the cross." They had
fallen in a fire-rain on his soul, and he felt himself, already,
accursed. The light of life passed into the darkness of despair.
Which way he looked was hell; himself was hell.

Hurrying to the Temple with his wretched gain, for which
he had bartered away the glory of an apostle here and here-
after, he sought to thrust it back again on the priests. But
though willing to prop up their Temple system by murder, they
would on no account touch the coin, which they themselves had
polluted by paying as the price of crime. They could see the
stain of the blood on the shekels, but not on their own souls.
Judas had served their purpose, and was nothing to them now.
He had in his agony pressed into the very court of the priests,
where they were gathered. "Would they do nothing to save
his Master? He had not expected they would go to such awful
extremes. Jesus was innocent. All he had said against him
was untrue. Would they not, for their holy office sake, for the
sake of the holy spot on which they then were, undo the awful
offence?"

He might as well have spoken to the marble pavement on
which they stood with bare feet. The stone was not harder
than their hearts. "It is nothing to us," answered they, "what
you have done. That is your own affair. See you to it." But
if he could not move them, he could at least throw back among
them the money with which they had hired him. ¹ Hurling it
down on the pavement, therefore, he went out, perhaps in the
darkness of early morning—not waiting for the scene on Calvary
—and hanged himself in a spot of ground, till then known as the
clay-yard of a potter of the town, and thenceforth as the Field
of Blood. Nor was even this the end; for the cord by which

¹ Matt. xxvii. 3–10; Acts i. 18, 19.
he had suspended himself gave way, and he fell beneath, ruptured and revolting.

To put into the treasury money defiled from any cause, was unlawful. To what could the authorities apply it? How, better, than to buy the worn-out clay pit, already unclean by this suicide, for the further pollution of a graveyard. There

![Crosses]

The cross-pieces were more frequently set forward on each side at a low angle.

was need of a spot in which to bury foreign Jews who might die in Jerusalem. So the scene of the traitor’s death became doubly a "field of blood."

Meanwhile, preparations were being rapidly made for crucifixion.¹

¹ Matt. xxvii. 31–38; Mark xv. 20–28; Luke xxiii. 26–38; John xix. 16–22.
Death by the cross was the most dreaded and shameful punishment of antiquity—a punishment, the very name of which, Cicero tells us, should never come near the thoughts, the eyes, or ears of a Roman citizen, far less his person. It was of Eastern origin, and had been in use among the Persians and Carthaginians long before its employment in Western countries. Alexander the Great adopted it in Palestine, from the Phoenicians, after the defence of Tyre, which he punished by crucifying two thousand citizens, when the place surrendered. Crassus signalized its introduction into Roman use by lining the road from Capua to Rome with crucified slaves, and Augustus finally led to its general use, by crucifying six thousand slaves at once, in Sicily.

It was not of Jewish origin, for the cases mentioned in the Old Testament of “hanging up” criminals or offenders, refer only to their dead bodies, or were imitations of the heathen custom, by some of the kings. For Jews to crucify a Jew would, indeed, have been impossible, as the people would not have allowed it. The cruelty of heathenism had to be invoked before such a death could be inflicted on any Israelite, far less on one declared by the governor himself to be innocent. It was the Roman punishment on the worst criminals, on highway robbers, rebels, and slaves, or on provincials, who in the eyes of Romans were barbarians.

The cross used at Calvary consisted of a strong post, which was carried beforehand to the place of execution, and of two cross-pieces, borne to the spot by the victim, and afterwards nailed to the uprights so that they slanted forward, letting the sufferer lean on his stretched-out hands. A stout rough wooden pin, in the middle of the upright post, supplied a seat of fitting agony, for the weight of the body would otherwise have torn it from the cross.

While everything was being prepared, Jesus was again exposed in the guard-room to the insults of the soldiery. At last, however, all was ready, and the scarlet cloak was now removed
his own linen tunic being replaced. It was the custom, as I have said, for offenders themselves to carry the transverse pieces of their cross, and these, therefore, were laid on the shoulders of Christ, faint as he was with mental and bodily distress. A detachment of the troops still detained in the court of the palace, in case of disturbance, was marched out under a centurion, to guard the procession to the place of death, the officer being answerable for the due execution of the sentence. Jesus was not, however, to die alone. Two more prisoners were led off to suffer with him; men convicted not of mere insurrection, but of robbery—the special trouble of the land in these evil times. Pilate could hardly have intended to degrade him in the eyes of the Jews by this association with enemies of society; but the thoughtlessness which permitted such a group of victims, simply to empty the prison, and get through the annual Easter executions at once, shows how slight an impression had been made on him by all that had passed. His seriousness had been written in water; heartlessness and insincerity were his prevailing mood.

And now the sad procession began. It was about ten in the forenoon, for at least an hour had been spent in getting ready. The soldiers stepped into their ranks, and the prisoners were set, under guard, in their places, each carrying, hung from his neck, a whitened board, stating in large black letters the offence for which he was about to die; unless, indeed, as in some cases, a soldier bore it before them. Each, also, carried the cross beams of his cross, fastened together like the letter χ, with his arms bound to the projecting ends.

It is vain to attempt to follow the route, for the whole surface of Jerusalem has changed since then. Roman London is reached only at a depth of sixteen or seventeen feet, though the history of our island has been comparatively peaceful; but Jerusalem has stood siege after siege till the streets of Christ's day are buried below the ruins of successive cities. All we know is that the place of execution was outside the walls, to
the north-west, at the side of a leading road, to let the spectacle be seen by the crowds passing and repassing. From the palace of Herod, the sad procession must have passed under the shadow of the great castles, through the Damascus Gate. As it moved slowly on, an official proclaimed aloud the names of the prisoners, and the offences for which they were about to die. Four soldiers walked beside each, as the special guard and executioners, the rest of the detachment preceding and following.

As it moved through the narrow streets, a great crowd accompanied it. The Temple had special services in the Passover week, and, besides, as it would soon be Sabbath, they were busy with their worldly affairs, and loath to afford the time; yet many, both friends and enemies, pressed after the soldiers. The women especially, most easily touched with sorrow and pity, thronged to see One of whom they had heard so much, led out to die. In the East, men and women, even husband and wife, never appear in public together, and hence all were free to show their feelings. The Galileans in the city, taken by surprise, had had no time to gather at the trial and show sympathy with their countryman, whom so many of them reckoned a prophet. Only Jerusalem, to which the cry of the priests was law, had heard of the arrest early, and had gathered to yell down Pilate's proposals of release.

Two incidents are recorded of the journey to the place of execution. The beams laid on Jesus soon proved too heavy, in the hilly streets, for his exhausted strength, and his slow advance with them so delayed the procession that the guard grew impatient, and having seized a passer-by coming from the country, compelled him to bear them. The involuntary cross-bearer was a foreign Jew, called Simon, from Cyrene, in North Africa—now part of Tunis, but then in the province of Libya. An Egyptian king had carried off a hundred thousand Jews

1 Num. xxv. 4; 1 Kings xxii. 13; Acts vii. 59; Matt. xxvii. 59; Mark xv. 29.
2 Ptolemy Soter, b.c. 323–285.
from Palestine, and settled them in those regions, where, in three hundred years, they had increased so greatly in numbers, that a special synagogue was erected in Jerusalem 1 for the pilgrims they sent to the great feasts. Simon's appearance marked him as a foreigner, for, in the East, all nationalities have their distinctive dress, and, as a stranger, the infamy of being made to carry a cross would be less likely to cause a stir. It may be that he showed sympathy with Jesus; but, in any case, his service to him appears to have led to his becoming a Christian, with all his family; for it is easy to believe the tradition that the "Rufus and his mother," of whom St. Paul, a quarter of a century later, speaks so tenderly, were his wife and one of the two sons, Alexander and Rufus, mentioned by St. Mark 2 as known to his readers.

From the moment of his declaring himself the Messiah, and being condemned to die for doing so, Jesus had had nothing more to say to his judges. 3 No cry of pain, no murmur of impatience escaped him. He bore indignities and agonies with unbroken submission.

But his lips, shut for hours, opened once more on the way to his death. The road was lined with spectators, many of whom did not attempt to conceal their sympathy; and a great crowd followed, both of men and women—the latter filling the air with loud lamentations and wailings. Touched with their grief, so strangely sweet after such a long bitterness of mockery and clamorous hatred, the Innocent One stopped, and turning to them, bade them lament, not for him, but for themselves.

"Daughters of Jerusalem," said he, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. The fate of Jerusalem, which I love so well, is sealed, and will be sad indeed compared with my brief pains. For if your enemies do these things to me, a green fruit-bearing tree that deserves to live

1 Acts vi. 9.  
2 Mark xv. 21; Rom. xvi. 18.  
3 Luke xxiii. 27-32; Matt. xxvii. 51-54; Mark xv. 20-23; John xix. 16, 17.
and be cherished—me, pronounced guiltless even by the judge himself—what will they do with the dry and worthless tree of the nation, guilty before God and man? Israel is a dry, leafless trunk that will bear no more fruit, but is doomed to the burning. What will be its fate, if mine, who am green and fresh in innocence, be what it is! Yet the green, cut down, will sprout again, but the dry will perish for evermore! In that day the curse of ages of sin will overwhelm your city and Temple, with its watchers and shepherds."

He had always loved children, and had often pressed them to his heart and carried them in his arms; but the vision of the awful future rising before him was darkened by this very tenderness. To bear children was the glory of every Jewish wife; but now he told them that, in after years, they would call her blessed who had never borne. "Your nation has not known the day of its visitation; it has pushed back my hand when I offered it life here and hereafter, it has killed its prophets and stoned them that were sent to it from God, and at last the things of its peace are hid from its eyes. Instead of life let it wish a grave, ere its despairing cry rises, that the mountains should fall on it, and the hills cover it\(^1\) from the avenging wrath of God." Words of tender human love, welling up from the depths of a sacred pity, even under the shadow of death!

The spot on which the crosses were to be erected stood near some gardens, and was known by the name, Golgotha, of which Cranion, "a skull," given as the name by St. Luke, writing for Gentiles, is the Greek translation, and Calvaria, Calvary, the Latin. From a fancied allusion to the shape of a skull, tradition has spoken of it as a hill; but the Gospels ascribe its name simply to its shape, without any reference to its height. A spot just outside the Damascus gate has been thought, in late years, to be the place thus sadly honoured, for its shape is

\(^1\) Matt. xxvii. 35–38; Mark xv. 24–38; Luke xxiii. 33, 34, 38; John xix. 18–24.
not unlike a skull, and the Jews still give it the name of the "place of execution," or "the place of skulls." A Mohammedan burial ground covers part of it, and there is a cave at the side next the city, known as the grotto of Jeremiah. It is quite bare and unenclosed, and only twenty or thirty feet above the road, at its highest point; the road to Damascus passing close before it.

The cross-pieces were nailed in their places on the upright posts, sometimes before, sometimes after, the posts themselves had been set up. Jesus and his fellow-sufferers, in either case, were now stripped, as they had been before they were scourged—a linen cloth at most being left round their loins. The centre cross was set apart for Our Lord, and he was either laid on it as it lay on the ground, or lifted and tied to it as it stood upright; his arms stretched along the two cross beams, and his body resting on the projecting pin of rough wood. The most dreadful part then followed; for, though even the Egyptians only tied the victims to the cross, the Romans and Carthaginians added to the torture by driving a huge nail through the palm of each hand, into the wood. The legs were next bent up till the soles of the feet lay flat on the upright beam, and then they, too, were fastened, either separately, by two great iron nails, or over each other, by one.

During these preparations, it was common to offer the sufferer some of the common sour wine drunk by the soldiers, mingled with some stupefying bitter drug, usually myrrh. The ladies of Jerusalem made it, indeed, their special task to provide this for all condemned persons. But Jesus would take nothing to cloud his faculties, even though it might mitigate his pain. The cross was now raised and let down into a hole dug for it, with a rough shock of indescribable agony. It was perhaps then that the first words uttered on it rose from his lips: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,"—words breathing love, not only towards the soldiers, who

1 Assuming that our Lord was nailed to it while it lay on the ground.
were the blind servants of power, but even to Pilate and Caiaphas, Hannas and Jerusalem!

Racked by the extremest pain, and covered with every indignity offered to the greatest criminal; forsaken and denied by his disciples; no sigh escaped his lips, no cry of agony, no bitter or faltering word; only a prayer for the forgiveness of his enemies. They had acted in blindness; for, to use St. Paul's words, had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. They thought, without doubt, they were doing a service well-pleasing to God in putting him to death. But they were blind to the true meaning of the Scriptures, though he had sought for three years to rouse them to a better knowledge.

The "title" that had been borne before him, or hung from his neck, was now nailed on the projecting top of the cross, over his head. That all classes might be able to read it, Pilate had it written in the three languages of the country—the Aramaic of the people, the Latin of the Romans, and the Greek of the foreign population. It proclaimed him THE KING OF THE JEWS, but seems to have run differently in each language, to judge from the variations in the Gospels.

No tribute could have been more fitting or more prophetic than an inscription which spoke unconsciously of the relation of the Cross to all the world. The crucifixion was now completed, and there only remained the weary interval till death came to release the sufferers from their agonies. Meanwhile the troops, with their centurion, kept the grounds and guarded the three crosses, for they were answerable with their lives for the due carrying out of the execution.

The four soldiers specially detailed to carry out the sentence of the governor, were now free to appropriate, as their perquisites, the clothes of the three victims. The outer garments of Jesus they divided into four shares—tearing the larger, to make the division equal, for they were not worth keeping

1 John xix. 23.
entire. The inner robe, however, like the robes of the priests, was of one piece, woven from the top without any seam or stitching, and would be destroyed by rending. The dice were ready in their pockets, and one of their brazen helmets would serve to throw them; it would be better to cast lots for this, and let him who won the highest number keep it for himself—and so it was done. No wonder that both Matthew and John, looking back on the scene, were struck by the fact that it had been written ages before, in the twenty-second Psalm, which the Jews of that day, as well as Christians, rightly believed to refer to the Messiah: “They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots.”

The inscription on the cross had been Pilate’s revenge for the condemnation of Jesus wrung from him by the priests. To proclaim him, the villager of Nazareth, as the King of the Jews, marked at once what, in his opinion, was fitting for them, and flung in their faces a bitter reproach of having betrayed their own nation and countryman to Rome. The authorities of the Temple, indignant and yet alarmed, applied to him to alter it. But he had suffered enough at their hands, and smarting under his defeat and humiliation, dismissed them with the curt answer, “What I have written I have written.”

Meanwhile the fierce heat of a Syrian noon beat down on the cross. The suffering in crucifixion, from which death at last resulted, rose partly from the fixed position of the body and of the outstretched arms, which caused acute pain from every twitch or motion of the back, lacerated by the knout, and of the hands and feet, pierced by the nails. These latter were, moreover, driven through parts where many sensitive nerves and sinews come together, mutilating some and violently crushing down others. Inflammation of the wounds in both hands and feet speedily set in, and ere long rose also in other places, where the circulation was checked. Intolerable thirst and ever-increasing pain resulted. The blood, which could no

1 Ps. xxii. 18.
longer reach the extremities, rose to the head, swelled the veins and arteries in it unnaturally, and caused the most agonizing tortures in the brain. As, besides, it could no longer move freely from the lungs, the heart grew more and more oppressed, and all the veins were distended. Had the wounds bled freely, it would have been a great relief; but there was very little bleeding. The weight of the body itself, resting on the wooden pin of the upright beam; the burning heat of the sun scorching the veins, and the hot wind drying up the moisture of the body, made each moment more terrible than the preceding. The numbness and stiffness of the more distant muscles brought on painful convulsions, and this, slowly extending, sometimes through two or three days, at last reached the vital parts, and released the sufferer by death.

Common pity would have left the victim of such agony to die in peace. But there was no compassion for the Redeemer. The title over his head was as offensive to the people as to the priests and Rabbis, for it was a virtual ridicule of their dream of universal monarchy. Beneath the cross rose the same cruel mockery as the governor had thought not beneath the dignity of Rome. The fierce crowd had heard repeatedly that day of Jesus having said, as was asserted, that he could destroy their Temple, and rebuild it in three days. They had heard also a great deal about his miracles, and of his calling himself the Son of God; but if he were so, why would he allow himself to die such a death? There were taunts and gibes from the mob and the soldiers, and sneers at his fate as no worse than he deserved; even the chief priests, Rabbis and elders, among their own haughty knots and groups,¹ degrading themselves to the level of the rabble in their coarseness. "Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, show that thou couldst have done so, by saving thyself, and coming down from the cross," said out a looker-on, with a contemptuous

¹ Matt. xxvii. 39-44; Mark xv. 29-32; Luke xxiii. 36-37, 39-43; John xix. 25-30
laugh. "If thou be the Son of God, as thou sayest," cried another, "come down from the cross." "He wrought miracles to save others," said a high priest to his fellow, "by the help of Beelzebub, but he cannot save himself now his master has forsaken him." The crowd, catching their spirit, bandied from one to another the scoff, "If he be the Christ, the King of Israel, the Chosen of God, let him descend from the cross, that we may see and believe."

Nor was the only railing and mockery from the spectators. Perhaps wishing to win a poor favour with the crowd, in their last hours—perhaps angry that Jesus had left both them and himself to die, when he might have saved them—the two unhappy men crucified with him, cast the same reproaches in his teeth. But a strange contrast was soon to display itself. One of the two, ere long, awed and won by his bearing under such treatment—perhaps thinking of the words of Jesus to the women on the way to Calvary; perhaps struck by the title over the Saviour's head, or recollecting some words of his, heard in happier days—repented of his bitterness, and turned to his companion, to persuade him also to kinder thoughts. "Have you no fear of God," said he, "when you think that you are dying the same death as he whom you are reproaching? It is no time to mock, when you are so near death. Besides, we are dying justly, for we are receiving the fitting punishment of our deeds; but this man, as the very governor has said, has done nothing amiss."

Then followed words which showed that his repentance and faith were sincere and intelligent. He had been silently watching the meek and patient endurance by his Fellow-Sufferer of all that his enemies could do, and had come to the belief that he was, in reality, the Messiah he declared himself to be. With death near, the folly of the earthly dreams of his countrymen—for he must have been a Jew—flashed on his mind. As the Messiah, he who now hung in agony must have a Kingdom of which death could not deprive him, and it must
be in the world beyond, since he had only a cross here. He would doubtless enter on it, as even the Rabbis taught, at the resurrection of the dead, and reign over it for all future ages.

"O Lord," said he, therefore, turning as far as he could towards Jesus as he spoke, "remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

"This day," replied Jesus, "thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

To have confessed his faith when Christ hung on the cross, and was deserted even by his apostles, won for him the high reward of being the first trophy of the victory that cross achieved. His ideas might be vague and obscure enough; but the broken heart and trustful love which uttered them were dear to the Saviour. Angry blasphemies alone had hitherto greeted him, but now came this prayer, dropping like balm on his wounded spirit! Calmly, and with the bounty of a king—though now nailed to the cross—he showed his answering love by the gift of divine pardon of sin, and the bestowment of a crown in Paradise!

The Eleven had never gathered again after the arrest, having been too much alarmed even to venture singly into the crowd outside the troops round the three crosses. John, alone, showed courage enough to follow his Master to Calvary, and to cheer him by the proof of fidelity in at least one heart. The last sight we have of him, before the crucifixion, is in the courtyard of the high priest, where his silence and prudence saved him from the danger before which Peter had fallen. He had seen Jesus led away to Pilate, and, apparently, followed him to the palace, waiting in the crowd to the end. When it came he probably hastened into the city with the sad news, to those anxious to hear; above all, to tell her whose soul the sword was now about to pierce most keenly. Mary had come to Jerusalem to be near Christ, but we do not know when; for she was not one of the group of pious Galilean women who habitually followed him, though she was with them at this
moment. How many were together is not told; but Mary at least, on hearing John’s words, determined, in her love, to go at once to Calvary, and her sister, who, it may be, was Salome, the mother of John; Mary, the wife of Clòpas; and Mary from Magdala, on the banks of Gennesareth, resolved to go with her, nor would John, faithful as a woman, stay behind.

The first sight the Virgin had of her Son was as he hung on the cross, at the roadside, mocked by the crowd and the passers-by, and scowled at by the high priests and dignitaries, who had come out to glut by the sight of his agony the hatred they bore him. A supernatural darkness—the sign of the sorrow and wrath of heaven—had fallen on the landscape soon after the nailing to the cross, though it was then high noon; but the spectators fancied it only a strange incident in the weather. The sufferer had offered his prayer for his murderers, and had spoken words of comfort to the penitent spirit at his side, when, as his eyes wandered over the crowd, he saw, through the gloom, John, standing by his mother. None of his “brothers or sisters” were there, for it was his resurrection apparently that first won them to his cause. Mary, long a widow, was now to be doubly bereaved. John’s presence there proclaimed his heart. The sight of his mother in tears; true even in death, in spite of danger, or of her broken heart, or of the reproaches rising on every side; the remembrance of Nazareth; the thought of the sorrows that so often, in these last years, had pierced her soul, and of the supreme grief that now overwhelmed her; the recognition of true faith in him, shining out in these last hours, as born by miracle to be a Saviour, the Holy Son of God; and the thought that earthly relations to her were closed for ever, filled the heart of Jesus with tender emotions.

Turning his face, now veiled with many sorrows, to her and John, he provided for the one, and honoured the fidelity of the other. A few words gave Mary a home and another son, and rewarded the friend of his soul by the charge to take the place
towards Mary which he himself was leaving. "Woman," said
he, in tones of infinite tenderness, "behold in him at thy side,
thy Son given back to thee." Then, looking at John, he added,
"To thee I trust my mother; let her be thy mother for my
sake."

Need we wonder that the beloved disciple, writing his Gospel
in old age, felt a sweet reward in recalling an incident so
unspeakably touching? Mary, henceforth, had a home, for
John took her to his own. His love to her Divine Son made
him dearer to her than the circle of Nazareth, however related.
In Mary, he saw a second mother; in John, the widowed one
saw a son. Nor was this special honour the only reward to
John from the cross. His Master had shown, by his thoughts
for others rather than himself, in this time of his greatest need,
that he was still what he had always been. Looking up to
him, John saw the light of higher than earthly victory on his
pale features, and felt his faith confirmed for ever.

It was now three o'clock, and Jesus had hung on the cross
about three hours. Darkness still lay like a pall over the
landscape, as if nature, less insensible than man, refused to look
on such a spectacle, or would foreshadow the sadness one day
to be spread over all nations for the sin that had caused so
awful a sacrifice. What had been passing in his spirit no one
can know. As a man he had a nature, in all things except its
sinlessness, like that of the race at large. But he was also
the Divine Son of God, for a time in the form of a servant,
and now, of his own free love to man, dying as a ransom for
sin. We accept the mystery, but we cannot hope to explain it.
The cross was but the last scene in a long martyrdom. His
soul had often been sore troubled; his sighs had been marked
even by his disciples. To be dying for the sake of men, and
yet to be treated as their foe; to be misconceived and misre-
presented; to have his heart full of infinite love, and hear, even
now, only execrations, brought back for a moment the mental
agony of Gethsemane. It was the "power of darkness;" the
final struggle with the Prince of this World. To the torture of the body there was added the spiritual pain of rejection by man, towards whom he bore a love so Divine! His Father was with him in the midst of the darkness as much as in the Transfiguration at Caesarea Philippi, but the gathering clouds and gloom of these last awful hours made it seem, for an instant, as if His face were hidden. The shadows of death passed for a moment in blackness and horror over his spirit, and his mental anguish relieved itself by a great cry of distress. The language we have heard from our mother's lips and have spoken in childhood may be afterwards laid aside, for another, to meet the requirements of life; and Jesus, doubtless, in these last years, had often used Greek, instead of his own simple Galilean. But, now, the sounds of infancy, always nearest the heart, and sure to come to the lips in our deepest emotion, returned in his anguish, and in words which he had learned at his mother's knee, his heart uttered its last wail—

"Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani?"

"My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken me?"

The first words sounded like the name of the great prophet Elijah, the expected herald of the Messiah, and were taken, by some in the crowd, for a cry that he should come to save him. Meanwhile, one near, more pitiful than the rest, caring little for the words, but seeing the agony of which they were the expression, ran and filled a sponge with the sour wine-and-water of the soldiers, and having fixed it on the short stem of a hyssop-plant growing near, put it to his lips; for the cross was quite low, the feet of Jesus reaching nearly to the ground.

A moment more, and all was over. The cloud had passed as suddenly as it rose. Far and wide, over the vanquished throngs of his enemies, with a loud voice, as if uttering his shout of eternal victory before entering into his glory, he cried,

"IT IS FINISHED!"

Then, more gently, came the words:—

"Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."
A moment more, and there rose a great cry, as of mortal agony; the head fell. He was dead.

The work of salvation was now at last completed. The Jewish religion was for ever done away, and the Holy of holies had ceased to be the peculiar presence chamber of Jehovah among men. Nor was a sign wanting that it was so; for the great veil of purple and gold—sixty feet long and thirty broad—before the inner sanctuary of the Temple, suddenly rent itself in two, from the top to the bottom, at the moment of Christ's death; as if He who had hitherto dwelt there had gone forth to lead up His Eternal Son to His own right hand. And, indeed, not only the yielding veil of the Temple, but the very rocks round Calvary, as St. Matthew tells us,¹ "were rent, and the earth quaked, the graves were opened, and many of the saints sleeping in them rose from the dead, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many."

One incident is recorded of this moment by three of the Evangelists. The centurion in charge of the troops had halted, as he passed the cross, when Jesus uttered his loud death-cry. He was within a few yards of it, and must have fixed his gaze on him at such a sound. He saw the change pass over his features; the light of life leaving them, and the head suddenly sink. As it did so, the earthquake shook the ground and made the three crosses tremble. But the tremor of the earth affected the Roman less than the piercing cry and sudden death.² He had likely attended many crucifixions, but had never known of a man dying on a cross within three hours. He had never heard a crucified man, strong to the last, utter a shriek that showed, as that of Jesus did, the full power of the vital organs to the end. He felt that there was something mysterious in it, and joining with it all he had seen and heard of the Sufferer, he broke involuntarily into the words, "Certainly this was a righteous man; truly this was the Son

¹ Matt. xxvii. 51-56; Mark xv. 38-41; Luke xxiii. 45, 47-49.
² Matt. xxvii. 54; Mark xv. 39; Luke xxiii. 47 (R.V.).
of God." The one expression, perhaps, on his lips meant no more than the other, but both showed that even thoughtful heathen were deeply moved by the spectacle they had witnessed.

Nor was the effect on the spectators less marked. The darkness, the earthquake, and the rending rocks had filled them with alarm. They had hitherto been noisy and ribald enough, but when all was over, amidst such strange portents of nature, they were glad to hasten home in silence, with the demonstrations of awe peculiar to eastern populations—smiting their breasts as they went. The incidents of Calvary had prepared the way for the triumph of Pentecost, as perhaps the rending of the veil had been the first step towards the change of feeling in the great company of priests who soon after professed themselves Christians.

The Jewish law, as I have said, knew nothing of crucifixion, but it had been not uncommon to hang up the dead body of a criminal. It was not permitted, however, that it should be exposed after sunset; burial the same day was enacted, "that the land should not be defiled." The Romans, on the contrary, left the bodies on the cross till they were wasted away, or devoured by the dogs, the jackals, or the ravens, as they fell limb from limb. "To feed the crows on the cross" was a familiar expression. It was necessary, therefore, if the Jewish law were to be honoured, that the permission of Pilate should be given for putting the crucified ones to death, if they had not already died, and for taking down and burying their bodies, almost at once. Next day was the great Paschal Sabbath, and only an hour or two remained before it commenced. Three corpses seen on the cross, so near the Temple and the Holy City, on a day so sacred, would make great commotion, as polluting the whole place.

The Temple authorities, therefore, waited on Pilate, to get his sanction for putting to death any of the three who might

1 Acts vi. 7.  
2 Deut. xxi. 23; John xix. 31-42.
yet be alive. The common way to do so was in keeping with Roman brutality. The legs of the unfortunates were broken by blows of clubs, that the shock might kill them at once, and this Pilate authorized to be done. The two thieves were found still living, and the horrible order was forthwith executed on them; but Jesus was dead already, and they left him untouched. One soldier, however—resolved that there should be no doubt—plunged his spear into the Saviour's side, making a gash so wide, that Jesus could afterwards ask Thomas to put his hand into it, and so deep, that blood and water poured out in such a quantity as attracted the notice of John, who was standing close by.

That any one should die so soon on the cross,—especially one, like Jesus, in the prime of life and unweakened by previous ill-health, and in so great vigour as to utter such a shriek as that with which he expired,—appeared to the early Christians supernatural. But the mingled flow of blood and water points unmistakably to another explanation. The immediate cause of death appears, beyond question, to have been the rupture of his heart, brought about by mental agony. Excess of joy or grief is known to induce the bursting of some division of the heart, and the consequent flow of blood into the bag, filled with colourless liquor, like water, in which it is suspended. In ordinary cases, only examination after death discovers the fact, but in that of Our Lord, it was disclosed by the thrust of the soldier's spear. In a death from heart-rupture the hand is suddenly carried to the front of the chest, and a piercing shriek uttered. The hands of Jesus were nailed to the cross, but the appalling shriek is recorded.

Jesus died, literally, of a broken heart!

The heat of the climate in the East has led to the custom of burial almost immediately after death, but there were special reasons for that of Jesus being hurried. It was, as I have said, Sabbath eve, and no corpse could be left unburied to defile the Holy City, on that day. Our Lord, therefore, must
be buried without a moment's delay, for sunset, when the Sabbath began, was rapidly approaching.

Bodies of Jewish criminals seem to have been thrown into the unclean dust-heaps in the Valley of Hinnom—known, from this reason, as the Valley of Corpses. They could not be laid in the common burial-place of the community—for the guilty could not be buried with the just; but were huddled out of sight; the beheaded or hanged, in one spot, the stoned and burned, in another. But such an indignity was not to befall the sacred form of the Saviour.

Among the spectators of the crucifixion there had been one, if not two, whose position might have enabled them to be of service to Jesus in his hour of need, before the high priestly court, had they possessed the moral courage required. Joseph, a member of the ruling class, known by the name of his birth-place, Arimathea, or Ramathaim Zophim,1 where Samuel the prophet was born, among the fruitful hills of Ephraim, had long been a secret disciple; and so, also, had Nicodemus, another member of the upper classes. Afraid of the opposition they must encounter by supporting Christ, they timidly kept in the background during his trial, though neither voted for his condemnation. Joseph indeed, if not both, even braved public opinion and the wrath of their fellow-counsellors, by following Jesus to Calvary. Now that he was dead, breaking through all weak reserve and caution, he went into the city,2 and waited on the governor in his palace, to ask as a favour, that the body of Jesus might be put at his disposal. He would fain honour the lifeless form, if only to show regret and shame for unworthy half-heartedness while he still lived. The meekness and majestic silence under all reproaches and indignities, the veiled sky, the trembling earth, the prayer of the Sufferer for his murderers, his wail of mental agony as if forsaken, and

1 1 Sam. i. 1, 19; Matt. xxvii. 57-66; Mark xv. 42-47; Luke xxiii. 50-56; John xix. 38-42.
2 Mark xv. 43.
then the great shriek and sudden death, had awed his soul and lifted him far above fear of man. He had been waiting for the Kingdom of God before, but would openly recognise its Founder now.

Pilate was astonished, alike that a Jew of high social position should make such a request, and that Jesus should already be dead. It was not allowed to remove a body from the cross without formal permission from the governor. The Eleven, with one exception, had left their Master alone amidst his enemies in his last awful hours, and the humble women who had watched the cross did not venture to ask leave to pay the last tribute of love to the dead. It was no light matter Joseph had undertaken: for to take part in a burial at any time would defile him for seven days, and make everything unclean which he touched;¹ and to do so now involved his being shut up through the whole Passover week, with all its holy observances and rejoicings. But, conscience-stricken for the past, he had risen superior to all selfish considerations, and would render his Master a tribute and service especially sacred in the eyes of a Jew. It was one of the most loved remembrances of the hero Tobit, in the old times of the first exile,² that he had buried any Jew whom he found cast out dead round Nineveh, and Josephus could add no darker horror, a generation later, to the picture of the fall of Jerusalem, than by telling that the Zealots would not bury those slain in the city, or who fell down on the roads. Joseph would not suffer Jesus to want a grave.

Sending for the officer who had charge of the execution, and finding that Jesus was really dead, Pilate granted Joseph’s strange request. A brave deed had had its success. The humour of the governor could not be counted on, and the rage of Joseph’s own party was certain. In later days, a servant who ventured to ask the body of his martyred master for burial, was himself seized and put to death. Legend describes Joseph as beseeching the favour with tears and entreaties, and

¹ Num. xix. 16; Hagg. ii. 13. ² Tobit i. 17, 19.
thus rightly marks the gravity of his act; but it is not un-
likely that a meager influence came to his help, for Pilate was
always open to a bribe. A good sum of money from the
wealthy supplicant would weigh more than his entreaties, to
secure his wish.

A written order, or a verbal command to the centurion, put
the body at Joseph’s disposal.

With the help of servants, and it may be of some soldiers,
the cross was quickly lifted from its socket and laid on
the ground, the cords round the limbs untied, and the nails
drawn from the hands and feet. An open bier sufficed to
carry the body to its destined resting-place.

Among the Jews the hopes of the future were closely con-
ected with the careful preservation of the body after death.
Like the Egyptians, they attached the greatest importance
to the safe-guarding of the tomb, and to lie in the Holy Land
in the midst of their fathers, has, also, at all times been the
most sacred wish of the Jews, from the belief that the Resur-
rection was to take place in the valley under the east of the
Temple. Even now an Israelite always seeks to have some of
the soil of the Holy Land laid in his grave, that the spot where
he rests may be counted part of the sacred ground; if indeed
his body has not, before the judgment, made its way through
land and sea to the home of his fathers. The same feeling was
all-powerful in the days of our Lord; for in the great sieges
of Jerusalem, many Jewish fugitives came back to the city,
in spite of the horrors they had striven to escape; that they
might count, at least, on a burial in holy soil.

The neighbourhood of Jerusalem, like all other parts of
Palestine, has hence, since the earliest times, abounded in
tombs hewn out in the limestone rock. Every one who could
by any means secure it, desired above all things to prepare for
himself and his family an “everlasting house,” and such a
tomb, never yet used, had been hewn out in the hill-side, by
Joseph, in a garden not far from Calvary.
To this the body of Jesus was now taken. Nicodemus had come, with some of his servants, and he and they, with Joseph and his attendants, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, the wife of Clópas, and perhaps some others of the true-hearted women from Galilee, were the only followers of his bier.

Arrived at the grave, the sacred burden was laid down, till

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
(From the top of the Tower of David.)

the needed preparations were made for placing it in the tomb. The whole body, stained as it was with blood, was tenderly washed, and then wrapped in broad bands of white linen, within which were thickly strewn powdered myrrh and aloes, which had been provided by Nicodemus for the imperfect embalming practised by the Jews. The ends of the bandages were apparently secured on the inner side with gum, as in the case
of the Egyptian dead. After a last kiss, the pledge of undying love, a white cloth was finally laid over the face. The corpse was then placed in a niche in the rock, and a great stone, prepared for the purpose, was rolled before the entrance, to protect the body from the designs of enemies or the attacks of wild beasts. It was only a hurried burial, for the last rays of the sun were shining on the garden as the tomb was closed.

Even then, however, there were some hearts that could not leave the spot. Though he no longer spoke to them and they no longer saw him, some of the Galilean women lingering beside his resting-place sat down on the earth, before it, as mourners. In the evening stillness and gathering twilight they seemed even yet to hear his voice and see his form, and so they lingered on, as near as might be into the Sabbath eve, lamenting him whom they had lost.

Meanwhile, the fears of the chief priests and their party had already been awaked. A meeting had been held immediately after the crucifixion, and the success of the scheme to crush Jesus had, doubtless, been the subject of hearty rejoicing. But they feared all was not over. It was remembered by one or more, that "the deceiver" had spoken darkly of rising from the dead on the third day, and his disciples, acting on this hint, might steal the body, and spread it abroad that he had risen, misleading the people more than ever. It was hence necessary that the grave should be watched for three days. A deputation was therefore appointed to wait on Pilate, representing their apprehensions. Tired of them, and hating them, the governor was in no humour to argue. "You have a guard," said he with military bluntness. "Go, make it as sure as ye can." This they did. Passing a strong cord across the stone, and securing its ends by clay, they sealed it, after noting that the soldiers were duly stationed so as to make approach without their knowledge impossible.

And thus the Redeemer was left, pale but victorious, to sleep through the Sabbath.
CHAPTER XXXII.

MARY of Magdala, and the wife of Clōpas, herself another Mary—for Mary, from the Hebrew Miriam, had been a favourite name among Hebrew women ever since the days of the sister of Moses—had sat on the ground at the door of the garden-tomb in which the Beloved One lay, till late on the evening of Friday. The trumpet announcing the beginning of the great Passover Sabbath had only startled them for a moment, and exhausted nature had, perhaps, first compelled them to leave.

The next day rose calm and bright on the budding and blossoming landscape, for it was the month of flowers, and nature was in the secret to be revealed on the morrow, and might well, for joy, put on her fairest. The courts of the Temple were filled from morning till evening with zealous worshippers; the bare-footed, white-robbed, and turbaned priests were busy offering the blood of bulls and of goats for the sins of Israel, unconscious that the blood of a greater sacrifice had been shed, of which those offered by them were only the rude, and well-nigh revolting symbol. Yet it must have been with strange feelings they went through the services of the day. The trumpets and voices of the Levites were loud and clear as ever; the high priest, fresh from Golgotha, as gorgeous in his splendid robes; the crowd of priests as engrossed with official toil; the throngs filling the courts below not less numerous or devout. But an omen, portentous beyond all their history recorded, had been seen by Levite and priest alike—for was not the Holy of Holies, hitherto veiled in awful darkness, and en-
tered only once in the year, for a few moments, by the high priest, laid visibly open before every one in the court of the priests, or even in the vast Temple area? For the Holy of Holies stood high above the rest of the sanctuary. The huge, heavy veil of Babylonian tapestry of fine flax, gorgeous in its hyacinth and scarlet and purple, had been rent from top to bottom, at the moment when the "enemy of the Temple" expired on Calvary, and the awful presence-chamber of Jehovah had been exposed to every eye, like ground no longer sacred.

The disciples of Jesus, and even the Eleven, had been overwhelmed by the events of the day. Having no clear idea of their Master's meaning, and thinking little on words painful at best, his repeated warnings that he must be put to death, but would rise again from the dead on the third day, had made no lasting impression on their minds. The end had been so sudden and complete, that, for the time, they were confounded and paralysed.

It is the glory of woman that she refuses to forsake those she loves, even when things are darkest. The two Marys had left the grave only when the deep night compelled them, but even then they still had its dear One in their hearts. The Sabbath, which had begun just as the stone was rolled to the entrance, kept them from doing anything for him for twenty-four hours, but it was no sooner over, on Saturday at sunset, than with Salome, and Joanna, and some other women, they arranged to take additional spices at the earliest dawn, to complete the embalming of the body, begun by Nicodemus, but left unfinished through the approach of the Sabbath. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was too sorely stricken in heart to join them.

Meanwhile, the Roman sentries were pacing to and fro on their beat, before the sepulchre; their fire lighted, for the spring night was chilly, and besides, the light revealed any one approaching. The true-hearted women had resolved to reach the grave by sunrise, which would take place about a quarter before six in the morning, and slept outside the city gates,
which did not open till daybreak at the earliest. The grey
dawn had hardly shown itself, before they were afoot on their
errand, to perform the last offices of love. As they went, how-
ever, a difficulty rose of which they had not thought before.
Who would roll back the stone for them from the door of the
sepulchre? They had heard nothing, apparently, of its having
been sealed, or of the guard being mounted in the garden, else
they might have been altogether discouraged. But we may be
sure they had told some of the Eleven where the grave lay,

![Rock Tombs](image)

(a) With the stone rolled to the door and sealed by a band across.
(b) With the stone rolled back and the seal broken.

and might hope that one, at least, would be there to help
them.

A greater than an apostle had already, however, been at the
tomb. For St. Matthew tells us, "an angel of the Lord had
descended from heaven, his countenance shining like lightning,
and his raiment white as snow, and," striking terror even into
the Roman guard, "had rolled back the stone from the door." As
it opened, the Crucified One had come forth, unseen by the
dazzled soldiers, and had presently vanished.

They had scarcely left the spot when the women arrived.
The earth was trembling strangely, but they had kept on their
way. How great must have been their astonishment, however, when they found the stone rolled back, and the grave open. There was no longer a guard, for the soldiers had fled in terror at the angelic vision. Mary of Magdala entered the garden first, and found things thus, and having run back to the others, hastened into the city to tell Peter and John. Determined to solve the mystery, if possible, her companions came together to the sepulchre, and, bending down, entered its inner chamber. But it was only to be appalled by the sight of an angel in white, sitting in it, as if waiting to bear the glad news to them of what had taken place. Presently, a second radiant form stood before them, as they bowed down their faces to the earth in terror. But words now fell on their ears which brought back joy to their hearts. “Fear not, for I know that ye seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, for he is risen. Behold the place where they laid him. But go quickly, tell his disciples, and Peter, that he is risen from the dead. Remember the words that he said to you while he was yet in Galilee—that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And tell them ‘he goeth before you into Galilee, there you will see him, as he said unto you.’ Lo, I have told you.”

Mary of Magdala had hurried back to Jerusalem, to tell of the grave being empty; to Peter and John, who seem to have lived together at this time. The Virgin Mother, now John’s honoured guest, hearing the amazing news, joined the other Mary in urging the two apostles to go immediately to the tomb, though their own faithful hearts had already impelled them to do so. Peter and John, therefore, were instantly on the way to the garden; their eager haste hurrying them to the utmost speed. John, however, younger than Peter, outran him, yet contented himself, on reaching the tomb, with stooping down and gazing into it. The body assuredly was gone, but there was no trace of violence, for the linen bandages lay
in the niche where the body had been placed, while the head-cloth had been carefully rolled up and put by itself. The sight awed him so that he could not enter; but no such hesitation checked Peter. Passing through the low door, he went in, undismayed. Following his friend, John now entered, and saw that Christ was, indeed, gone. The great truth, as he himself tells us in long after years, now for the first time flashed on his mind, that Jesus had risen.\footnote{1} Neither he nor the other apostles had as yet realized that it had been foretold in the Scriptures\footnote{2} that he would do so; for this would have explained the whole at once, and would have thrown light on the hitherto mysterious words of Jesus himself respecting his resurrection.

Having seen for themselves the empty tomb, they thought only of going back, to discuss with each other and with their brethren what it could mean. But the women would not leave the spot. They only cared to find him whom they loved, if they could; for they fancied that the body had been removed to some other place. Mary of Magdala had meanwhile returned, and stood weeping at the door of the tomb. The two apostles had seen no angels, but she was more highly favoured. Gazing into the sepulchre, the space where Jesus had lain was no longer untenanted, but, instead of the Redeemer, she saw two angels, in bright robes, one where the head and the other where the feet had rested. They were there to comfort the broken heart, as, indeed, they had, doubtless, been before, though for the time they remained unseen.

"Woman," said one, in a human voice that disarmed fear, "why weepest thou?"

"Because," replied Mary, in broken accents, "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

As she said this, she drew back into the open garden, hardly knowing what she did. A man now stood before her, with the

\footnote{1} John \textit{xx.} 8. \footnote{2} Ps. \textit{xvi.} 10.
simple dress of the humbler classes, and being in a garden, she naturally thought him the person in charge of it. "Woman," said he strangely enough, as it must have seemed to Mary, in the same words as the angels had used, "Why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" "Sir," said Mary, taking it for granted that he would know the cause of her grief, "if thou hast carried him from this tomb, pray tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." She was a woman of means, and would see that he had a final and suitable resting-place.

No reply was given, except the utterance of her own name—"Mary." But the voice revealed the speaker. It was that of Jesus. She had not recognised him, but the sound of that voice, so tenderly remembered, brought with it full recognition of the face and form.

"Rabboni," said she, in the country tongue they both loved so well, "my Teacher!" and was about to fall on his neck.

"Touch me not," said he, drawing back, "for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

Meanwhile, the other women had come near, and hearing and seeing what had passed, kneeled in lowly worship. As they advanced, Jesus greeted them with the salutation they had often heard from his lips, "All hail!" and the words left them no question of its being their Lord. He had withheld Mary from any approach to the tender freedom of former days, but he now stood still while the lowly band, Mary among them, held him by the feet, and paid him lowliest reverence. Then, as they kneeled, came the words, grateful to their hearts, "Be not afraid! Go tell my brethren to go into Galilee, and they will see me there."

So saying, he was gone.

Losing no time, Mary of Magdala and the others hurried back to Jerusalem, and found that, in the still early morning
the news had spread to all the Eleven, that their Master was alive and had been seen both by her and by them. But it seemed too wonderful to realize at once, and sounded like an idle tale. It sufficed, however, to rally them, for the first time since Gethsemane; for that very night they once more assembled as of old.

No detailed narrative of the successive appearances of Jesus to his disciples, after his resurrection, has been left us, each narrative giving only special cases, which had particularly impressed the mind of the writer. It is evident, indeed, that he showed himself on many occasions of which no record is preserved; for St. John expressly tells us, that besides the sign in the case of Thomas, Jesus did many others before his disciples, which are not written in the Gospel bearing the apostle's name. Had we a full narrative of the interval between the Resurrection and the Ascension, it would doubtless illustrate more vividly the fulness and variety of evidence which explains the triumphant proclamation of Christ's victory over death, by the apostles. To some he made himself known, as to Mary and the women, by a single word or by brief sentences, the voice carrying instant conviction with it; to others, in a lengthened communion, as with the disciples going to Emmaus; to others again, as to Thomas, by an outward proof from the wounds on his person; and, to still others, by joining them in their simple repast, as with the disciples on the shore of the Lake of Galilee.

It would seem, from a notice by St. Paul, that the first appearance, after that granted to the women, was vouchsafed to Peter, perhaps while still in the garden. The completeness of the apostle's repentance had secured as complete a forgiveness, and Jesus could not forget that Peter's home at Caper-naum had been his, or how true-hearted he had shown himself from the days of the Baptism on the Jordan, though he had failed for a moment when off his guard. The look of reproach,

1 John xx. 30. 2 John xxi. 25. 3 1 Cor. xv. 5.
mingled with love and pity, had melted Peter's heart while the denials were yet on his lips, and now, the tender words of the risen Christ won his heart for ever. He had been foremost in zeal for the meek and lowly Master while still rejected and despised; but when that Master stood before him, the conqueror of death, and the glorified Son of God, that zeal rose to a passionate devotion which, henceforth, knew no abatement.

The news of the Resurrection spread fast among the disciples in Jerusalem. Still, it required time to reach all, and even when announced, could not be realized at once. Deep dejection reigned throughout the little company. In spite of all their Master's warnings, his death had come on them by surprise, and, as it seemed, had destroyed everything. Cut off suddenly from all the hopes of an earthly kingdom, cherished, notwithstanding the constant lessons of Christ's life and words, and deeply distressed by the loss of their Teacher and Head, they appeared to be left helpless. The events of the past few days engrossed their thoughts and conversation. They believed him now in Paradise, but no one dreamed of a resurrection so soon. John had, indeed, risen in some measure to the grandeur of the truth, and Peter had even seen him; but the bulk of the disciples had well-nigh lost hope. The report of the empty grave, and of the vision of angels and of their announcement that he was alive, was insufficient to break their gloom, and prolonged their perplexity without relieving it.

Midday had passed, and only floating rumours were as yet abroad. The disciples began to think of finally separating, and returning to their homes; for without their Master, they were without a leader. Two of them determined to go back to Emmaus, a village between seven and eight miles north-west of Jerusalem, among the hills. The way to it was over heights and through valleys, more and more barren as Jerusalem was left behind, but Emmaus itself looked down into a hollow through which a rivulet spread greenness and beauty. Vines
and olive-trees, planted in terraces up the slopes, and the white and red flowers of the almond-tree, now bursting into

blossom in the valley, made the end of the journey a pleasant contrast to its beginning.

The two travellers were not from among the apostles, and
it is not even known whether they had been in the number of the Seventy. The name of the one is told us, Cleopas, a different word from Clōpas, the name of the husband of one of the Marys who waited on Christ. The other has been variously fancied as Nathanael, Peter, or, even Luke himself, but this is only conjecture. They were passing on their way, their conversation turning naturally on that of which their hearts were full. Was Jesus the Messiah or not? If so, how had things ended so gloomily? His life, his words, his miracles, seemed to show that he was the Messiah; but, on the other hand, how could the Messiah have been crucified?

Meanwhile, a stranger, going their way, overtook them, and very possibly to their disappointment, joined them. He had heard how eagerly they were disputing and reasoning, so that it seemed only natural when he asked what subject had so engrossed them. Half impatient that he should seem unacquainted with a matter so supreme to themselves, Cleopas answered, "That he could not have thought any one who had been to the feast in Jerusalem, would ask the subject of their conversation, when such great things, still in every one's mouth, had happened in these last few days."

"What things?" asked the stranger.

"What but respecting Jesus of Nazareth?" replied Cleopas. "He was a prophet of God, a mighty worker of miracles, and a great teacher. All the people must own that he was that. Do you not know about him? How our priests and Rabbis seized him, and condemned him to death, and forced Pilate to crucify him? Yet we believed, as it seemed on the best grounds, that he was the Messiah, who should have delivered Israel. But it is now the third day since all this has happened. Some of the women belonging to our company, however, have created no little perplexity amongst us. They went early in the morning to the tomb, but found it empty, and came back, saying that angels had appeared to them, who told them that he was alive again. On this, some of our number went to the
sepulchre, and found the facts as the women represented, but they did not see Jesus himself."

It was clear that the spark of hope kindled by the first report had been already extinguished.

The stranger had listened attentively, and now, to their surprise, began to chide them for their doubt, and entered into the matter that so engrossed them, with the earnestness of one who felt as interested in their Master's cause as they were themselves.

"What is there in all this that makes you so dejected and despairing?" asked he. "O ye dull of understanding, and sluggish of heart! Why not grasp more clearly, and believe more readily, what is the burden of all the prophets? Had you been as ready as you should have been, to understand the witness of Scripture, you would have seen that it had been foretold, from the first, that the Messiah was to suffer and die, as Jesus has done. Let us examine whether the prophets do not show that the Christ—the Messiah—must needs have been thus lowly, entering into his glory only after suffering death, though you have foolishly imagined his Kingdom was to come by force and miracle?"

The stranger was evidently at least a learned Rabbi; and had won their anxious, respectful attention already, by the novelty and force of his appeal. But, now, as he journeyed on at their side, their wonder and delight increased, for he quoted passage after passage, from the beginning to the end of the Scriptures, and showed them how the whole spirit and contents of the Holy Books pointed to a Messiah founding a spiritual, not a mere earthly kingdom, by love and self-sacrifice, not by force. They had never heard such discourse. He threw light on the Sacred Writings which made them a new book.

Such intercourse shortened the road and found them still eagerly listening as they approached Emmaus. Climbing the hill path together, through the terraces of vines and olives, and passing under the village gate, they were presently at the
house where the disciples were to stay. And, now, the stranger bade them adieu. What they had heard from him, however, had interested them so much that they longed to hear more. They begged him, therefore, to lodge with them for the night, and this, the rather, as the day was far spent. Accepting the invitation, all three went into the house.

Who could this delightful companion be? Nothing in his dress or speech gave them a clue, and they did not know his features. But a feeling of reverence kept them from asking.

Simple refreshments were presently set before them—among the rest bread and wine. The stranger, as was his due, had the place of honour at table, and it fell to him to hand what was before them, to the others. Only the three were together.

Soon after, the Unknown, taking the bread, offered the usual benediction, just as Jesus had done; broke the bread, just as Jesus had broken it; handed it to them, just as Jesus had handed it. Bearing, voice, and manner were his. And now, as they look at him more closely, the veil he had assumed passed away, and the very face and form were his.

It was he! Meanwhile, as they gazed in awe-struck wonder and reverence, he vanished.

Left to themselves, the two could only speak of what they had heard and seen—of how their hearts had glowed as he talked with them along the road, and opened to them the Scriptures. Their joy at having seen him unveiled to them as the Messiah risen and glorified, the conqueror of death, can only be faintly imagined. Neither life nor death could ever efface the memory of it from their inmost hearts. But their brethren must know the great truth. Hastening back to Jerusalem with quickened steps, to reach it before the shutting of the gates, they found the Eleven and a number of the disciples gathered together—the amazing rumours of the day the one engrossing theme of discussion. Peter, it seemed, had told them that Jesus had appeared to him, and now the two added their wondrous narrative. It was a thing so wonderful, how-
ever, that any one should rise from the dead, that the company still fancied the women, and Peter, and the two, under some strange delusion. They could not credit their story.

It was still Sunday, and the assembled apostles, with the others, had gathered at the table couches, to eat a simple evening meal together, before parting for the night. The doors were fast closed, for fear of any one from the high priest or Rabbis discovering them. Suddenly, through the closed doors, a Form appeared in their midst, which they at once recognised as that of Jesus. Presently the salutation they had heard so often, sounded from his lips—the common Jewish greeting, "Peace to you!"

The sight terrified and alarmed them. They could not realize that it was really Jesus himself, but fancied it was his spirit.

"Why are you in such fear," said he, "and why do you not, at once, without any such doubts and questionings in your minds, recognise me as him whom I really am?" His hands were, of course, exposed beneath the sleeves of his tunic, and his feet could be seen through his sandal-straps. Holding up the former, and showing the marks of the great iron nails of the cross in the palms, and pressing back his tunic, and disclosing the wounds on his feet, he went on: "Look at my hands and my feet, see the wounds of the nails, and be satisfied that it is I, Jesus, myself, who speak. And, that you may know that it is not my spirit you see, but the same Master you knew of old, come near and touch me, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me have."

Evidence so convincing could leave no doubt, except from very joy at its completeness; for the return of their Lord, thus triumphant over the grave, was so great a miracle that while they could not question it, their gladness would scarcely let them think it real. But still further proof was to be given. Knowing how easily the idea might spread that his appearances

were merely those of a spirit, he asked them to let him share their meal. They had broiled fish, and having set some before him with wondering awe, he ate it in their sight. All doubt herewith fled; it was, indeed, their risen Lord.

"Now that you are convinced that it is really I," continued Jesus, "let me remind you that the facts you have seen proved—that I should die, and rise again from the dead—are the fulfilment of what I said to you while I was yet with you, that everything written concerning me in the Scriptures must be fulfilled in this way."

"You see thus," added he, after showing the testimony of Scripture, "how it was necessary, that instead of founding an earthly kingdom, as you expected, the Messiah should suffer as I have done, and that he should rise from the dead the third day, as you see has been the case with me. The purposes of God further require that the need of repentance, and the promise of the remission of sins, to be obtained through my death and resurrection, should be preached, henceforth, as the great end of all I have suffered, not for Israel only but for all mankind. These truths you are to proclaim to all nations, but you are to begin at Jerusalem, that Israel may have still another opportunity of being saved through my name."

The wondering disciples now saw that he was about to leave them once more. As he prepared to do so, however, he added:—

"Peace be with you! As my Father sent me, so I send you. Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these miraculous gifts will be granted to those who believe, for a confirmation of their faith, and that they may win others. They will cast out devils in my name; they will speak with tongues new to them; they will take up serpents without harm to themselves; if they drink any deadly thing it will not hurt them; and they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."
"To fit you for your great work I shall presently send you the Helper promised by my Father, but stay in Jerusalem till you are clothed with this power from on high."

There were only ten of the Eleven present, for Thomas was absent, but these he now gathered before him, for special consecration by the Holy Spirit, to their office as apostles. He had compared this heavenly influence and transforming power to the breathing of the wind, and now, prefacing his words by breathing on the Ten, he said:

"Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whosesoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." The government of the Church is committed to your charge.

Having said this, he vanished from their sight.

The appearances during the day of the Resurrection had now ended. On the part of the priests and Rabbis there had been great anxiety, for they, as well as the disciples, had early heard the rumours of his having risen. Some of the watch, after having fled in terror before the descending angel, had come into the city, and reported what had happened. A hasty meeting of the chief men of the party had been held, and the whole matter laid before them. Their perplexity was extreme, but at last their Sadducee leaders invented a specious story. Not believing in angels, they affected to think that the soldiers had been frightened away by some clever trick of the disciples, who had thus got possession of the body of their Master. There were, indeed, difficulties in the way of spreading such a story, but it would be fatal if the rumour spread that angels had appeared. The people would naturally think it a proof that Jesus had been what he said he was, and they would turn to him with more ardour than ever. The guard were therefore instructed, with the inducement of large bribes, to say that they had fallen asleep, and found the body stolen when they woke. The priests were aware that it was death for a sentry

1 John xx. 22, 23.
to sleep at his post; but removed this difficulty by the promise that, in case the story reached the ears of Pilate, they would explain that it was only an invention, to keep the people quiet.

A whole week passed before the next manifestation recorded. On Sunday—known, henceforth, as the "first day of the week," in contrast to the Jewish Sabbath, the seventh day; and as especially the "Lord's Day"—the Eleven, having once more assembled, as they had done daily through the week and continued to do, Jesus, honouring his resurrection day, once more stood in the midst of them. Thomas, known as Didymus, or The Twin, had not been present on the Sunday before, and in his grave, earnest way refused to believe that Jesus had risen and appeared to the Ten, without what he himself deemed complete proof. "Except I see in his hands the prints of the nails," said he, "and put my finger into them, and put my hand into his side, where the spear-thrust made the gash, I will not believe."

On this first Lord's day after the Resurrection, however, his doubts were for ever dispelled. The disciples had gathered in their common room, which held at least a hundred and twenty. The doors, as before, had been carefully closed, for fear of spies from the Temple, and the approaches were, doubtless, vigilantly watched. Suddenly, however, the words "Peace to you!" were heard in the midst of the company, and looking up, Jesus stood before them. He had not been near, so far as the senses could perceive, when Thomas had uttered his doubts, but he knew them none the less. Turning to the faithful but still doubting one, whose presence there showed how eagerly he wished to believe the great news, Jesus, to his amazement, addressed him:

"Thomas, thou saidst thou wouldst not believe, unless thou couldst put thy finger into the wounds of my hands, and feet, and side. Reach hither thy finger—here are my hands; and

1 John xx. 19.  2 Rev. i. 10.  3 John xx. 24-29.  4 Acts i. 15.
reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing."

To hear his own words thus repeated by one who had not been present when they were spoken; to see the hands, and feet, and side; to receive such condescension from One who he now felt was, indeed, his loved Master, yet no longer a mortal man, but the Lord of Life, the glorified Messiah who had triumphed over death, overwhelmed him with awe. No words could express his emotion. He could only utter his one deepest thought, that he had before him his Lord and his God.

"Thomas," said Jesus, "thou hast believed at last because thou hast seen me; blessed are they who, without having seen me, believe, as thou now dost, that I have risen from the dead."

Hitherto, the Risen Saviour, in all his appearances, so far as they are recorded, had designed to prove to his disciples that he was really alive again. Convinced of this, there was much to say to them of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," which they were to spread abroad through the earth. Before his death, he had told them that he had many things to say to them, which were, as yet, too hard for them to understand or receive. These he had now to communicate; for what would have been incomprehensible before his sufferings and Resurrection was dark no longer, when seen in the strong light of the cross and the empty grave.

He did not, however, mingle among them and live in their midst as of old. They apparently expected that now he was alive again on earth, he would once more gather them round him, and stay with them, and they even fancied that surely now at last he would set about the establishment of the earthly kingdom of Israel to which they so fondly clung. But to have lived thus familiarly with them was no longer fitting.

He had told the women at the sepulchre, to say to his

1 Acts i. 3.  
2 John xvi. 12.  
3 Acts i. 6.
disciples that he would meet them on a particular mountain in Galilee, and he doubtless repeated this to the company when in their midst. The most of them were Galileans, and would return home after the feast week. Galilee had been, moreover, the special scene of his labours, and of his success, and a greater number could be gathered together there than in Judea. Jerusalem was not to be their scene of action as yet. They could not begin their great work while their Master was still on earth, and, besides, they needed not only many counsels before he left them, but the power which the Holy Spirit, who was not yet given, would impart. At the Feast of Pentecost, seven weeks after the Resurrection, they would receive their full heavenly consecration.

The future was still unknown even to the apostles, and hence, though they held themselves at the command of their Lord, the interval before he required their permanent service saw them, once more, at their former callings. They seem to have had no idea that this visit to their homes would be the last they would ever make to them as such, or that, within a few weeks, they would remove to Jerusalem, to stay there for a time, and then wander forth to all lands. But the long attendance on their Master had prepared them for finally leaving everything for his sake, and had fitted them, unconsciously, for the duties that lay before them.

Simon Peter, Thomas the Twin, Nathanael of Cana, John and James, sons of Zebedee, and two whose names are not given, apparently because they were not apostles, had, among others, betaken themselves to the well-known shores of the Lake of Galilee, and had quietly resumed the humble occupation familiar to most of them—that of fishermen. They had been out on the lake all night, but had caught nothing, and were rowing dispiritedly to land in the early dawn, when they saw on the shore a stranger, whom they could not recognise in the twilight as any one they knew. It was nothing strange that a person should come to them as they were landing, to buy
their catch. The simple habits of the East, moreover, made it common to sell even single fish, which were prepared and cooked on the spot, in the open air, by the buyer. They thought nothing, therefore, of the stranger presently asking them, with a kindly familiarity not unusual in addressing the humbler classes, \(^1\) "Children, have ye anything to eat?" as if wishing to buy for his morning meal. "Nothing at all," cried the fishermen.

"If you cast your net once more on the right side of the boat, you will find fish," said the stranger, and they, thinking perhaps that he had noticed a shoal they had overlooked, were only too glad to do so. But now the net sank, overloaded, so that they could hardly draw it after them as they rowed to land.

There was no further question who the stranger could be; for what was this incident but the repetition of a well-remembered miracle of their Master, almost at the same spot? "It is the Lord," whispered John to Peter. The name was enough. They were only about a hundred yards from land, but Peter could not wait. He was standing, naked, in the boat, after having swum round with the net, to sweep the waters, as is still the custom on the Lake of Tiberias; but he instantly drew on his upper garment, and, jumping into the water, swam ashore, to be the first to see if it really were his Master. The others, meanwhile, were slowly pulling to the beach, and presently reached it. It had been bare a moment before, but now, strangely enough, they saw a fire burning, with some fish on it, and bread at hand, as if the stranger had intended them for himself.

"If you would like to eat with me," said he, "bring some of the fish you have just caught."

Peter had not dared to speak, for the awe of his Lord's heavenly greatness, as One belonging now to a higher life, was on him. But he instantly ran to the boat, dripping as he stood, and dragged ashore the net, which was found to have

\(^{1}\) John xxix. 1-24.
caught a hundred and fifty-three large fish, without being rent
All were convinced that it was Jesus, but they were dumb with
amazement; and though they wished to ask, their fear, and
their very eyesight, which told them that it was no other than
their Master, kept them from doing so.
They had sat down on the white, dry beach, round the fire,
at his invitation, and he now, once more, as of old, took his
place as Head of the little group. Taking first bread, and then
the fish, he divided them, just as he had done while he was with
them, and, as he did so, his face and bearing were so exactly
what they had been, that the fear produced by the suddenness
of his appearance, and the difference in him which had struck
them at first, soon abated. His every word was now doubly
weighty, and hence John gives us a more than usually full
narrative of what followed. The meal being finished, he turned
to Peter, as if to show him by a further proof how entirely his
shortcoming had been forgiven, and the completeness of his
restoration. He commonly called him Peter, but now ad-
dressed him as he had done three years before, when they
first met, and only once since, when he made his grand con-
fession of belief that his Master was the Messiah. "Simon,
son of Jonas," asked he, "carest thou for me more than my
other disciples?" "Yes, Lord," answered Peter, "thou
knowest that I love Thee." "Go and feed my little ones—my
lambs," replied Jesus. The same question, in the same words,
was then repeated. "Yes, Lord," answered Peter, more
eagerly than before, "thou knowest that I love thee." "Then,
tend my sheep," replied Jesus. "Not only nourish, but care
for them, as committed to thy charge." A third time the same
question was asked—"Simon, son of Jonas, loveth thou Me?"
The threefold repetition had something in it tender and
warning. It was not a reproof, yet it was fitting that the dis-
ciple who, a few days before, had thrice denied him, should
be made to think as often of his weakness. Peter felt it, and

1 John i. 42.  2 Matt. xvi. 16.
almost thought that Jesus doubted his trustworthiness.

"Lord," said he, "thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." "Then," replied Jesus, "feed my sheep."

"Hear now," he continued, "what awaits you. Verily, verily, I say to you, Hitherto you have girded yourself and gone whither you pleased, and you do so still; but in your old age you will stretch forth your hands helplessly, and will give yourself up to others, who will gird you with chains, and lead you off where you would fain not go—to the place of judgment." An assurance of safety for the present, and a timely warning of what the future would bring! There was a brief pause, and then the words, "Follow me," summoned the apostle once more, as of old; but spoken this time by the risen and glorified Saviour, it called him to follow him in a martyr's death, and then, to the glory beyond.

Peter, taking the last words literally, as Jesus seemed now leaving them, had followed him a few paces, when, turning round, he saw John coming after him. Unwilling to separate from one endeared by long companionship as a fellow-disciple, he, therefore, ventured to ask, in hope that John, too, would be allowed to come with them—"Lord, what will this man do?" But things were not as in old days of common familiar communion. "If I should please that he live till my return, why should ye seek to know it?" replied Jesus.

St. Paul, about twenty-five years after, mentions another appearance,\(^1\) which was no doubt the same as is related more fully by St. Matthew.\(^2\) It took place in a mountain, appointed for the purpose by Jesus himself, as a spot well known to all. Here a large number of disciples, including, as we know, the Eleven, gathered at the time fixed. It was a moment of supreme solemnity, for it was the close, so far as we know, of Christ's ministry in Galilee. A mountain had been chosen, alike for privacy and because all who might come would be able to see their Master. Over five hundred were gathered when

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\(^1\) 1 Cor. xv. 6; written A.D. 59. \(^2\) Matt. xxviii. 16, 20, R.V
Jesus appeared in their midst; some of them dead when Paul wrote, but the majority still alive. With beautiful frankness, the Evangelist tells us that some, who probably had not seen him before, still doubted a miracle so wonderful, but they were so few that he could say of the multitude, as a whole, that they worshipped Jesus as their Lord.

Before this numerous assemblage Jesus declared himself, in the loftiest sense, the Messiah. "All power," said he, "is given me in heaven and in earth. As I have before commissioned my apostles, so now I commission you all, in the fulness of the authority thus given me, to go into the whole world, and announce to all men that I live, and am exalted to be the Messiah. Go, gather disciples to me from among all nations, and baptize them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Only two or perhaps three more appearances are recorded—one to James alone, and one to all the Apostles. The last known meetings with the Eleven took place immediately before the Ascension. It was the Parting for Ever, so far as visible communion on earth was concerned—the final committing of the interests of his Kingdom to them, as his chosen heralds and representatives. They were instructed to wait in Jerusalem till the promise of the Father was fulfilled, that He would send the Holy Spirit to them, as their Helper and Advocate, in place of their departed Master—a promise which Jesus himself had made known to them. "For John," said he, "truly baptized with water, but the promise which even he announced, that you would be baptized with the Holy Spirit, will be fulfilled before many days."

The Apostles, acquainted as they were with the Old Testament prophecies, which foretold that the fulness of the Holy Spirit would be poured out in the times of the Messiah, seem

1 1 Cor. xv. 7; Acts i. 3-8.  
2 Joel ii. 28, 29; Acts ii. 16.
to have fancied that there was an indirect promise of the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, as they conceived it, in these words. It appears as if an interval had elapsed—apparently only a part of the same day—between the appearance at which the renewed assurance of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit was given, and that at which the question they were now to ask was put. When they had come together again, Jesus once more stood among them, and then they resolved to find out, if possible, whether they had any grounds for their fond hopes.

"Lord," asked they, "wilt thou at this time restore the fallen kingdom of the Israelitish nation?"

Jesus would not answer such a question. There was much in their expectations which would never be realized; yet the gift of the Spirit would really be the true setting up of the Kingdom of the Messiah. Of its full establishment, which would take place at his return at the last day, he would say nothing. It lay hidden in the future, and was of no advantage to them to know. "It is of no use to you," said he, "to know the time or the circumstances of the ages to come. The Father has kept these as a secret of his own. Be it enough for you to know what will happen immediately on my departure. You will receive the powers of the Holy Spirit in rich measure, and inspired by these, and prepared by them in all points, you will go forth as witnesses for me, and of my resurrection, not only to Jerusalem and Judea, but to hated Samaria, and to the heathen throughout the whole earth; for mine is a universal kingdom, open to all mankind, without distinction of race or rank, of bond, or free, of barbarian or Greek, of Jew or Gentile."

This last interview had taken place in Jerusalem, but he had left it before he closed, leading them out towards Bethany. He may have walked through the well-known streets, veiled from his enemies, or he may have appointed the meeting-place for them, where he had so often, in his last days, retired in their
company. The place where he assembled them is not minutely recorded, but was on the Mount of Olives. It was the last time they were to see him. He had prepared them, as far as their dulness made possible, for his leaving them, and had fitted them to receive the gift of the Spirit, which, within a few days, would illuminate their intellects and hearts.

He wished, however, to leave them in such a way that they should not think he had simply vanished from them, and wait for his present re-appearance. He would show them, as far as it could be shown, that he returned from the earth to his Father; that God took him to himself as he had taken Elijah. They would be able to tell men, when they asked where he now was, that they had seen him leave the world, and pass through the skies to the eternal kingdoms, in his human body, to sit down at the right hand of God. The thought—he lives: He is with the Father! was, henceforth, to be the stay and joy of his followers in all ages.

We know not with what last parting words he let them see he was now finally to leave them. All that is told us is, that he gave them his blessing, with uplifted hands. Step by step he had raised their thoughts nearer the grandeur of his true nature and work. At first the Teacher, he had, after a time, revealed himself as the Son of God, veiled in the form of man; and now, since his crucifixion and resurrection, he had taught them to see in him the Messiah, exalted to immortal and Divine majesty, as the conqueror of death and the Lord of all.

The wonderful miracle which closed his earthly communion with his chosen ones is most fully narrated by St. Luke:

"When he had spoken these things, while they were looking at him, he was taken up into heaven, and a cloud received him out of their sight"—that cloud which spoke of the presence of God. "And as they were gazing earnestly into the heavens, as he ascended, behold two men stood by them, in white apparel,

1 Acts i. 9-11; Mark xvi. 19, 20; Luke xxiv. 51.
and said to them, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into the heavens? This same Jesus, who is even now taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way as ye have seen him go.'”

“Earth, thou grain of sand on the shore of the Universe of God; thou Bethlehem amongst the princely cities of the heavens; thou art, and remainest, the Loved One amongst ten thousand suns and worlds, the Chosen of God! Thee will he again visit, and then thou wilt prepare a throne for him, as thou gavest him a manger cradle; in his radiant glory wilt thou rejoice, as thou didst once drink his blood and his tears, and mourn his death!”
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