

The Life of Jesus Christ

A SYSTEMATIC ARRANGEMENT OF
THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE
"GREAT INVAIENENT" ESPECIALLY ADAPTED
TO THE YOUTH OF THE AGE

R. C. ROSCAMP

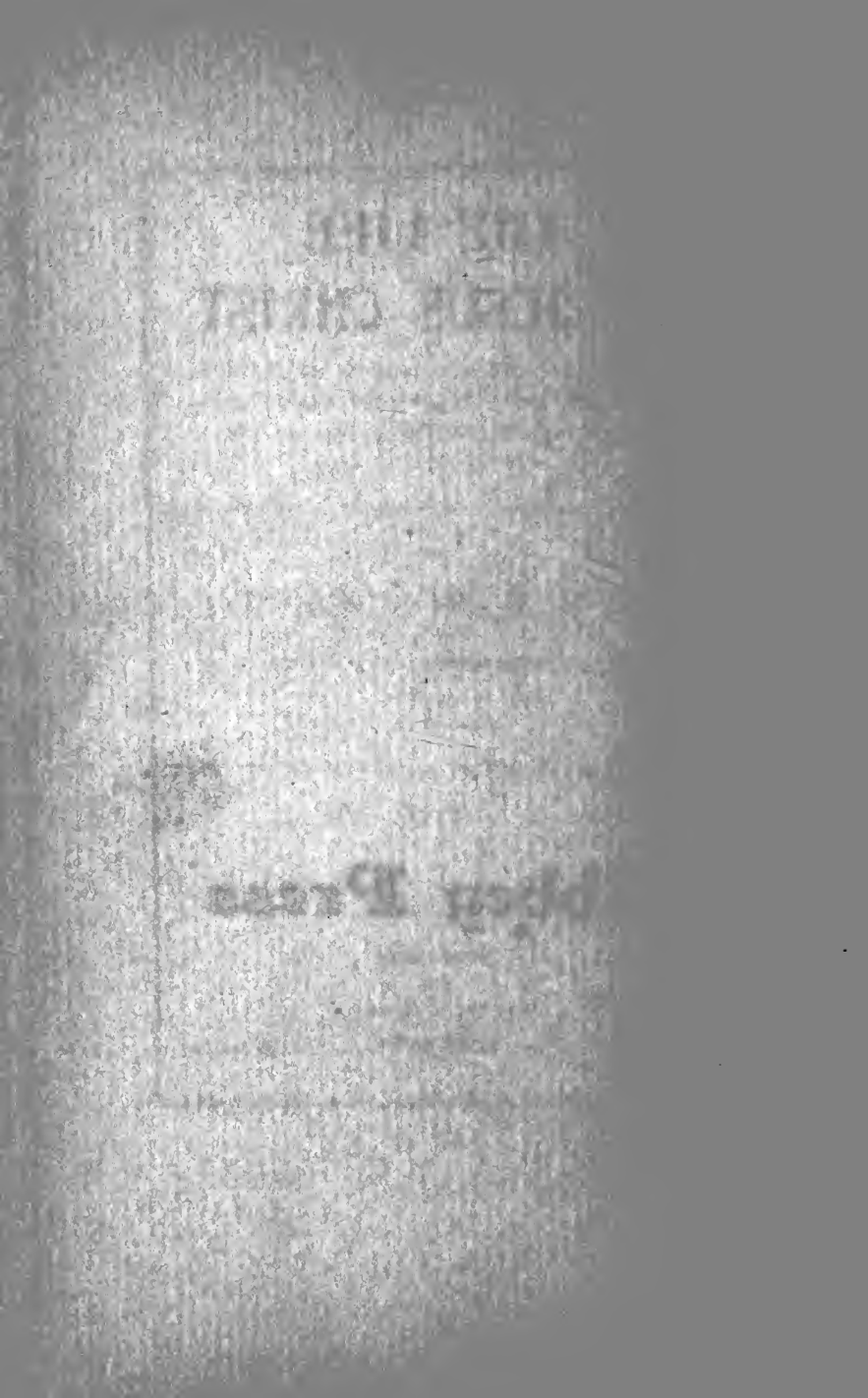


Class BT 301

Book R 78

Copyright N^o _____

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.



THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

A SYSTEMATIC ARRANGEMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL
EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF "THE GREAT NAZA-
RENE," ESPECIALLY ADAPTED TO THE
YOUTH OF THE AGE

BY

REV. R. ^{Robert} G. ROSCAMP, D.D.

"*Manet Immota Fides.*"

"The Immortal Faith Endures."

THE

Abbey Press

PUBLISHERS

114

FIFTH AVENUE

London

NEW YORK

Montreal

BT301
R78

THE LIBRARY OF
CONGRESS,
Two Copies Received
OCT 10 1902
COPYRIGHT ENTRY
OCT 8 1902
CLASS A XXXA No.
43392
COPY 3

Copyright, 1902,

by

THE

Abbey Press

CC0

M. v. g. 16 ja 34

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
“ Introduction ”.....	3
I. “ The Annunciation ”.....	9
II. “ The Birth of the Messiah ”.....	13
III. “ The Childhood and Youth of Jesus Christ ”	21
IV. “ The Appearance of the Messiah ”.....	32
V. “ The Reception given to Jesus Christ by the People ”.....	39
VI. “ His Character and His Mission ”.....	45
VII. “ Christ and Nicodemus ; ” Or “ Seeking by Night ”.....	52
VIII. “ The Healing Pools of Bethesda ”.....	60
IX. “ The Miracles Performed by Jesus Christ ”	69
X. “ The Miracles Performed by Jesus Christ ” (Continued).....	82
XI. “ The Miracles Performed by Jesus Christ ” (Continued).....	93
XII. “ The Disciples in the Storm ”.....	103

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIII. "The Great Teacher".....	114
XIV. "Christ Teaching by Parables".....	136
XV. "The Transfiguration".....	148
XVI. "Striking Characteristics in the Life of Christ".....	163
XVII. "The Lord's Supper".....	174
XVIII. "The Closing Scene: The Beginning of the End".....	183
XIX. "Jesus Before Pilate".....	191
XX. "The Great Tragedy".....	204
XXI. "The Burial of Jesus Christ".....	217
XXII. "The Empty Sepulchre".....	227
XXIII. "The Ascension of Jesus Christ".....	243

INTRODUCTION.

IN the morning of the world, before the ruby portals of the East were opened to admit a golden dawn, there was light from the invisible throne, and refulgence from God's presence, which illumined all that He had made on the first day of His marvelous work. When the six days of Creation were ended, the sun, moon and stars poured their flood of light over the completed creation, and made the world a scene of harmony and beauty; while bird, flower and landscape joined with the first human pair in offering to the Creator a song of united praise.

The sacred writers have described how man, who was created in the image of God, brought sin into the world, and all its fearful consequences. Over the vault where spread the glory of a pleased Omnipotence, which bathed the world with splendor inconceivable, there now rolled the clouds of darkness obscuring the

heavenly light, and disturbing the harmony of the once beautiful creation.

The promise of a Redeemer was like the breaking of a new day on creation, when the light of the world rose not in the sky, to pass its brief circuit and sink behind the hills; but like a sun that should never set, nor lose its radiance by any obscuring darkness; a light that beats upon the soul, imparting light and hope, and brings us back to the Fatherhood of God.

Numerous prophecies had been made by holy men of old, that a Messiah should be born Who would redeem the world, and the time of fulfilment had arrived, and all Israel was looking forward to the promised event.

It was a matter of small surprise to Herod when word came to him that a Saviour had been born in Bethlehem, who should become King of the Jews. But when he had definitely learned that this promised King was the child of a lowly woman who, too poor to find a place in the inn, was forced to seek shelter among the lowly beasts of the field, he gave no credit to the report, since all Israel had expected the Messiah to make His appearance

clothed in splendor, and with a manifestation of power that would prove His heavenly descent.

To nearly all Jews the manner of Christ's coming was a disappointment, which caused many to reject Him and led finally to His crucifixion. For four thousand years the sun had enlightened the world, nations had arisen, flourished, and decayed.

Already had the Assyrian Empire yielded to the Persian Empire, the Persian Empire had given way to the Grecian, and at length the "Roman," the fourth great Empire in succession, had absorbed all those which preceded, and extended itself over three parts of the known world.

Over this immense territory the same laws prevailed, the same languages were spoken, and peace diffused its blessings.

This was the period foretold in ancient prophecy, and chosen by Divine Providence for laying the foundation of a Kingdom which should never be destroyed, which was destined to break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms. It was now that the Great Personage was to be ushered into the world Who was

denominated the "Prince of Peace," "the desire of all nations." It was Palestine, the country of the Jews, and the centre of the civilized world, which had been long the scene of miracles and prophecies, that this mighty Person was to grace with His Divine presence.

It was the most enlightened age which had then appeared in the world, while Cæsar Augustus ruled the far-extended dominions of Rome, and Herod, falsely called the Great, presided over the dependent Kingdom of Judea, that this Celestial Character visited the abodes of men.

From the earliest period of recorded time, intimations had been given of Him, and these had been continued till the spirit of prophecy itself was withdrawn from the world.

THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

“ THE ANNUNCIATION.”

WHEN the time of the “ Advent ” drew near, a messenger of the most exalted rank, elevated above all the prophets, was commissioned to communicate the joyful news to the earth.

This was the “ Angel Gabriel.” In selecting Gabriel there was a wonderful propriety. For it was the same angel who, more than five hundred years before, had delivered to Daniel the prophecy of the “ Seventy weeks of years,” had first mentioned the Messiah by name, and pointed out the precise time of His arrival.

After so long an interval, he was again sent to Zacharias to inform him that a son should be born to him, Who should be the Prophet of the Highest, to go before the Lord as His herald, to proclaim His approach.

Then, again, Gabriel was sent to Mary, of the family of David, to announce the coming of the Messiah in person.

It appears that, soon after the interview with the Angel Gabriel, Mary was impatient to tell the extraordinary tidings to Elizabeth, her relative, and accordingly we are told she went in haste to the hill-country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and saluted Elizabeth.

But Elizabeth already knew what Mary had come to impart. She already knew that Mary was to have a son, of a superior nature, Who might with propriety be designated Lord—even prior to His birth. No sooner had Elizabeth concluded than Mary raised above herself, poured out her inspirations in a poetical strain, expressive of the high honor conferred on her, and her deep sense of gratitude.

The prophecies concerning John the Baptist, the message of Gabriel to Zacharias—his loss of speech and its recovery after the birth of John; all these were preparatory and subservient to the arrival of that Illustrious Person, Who was to be the Redeemer of the Race of Mankind.

At this time Augustus Cæsar, the Roman Emperor, issued an edict that all the inhabitants of the Empire should be registered or enrolled. It was customary, in the case of registration, for the Jews to assemble at the town or village which had belonged to their ancestors, and as Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, it is satisfactory fulfillment of those prophecies which had declared that Jesus was to be a direct descendant of David, King of Israel.

Joseph and Mary arrived at Bethlehem, and while they sojourned there, Jesus was born. “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be a Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

In the sixth month the Angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the Virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said: “Hail, thou art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women.” And when

she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her: "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God; and, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, "Behold, a Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel," which, being interpreted, is God with us."

"And when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem us who were under the law."

CHAPTER II.

“THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH.”

BETHLEHEM, the place chosen by God for the Nativity, lies five miles south of Jerusalem. To the east spreads a softly undulating plain upon which grass grows abundantly, and upon which, most probably, the shepherds were grazing their flocks when the angel announced the birth of Jesus.

Bethlehem had already become famous as the birthplace of David, and about the valleys and plains where he had roamed whilst attending his father's herds, before being crowned King of Israel.

About this sacred place, also, attaches a holy feeling, because it was here that Ruth gleaned and Boaz won her for his wife.

Although Jesus was born among the poorest and was cradled in a manger, the glory of God shone round the Babe, while angels sped on

swiftest wing to bear the glad tidings of Messiah's birth to the world. Hitherto the preparations for the descent of Christ to earth corresponded in some measure with the dignity of His rank as the Son of God. But immediately afterwards His condescension and humility became not less conspicuous.

For no splendid preparations were made on earth for His reception, no magnificent apartments admitted Him, no persons of distinguished power or wealth came to pour out their congratulations at His Nativity. "He was born in a stable, and was laid in a manger."

The persons to whom this joyful event was first communicated were not kings, nor princes, nor nobles, nor learned scribes; but lowly shepherds of Bethlehem.

While these shepherds were watching their flocks by night, a sudden and astonishing vision appeared to them; an angel of the Lord was seen, and the "glory of the Lord encompassed all who were present." By the "glory of the Lord" is meant a bright, dazzling splendor, which assumed a variety of forms at different times. Sometimes it appeared like a blazing fire, as a burning bush to Moses. Sometimes it

presented itself in the form of a “pillar of fire,” or a bright cloud, or like an immense conflagration, as it did on Mount Horeb and Sinai.

Sometimes it assumed a circular form, such as that which surrounded Paul while on his way to Damascus; “a brightness which, it is expressly said, surpassed the splendor of the sun at mid-day.”

A light of such refulgent lustre suddenly encircling the shepherds of Bethlehem must have dazzled and terrified them.

Nor was it their eyes alone that were addressed on that occasion. A voice was heard soothing their troubled minds. “Fear not, for lo, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord!” “And by this ye shall know Him; ye shall find the babe in swaddling-bands, lying in a manger.”

No sooner was this cheering message given, than a chorus of heavenly voices sang forth,—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will toward men.”

Here we have an instance of celestial beings

congratulating mankind on the birth of their Redeemer, and while ascribing glory to God, they express ardent wishes and hopes of peace and happiness to men, from the prospect of the beneficent plans which should speedily be unfolded.

The shepherds departed and went to Bethlehem as directed, and they found Joseph and Mary and the Child, as described by the angel. When they had seen all, they published what had been imparted to them concerning this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things told them by the shepherds.

But Mary let none of these things pass unobserved, but pondered them in her heart. But the publication of the shepherds was probably confined to a small circle.

It was, therefore, agreeable to the wisdom of God that other persons should be introduced, who might be the means of rousing the attention of the Jewish nation, and especially of persons of power and influence. Accordingly, we are informed that "a star appeared in the East," a luminous body having the appearance of a star, was seen by "wise men"—magis—and according to the divine intimation made to

the “magians,” went before them, until it stood over the house where the young Child was.

The wise men arrived at Jerusalem and made inquiry, saying, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him.”

The object of the wise men’s visit was remarkable, and it touched a subject which was deeply interesting to the whole Jewish nation. The King of Judea—Herod—was naturally filled with fear and jealousy. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were alarmed with the forboding apprehension of the terrible evils which might arise from the inflamed passions of a tyrant, who was restrained neither by justice nor humanity.

A great council was called, consisting of chief priests and scribes, and men of learning, and Herod demanded of them—“Where the Messiah should be born.”

The reply was that the Messiah should be born at Bethlehem of Judea, and the prophecy of Micah was quoted—“And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least illustrious among the cities of Judah; for out of

thee shall come a ruler, who will govern my people of Israel." The wise men return to their own country, having seen the new-born King, and they take their place as among the first preachers of the new dispensation.

Herod was so alarmed that he sought for means to arrest the progress of the New Kingdom, and he issued a cruel edict to put to death all male children of two years and under, so as to include the new-born King; but he failed in his design.

He Who sits upon the circle of the earth overruled his secret plot, and thwarted his sinful purpose, and the Infant King was placed out of his reach.

What a message! "Unto you is born this day—a Saviour!" The world did not need an Adviser. The world did not ask for a "Reformer," a man who could change the outward relations of things.

The world "wanted a Saviour."

It is not an official title; it is not an image you could robe in scarlet, and bow down before on account of its mighty majesty, but a Saviour. "A Saviour is an angel with tears in

“The Birth of the Messiah.” 19

His eyes, arms mighty as the lightnings of God; but a heart of tenderness.”

It has in it all human nature, all divine nature, all the past of history, all the possibility of prophecy, all the mystery of the Apocalypse, the tenderness surpassing the love of women, the majesty humbling the pride of kings. “Unto you is born a Saviour.”

The heavenly music ceased. The Angelic Vision disappeared. The high estate and lowly condition of heaven's earth-born King were alike the marvel of men and the wonder of angels.

The Nativity of Jesus should be joyfully commemorated with gifts of love and songs of joy, by young and old, in all lands, and in all ages. It is a song of “Great Joy to all people.”

Joy to the poor, because the new-born King came to make them rich; joy to the rich, for He came to make them richer still; joy to the simple, because He came to make them wise unto salvation; joy to the wise, for He came to give them true wisdom; joy to the mourning and the sorrowing ones, because He came to comfort and to bind up their broken hearts. Joy! Great joy!

20 The Life of Jesus Christ.

Let us rejoice that the flood of joy which flowed from the manger of Bethlehem is wide enough to encompass the earth with its glory, rich enough to bless the race with its mercy, and deep enough to roll on through all time, and over boundless eternity.

CHAPTER III.

“THE CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF JESUS IN
NAZARETH.”

O CHILDHOOD! Most charming age! Fairest of all ages! Age of innocence and purity! When Herod was dead, Joseph brought back Mary and the Child Jesus from Egypt, whither they had gone for refuge, and they went to Nazareth, in Galilee, to make their home.

It was there that Jesus lived until the commencement of His public ministry. “The Child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom; and the grace of God was in Him.”

Is it not marvelous that He Who, filled with wisdom as God, yet subjecting Himself to the condition of humanity, grows in wisdom and in grace, according as He grows in age, awaiting the time when, as a full-grown man, He may manifest to the world the treasures of knowledge and wisdom which are in Him!

The boyhood life of Jesus is of special and

peculiar interest to the world. In many respects the young Galilean must have been much like other boys of his day and age. He possessed the buoyant spirit of boyhood life. He loved the society of his fellows.

He had a home congenial to those natural inclinations. Nazareth was the flower of Palestine. Of all the Galilean towns it is said to have been the most lovely for situation, and most to be desired as a retired and attractive home.

It was beautiful and romantic beyond description. It was regarded in springtime as a princely paradise, because of its great number and variety of beautiful flowers. Everything about the place looked indescribably bright and soft. Doves murmured in the trees; and all nature seemed aglow with beauty.

Its picturesque streets were terraces on the hill-slopes, which overlooked the fertile plains and flowery vales beneath. It was a mountain village, with pure air and sunshine free. It was in this little town of Nazareth, where the Son of Man and the Son of God,—the Saviour of Mankind, spent nearly thirty years of His earthly life. It was, in fact, His home, His na-

“Childhood and Youth of Jesus.” 23

tive village for all but three years of His life on earth; the village which lent its then ignominious name to the scornful title written upon His Cross; the village from which He did not disdain to draw His appellation when He spake in vision to the persecuting Saul:

“I am Jesus of Nazareth Whom thou persecutest.”

The Father made no mistake in the orderings of Providence which sent His Son to this quiet and beautiful little city to be reared among its lofty and graceful mountains and liberty-loving people.

Among these hills, in these valleys, and on these streets, He spent the years of His boyhood life. In this humble, though happy home, drinking in the purity and freedom of its mountain air, this true-hearted and generous Child of Heaven, quick in intellect, vivid in imagination, and gifted in all the noble characteristics of youthful life, developed into perfect manhood, the wonderful Nazarene.

As to the manner of life during those thirty years, history is almost barren of recorded facts, and must, therefore, be largely conjectural. The Gospels simply say that “He grew

and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him." He grew as other children grew, only in a childhood of stainless and sinless beauty—"as the flower of roses in the spring of the year, and as lilies by the waters."

There is, then, for the most part a deep silence in the Evangelists respecting this period; but what eloquence in their silence?

We may suppose that a large proportion of these childhood days were given to His intellectual and moral development.

For, strange as it may seem to us, we must remember that Jesus passed through all the stages, and was subject to all the necessities of human life. Hence His deep sympathy and interest in childhood and youth. He was purely a human being.

Evil alone had no seed, and consequently no growth in the spotless nature of the young Nazarene. The innocence of infancy was never lost by Him. He sanctified all the periods of human life through which He passed. He lived without sin, in the perfect development of all the Christian graces which He afterwards inculcated by a sinless life.

“ Childhood and Youth of Jesus.” 25

He was humanity's ideal from the cradle to the Cross. His human life was a perfect reflex of the Divine character.

His heart was the most sacred temple of the Holy Ghost, which was given Him without measure. His soul was a divine mirror which gave back to earth and heaven all of their imparted grace, and its own innate glory. He continued increasing in wisdom as He grew in stature, and waxed strong in spirit as He increased in favor, both with God and man. So that at twelve years of age He was found in the temple conversing with the learned doctors of the law.

Both His questions and His answers astonished beyond measure the astute and learned rabbis. It was evident that He had not taken His seat in the synagogue at Nazareth in vain.

Neither had the young Nazarene studied the Scriptures for naught.

He had stored away for future use all the valuable lessons learned in God's holy sanctuary, until His whole existence, at this age, was purely and spiritually religious.

This marvelous boy also studied nature. His constant allusions to, and striking illus-

26 The Life of Jesus Christ.

trations from natural things, in the discourse of His after-life, shows most conclusively that He had been a close and successful student of nature's arena.

But whatever He may have gathered from natural and human sources, He was also the pupil of heaven. His richest lessons came directly from the Father, who willingly bestowed wisdom without measure upon His Divine Son, Whose will was completely lost in the Divine will. The young Nazarene had a meek and meditative soul, vast in its youthful expansions, and infinite in its continued development. He also had a lofty soul which royalty could not dazzle; an humble soul which honors could not trouble; a pure soul which knew no vexation, and a noble soul which walked calmly alike through the joys and sorrows of life.

Being perfectly conscious of His own superiority, He journeyed on through this world spreading sunshine and blessing.

In His boyhood days, Jesus was simply learning how to live, that He might afterward, both by precept and example, teach others the same great lesson. The real victories of life

“Childhood and Youth of Jesus.” 27

are gained in our apprenticeship at learning how to live.

The boy Jesus lived right. His manners were always sweet and attractive. His demeanor was ever generous and captivating, and He walked at all times conscious of the Divine presence.

The Father's grace ever distilled gently and softly upon His Son, like the falling dew or the morning light.

This youth of Nazareth not only taught us how to live, but taught us how to love and labor. Just as He was the only perfect life, so His was the only perfect love and joyous service the world has ever known. He was absolutely perfect in character, and infinitely perfect in degree.

He loved with purest and deepest devotion those whose thoughts, purposes and hopes were kindred to His own.

He not only loved, but He both sanctioned and sanctified manual labor. He was called the “Carpenter's Son.” He learned this humble trade, and made it the honorable means of His support for years. He recognized in labor the girdle of manliness and the salt of life.

28 The Life of Jesus Christ.

In His example He showed what a noble and manly thing it is to work, even where idleness is the stamp of aristocracy. He was perfectly content to labor for others, when He had nowhere to lay His own sacred and weary head.

There is a unique charm in the vein of self-denial which ran through the entire life of Jesus of Nazareth.

There is a part in the life of Jesus which may be designated as the "Silent Chapter." It is from the twelfth to the thirtieth year. We are told that from the time that Jesus and His parents returned from the "Passover" at Jerusalem, when He was twelve years of age, He gave Himself to the study of the law, and to manual labor, till He arrived at the age of thirty.

About eighteen years then passed away with no record of His words of wisdom, or deeds of daring. Not a footprint is left on the sands of time to mark definitely any of His mysterious journeyings.

We only know that, during this long period of His life, it was His custom to teach in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and continued to increase in wisdom and stature, as He grew

in favor with God and Man. During this voiceless period, the silent Nazarene must have astonished the multitudes with the depth of His constantly increasing wisdom.

During these solitary vigils of the young Galilean, He became more and more conversant with the loftiest conceptions of Israel's seers, who had been so richly endowed through the channels of Divine inspiration. The learned and eloquent young Nazarene became eminently qualified to instruct, and continued to teach the people in the synagogue at Nazareth.

Those who listened to His words were among the most highly favored auditors ever assembled in the world. For there was grandeur and harmony in the sublime truths He uttered.

There was life in the thought, music in the voice, and melody in the soul of the wonderful speaker. Like the gentle breezes which swept the eolian harp of the royal prophet, the harmonious breathings of a more sublime inspiration, kissed the melodious chords of a sweeter harp, struck by the fingers of David's Royal Son.

The sacred truths had never before been ex-

pressed with such childlike simplicity and infinite wisdom. Religion had never before been brought with such authority so near to the every-day life of the world. We love to contemplate the private life of the silent Nazarene during those voiceless years of His sinless solitude. Here we find an exhaustless fountain of sacred lore.

The heart of Jesus was full of grace, a soul replete with grandeur, and a destiny to be crowned with infinite glory.

Never have men seen so many perfections blended in any other character. Never will the world witness such grace and grandeur united in mortal man. Jesus was the masterpiece of humanity, the wonder of ages, and the perfect ideal of heaven.

The silent hours of this secluded and solitary life are full of precious lessons, overflowing with consolation and encouragement to the apparently insignificant and obscure earth.

These lessons teach us that prominent action, public service and brilliant success are not essential to true and noble living.

They also teach us that the lot of those who spend their years in private life, unhonored and

“Childhood and Youth of Jesus.” 31

unsung in the public arena, is the safest and happiest lot after all.

All these silent and sinless years of Jesus of Nazareth were spent in toil, submission, and obscurity; in contentment, humility, and prayer, in order that He might prepare Himself well for life's great mission, and leave an example worthy of imitation in all ages to come.

It was during these private years, in the midst of evil associations and unhallowed surroundings, that the spotless Son of God developed that perfect representative character for the world's study. It was at this time and under these circumstances that He kept the law perfectly, and thus taught by example what He afterward taught by precept—how to live a life wholly consecrated to the service of God.

Jesus, in His private life, was the Moral Hero of the world. Moral excellency always adorned His matchless character. And His laws were all recommended by His own example, before they were enforced by His sovereign authority. So ended the boyhood days and private life of Jesus of Nazareth.

CHAPTER IV.

“THE APPEARANCE OF THE MESSIAH.”

THE time at length arrived when the Saviour should manifest Himself to men and commence His glorious work of redemption.

His precursor had already appeared, and his voice had been heard in the wilderness. All the prophets who had foretold Christ's coming had, indeed, been His precursors, nevertheless there was a last prophet, the greatest of all the prophets, John the Baptist, who came preparing the “way of the Lord.”

“There shall be heard,” said Isaiah, “the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight the paths of our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough ways plain.”

“In those days came John the Baptist.” As

if all the movements were continuous in the drama, without a break, as if there were no past tense, as if we lived in a perpetual present, and all history were a continuous breathing, a perpetual outgo of the Divine purpose and will. We have broken up our grammar so that we now have the present, the past, the pluperfect, and the future; but there is another grammar in which there is but one mood, and one tense, and it is Christ's purpose to draw us up into His own thinking, until all history and all development, the whole sweep and current of things, shall be to us a living indicative.

John the Baptist—a transient name! When a man is so specialized, the meaning is that his mission is here and gone, whilst you are speaking about him, a breath, a shock, a voice, an echo, and then a vacancy. John himself said his mission was introductory, symbolical, a plunge, and all was over. John came preaching—a term but little understood in that age. There were few preachers known as such at that time.

Preaching, in the New Testament, is a term which means heralding, going up and down from East to West, crying with a ringing voice

—“Prepare ye the way. Prepare!” He is the preacher who does so, who breathes through the herald’s trumpet and startles the stagnant air with shattering blasts, and exclaims: “The King! The King!”

The true preacher is the *vox clamoris*—“Prepare! Look out! Attention!” The nature of John the Baptist was full of impetuosity and fire. In his manifestation and agency, it is said that “he was like a burning torch”; his public life was like an earthquake—the whole man was a sermon.

He might well call himself “A voice—the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.”

The theme of the ministry of John the Baptist was “Repentance.”

The cry of all widening civilization has been “Repent.” We must not be startled at the word, as if it were a Church word and a Bible term only; it is a word you cannot do without in the history of secular civilization. The meaning of it is—Change your purpose, alter your mind, turn round, face about, you are on the wrong road. Return!

He who corrects the thinking of his age, hav-

ing verified his own conclusions, comes forth and says to his age, “Repent, you are wrong; change your mind, alter your standpoint!” When the word is taken in a religious sense, and invested with vital meanings, it still continues the first signification, and enhances that signification with other meanings deeper and grander still.

When a man repents of his sins, he knows the bitterness of inward sorrow, his heart weeps blood, his soul is afflicted with grievous distress on account of sin.

Then the repentance expresses itself in an outward change of standing, altitude and relationship, coming from an inward conviction wrought through infinite pain, and by ministries for which there are no words to express it.

John’s ministry, then, was not a very cheerful one, or a very popular one. It is much more pleasant to say to men, “I approve all your doings, I confirm your proceedings, I indorse your policies, and heaven’s blessing shine upon you like a summer day.” He who comes with a speech of that kind to the populace will for the time being be the popular idol.

To come into the midst of a city and urging the people to "repent," is to excite the most desperate prejudice. The man whose little sermon is "Repent" sets himself against his age, and will for the time being be battered mercilessly by those whose moral tone he challenges. But John kept at his work, and Jerusalem and all Judea, and the regions round about Jordan were strangely stirred.

See in this case the power of one consecrated and burning heart. John was one, only one, and yet the whole valley of the river was shaken by his voice, and men flocked from every quarter to see and hear him. We here see the power of individual labor, that one solitary thinker, preacher, or reformer, may move a nation and an age. Everywhere do we read of the great results attending one man's ministry. One man is sometimes an army, one man is sometimes a whole congregation. Despise not the two and the three when they are thoroughly consecrated, for they will increase the measure and the momentum of the message.

John the Baptist preached repentance and the initiatory rite of baptism. We might ask the question, "What is baptism?" Baptism is

“The Appearance of the Messiah.” 37

the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. It does not follow that you must have water in order to have baptism, but if you want the Atlantic Ocean, have it; if, however, the drop of dew trembling on the rosebud will suffice you, take it; but they are both nothing but ritualism, ceremonialism, and form, if you do not seize the inner meaning, the laver of blood and the baptism of fire.

The one baptism of which all other baptisms were indications, types and symbols is the baptism of blood and the chrism of fire.

John the Baptist, in answer to the questions of the priests and Levites who had been sent from Jerusalem to examine his claims, had already declared that He was not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet, but that he was the person predicted by Isaiah who should make proclamation in the wilderness.

Finding that the people were in suspense respecting his office and character, John addressed them, saying: “I indeed baptize with water, but One mightier than I cometh, Whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose. He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with

fire." It is evident that no person who heard John could doubt but that the great personage to whom he alluded was the Messiah. John the Baptist was the precursor, the prophet, and the harbinger of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER V.

“ THE RECEPTION GIVEN TO CHRIST BY THE
PEOPLE.”

JOHN THE BAPTIST required of his disciples a confession of sin, reformation in life, a hope of forgiveness, together with a belief that the Messiah was soon to make His appearance.

But Jesus Christ had no sins to confess, no guilt to be forgiven. Nor did He require to be informed that the Messiah would soon appear; for He knew that the high office belonged to Himself.

Between Jesus, then, and all others who received John's baptism, there was no resemblance in situation or character.

The only circumstance in which there was any agreement was the external form of baptism. The baptism of Jesus may be considered as a consecration to His high office as Messiah and Saviour of the World; for, immedi-

ately after He was baptized He was acknowledged by Divine interposition; and after that event His ministry commenced.

This baptism of Christ was a baptism of sympathy. Sympathy means feeling with, having a common emotion or passion, and He, the Saviour, was in all points made like unto His brethren, that in all points He might have a fellow-feeling, a kindred passion.

That there might be no tone in all the scale of their life's utterance to which He could not respond, giving it a keener and a truer accent. Jesus Christ identified Himself with all the dispensations of Providence. He was the spirit of the Prophets, and now He came to the baptism of John.

So He accepted that baptism, not because the word "repentance" was associated with it, but because it extended itself to righteousness.

Again.—It was a baptism of Inauguration and a baptism of Approval. The Spirit descended. God the Father approved.

"This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Here is a new name introduced. It is a short name—it is the name of "Son."

“The Reception Given to Christ.” 41

“This is My Beloved Son.” This new name marks a new epoch in human history. As we read the Bible we discover that the line of development moves in this form—“Man, Servant, Prophet, Messenger, Son.” Last of all He—Jehovah-God—sent His Son also. It is infinitely exciting and interesting to see how these new words came into human speech. All the time it seemed as if something was wanting.

“Man” was a great name; “Servant” a high office; “Prophet” a marvelous function; “Messenger” a high ministry; but the name “Son” takes them all up and rounds them into completeness, and lights them with ineffable splendor.

The Divine movement is always upward, the Divine progress is an ascension. Each word can be emphasized: “This is My beloved Son.” God’s image! God’s equal! Jesus Christ is installed in office. His work began. We now bid farewell to John the Baptist, his work is completed, his last words are spoken when he said: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” The Christ, the Son of God, now enters the arena, and as the

curtain is lifted upon the drama of His majestic life, we see Him led forth by the Holy Ghost into the wilderness, there to fast for forty days and forty nights, and then to be tempted of the devil. The temptations of Our Lord were three in number.

First.—"There was an attempt to induce Him to misapply His miraculous power for the relief of His own wants."

Second.—"The second was for the purpose of gratifying vanity."

Third.—"To gratify His ambition."

Satan has only three things to say, the tempter's program is short and shallow. Beyond these three things he has never advanced one step.

The same things presented to Christ were presented to our first parents in Eden. The first temptation was to the senses, an appeal to the appetites, an impulse given to that lower nature which man shares with all the animal creation. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." "If thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down," and put God to the test.

"All these things will I give Thee if Thou

“The Reception Given to Christ.” 43

wilt fall down and worship me.” Satan has no other temptation to offer.

He appeals to the dominant appetite, he asks man to make God his servant, in order that man may have good harvests, a fine income, plenty of good food, and an abundance of possessions.

Satan has no other temptation to level at the human heart. He may vary the form, he may change the manner and expression; but this is substantially his program. Satan simply says: “Eat and live. Take plenty of bread and refuse to die.”

The answer which Christ made to Satan was: “Man shall not live by bread alone.” How beautiful and comforting is the answer.

Life is not a question of eating and drinking, but righteousness. The second temptation was answered by Christ in this manner:

“Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” Again.—“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”

Looking at the answers which Our Lord makes to the tempter, we find: First—“That they were written answers.” Second—“They were simple and plain.” Third—“They were authoritative.”

44 The Life of Jesus Christ.

Victorious over the concentrated temptation, triumphant in the fiery ordeal, the Saviour left the wilderness and returned to the fords of Jordan; and now begins His wonderful, busy, public life.

CHAPTER VI.

“ HIS CHARACTER AND HIS MISSION.”

THE fourth Gospel was written by the beloved apostle, St. John. He wrote more especially to the Church, and hence from the Divine standpoint. John wrote his Gospel in his old age, and it contains many of the sweetest and most sacred accounts of his Lord's life and death. He loved to contemplate the Master as a Divine Being. He viewed Him almost constantly during his later years from this standpoint. He saw in Him the Alpha and Omega, the Incarnate Word, the Rabbi, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Father's gift of Love.

After the fast and the temptation, Jesus goes forth from the desert to preach the glorious Gospel. The Lord Jesus declares Himself to be the “ Son of Man,” but both His words and His works declare Him to be the “ Son of God ” as well. The Son of Man and the Son of God! What a fascinating picture is that

where the human and the Divine are so sweetly blended. What sweetness and what majesty sits upon His brow! What power and inexpressible tenderness is seen in His looks! What a fountain of love flows from His heart! The four Evangelists are most artless in describing the character of their historic hero.

They recorded no bursts of admiration at the displays of His matchless power, or of His infinite condescension. They simply chronicled His words and works without approval or applause; and thus they most successfully set forth His glorious character, tell of His marvelous nature, and gave the world its greatest wonder and richest blessing, the Christ of the Gospels.

History nowhere records a more perfectly human, or a more genuinely divine character, than these Gospels give to Jesus Christ.

How humanity and divinity were harmonized. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

The God-Man walked forth in His humanity amongst men, and they readily recognized His

“ His Character and His Mission.” 47

divinity. The Representative of heaven and earth was seen in all the manifestations of His human weakness and divine power. In the Redeemer earthly sorrow was blended with heavenly wisdom, and His eternal glory was blended in His compassionate love for sinful man.

The commencement of Christ's ministry is thus described by St. Matthew, Chapter 4th, 23-25: “ And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of diseases among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those which had the palsy; and He healed them. And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.”

What a blessed beginning of the most blessed of all ministries was this! He came to bless our world, and here we see how He entered upon His work. Observe, one of the first things He did after thus beginning His ministry was

to gather His disciples round Him. The first two that we find named among His disciples are John and Andrew.

John and Andrew had been disciples of John the Baptist. Their master pointed them to Jesus, and said: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." When they heard this they followed Jesus, and became His disciples. When Andrew met with his brother Simon Peter, he said unto him: "We have found the Messiah, the Christ." And he brought him to Jesus.

After this we are told that "Jesus findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me." He obeyed the call at once, and became one of the greatest of the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then Nathaniel and Matthew joined the company of the disciples and followed the Master. So it was with the others. Of these He chose twelve, whom He set apart for a special work in the early Church. Followed by these apostles, He went through the towns and cities, preaching the glad tidings and scattering blessings as He went. The people followed Him in crowds. Never had they seen

“ His Character and His Mission.” 49

in any man so much sweetness and tenderness, so much power and wisdom. Every word revealed an unheard-of love for men.

Every act displayed His infinite goodness. When Nathaniel was invited by Philip to “Come and see” the Saviour, we heard Him expressing a prejudice against a place—“Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Philip was an apt scholar, and he said: “Come and see.” That question of Nathaniel’s is often repeated in this age, and the one sufficient answer—almost the only possible answer is now, as it was then, “Come and see.” That it meant “Come and see One Who speaks as never man spoke; come and see One Who, though He be but a carpenter’s son of Nazareth, yet He is the greatest of all men who have ever appeared in the earth.”

“Come and see One from Whom there seems to breathe forth the irresistible charm of a sinless purity, the unapproachable beauty of a divine life.” “Come and see,” said Philip, convinced in his simple, faithful heart that to see Jesus was to know Him, and to adore Him. In this sense, indeed, we can say “Come and see” no longer, for since the blue heavens

closed on the visions which were given to Paul, and Stephen, Philip and Nathaniel, His earthly form has been visible no more.

But there is another sense, no less powerful for conviction, in which it still suffices to say, "Come and see."

Come and see a dying world revived, a decrepit world regenerated, and an aged world rejuvenescent. Come and see the darkness illuminated, the despair dispelled. Come and see tenderness brought into the cell of the imprisoned felon, and liberty to the fettered slave. Come and see hospitals and orphanages rising in their permanent mercy beside the crumbling ruins of colossal amphitheatres which once reeked with human blood. Come and see the dens of evil and tyranny transformed into sweet and happy homes. Come and see defiant atheists turned into believing Christians, and rebels into obedient children.

Ay, "Come and see" the majestic acts of one great drama continued through nineteen centuries, and as you see them all tending to one great development—as you hear the voice of the Saviour calling "Follow Me," you join the pure and candid Nathaniel in saying:

“ His Character and His Mission.” 51

“ Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God. Thou art the King of Israel.”

Jesus, as He saw Nathaniel coming to Him, recognized that the seal of God was upon His forehead, and said unto him, “ Behold a true Israelite, in whom guile is not.”

We scarcely hear of Nathaniel again. He seems to have been one of those calm, retiring, contemplative souls, whose sphere of existence lies not here, but “ where beyond these voices, there is peace.”

CHAPTER VII.

“CHRIST AND NICODEMUS,” OR “SEEKING
BY NIGHT.”

NICODEMUS is an interesting character, and he impresses us favorably at every point. Among the rulers, scribes, Pharisees and wealthy members of the Sanhedrin, Christ found believers and followers. The earliest and most remarkable of these was Nicodemus, a rich man, a ruler, a Pharisee, and a member of the Sanhedrin. There is a certain timidity observable in all which the Gospels tells us about Nicodemus; a timidity which could not be wholly overcome even by his honest desire to befriend and acknowledge One whom he knew to be a Prophet, even if he did not at once recognize in Him the promised Messiah.

Such was the rabbi who, with that mingled candor and fear of man which characterize all that we know of him, came indeed to Jesus, but came cautiously by night. He was anxious

to know more of this young Galilean prophet whom he was too honest not to recognize as a Teacher come from God; but he thought himself too prominent a person among his sect to compromise his dignity, and possibly his safety by visiting Him in public.

Although he is alluded to in only a few touches, because of that high teaching which Jesus vouchsafed to him, yet the impression left upon us by his individuality is inimitably distinct, and wholly beyond the range of invention.

His very first remark shows the indirect character of his mind—his way of suggesting rather than stating what he wished—the half-patronizing desire to ask, yet the half-shrinking reluctance to frame his question—the admission that Jesus had come “from God,” yet the hesitating implication that it was only as “a teacher,” and the suppressed inquiry, “What must I do?”

Our Lord saw deep into his heart, and avoided all formalities or discussion of preliminaries, startles him at one with the solemn, uncompromising address, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again (or

from above) he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

“ My disciple must be Mine in heart and soul, or he is not a disciple at all; the question is not of doing or not doing, but of being.” That answer startled Nicodemus into deep earnestness; but like the Jews, he either could not, or would not, grasp its full significance. He prefers to play, with a kind of querulous surprise, about the mere literal meaning of the words which he chooses to interpret in the first physical and unintelligible sense.

Mere shifting like this, Jesus did not pause to notice; He only sheds a fresh ray of light on the reiteration of his former warning.

He spoke, not of the fleshly birth, but of that spiritual regeneration of which no man could predict the course or method, any more than they could tell the course of the night breeze that rose and fell and whispered fitfully outside the little tabernacle where they sat, but which must be a birth by water and by the spirit—a purification, that is, and a renewal—an outward symbol and an inward grace—a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness.

Nicodemus could only answer by an expression of incredulous amazement. A Gentile might need, as it were, a new birth when admitted into the Jewish communion; but he—a son of Abraham, a rabbi, a zealous keeper of the law—could he need that new birth? How could it be?

“ Art thou the teacher of Israel?” asked Our Lord, “ and knowest not these things?” Art thou the third member of the Sanhedrin, the wise men, and yet knowest not the earliest, simplest lesson of the initiation into the kingdom of heaven? If thy knowledge be thus carnal, thus limited—if thou stumblest on the threshold, how canst thou understand those deeper truths which He only who came down from heaven can make known?

The question was half sorrowful, half reproachful; but He proceeded to reveal to this Master in Israel things greater and stranger than these; even the salvation of man rendered possible by the sufferings and exaltation of the Son of Man; the love of God manifested in sending His only begotten Son, not to judge, but to save; the deliverance of all through faith in Him; the condemnation which must

fall on those who wilfully reject the truths He came to teach. These were the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven—truths once undreamed of, but fully revealed.

It is in this conversation with Nicodemus that we get the first glimpse of the God-Man's method of teaching. How simple, how interesting, and how comprehensive it is. Probably Christ never talked so grandly as upon this occasion; He kept to the one point in the hearing of one man, and made that one night the most memorable period in the man's recollection.

Nicodemus had not a thousand messages to take home; Jesus saw the kind of man with whom He had to deal, and, like a wise master-builder, He dealt with it according to its quality and scope.

It is possible to occupy a very high nominal position in the Church, and to know nothing about the purpose of the Master.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, a master in Israel, and yet he knew nothing about this nobler and diviner life.

We give Nicodemus credit for going to Jesus in person to inquire concerning the kingdom,

and we commend him for his wise selection of time. “ He went in the night-time ”—at a time when it was likely that there would be the least interruption.

Some critics have blamed him for going at such a time, and have looked upon him as a coward; but we take the nobler and more honorable view of the visit, and esteem him for his earnestness in seeking for the truth. Listen to the salutation which Nicodemus offered when he approached the Saviour of Men.

“ Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.”

It is possible to go direct to Christ Himself on the wrong business. Jesus Christ does not want to talk about miracles.

The miracles are but the dust of His feet. He wants to talk upon a greater subject. Jesus says: “ If you will begin at the beginning, I will remain with you until you are a scholar in My school; if you will come and ask about inward, spiritual and vital subjects, I will tarry with you till the rising of the sun.”

Jesus answered and said unto him: “ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born

again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Blessed salvation! Sweeter than a woman's love, and more tender than a mother's compassion, wiser than all sages in understanding human nature. The subject which Nicodemus introduced was miracles; the subject which Jesus Christ introduced was regeneration of the heart.

Nicodemus exclaimed: "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus was a literalist, and he was startled by the word "born." "How can these things be?" Jesus answered: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit." Jesus Christ thus gives Nature an illustrative function; all its beauty, its splendor, its force, is to teach something beyond itself; there is a voice in the wind other than that which smites the ear; beyond the common fragrance of the flowers there is an odor which reaches the soul; the glitter of the starlight comes from a fire veiled from all eyes. Jesus Christ thus found a common law in nature and grace; the Spirit is the same, whether it directs the course of the wind

or in renewing the springs of the heart, the earth to the spiritual mind is but a lower heaven.

Though the mystery of the “ New Birth ” may remain unexplained, yet it is a blessed truth—both birth and life are mysterious.

The discourse with Nicodemus occupies twenty-one verses, and touches upon such subjects as the work of the Holy Spirit, the lifting up of the Son of Man, Faith in the Son of God, Divine Love, Salvation, and Eternal Life. Is there anything suggestive in the circumstance that Nicodemus came to Jesus Christ by night? Oh! the night!

How many troubled doubters and inquirers are weary of its darkness!

Those who come by night should be encouraged. God Himself made the night, as well as the day; the moon as well as the sun.

We know little more of Nicodemus, but what we do know is sufficient. Where do we last find him? We find him at the Cross and standing in the light. He has found his way through the night to the morning, from the miracles to the Cross, a true disciple.

CHAPTER VIII.

“THE HEALING POOLS AT BETHESDA.”

“Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep-market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

“In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the waters.”—John, v., ch. 2-3.

AT what feast of the Jews this special miracle was wrought it is difficult to say; and it is not of very material moment that we should be able to determine. The feast is called “a feast of the Jews,” that is, it was peculiar to the Jews.

The moment, however, that Jesus touched it by His presence, that moment it was gone; for He was the end of all types; He was the substance of all shadows; and just as the shades of night depart when the sun rises above the horizon, so the feasts and fasts and institutions of the Jews passed away the moment that the Sun of Righteousness shone upon them.

“The Healing Pools at Bethesda.” 61

Bethesda, literally translated, means the house of mercy. The place is still traditionally pointed out, and in most books on Palestine a certain pool or deep well is alluded to as the pool of Bethesda; but prominent writers on Biblical research state that it is not positively known where it was. Nor does it much matter. The local is the circumstantial and the transient; the moral and the spiritual lessons of Bethesda endure now and forever.

The pool, it seems, was either miraculously impregnated with medicinal virtue after an angel had stirred it, or it was permanently endowed with that virtue, so that every one that stepped into it after it had been stirred by the angel was healed of whatever disease he had.

It appears that at this pool, whether its virtues were permanently healing or temporarily so, there were multitudes of the halt, the lame, and the impotent.

In this crowd that surrounded the pool of Bethesda we have a very suggestive fact. It is this: “Men who have lost the health of the body that is day by day falling to dust will go to the ends of the earth, if peradventure they may obtain its recovery; but persons who know

they have lost the health of their soul are not as eager to enter the true and lasting Bethesdas, the sanctuaries of God and the houses of prayer, into which not a created angel, but the Angel of the Covenant stately descends, and heals the broken spirit, binds up the bleeding heart, gives beauty for ashes, and the opening of the eyes of them that are blind. Hence it happens that man needs not to be awakened to a sense of the danger of a bodily disease; but in every case man needs to be awakened to a sense of his spiritual disease.

One invalid went to the earthly Bethesda who had labored under his disease thirty-eight years—not who had been there thirty-eight years, as some have construed it.

This invalid was despised or jostled aside by the crowds. It is a strange fact, that a certain amount of misfortune does make men sympathize with each other; but when it becomes rapid, terrible, and universal, it creates an intense selfishness in all, so that each is ready to tread down his brother in order to find a rescue and deliverance for himself.

This poor man had been so treated; the greatest sufferer had faced the worst at man's

“The Healing Pools at Bethesda.” 63

hands. On him, however, Jesus cast His eye. The deepest affliction upon earth has ever the readiest response in heaven. Jesus cast the eye of pity, not upon the selfish crowd who had few ailments, but first on the greatest sufferer, and to the sufferer He showed the greatest mercy.

Our Lord, casting His eye upon the sufferer, asked him the question, “Wilt thou be made whole?” This seems a superfluous question. Why, there could be no doubt that the poor man would be made whole, for he had come on purpose, and had waited many a weary day to be so. And yet Christ never spoke a superfluous word, nor did a superfluous deed.

There was a reason in all He said, and a necessity for all He did. And no doubt the question that He put here was meant to quicken hopes that were dead in the poor sufferer’s bosom; to revive withered feelings, affections and desires; and to create in the desponding man’s soul a presentiment of approaching cure, and cast over it the first rays of that sunshine into which Christ was soon to introduce him. The sick man, roused by this question—and nothing so delights and revives a sufferer as a word of sympathy—instantly answered, “I

have no man near me to put me into the pool, but when I am going another steppeth down before me."

As if he had said, "Most gladly would I be cured; I have been looking for it; but I have the misfortune to be so thoroughly impotent that I am not able to reach the pool, and others, abler and stronger, with greater patronage or with greater aid, rush in first, and are healed." The man felt that there was no healing outside Bethesda, and that if he could not be lifted into it, he could not be healed, just as many persons think there is no virtue extrinsic to the ordinances, but the Lord of the ordinance can work above it, without it, and beyond it.

Now, if Jesus had been a mere man, He would have lifted the impotent person from the spot he had so long and hopelessly held, and would have placed him in the pool of Bethesda! but He did not do so. He left Bethesda to those who worshiped it as the whole spring of their recovery, and cured the impotent man by that word which was more healing than all Bethesda's waters.

Jesus said unto the man: "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk." It is well that Christ is

“The Healing Pools at Bethesda.” 65

thus Sovereign; it is glorious to Him, and it is also good for us. I need scarcely explain that the bed was a sort of couch on which the man lay, and which could be folded like a tent, and carried away by him.

If this man, when Christ said to him, “Arise, take up thy bed and walk,” had been a modern theologian, he would first have introduced the question that man had no strength of his own, and that unless He would give him strength it was absurd to attempt to obey the order that Christ had issued.

Such reasoning is always perilous, very often mistaken. The man, however, reasoned none, but instantly obeyed the bidding of his Lord; and the moment he made the effort, that moment divine strength enabled him to succeed.

The Jews, when they saw this cure, instantly objected to the man on the ground that he was carrying his couch upon the Sabbath day, urging that it was not lawful to do so. It was not zeal for the Sabbath that animated them, but hatred to Him Who had wrought the miracle. The Jews were watching to discover reasons for crucifying the Lord of life and glory.

Whatever He did, however beautiful, beneficent and good, was tortured and construed by them into a reason for exciting popular feeling against the Redeemer.

The man's answer to the Jews who thus cavilled at him was truly admirable. It was the very essence of that rarest sense, common sense. "The man, I know not who he was, that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk."

He argued: "The love, the pity, the power that healed me surely would not have bade me do that which is in itself sinful, or to violate the sanctity of the Sabbath day." As if he had said: "The power that has been put forth is to me evidence that it was the Lord of the Sabbath that raised me from my weakness and restored me to life."

We gather from the context that the poor man went immediately to the temple. How beautiful is this trait in his character! He sees Divinity in his cure; recognizes the Lord of the Temple in the restoration he has experienced; and instinctively, after reaping so gracious a blessing, he goes to that holy place, that there he may openly, before the world, render

“The Healing Pools at Bethesda.” 67

praise and thanksgiving to Him Who had compassion on him and delivered him.

The world is an hospital, the whole earth is an asylum. In the midst of life we are in death; our life at best is but frailty. Life is a perpetual crisis. “Blessed is that servant who shall be found when his Lord cometh waiting and watching, and working.” The sick and impotent multitude were “waiting for the moving of the waters.” Every life has some opportunity given to it. Every one of us has a door opened, we have seen the index-finger lifted up, we have beheld an angel beckoning.

“For the angel went down at a certain season into the pool.” O beautiful angel of mercy, and healing, and salvation! Christ Jesus has all power. He speaks and it stands fast. He commands and the disease disappears. He breathes and the sun is dim. He breathes again, and the sun increases in lustre. He says: “Let there be light, and there is light.”

This picture has two sides, one dark, the other bright. On the one side we see what sin has done and is doing, what loneliness and suffering there is among the sons of men.

On the other hand, we see whence cometh

help, the light of hope and the hand of un-
failing power. In the sick man waiting at the pool
we see the one; in Christ, the Restorer, we see
the other.

“ There is no name like Christ’s for us. It
is more imperial than Cæsar’s, more musical
than Beethoven’s, more eloquent than Cicero’s.
It throbs with all life. It weeps with all
pathos. It groans with all pain. It stoops with
all condescension. It breathes with all per-
fume.” “ Who has such an eye to see our need,
such a lip to kiss away our sorrow, such a hand
to snatch us out of the fire, such a foot to
trample our enemies, such a heart to embrace
all our necessities ? ”

CHAPTER IX.

“ THE MIRACLES PERFORMED BY JESUS CHRIST.”

THERE are three great expressions by which miracles are known. First, “ A miracle, or a wonder ; second, “ a sign ” ; third, “ a power.”

The first name is that of “ a wonder.” This presents the miracle in one of its aspects, but in its weakest and poorest aspect, and implies simply the impression which the performance of the miracle is to make upon the senses of him that sees it.

It merely implies that, by the act just witnessed, wonder, awe, amazement is created ; all that is designed in this character to do is to break the slumber of the senses, to disturb the continuity of apathy, and to rouse man to a perception of a presence greater than himself. Hence, the very result of the performance of a miracle is to arrest the attention, to awaken thought of those that are present, and in the midst of whom the miracle is done.

The second name given to a miracle is a higher and more expressive one—"a sign." All signs are not miracles, but all miracles are signs. A sign means a substance. Wherever you say there is a sign, you imply that there is something that is signified.

When, therefore, a miracle is performed, it is, at this point, a sign of the presence of God. As a wonder it startles; as a sign, it teaches; the one strikes, the other speaks; and hence, a miracle is not only startling to the senses, but it is significant and instructive to the mind. In other words, it not only creates awe, amazement, arrest, but it conveys meaning and instruction, the chiefest point of which is, that men here trace the finger, the footprints and the marks of Deity.

The third name by which a miracle is known in Scripture is "a power." The word is sometimes rendered "works," sometimes "mighty works," and sometimes it is rendered "powers"; and it is so called, because a miracle is the manifestation of power; not necessarily of a greater power than is already manifested in Creation, but the manifestation of that power in a new formula, in an unexpected shape, in

a way which we have not seen it so manifested before, and which, therefore, is more completely fitted to arrest the mind.

“ The Water Made Wine.”—St. John’s Gospel, second chapter and tenth verse. We read of the sense of wonder in the mind of the chief person at the feast. “ And he saith, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now.”

“ There is some mysterious change,” he says; “ this is a new phenomena; I am astonished, surprised; something more than is usual is here.” The “ power ” of the miracle was felt when that which was water blushed into wine, as the Lord looked upon it.

The miracle was also “ a sign,” for it was so full a manifestation of the glory of Jesus, that it is said, “ His disciples believed on Him.” We have here the three characteristics of a miracle embodied in the account given by St. John.

Now a miracle itself is not a mere action, or a mere operation of nature, and yet it need not imply any more power than is already put forth

in creation. For instance, in casting a handful of wheat into the soil, and making it grow up till it produces two or three bushels, there is as much power of God manifested as there is in making a few loaves of bread grow into a few thousand.

There is the same power exerted in making a seed cast into the soil grow up into many seeds as there is in making one loaf grow into many loaves. The difference between what we call a natural thing and what God pronounces a miraculous thing is not so much the extent of power that is manifested as the manner of the manifestation of that power. Thus we read in the Epistle to the Romans that the invisible things of God "are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and God-Head.

So that all Creation, we are told, in its action, as clearly intimates and proves the power of God as any miracle, strictly and properly so called, could prove it.

Then where is the difference, you ask, between a miracle and the natural laws, as they are called, or operations of nature?

I answer, the difference arises from the new

and strange formula, shape, mode, or manner in which that power is put forth.

Another difference arises from the fact that the miracle of the seed cast into the earth growing into many bushels is a miracle occurring every year, and witnessed by every individual upon earth; but the miracle of one loaf being multiplied into ten, twelve, or twenty, was a thing that occurred only once, and was witnessed by a few; and to that few only, and by their testimony to others, is that miracle addressed.

The water coming from the clouds, and descending from springs and rocks, proves abundantly the power of God.

That the ocean should be a mighty cistern, that the sands and rocks of the earth should constitute so many filters, that the water should be constantly supplied through these for us to drink, that the steam which evaporates from the sea should shape itself into clouds, and meeting with cold currents of air, should become condensed, and fall in the shape of prolific and fertilizing showers; all this is an evidence of the power of God.

But the “ water turned into wine ” is not

the manifestation of a greater power, but it is the manifestation of the same power, relieving the monotony which has dulled the impressiveness of the former! lifting, as it were, the veil under which God works, enabling us to see, not dead laws which the philosopher sees, but a living hand put forth at the springs of nature, controlling, originating, and creating all. Thus, then, the water from the clouds, falling upon the soil, ascending the trunk of the vine, and ultimately issuing in grapes, and those grapes formed into wine, is one process, and in every stage of that process God's power is manifested; and when God turns water into wine all that He does differently is to shorten the process.

The ordinary process is that the water in the sea should rise into the cloud, then fall from the cloud in copious showers, give refreshment to the vine and fertility to the earth, develop itself in sap, in blossom, in grapes, in fermentation, in wine,—that is the long process; the short process is, the water turning into wine at Christ's word; but it is equally Christ in both; it is equally Divine power in both, only we have got so accustomed to the long process that we

say it is the natural thing, and are so little accustomed to the short process that the senses are startled and the mind is awakened.

The difference is here, too—that in the one case we see a succession of continuous causes, and in the other we see the actor come forth Himself, lay aside the machinery by which He has acted heretofore, and in one word say: “ Let this water be wine ”; and, recognizing its Creator and its God, it becomes so.

A miracle is not a thing against or contrary to nature, but is a thing above and beyond what we call nature.

It is an addition to a new and a nobler law to the law that previously was; it is not the destruction of any existing law, but it is super-adding to that law a more perfect and glorious one.

Thus, when I raise my arm, the power of gravitation ought to make that arm instantly fall; but when I keep that arm up it is not by the destruction of the law of gravitation, but it is the super-adding of a higher law, the great law of life.

So, we can conceive that when Christ does a miracle, it is not the extinction of that which

is really a right law, but it is the bringing from heaven a nobler law, to be super-added to, and render more glorious the law that was.

Let us look for a moment at the first miracle which Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. His first miracle was not a miracle of tremendous power, but one of quiet and gentle beneficence.

The Saviour's first miracle dawned in the form of a nuptial benediction upon a young couple, beginning the journey, and about to attempt the battle of life. He heightened domestic joys before He went forth to mitigate domestic sorrows. He began rejoicing with them that do rejoice, before He went on His pilgrimage to "Weep with them that weep."

St. John says that "there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee," an incident which had occurred within a comparatively small circle, but destined to be felt in a much wider area.

Jesus had chosen His disciples, and was present with them at the wedding. While the feast proceeded the wine seemed to fail. "They have no wine," said Mary, the Mother of Jesus. "Woman!" he replied, "what have I to do with thee?" The words at first sound

harsh and severe by their seeming roughness and brevity.

He does not call her “Mother,” because, in circumstances such as these, she was His mother no longer; but the address “Woman” was respectful, and was addressed to the queenliest and the gentlest of all women. And Mary, knowing Him, said to the servants, “Do whatever He shall tell you.” Now there were in the banqueting hall six large water-pots or vases, for the purification in use among the Jews. Jesus said: “Fill the water-pots with water.” And when they were filled, He said: “Take, or draw out now, and bear to the governor of the feast.” They were brought, and the governor having tasted, found them full of delicious wine.

Such was the first miracle wrought by Jesus, “changing water into wine.” His disciples, who had followed Him, after this miracle believed fully in Him, and the fame of the miracle spread abroad. The Gospel does not relate the miracles of our Lord in regular succession, and perhaps it does not record them all.

It is interesting to observe how wonderfully a sense of the completeness of Christ’s power

had seized the people. That He had turned water into wine was proof enough to the nobleman that He could also turn disease into health.

Before leaving this beautiful wedding-scene, and the miracle performed there, we observe that Christ's glory shone forth in it,—shone forth as the Lord of Creation, and as the Law-giver to His creatures; but we inquire, What may be the issue of the exposition of this circumstance, that you shall admire His power, be charmed with His mercy, believe in His sacrifice, rest upon His intercession, and anticipate that day when the marriage festival shall not be that of a poor couple in Cana of Galilee, but when the Bridegroom shall be the Lord of Glory, and all redeemed saints shall constitute His chosen and beautiful bride, and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb shall come, and we too shall be among those who have made themselves ready?

Another miracle, namely, "The nobleman's son." A nobleman's son was sick. This noble man, it seems, was a person of great rank and dignity, but though high in rank, he shared in the common ills of life. Disease finds its way into every rank. The nobleman, though one of the greatest in the land, had a sick son, and

so far was placed on a level with the poorest of the people. That sick son became his greatest mercy and blessing. If this nobleman's son had not been sick, then the father would never have found a Saviour. The nobleman having heard of the fame of Jesus, and of His miraculous power, “he besought Him that He would come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.”

Let us learn here a very practical lesson, namely, that where there is faith in the power, there may be something of dictation as to the method. The nobleman did not see that the power which could heal was independent of time and space. He needed to be taught this, and the lesson was given him under circumstances which would save it from oblivion. “He went about doing good,” says the Gospel, marking His path with blessings, consoling every sorrow, healing every disease and every infirmity; and these were the proofs of His divinity which He gave to men.

The nobleman's prayer was “Come down ere my child die.” He believed Jesus had power to heal, but he believed it was a limited power, that it was restricted to personal con-

tact with the object. Jesus replied to him in what seemed to be a rebuke: "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." It is evident that the nobleman was driven to Christ by the sense, the foreboding sense, of the loss of his son, and not drawn to Christ by a perception of the blessings that Christ had to give. Yet the Lord Jesus revived him. The nobleman was overwhelmed with a sense of the suffering of his son that he scarcely heard the rebuke.

How true to human nature is this! How like what we are! He could scarcely listen to the Divine lesson, so mighty and strong within him was the human and the paternal sympathy.

Herein we are taught the secret of persevering prayer. The nobleman continued to cry for relief, he prayed fervently, prayed constantly, "Come down ere my child die."

Christ answered the nobleman's prayer, but not in the way that the nobleman expected. So will He do with us. Christ then said to the nobleman, "Go thy way, thy son liveth."

What was true then is true now. Christ's word spoken at Cana provoked its echo at Capernaum; sickness fled from his victim, and

left this memorial in its flight: “Truly this was the Son of God.” Christ is now in His holy place, and we are upon the earth; but if His word can travel five miles and heal that nobleman’s son, the same word can travel from His throne in the loftiest heaven, cleave its way, unspent in its transit, unweakened by the distance, and go into the sick man’s heart, into the dead man’s grave, and into the guilty man’s conscience, and speak words of resurrection and life. There is a connecting and transmissive wire between heaven and earth; there is a communication with the skies and the very throne of God.

What adds to the glory of this miracle performed by Our Lord is this: The same word that cured the sickness of the son, cured the scepticism of the father, for it is added: “And the nobleman believed.” This teaches us that no man ever interests himself in the welfare of another without receiving a reflex blessing in doing so. It is God’s law, that in watering others, we shall be watered ourselves.

CHAPTER X.

“ THE MIRACLES PERFORMED BY JESUS CHRIST.”

(*Continued*).

WE shall not follow with a discussion of all the miracles wrought by Jesus Christ, but select a few of the more prominent, so as to show that the Lord possessed power to control the forces of nature, and at His bidding or touch, the very forces of nature are made to serve a higher and a nobler end.

Hence, we call attention to “The hungry multitude, and how they were fed,” “to the lepers, and how they were healed,” “to the blind, and how they received their sight.”

The people thronged eagerly in crowds to hear the word of the Son of God. In vain did He retire to the desert to avoid the multitude. They followed Him even there, forgetting to provide themselves with food. Poor people, they were like a flock without a shepherd! There was no one to teach them the way to heaven, and as Jesus came to be their Guide,

and their Shepherd, He could not cast them off. And He said: “ I have compassion on the multitude, for behold, they have followed Me for three days.” “ I will not send them away fasting, lest, perhaps they faint on the way.”

Addressing Himself to His disciples, He asked them: “ Have you any bread ? ” And they said: “ Master, we have only five loaves and two fishes, but what is that for such a multitude ? ”

“ No matter,” said the Lord, “ make the people sit down, and bring Me the loaves and fishes.” The disciples did as they were told, whereupon the Saviour blessed the loaves and fishes, and broke, and gave to them to distribute to the people, and after all had eaten there yet remained twelve baskets filled with the fragments which were left. Our Lord performed a similar miracle on another occasion, when He fed four thousand men with seven loaves and a few fishes. The feeding of the five thousand with a few loaves and fishes is undoubtedly one of the most striking of our Saviour’s miracles. It was performed in the presence of five thousand witnesses. These were not only spectators, but they were the recipients of the favor shown,

and they watched the whole procedure with vigilance and astonishment, for they were greatly benefited, as they were refreshed and strengthened when weary with hunger and fatigue. This miracle of Our Lord was also remarkable from the open and sensible manner in which it was performed.

All present not only saw the food grow in their hands, but they saw it increasing in the hands of those who were near to them.

They saw the process continuing for some time, till the five thousand men, women and children were refreshed and fully satisfied.

They then heard Our Saviour give orders to His apostles to "gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost."

They saw these collected, and they then saw that twelve basketsful were taken up. The greatness of the miracle was not so much in the number of persons supplied with food as in the amount which was left over, after all had been satisfied.

The conclusion was obvious and irresistible, and plainly showed that the power that had wrought the miracle was divine.

This was the only miracle of our Saviour

that is recorded by all the four Evangelists.

It is, however, very remarkable that the effect produced on the minds of the scribes and Pharisees was not admiration and conviction, respecting the power and character of Jesus Christ, but merely a selfish desire that He would continue to support them by such miracles, and repeat the miracle of the “ manna ” given to the Israelites in the Wilderness. But though this miracle did not produce the proper effect upon them, it clearly showed that He Who had performed it was no less than the Son of the living God.

It is quite evident that He Who could miraculously increase the bread to satisfy the hungry multitude, is the same God Who multiplies the seed put into the ground, and Who makes the grass to grow for the use of man and beast.

We dig up the earth, and sow the seed therein, but it is God Who fructifies that seed and causes it to grow. When it has appeared above the ground, it is His rain that waters it, His air and light that nourishes it, and His sun that ripens it.

Such is the perfect order of creation. Such

the wisdom and harmony, the variety and unity which pervades all the works of God.

Not only has He given in abundance for the supply of all our wants, but He has also provided munificently for man's pleasure. Nature is, as it were, a magnificent table, spread by God, as a perpetual banquet for the children of men.

Not only does Jesus Christ perform miracles in satisfying the needs of the body, but He displays His marvelous power in healing diseases. Take the case of "The Lepers."

The superhuman power of the Saviour, and His great goodness, drew around Him all the sick, the infirm, and the afflicted, and He healed them. A poor leper came to Him, and said: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me whole." Jesus said: "I will, be thou whole, but go show thyself to the priests, and make the offering commanded by the law of Moses."

One day He cured ten lepers, of whom one only remained to thank Him, and He was a Samaritan. The Saviour was deeply moved by the ingratitude of the nine who did not return to give thanks.

“ The Miracles Performed.” 87

“ And He said, were there not ten lepers cured?” “ Where are the nine?” So odious is ingratitude before God and man.

Take the case of “ The Blind Man.”

A poor blind man, having learned that Jesus was passing by, cried after Him, saying: “ Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”

The disciples would have driven him away, but he only cried the more, “ Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus asked him: “ What wilt thou that I do unto thee?” The blind man replied: “ Lord, that I may receive my sight.” “ Receive thy sight,” said Jesus unto him, “ thy faith hath made thee whole.”

And immediately the blind man opened his eyes and saw, and he followed Jesus, giving thanks to God. But this was not the only blind man to whom Jesus gave sight. In Jerusalem He met one who had been blind from his birth. The disciples, observing him, asked this question: “ Master, who hath sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?”

The Saviour answered: “ Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; he is born blind in order that the works of God may be made

manifest in him." Jesus then spat upon the ground, made clay of the spittle, anointed the man's eyes, and said: "Go wash in the pool of Siloam." The man answered by saying: "I went, I washed, and I see."

How did the blind man receive his sight? The Lord said: "Go wash in the pool of Siloam"; the man did as he was bidden. This perhaps, was to try his obedience; just as in the almost analogous case of the miracle performed on Naaman the Syrian, concerning which we read that "Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper." This man, however, in favorable contrast, obeyed the command, and went, and washed and saw.

The man, we read, "Saw"; and the moment he saw he returned to his home. No doubt his parents, his friends, and his neighbors were amazed to see a man, a well-known

blind beggar, now in the possession of his sight. Some said, “It is he.” How very natural! Others said, “It is very like him!” A blind man walks with his head back, and puts his foot or his hand foremost, to feel that the way is clear, but the moment his eyesight is restored the head resumes its natural position. Not only is the face altered, but the whole shape, tone, mannerism of the man undergoes a complete transformation.

You can, therefore, easily conceive how naturally some of his neighbors said, “This is he,” and others said “It is like him,” but he said, “I am he.” They doubted his identity, and asked him how the change took place. He said: “A man (for he was not yet convinced that Christ was the Messiah) made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash; and I went and washed, and I received my sight.”

We shall not continue the dialogue which took place between the man and the Pharisees concerning the miracle, but we rest upon the fact that a miracle was performed, and that Jesus performed it.

As for the metaphysical, speculative, psycho-

logical questions which men would raise, I cannot enter into these; but so long as the eyes of men are opened, I will mention the Physician's name.

These facts are at hand every day. Such miracles were wrought once for all, they are being accomplished morning by morning, night by night; the one thing men are now recovering is their eyesight. We shall miss the genius of the whole thought if we limit the word eyesight to some bodily function or exercise.

Sight means larger vision, keener perception, an awakening of all the faculties of the mind to a state of keen, exact, complete penetration. "Lord, that I may receive my sight!"

"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

May the Great Physician save us from looking at surfaces, outsides, transient shapes and symbols, and give us that peculiar penetrating vision that sees without staring, and that knows afar off what lights are coming up on the horizon.

“The Miracles Performed.” 91

Christ always completes His work: “Jesus heard that they had cast the man out of the synagogue,” because he acknowledged the fact that a great miracle had been performed upon him; “and when Jesus had found him”—how did He happen to go that way? For the same reason that He went the way in the first instance.

He knows all the roads, all the byways and highways. He knows all the roads to human dwellings and human halting-places.

“Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?”

Now we come to the real pith and purpose of Christ’s mission—“Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” Was it not enough that the man could see? Was it not enough that the man had a sound body? He had ears, and eyes, and hands; he could smell the flowers, he could touch the very bloom of creation. Was it not enough?

No. Jesus Christ must needs go to the inner man, and ask the all-involving question, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?”

It is in this belief we see and feel and realize

life. Without faith we cannot fly, we cannot walk, we cannot reach heaven.

The man answered and said: "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on him?" We know some men by their tone of voice, some by their touch. This man seemed to realize already in whose presence he was.

"Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen, and it is He that talketh with thee." Oh, sweetest words! He might have known Who it was. "Never man spake like this man. What a voice! What tender sympathy! What suggestion! What music!

"It is He that talketh with thee," and the man said: "Lord, I believe," and he stood there—a man!

CHAPTER XI.

“ THE MIRACLES PERFORMED BY JESUS CHRIST.”
(*Continued*).

WHILST the Pharisees and the doctors of the law, inflated with their vain science, reasoned to no end on the miracles of the Saviour, and their hearts all withered with their own incredulity, the grateful multitude adored and blessed the Son of God.

There is something inexpressibly touching in the simple, artless faith of those who went with such entire confidence to implore His aid, and also in that inexhaustible goodness which wrought miracles at their request. One of the most affecting examples of this confidence in the power and goodness of the Saviour is that seen in the case of the “centurion” who implored the Lord to cure his dying servant. “And when Jesus was entering into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant

lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." And Jesus said: "I will come and heal him."

This centurion was a Roman officer, and was called "a proselyte at the gate." He was one of those Gentiles who felt the worthlessness of heathenism, the absurdity of its polytheistic rites, and saw in the doctrine of the Jews, interpolated as they were, mutilated as they had become, a response to what was deepest and most earnest in his heart; he abjured the heathenism which could not satisfy him, and clave to that living religion which the Pharisees had overlaid, but from which truth still spake forth in much of its primeval purity and brightness.

He was of the same class, plainly, as the centurion spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles: "Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band; a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." Just previous to the Advent of Christ there were many of these proselytes making their appearance, which indicated the development of great purpose. They were the links that con-

nected the Jew with the Gentile world; they were, as it were, those intermediate persons who were in communion with the Jews upon one hand, and in contact with the Gentiles upon the other hand; and were the premonitory signs and symptoms of that great fusion of the human family, in which there should be neither Jew nor Gentile, nor Greek nor barbarian, nor bond nor free, but Christ should be in all.

It is a remarkable fact, that whenever God is about to take a great step in the development of His Kingdom upon earth, He always gives preliminary signs of its approach.

The great fact that was to occur when Christ came was the fusion of the Jews and Gentiles into one redeemed family. The preliminary foreshadows, flung back upon the world from that sun before he rose above the horizon, were these proselytes at the gate—men who were not Jews, because they did not conform to all the rites of the Jews, and who were not Gentiles, because they rejected the polytheistic religion of the Gentiles; but who, therefore, constituted the connecting links and bands between the two, and the pioneers of that brighter and better fellowship, in which Jew and Gentile

should be lost in the family name, "Christian," and Christ be all in all.

This centurion, then, who was thus "a proselyte at the gate," came to Christ, as it is recorded in one Gospel, or sent to Christ by his friends, as it is recorded in another, and what one does by his representative he does himself; for you will often see this interchange of terms used in the New Testament.

But this sense of unworthiness was so great, that he said: "I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof."

This Christian soldier came to Jesus, and asked Him to interfere in behalf of his sick slave. He was a brave man, for such a Roman soldier must be; he was a humble man, for such a Christian always is; and he was a kind, an affectionate, and a loving man, who felt an interest in the health and happiness of his poor sick slave.

Jesus said: "I will come and heal him." "Nay, I am a man under authority, and am not worthy, but just speak the word only."

The Centurion little knew what he was saying. "The Word"—that would have been beautiful and complete—"the word only."

There he falls into softness and weakness; he shows the stoop which proves him to be but a man. “The word only.” The word is the authority, the word is the power, the word is the soul, the word is the incarnation. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Your word is yourself. Do not imagine that your speech is something independent of your individuality; your speech is your soul in utterance.

When a man speaks earnestly, the word is the very fire and flame of his heart. Jesus Christ could not but speak earnestly, so His quietest word held the thunder, the lightning, as the dew-drop holds it, for there is force enough in that one dew-drop, if rightly touched, to rend the mountain and throw down the altar stair that faced heavenward. Let your yea be yea, and your nay nay—let your word be your true self, and it will always be, according to the degree of your capacity and influence, with authority and power.

Now it is Jesus Christ’s turn to speak. O that we could have seen that marred and sorrow-riven face when he lifted it up and marveled. “Verily I say unto you, I have not

found so great faith, no, not in Israel." A great wave of emotion swelled his heart, and a great love was pulsating and throbbing within Him for the healing and salvation of men.

The centurion's servant was healed at the word of Jesus Christ.

But there are still greater miracles to tell. It was indeed very marvellous to open blind eyes, cleanse lepers, and heal the sick; but still more marvellous to raise the dead.

Take the case of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. There are three instances of this kind recorded in the Gospels. "The Daughter of Jairus," the "Widow's Son of Nain," and Lazarus.

We shall take that of Lazarus as sufficient for our present purpose. The scene of this miracle was at "Bethany," the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. There is something beautiful in this allusion. I have no doubt that Bethany had given birth to some heroes, poets, statesmen, philosophers; and if some rabbi had been asked what was the greatest glory of Bethany, he would have pointed to some tall, tapering spire, some exquisite specimen of architectural grandeur, or he would

have unfolded the page that contained the names of some great poet who was born in it, or some illustrious hero who bled and suffered for his country.

But these characteristics are all restricted to this world. The sounds of the fame of heroes, poets and philosophers are spent before they reach the skies, but the sigh of the broken heart is heard in heaven louder than the seven thunders; the simple petition of a contrite spirit rises to God swifter than an angel's wing can clip, and rises higher than an archangel's pinions can soar. So here the only trace in the history of Bethany that had its reflection beside God's throne was this: That two sisters lived there with their brother Lazarus.

It was not the town of the hero, not the town of the poet; but the town of Mary and her sister Martha. These two fair, and frail and fragile flowers were in the sight of God the fairest things in Bethany.

There is another trait. Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus were bosom friends of Jesus—for Jesus, let us never forget, was a Man. As a man He had His friends. There is not a sympathy that nestles in the heart of a saint that

Jesus had not in all its purity; there is not a sorrow that hangs like a cloud over the broken and wounded spirit of a believer that Jesus did not realize, for He was our Elder Brother—our great High Priest, touched with the feelings of our infirmities.”

We read in John's Gospel: “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. When he heard, therefore, that Lazarus was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was.”

This seems to startle us. It seems like a disappointment. How can it be explained? Mary and Martha had sent for Jesus, but still He tarried. Jesus said to His disciples that “the sickness should not be unto death,” but that it should be “for the glory of God.” When Jesus arrived at Bethany, Martha meets Him with this lamentation: “If Thou hadst been here, our brother had not died.”

And Mary joined in the same, sad strain. This indicated faith on the part of these two women. But the “ifs” of man are the decrees of God. The Jews, we read, followed Mary to the tomb. “When Jesus, therefore, saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which

came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was touched.”

It is added by the sacred writer that whilst Jesus was indignant at the havoc that sin had made, indignant at the spoils of the enemy, “ Jesus wept.” It is possible that He wept as a friend over a friend; for we can never forget that Jesus was a Man—a sympathetic Man. He was truly a “ Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

“ Jesus wept!” What a mixture in this miracle of the sympathy of man and of the majesty of God! The Jews exclaimed, as they saw Jesus weeping, “ Behold how He loved him.”

We then read, “ Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I know that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.”

And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice: “ Lazarus, come forth.”

Those words thrilled once more through that region of impenetrable darkness which separates us from this world and the world to come;

and scarcely were they spoken when, like a spectre, from the rocky tomb issued a figure, swathed indeed in its white and ghastly cements, bound hand and foot, but not livid, not horrible—the figure of a youth with healthy blood of a restored life flowing through his veins; of a life restored—so tradition tells us—for thirty more long years to life, and light, and love.

The words “Come forth” shall go down into nature’s heights, and receive a magnificent response!

Lazarus heard the voice, and came forth, and Jesus said: “Loose him and let him go.” The miracle is complete, Christ is Lord indeed.

CHAPTER XII.

“ THE DISCIPLES IN THE STORM.”

MANY of the miracles to which we have called attention had reference to the healing of the diseases of the body and the raising of the dead to life again, which proved Jesus Christ to be “the Resurrection and the Life.” We now turn to the sixth chapter of John’s Gospel, and we there see His power over Nature.

We again ask the question: “What is a miracle?”

And we answer: “It is just God’s Omnipotence becoming a pedestal or candlestick on which to plant God’s truth; it is Omnipotent beneficence coming down from heaven, pointing to a doctrine, or specifying a person, and saying that the one is of God, and the other is God manifesting Himself in the flesh.”

At such a crisis as Christ stilling the storm, that a miracle should be performed was natural, but when that crisis had passed away,

that the miracle should cease is no less natural.

When the fruit is ripe, the calyx or the petals that surround it drop away; when the building is well founded and complete the scaffolding is taken down. It is so with miracles.

We have now come to that era when it is not more power that man needs to see, but more grace that man needs to have and enjoy.

Let us now turn our attention to the beautiful miracle recorded in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, and also recorded in the fourteenth chapter of St. Matthew.

In the case of feeding the multitude the disciples rashly undertook to give advice to the Master; they rushed into sacred and forbidden places. Out of their urgent cleverness they had evolved the suggestion which pleased them greatly.

We have seen how Jesus Christ treated the smart ignorance of his shallow counsellors, and with what infinite beneficence He confounded the notion of sending anybody away from Himself to find anything that could do human life the very least good.

Now the scene is changed. Jesus Christ leaves the disciples to manage their ship, just

to show them how cleverly they can do without Him. They wanted to take the bigger case into their own hands, and He would allow them so to do, but to meet them by gracious compromise He gives them a ship to take care of, and in this they miserably failed. Thus He always rebukes busy meddlers with His administration; He gives them something to do by their own skill and power, and shows them by many a disaster what it is to take away from its divine centre, and to conduct life on a wrong principle.

He allows us to make little experiments, but it is well for us if He be looking on from the mountain-top.

Jesus went up into a mountain apart to pray. We wonder how a grand outward ministry can be sustained. The answer is simple in its sublimity. Every outward ministry that is massive, life-taxing, is sustained by mountain-climbing, solitary communion with God, and soul-fellowship with the Father.

If the Master could not do without lonely prayer, the servant surely cannot dispense with secret devotion.

Turning now our attention to the disciples,

we find that their management of the ship was a poor management. The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary. They who were going to manage the multitude were unable to manage their own ship. Our helplessness ought to be the basis of our best education. If we cannot manage the little how can we manage the great? Thus light is let in upon the administration of the universe. If we are in trouble with one little ship, how then can we control all the ships of the sea, all the star-vessels that sail through the infinite firmament, all the hosts of men that gather on the face of the earth, all the legions of angels that people the cities above, all the forces that burn and throb in every line of the immeasurable universe?

We may see how great the Lord is by seeing how little we are ourselves. "On the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." Whilst the disciples were buffeting the storm, Jesus was praying for them on the hill-side unknown to them. I think there is something exquisitely beautiful in this, that Christ does not wait until we are in trouble, and then pray for us; but that He

prays for us first. “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, before Satan hath got liberty to sift thee as wheat.” As long as faith remains, let the storm be ever so severe, faith is the victory “that overcometh the world.”

Such, then, we suppose to be the substance of Christ’s intercessory prayer for His people in the midst of affliction.

We read in the Gospels that when Christ came to His disciples, He came walking on the waves of the sea.

Moses went through the channel of a divided sea; but Christ walked upon the bosom of the undivided sea, turning its waves into a pavement, and its waters into a promenade, indicating that the Earth-lord and the Sea-lord of the universe was present there, and that nature obeyed its lord and maker.

Does not this teach us that just as the waves of the sea were under Christ’s feet, so all difficulties, all trials, all that His people fear, are under His feet still. Sin, death and Satan are under Christ’s feet; they are conquered foes.

Look again at the time of Christ’s appearance upon the sea. The ancient division of the night was in three watches, but here the Roman

division is adopted, which was into four watches.

Christ allowed His disciples to struggle in the storm, to get only half across the sea; and then He came to them at the fourth watch, or about three o'clock in the morning. We inquire: "Was that the best time for Him to come?" Yes, it was. He came at the moment when it was most for His glory, and most for their good.

He came at the moment when "Man's extremity was God's opportunity and man's deliverance was God's glory." We see, also, that when Christ comes to His disciples, how often are they mistaken.

It is written, that when Jesus went to His disciples, they "saw Him walking on the sea, and were troubled, saying, 'It is a Spirit.'" The Jews had a peculiar belief that the spirits of the departed visited their relatives long after death, and in this instance the thought of a spirit of some departed one was coming to them. Why did they misapply it? They had known, and seen, and heard Jesus before. When people are in trouble they generally look at what way they think it possible for them to see,

and if they do not see deliverance coming in that way, they leap to the conclusion that there is no escape at all.

These poor disciples thought there was but one way of escape from the storm, and that was to reach the other side of the sea; but when Christ came to deliver them by a new and unexpected way, they misapprehended Him. “ Jesus went unto them walking on the water.” If this act stood alone, it might affright us.

We must read every miracle as part of some great wonder; then it will come to us not with violent and mighty shock; but it will fall into the rhythmic march of life that could never be measured by human calculation. Yet all past miracles are lost upon us.

We must have a present miracle. The disciples therefore could not live upon the miracles of yesterday, they must have the miracle of that particular hour. So must it be with ourselves—we cannot live upon historical wonders, we can only be nourished by daily revelations of divine power and continual manifestations of divine care and love. Life is a continual miracle. The bread we eat is always broken by divine hands. If we consider the

bread that is in our hands, its history and origin, we shall find that it was broken by divine, all-blessing hands, and is itself a miracle. The disciples said: "It is a spirit." But how beautifully does our Lord reply to them, "It is I, be not afraid."

That voice which sounded so musically upon the streets of Jerusalem, which had spoken such words of power, that voice rose, and rang out its own peculiar melody amid the roar of the winds and the noise of the sea-waves, and carried consolation to their drooping hearts. "It is I, be not afraid."

Their sorrow was instantly turned into joy, their faith into absolute assurance, and they were perfectly comforted. There was something beautiful and very delightful in this as a lesson for Christ's followers in all ages. Why does not God show Himself?

God is a Spirit. It is not enough to see the figure; the sight is often misleading; so the ear must be charmed, the voice can do what the eye fails to accomplish. So Jesus said, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid." You cannot read the sermon, you must hear it. Some of us cannot read the Bible, we must hear it read by

“ The Disciples in the Storm.” 111

a sympathetic voice, every tone of which is a subtle suggestion or a profound exposition.

The ministry of the human voice is of God's appointment. It charms itself into ineffable concurring, apocalyptic variety and suggestion; it booms, it whispers, it commands, it soothes, it thunders with strength, it prays with piteousness of sympathy.

The Gospel, therefore, is given in charge of the human voice. Preach the Gospel, it can never be read, but in a secondary and introductory sense it must be heard. The voice of Jesus was recognized when His figure was indistinguishable.

In the sick chamber it is pleasant to hear the voice saying: “ It is I, be not afraid.” When depositing the dust of our friends in the grave, it is comforting to hear the words, “ It is I, be not afraid ”; and to read upon the tombstone, in the coming fore-light of the resurrection morning, “ Be not afraid, I am the Resurrection and the Life.” At the great last day, it is recorded, “ that all that are in their graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth.”

We read that “ When Jesus was received into the ship the wind ceased and there was a

great calm." What practical lesson do we learn from this? It is that when Christ is in the heart it is life. Christ in the conscience, it is legislation. Christ in the understanding, it is light; that harmony takes the place of discord, sunshine that of cloud, and happiness in place of misery. Christ in the heart will give peace; Christ in the home will light it up with new radiance; Christ in a nation will give it stability; and Christ in the world will purify it.

The result of this miracle was that the disciples worshiped the Saviour. To sum up, we may classify the miracles as follows: First, "Miracles of Love," such as the "Raising of the dead," "Curing of diseases, and healing the sick"; second, "Miracles of Power," such as "Creating bread to feed the hungry multitude," "Destroying the fig-tree," "Walking on the sea, stilling the tempest, changing water into wine, multiplying the fishes, and in passing through the angry crowd."

Here, then, we have healed suffering, healed heart-ache, healed sin, and the healed sin is the greatest miracle of all.

Thus all the miracles of Christ fall into

“ The Disciples in the Storm.” 113

beauteous rhythmic relationship. In reality there was but one miracle, and that one miracle was Himself, His Incarnation, His Life and Death, and Resurrection from the Dead.

CHAPTER XIII.

“THE GREAT TEACHER.”

THE general character of His doctrine was Divine in its basis, and simple in its form. Teaching was the great business of the life of Christ during the days of His public ministry.

He was sent to teach, and to preach the doctrine of the Kingdom. The speaker in the Book of Job was undoubtedly thinking of the Great Teacher when he asked the question: “Who teacheth like Him.”

And He is the Redeemer, of Whom the prophet Isaiah was telling when he said: “He would teach us to profit, and would lead us by the way that we should go.” And Nicodemus said of Him: “That He was a Teacher sent from God.” St. Matthew tells us that “Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues.” When Jesus Christ was brought before Pilate, His enemies brought this charge

against Him, that He had been “ teaching throughout all Jewry.”

In St. Luke’s Gospel it is said that “ the elders of the people came unto Him as He was teaching.” And St. John, in the seventh chapter, says: “ Now, about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught.” And the Jews marveled, saying, “ How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ? ” And Jesus answered them and said: “ My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me.”

And so we now come to look at the life of Christ from this point of view, namely, as a Teacher. When we read in John’s Gospel that the chief priests sent some of their officers to take Him prisoner, and bring Him unto them, the officers went, and listened, and then joined the company who were listening to His teaching.

The words of the Great Teacher had such an effect upon them that they could not think of touching Him. So they went back to their masters without their prisoner, and said: “ Never man spake like this man.” The public ministry of Christ began when He was thirty years of age, and lasted three years. It

was full of lights and shadows. It was diversified with sunshine and gloom. It was lulled into calms, and swept by storms. But out of His words and works have come the blessing of eternal sunshine.

Only a small fractional part of His words were left upon record, but those we have are the embodiment of wisdom and of power. They are transcendent and immortal. They are spirit and they are life.

“ From heaven He came, of heaven He spoke,
To heaven He led His followers' way ;
Dark clouds of gloomy night He broke,
Unveiling an Immortal day.”

We here note the perfect originality and independence of His teaching. We have a great many men who are original, in the sense of being originators, within a certain boundary of educated thought. But the originality of Christ is uneducated.

That He draws nothing from the stores of learning can be seen at a glance. The impression we have in reading His instructions justifies to the letter the language of His contemporaries when they say: “ This man hath never

learned.” There is nothing in any of His allusions or forms of speech that indicates learning. Indeed, there is nothing in Him that belongs to His age or country—no opinion, or task or prejudice.

The attempts that have been made to show that He borrowed from the Persians, or the Essenes, or the Egyptians have all so palpably failed, as not even to require a deliberate answer.

If He is simply a man, as we hear, then He is most certainly a new and singular kind of man, never before heard of; one who visibly is quite as great a miracle in the world as if He were not a man.

We can see for ourselves, in the simple directness and freedom of His teachings, that whatever He advances is for Himself.

Shakespeare, for instance, whom we name as being probably the most creative and original spirit the world has ever produced, one of the class, too, that are called self-made men, is yet tinged in all his works with human learning. His glory is, indeed, that so much of what is great in history and historic character lives and appears in his dramatic creations. Shakes-

peare is sometimes spoken of as the high-priest of human nature.

But Christ, understanding human nature so as to address it more skilfully than he, never draws from its historic treasures.

He is the High Priest, rather, of the Divine nature, speaking as one that has come out from God, and has nothing to borrow from the world. His teachings are just as full of Divine nature as Shakespeare's was of human nature.

As to His mode of teaching, it was not systematic, and in this example was imitated by His apostles. The language and form in which it was delivered was unsophistical; that is, instead of employing terms of science, He formed His expressions from passing occurrences, and whatever objects happened to be present to His hearers at the time of His addressing them.

Or else He spoke in Parables, or made use of that ancient symbolic language so often adopted by the Jewish prophets, as when He washed His disciples' feet, and sat as a child in the midst of them. As to the matter of His teaching, His discourses aim either at correcting what was perverted, and explaining what

was obscure in the preceding state of morals and religious knowledge, or else they declared truths not before revealed.

We now call attention to a few things that were prominent in the Teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

First.—“ Christ was a very popular Teacher.”

He attracted the masses. Although He was without folly, without art, without depravity, in a world of frivolity and deceit and wickedness; although he appealed to no interest, or passion, or prejudice, but He set His pupils as their first lesson, to solve the hard problem of poverty, shame and persecution for the truth; yet men in throngs pressed after Him; in the streets and in the temple, in the city and in the wilderness, a sea of excited human heads dashed about Him. He scarcely had time to eat, or drink, or sleep without observation.

Now the roof is open above Him to let down a suffering man to His sight, and now a vessel is anchored at His feet that He may escape the pressure of the crowd that arises around Him on the land. Now He ascends a mountain that

He may look down upon the upturned faces below Him, and now He must hide Himself in the darkness and in the mountain-side in order to have private prayer.

It is only occasionally that any man can get a crowd. No man can hold it, the multitude soon cease to have curiosity.

When Socrates taught, a few young men only were enchanted with his voice; and when Plato lectured, the people, though they ran together to hear him, left him as rapidly as they collected.

Jesus not only gathered the masses from city and watch-tower, from palace and cot, but kept them around Him till He died.

At the beginning of His ministry, "great multitudes followed Him from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan"; and when He closed that wonderful ministry, the multitudes spread their garments and palm branches beneath his triumphant feet, and shouted "Hosanna to the Son of David." Even when He was hanging upon the Cross, all Calvary is alive around Him. What is the secret of His popularity?

We answer: “His doctrines were popular.” The earth has produced a great many good men, but where is there one whose words are as broad and wise as those of Christ?

The words of Alexander may move armies; the words of Jesus moved hearts. The words of Demosthenes may move a nation; the words of Christ move the world. An Aristotle may sway the human mind for ages, but he must ere long drop the sceptre, for Jesus of Nazareth extends His moral dominion with every revolving year. The words of Zoroaster, Confucius, Mohammed withstand not the light; but the words of Christ make light, and make it to abound.

Scott, Baxter, Byron can move only a particular frame of mind, but the Saviour reaches the mind in all its frames, the heart in all its tones. Every principle He announces has a world-wide sweep.

Mark His summary of the Law: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, with all thy heart, and with all thy strength,” a precept so narrow as to measure the smallest man; and again so broad as to compass the mightiest outgoings of the largest angel; so

perfect as to bind all moral beings to the throne of God, and produce eternal and universal harmony and happiness and progress. Again we observe—"That His style is popular." He that would teach the people must condescend to speak as they speak. Christ's style is either dialogistic, as when He would confound His foes; or allegorical, when He would reprove the captious; or metaphorical, when He would instruct the inquiring—just the style of that great Grecian sage who sought to bring down philosophy from heaven to earth. He always teaches. In the field and in the highway, in the tumult and in the solitude, walking and resting, seated at meals or reposing on mountains, He is, concerning things both temporal and eternal, "a living epistle, known and read of all men."

He so associates truth with the heaven and the earth as to make everything a memorial of duty, a remembrancer of truth, or a reprover of sin. He hath taught the hammer to echo to the ear of the laborer in every stroke the admonition, "Labor not for the meat that perisheth." Who doth not drink water? Well, over every fountain and flood Christ hath poured this

crystal stream of truth, “ Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” Who hath not lifted up his eyes to that glorious sun? Well, in the sound of the voice from the sepulcher we hear Him saying, “ I am the light of the world.” Who hath not felt the night closing around him? Well, Jesus hath written on all its curtains this luminous line, “ The night cometh when no man can work.”

Who hath not had his thoughts carried down to the chambers of death? Well, there is a voice from the sepulcher saying, “ I am the Resurrection and the Life.” Thus Christ touches almost every object in Nature; and whatever he touches, though it be but a lily, or a sparrow, there leaps forth a living truth.

With simplicity Jesus blends majesty. When He states a precept, it is though He had planted a new doctrine, it is as though He hung a new star in the heavens.

Again.—“ Jesus Christ is very Popular in His Sympathy.”

Teachers often make distinctions among their pupils. Thus Aristotle confined his attention to Alexander because he was Philip’s son, and

Plato left the academy that he might instruct Dionysius; but Christ, like the Father, is "no respecter of persons."

He looks at man as man; He pierces through parentage, and rank, and wealth, and fame, and genius and power on the one hand, and through shame, and toil, and ignorance, and suffering and rags on the other, to the simple spirit; and when He finds it, He estimates it by its character and qualifications, all that constitutes its manhood—its capacity to be angel or devil forever.

Whether He treads the highest or lowest walks of life, He stands upon the same platform; whether He is surrounded by beggars or princes, He speaks as to the same brotherhood.

While He pays due attention to Nicodemus, and the centurion, and Joseph of Arimathea, He is wont to turn from the palace to the hut, to gather around Him the children of want and sorrow, to move in light and mercy amid blinded minds and bleeding hearts—not because of His partiality, but of their necessities.

With a God-like spirit He stooped to children; with Kingly condescension He ate at the tables of the poor. Without sympathy with

sin, and as a shepherd goes into the wilderness to seek and to save the lost, He preached to publicans and harlots.

Not with the rude elbow of stoical indifference, but with the soft hand of life-giving love, He touched the coffin and the couch.

In all this there is a peculiar beauty and propriety. Behold poor John Bunyan in his prison, as his children have gathered around him! To which does his heart most strongly turn? It is to his pale, blind daughter; and now, as they bid him good-bye, see how he grasps the hand of the helpless one, and detains her after the rest have gone away, and pours over her his most earnest, agonizing prayer! Now, had the Father of Mercies come down to that family, would He not, also, have shown most pity and tenderness to his eyeless one? Even so, when He did come to this world in the person of the blessed Christ.

Christ was a Teacher democratic in the largest and best sense for the people, for all the people, for even the lowest of the people, for all the people alike. If it had not been, our hearts would have turned from Him as being unworthy to represent the Being Who lighted

up that sun and poured the oceans from His urn.

Second.—"Christ was a Human Teacher."

His spirit is one of meekness and lowliness. These qualities may be passive; if so, they are infirmities; they are incompatible with decision, dignity, energy—with highest manhood.

In Christ they are active. His answers are soft, because He chooses that the words which might burst from His lips, like the rebukes of Sinai, should distil as the dew of Hermon; His reproofs are gentle, not because they want force, but because they enter the heart obliquely; His censures are mild, not for lack of power, but for abundance of love; His manners are affable, not because He is fearful, or unsteady, or dependent, but because, while He holds the keys of death and hell, He wills, by bearing injuries, and reproaches, and persecutions, and crucifixion, with a forgiving temper, to set revengeful men an example.

He is humble, not because of His infallibility, but because He would correct the arrogance of fallible man; He is modest, not because He undervalues His own qualifications, but because man overvalues his; He was lowly,

not because His mind was not set on high, but that He might teach us how, while we pour heavenly music on the skies, we may dwell upon the ground.

On suitable occasions, when mild reproof had been neglected, He stands up like fire and breathes like famine. In His dilemmas there was a caustic that burned scribes and Pharisees to the quick; in His hand there was a scourge before which the defilers of the temple fled; in His Parables there played a hidden lightning which ere long rent every tower and place in Jerusalem; yet in prevailing manner how gentle! how sweet!

In the wayside He halts to welcome the softest voice of supplicating sorrow. When He delivers His farewell to His disciples, we see how He would “gather His children together as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings.”

The themes of Christ evince His humility. Had He opened the veins of silver, or formed the philosopher’s stone, or invented the elixir of mortal life; had He pointed to the compass, or the steam engine, or the press; had He exhibited the imposing spectacle of history, or lifted the veil from the invisible world, how

would warriors, philosophers and monarchs have tracked His footsteps to lay their honors at His feet! True, His mind moves through all nature as though He were familiar with its laws, and He not only makes no mistakes concerning them, but flashes beams of light across them which the intellect of man requires ages of study to appreciate; but He does not teach science—not because He could not, but because man could. Jesus, however, has no jealousy of philosophy; He never condemns it; He often, indeed, entices man to Nature, and would have him linger over its precious wells.

He has no prejudice against books. This well, too, is deep, and leaves it, not because He has no bucket, but because He that would draw can make a bucket for himself.

He confines His attention to Moral Knowledge—that which the world by wisdom could not know. But His themes are most novel, most elevated, most satisfying, yet the blinded and depraved world concentrates all its attempts upon them.

The pretensions of Christ are humble. True, He says, “I and the Father are One”;

and yet it required the greatest humility to make such a pretension. How much philosophy has cried against Jesus, “ He hath a devil and is mad!” No wonder the mob took up stones to stone Him; no wonder the Sanhedrin could not rest till they led Him to Calvary. But we see not yet the depth of His humility. Listen to Him when He says: “ I can of mine own self do nothing”; instead of setting up His human reason as a god, He brings it to naught. “ My doctrine is not Mine.” He who touched all nature as God, Who brought life and immortality to light, and opened a fountain of mercy for all lands and all times, says, “ Nothing of My wisdom has welled up from My own soul—it hath all come down from the Father of Lights.”

Third.—We observe “ That Jesus Christ was an Independent Teacher.”

It is a pretty speculation of philosophy that every great man is either an embodiment of the genius of his own age, or a happy anticipation of the next. According to this theory, the race, like the individual, is progressive, and its great minds are the marks of its successive stages of advancement.

Lord Bacon, for example, did but give visibility to the great thoughts that had been gathered over the civilized world ages before he arose. Sir I. Newton did but catch the apple which his times had already ripened; and George Washington was but a manifestation of the spirit that had long rushed through the quickened veins and breathed through the dilated nostrils of his ancestors. But Jesus Christ stands alone—the embodiment of no age, the anticipation of none! Though He lived two thousand years ago, He is ten thousand years ahead. His character has been studied age after age, and the more studied the more admired.

Who hath ever found a fault in it? His enemies have sought for one as for hid treasures, but in vain. His friends have endeavored to equal such a character, but no one has succeeded.

Though visible on earth, its place is far in heaven, and to see it you must look through a long colonnade of celestial light.

The truth He brings is not truth in blossom or in fruit, but in seed; not to adorn and wither but to fall into the soul and germinate. Christ

teaches the great principle of the subordination of the body to the soul, of fame and interest to duty, of the present life to that which is to come, principles which philosophers and poets, kings and prophets, sought but never found.

We may develop and illustrate and systematize Christ's teachings, but never go beyond them. The germs of mental philosophy as well as morals are all in his blessed words. Political economy lies wrapped up in the Golden Rule, and all the forms of charity and improvement are but streams from the fountain of His law of love.

“ Jesus Christ is independent of all instructors. Few great men are self-taught; they generally owe their excellences to their opportunities. Hence, Philip thanked the gods, not so much that they had given him a son, as that they had given that son an Aristotle. Even the mightiest intellects are very dependent. Plato enjoyed the tutorship of Socrates, and the companionship of Xenophon, and though he compares teacher with teacher, argument with argument, system with system, that he may correct his errors and enlarge the compass of his truth. While communing with the

giants of his own times, he stands with holy awe on the banks of the Nile, till he seems to see Orpheus tune his lyre and Solon light his lamp. It was otherwise with Christ. He was not reared at Athens. No great school opened its gates to His footsteps. He was the son of a plain carpenter, in an obscure village of a rural district, in a despised province of the world; and when He read the Scriptures to His neighbors, they said in astonishment: "How knoweth this man letters, never having learned?"

Jesus Christ is independent of books. He reads none. He writes none. He needs none. He turns everything round Him into books; He makes legible the sympathetic ink with which every soul is overwritten. He did but touch Nathaniel's memory, and he brought out the truth, "Thou art the King of Israel." He but touched Peter's heart, and forth leaped the exclamation: "Thou art the Christ." He did but breathe his dying prayer over the centurion that guarded His Cross, and at once he exclaimed: "Truly, this man was the Son of God." It was not Christ's words that startled the Samaritan woman at the well, but her own

biography which he telegraphed to her soul in an instant.

Again.—“Jesus Christ is Independent of Human Reason.”

For six thousand years man sought, by dint of reason, to discover the origin, and essence and laws of all things, and all that time he was demonstrating that he knew nothing.

Nothing so humiliating to the pride of human reason as the history of its own achievements. At length we have learned to come down from the clouds of speculation, and walk the earth as Adam did the garden, waiting for the voice of God. We gather truth as a child gathers flowers; we compare facts; we group them together; we deduce general principles, and arrange them in systems; and we call this science—and so it is—science which God wrote for us when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

Man sought also by reason to scaffold himself up to God; but his labors produced only a blasted and confounded babel.

The greatest philosophy of ancient times, as the greatest of modern times, was but a negative teacher. But Jesus Christ comes; He

disperses the clouds and darkness which surrounds the God-head, in Nature and Providence and in the Old Testament. He marshals into harmony the stars which appeared to cross each other's paths in the skies of truth; He opens a path beyond the grave; He lifts the curtain from the Judgment Seat of the Great Judge.

All around the horizon of past and future, even outward eternally, Jesus floods the mountains with light. And yet He reasons not; He speaks not as man, with hesitation, with supposition, but with authority; an authority to which, while miracles certify, the soul itself responds; for, although His revelations could not be discovered by reason, they commend themselves to reason. As face answers to face in water, so the truths of Jesus to the hearts of man. "Jesus spoke as never man spoke."

The words of Christ are universally acknowledged to be the most potent ever uttered by any man, or heard by any mortal ear.

Wherever they are repeated, they carry light into dark homes, kindle hopes in desponding hearts, and give victory and life to dying souls.

The words of Jesus still live on, and will continue to live, until the final consummation of all things.

There is scarcely a scene or object familiar to the Galilee of that day, which Jesus did not use as an illustration of some great moral truth. He spoke of green fields, and springing flowers, and the budding of the vernal trees, of the red or lowering sky, of the sunrise and sunset, of wind and rain, of night and day, of clouds and lightning, of stream and river, of stars and lamps, of honey and salt, of wine and wheat, and corn and oil. He spoke of stewards, and gardeners, laborers and employers, of kings and shepherds, of courtiers in soft clothing, and brides in nuptial robes. All these are found in his discourses.

He knew all life and gazed on it with a kindly as well as a kingly glance. A method which in its unapproachable beauty and finish stands unrivalled in the annals of human speech, and shall continue to give comfort and strength to the children of men as long as the world stands.

CHAPTER XIV.

"CHRIST TEACHING BY PARABLES."

WE have referred to our Saviour as the "Great Teacher," and tried to point out some of the things in His teachings which helped to make Him great. And now it may be well to speak of His methods of instruction which He employed. These are called "Parables." The parables were the windows which let in the light upon the great doctrines which He had propounded.

At the beginning of His ministry our Saviour did not make much use of parables. But after He had been preaching for some time, He made a change in His way of teaching, and spoke in parables.

On one occasion, after He had used the Parable of the Sower, the disciples came to their Master and asked Him why He always spake to the people in parables? And the Master answered them as follows: "Because it is given

“Christ Teaching by Parables.” 137

unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given.”

The meaning of it is that He used parables for two reasons. One was to help those who really wished to learn from Him, to understand what He was teaching. The other was that those who were not willing to be taught, might listen to Him without understanding what He was saying. These people had heard Him when He was teaching without parables, but instead of being grateful to Him for coming to teach them, and of being willing to do what He wanted them to do, they found fault with His teaching, and would not give heed to what He said.

Now, there is a great difference in the way in which we are to learn what the Bible teaches us about God and heaven, and the way in which we learn other things.

We must be willing to be taught and willing to obey, if we wish to understand what Jesus, “The Great Teacher,” has to tell us.

He uses parables among His disciples in order that He might help them to understand, and remember what He taught them.

We have a great many of the parables of Je-

sus in the Gospels. There are not less than fifty, and it is impossible to speak of all of them in a Life of Christ. We, therefore, can only make a selection as specimens of this kind of teaching.

First.—We have Christ's estimate of "True Religion," as represented in the Parable of the Treasure Hid in the Field.

The Saviour spoke and said: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

The words, "Kingdom of Heaven," are used by our Saviour in different senses. Sometimes, as here, they mean the grace of God, or true religion. And what Jesus teaches us by this parable is that true religion is more valuable than anything else in the world.

Again.—"The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a merchant seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it."

By this "pearl of great price" Jesus meant true religion, as he did by the "treasure hid in

“Christ Teaching by Parables.” 139

the field.” Both these parables teach us the great value of true religion.

Christ’s revelations concerning the joys of heaven are delightful. “Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward which is in heaven.” And to these revelations of the Saviour an apostle adds: “Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, or the heart of man cannot conceive the joys which God hath prepared for those who love Him.” And yet the eye of man has seen many beautiful things here on earth, from the starry firmament, that most magnificent work of God, to the smiling earth with its plains and forests, hills and vales, its mountains, rivers and oceans.

His ear had heard much delicious harmony, from the warbling of the birds in the summer foliage to the majestic peal of the thunder.

His heart has throbbed responsive to many joys, from the paternal embrace to the soothing kindness of a friend, from the simplest emotion of pleasure to the purest and loftiest sentiment following a good action; but still it is said by One that cannot err, that neither “eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it en-

tered into the heart to conceive the entrancing joys of heaven."

After that, Jesus might well invite men to raise their eyes to heaven, and put forth every effort to secure such a place of rest and grandeur. The Master said: "Strive to enter in, work while it is yet day, for the night cometh when no man can work."

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins represents the union of God with the elect. The Five Wise Virgins made ready for the coming of the bridegroom; the Five Foolish Virgins made no preparations and were shut out from the feast.

The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard.—This parable represents life as a day which is given us to accomplish a certain task, and to earn certain wages. The parable teaches us that God's patience is so great that He waits even to the last hour; but even infinite patience has its limits, and the man who neglects to do his allotted work may be left without wages.

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree.—Our Lord said: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard and he came seeking

fruit thereon, but found none. And he said to the tiller of the vineyard: ‘ Behold, these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down, why doth it take up the ground?’ ” The teaching of this parable is that we are represented as trees planted in a vineyard, and that we must bear fruit.

A tree that bears no fruit, or otherwise bad fruit, is not worthy of a place in the vineyard; it is cut down, and cast into the fire.

The Parable of the Talents.—Here is a marvelous figure of human life. It is that a certain amount of capital has been placed in our hands by God in order that we may increase it, and that He will exact a strict account of its use.

A certain man going into a far country called his servants and delivered to them his goods. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, and immediately he took his journey.”

The man who received the five talents went and traded with the same, and gained other five. And in like manner he that had received two gained other two. But he that had re-

ceived the one talent, going his way digged in the earth and hid his Lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and reckoned with them."

He approved and commended the fidelity of the man who had received the five talents, and likewise the one who had received the two talents; but the man who received the one talent the lord condemned for his slothfulness.

The parable teaches us that God in giving unto us life, has confided precious talents to our care. All have received some kind of a talent or talents. God leaves us to make what use we choose of His gifts, but on His return He will demand a strict account of them, and we shall receive a proportionate reward for the faithful use which we make of our trust.

The talents intrusted to us by God are the qualities of the heart, mind and body, and we are to develop those qualities—the physical, the intellectual, and the moral, so as to make them serviceable to the giver.

Again.—Consider the Parable of the Prodigal Son. We read in St. Luke's Gospel that, "A certain man had two sons, and the younger son said unto his father, 'father, give me the

“Christ Teaching by Parables.” 143

portion of goods that falleth to me,’ and he divided unto them his living.”

The younger son was disobedient and ungrateful, lived as a prodigal, wasted his substance, was reduced to beggary, and finally returned to the home of his father. How beautifully does this parable illustrate the love of Jesus Christ for lost sinners, and what a gracious welcome is given to all who truly repent and reform.

That immortal parable, called the Parable of the Good Samaritan, is one of the most beautiful ever uttered by mortal lips, setting forth the law of self-abnegation and genuine kindness.

One day while Jesus was upon earth, a young lawyer came to Him with this question, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus referred him to the Ten Commandments. He then reduced them to two, and instructed him that if he kept them he could have that for which he was inquiring.

But the young lawyer said: “Who is my neighbor?” And Jesus answered by saying: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, he fell among thieves who robbed him,

beat him, and left half-dead. The Priest passed by without rendering the wounded man any help, likewise the Levite in the same manner; but a certain Samaritan came that way, and when he saw the poor wounded man lying there in that wounded condition, although he may be a Jew, and the Jews and the Samaritans might have enmity existing between them, yet he pitied the man, went down to him, bound up his wounds, set him on his beast, took him to an inn, and paid the fare," and Jesus asked the young lawyer the question, "which now of these three thinkest thou was neighbor to him that fell among the thieves?"

And he (the lawyer) said: "he that showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said unto him: "Go thou and do likewise."

Thus Jesus of Nazareth taught the duty of kindness. This kindness we must show, not to our dear friends alone, but to our enemies, to those who spitefully use us, and say all manner of evil against us for righteousness' sake.

Kindness may be defined as "lighting our neighbor's candle by our own," by which we lose nothing and impart something. One man has

kindness deep within him, and when the occasion comes the rind or shell is cracked, and the kernel is found.

Such a man's heart, too long clouded, like a sun in a storm-muffled day, shoots through some opening rift, and glows for a period in glory. But there are other natures that are always cloudless. With them a cloud is the exception, shining is the rule. They rise radiant over the horizon; they fill the whole heavens with brightness, and all day long they overhang life, pouring down an undiminished flood of brightness and warmth.

Among the Alps, when the day is done, and twilight and darkness are creeping over fold and hamlet in the valleys below, Mont Rosa and Mont Blanc rise up far above the darkness, catching from the retreating sun something of its light, flushed with rose-color, exquisite beyond words, or pencil or paint, glowing like the Gate of Heaven.

And so past favors and kindnesses lift themselves up in the memory of noble natures, and long after the lower parts are darkened by neglect, or selfishness, or anger, former loves, high up: above all clouds, glow with divine ra-

diance and seem to forbid the advance of night any further.

“ Be kind to each other ! The night’s coming on,
When friend and when brother—perchance may be
gone !
Then ’midst our dejection,—how sweet to have earned
The blest recollection—or kindness returned !
When day hath departed,—and memory keeps
Her watch, broken-hearted,—When all She loved
sleeps ! ”

An English barrister was in the habit of visiting the hospitals, and on one occasion visited the bed of one of the very poorest of creatures, one of the lowest in ignorance and poverty. The barrister was a man of tender sensibilities, a man whose tender spirit radiated from his countenance, and as he sat down beside the poor man’s bed he began to speak in tones of sympathy for the suffering man, and after speaking a few words he began to say something about Jesus of Nazareth, and he at once saw that the man’s face began to twitch convulsively. The muscles quivered, and at last the man hid his face in the bed clothes and burst into a violent flood of tears and sobbed aloud.

The barrister waited until this storm of grief was passed, and when the poor man was able to

“Christ Teaching by Parables.” 147

He asked him, saying: “What is it that has so touched you? What can have moved you so much?”

And as well as the man could sob out he said: “Sir, you are the first man that ever spoke a kind word to me since I was born, and I can’t stand it.”

Ah! that is so much like the touch of the Great Nazarene, when He mingled amongst men, he was the antitype of the Good Samaritan, and His life should be our constant example.

CHAPTER XV.

"THE TRANSFIGURATION."

The Evangelists tells us that after six days He took with Him the three dearest and most enlightened of His disciples, and went with them up a lofty mountain, or, as St. Luke calls it, simply "the mountain." The supposition that the mountain intended was Mount Tabor has been engrained for centuries in the tradition of the Christian Church. Others again have contended that it was Mount Hermon, the mount of Jewish poetry. St. Luke simply says: "the mountain," and, whichever it was, it has received the sacred name of "The Holy Mountain."

It was the evening hour when He ascended, and as He climbed the hill-slope with those three chosen witnesses, "the Sons of Thunder and the Man of Rock," doubtless a solemn gladness dilated his whole soul, sustained of the heavenly calm which that solitary communion with His Heavenly Father would afford Him.

There in that mountain solitude He knelt and prayed, and as He prayed He was elevated far above the toil and the misery of the world which had rejected Him. “ He was transfigured before them, and His countenance shone as the sun,” and His garments became white as the dazzling snow-fields above them. He was wrapped in such an aureole of glistening brilliance; His whole presence breathed so divine a radiance, that the light, the snow, the lightning, are the only things to which the Evangelist can compare that celestial lustre. And, lo! Two figures were by his side.

While He prayed the fashion of His countenance is changed. The inner radiance shines through the serge and sackcloth of His incarnate life, and for once they, “ See Him as He is,—the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His person,” and they wondered at the awful grandeur of the divinity which the Man of Sorrows possessed, but which He had veiled even from their vision until now. But, behold! There are two forms appearing, whom, by some instinct or instruction, they know to be Moses and Elias; the one disembodied spirit, clothed for a time in some ma-

terial vehicle; the other yet wearing the body of which he had cheated death, and who had "put on immortality" in the spirit world. There stood Moses and Elias talking with Jesus concerning "His decease at Jerusalem." And when the prayer is ended, the task accepted, then the full glory of heaven falls upon Him, and the testimony is borne to His everlasting Sonship and power—"Hear ye Him."

In the darkness of the night, shedding an intense gleam over the mountain herbage, shone the gloried form of the Lord Jesus. Beside Him, in the flood of golden glory, were two well known men, and their conversation was audible and distinct.

"And He was transfigured before them." It has been well observed that this was not the real Transfiguration. The mount but showed Him as He was. The actual Transfiguration was in the humiliation of the Incarnate life. He, essentially glorious, was "transfigured" into poverty and shame. But now, lest any lingering doubt should lurk in the minds of the apostles, which might make their future utterances falter, they see His glory; they had suspected it before. There was a heavenliness in

His teaching, a lustre from His miracles, and a brightness in His spotless life, which, amid the meanness, had betrayed the God; but here the inner Divinity shines forth through its fleshy covering, and the attesting Shechinah comes down in the encompassing cloud.

And as the splendid vision began to fade, as the majestic visitants were about to be separated from their Lord, as their Lord Himself passed with them into the overshadowing brightness, Peter, anxious to delay their presence, amazed, startled, transported, not knowing what he said—not knowing that Calvary would be a spectacle infinitely more transcendent than Hermon, not knowing that the law and the prophets were now fulfilled, not fully knowing that his Lord was unspeakably greater than the Prophet of Sinai and the avenger of Carmel, exclaimed, “Rabbi, it is best for us to be here; and let us make Three Tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” Jesus might have smiled at the naive proposal of the eager apostle, but it was not for Peter to construct the universe for his personal satisfaction. He had to learn the meaning of Calvary no less than that of Hermon.

Not in cloud of glory or chariot of fire was Jesus to pass away from them, but with arms outstretched in agony upon the "accursed tree; not between Moses and Elias, but between two thieves, who were crucified with Him on either side one."

No answer was vouchsafed to Peter's words, but even as he spake, a cloud—not a cloud of thick darkness as at Sinai—but a cloud of light, a Shechinah of radiance, overshadowed them, and a voice from out of it uttered, "This is My beloved Son; hear Him."

They fell prostrate and hid their faces on the grass. And as, awaking from the overwhelming shock of that awful voice, they raised their eyes and gazed suddenly all around them, they found that all was over.

The bright cloud had vanished. The lightning-like gleams of shining countenances and dazzling robes had passed away; they were alone with Jesus, and only the stars rained their quiet lustre on the mountain slopes.

At first they were afraid to rise or stir, but Jesus, their Master, as they had seen Him before He knelt in prayer, came to them, touched them, said: "Arise, and be not afraid."

We now inquire into the purpose of the Transfiguration. What were the designs for which it was arranged, and the lessons which it was intended to impress?

The first and great design, as we have already intimated, was the solemn inauguration of Christ as the Supreme Law-giver in His Church. This was the “honor and glory” which He received of the Father, as the apostle distinctly declares. The exposition of the whole transaction then, is in “the voice from Heaven.”

After Moses had received his commission he prophesied of a greater than himself. “The Lord thy God will raise up to thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken.” And on this solemn occasion was the promise fulfilled. If you will keep this idea in mind you will see the fitness of the appearance of Moses and Elias, rather than any other of the Old Testament saints.

They were the representatives of the law and the prophets; the two great authorities of the Jewish Church; the rigid jurists who upheld,

in all its strictness, the rubical exactitude of the law.

There was strong contention among the early Church, many of whose members believed that the ceremonial and moral laws should be of equal force forever; and the apostles, in the First Council, were to legislate on matters affecting the Church's spiritual freedom from the yoke of ancient observance.

But only He who anointed the Law-giver could supersede Him. The same authority which enacted the law must be the power to revoke its provisions. This authority was here given—given in the presence of the man by whose lips the former law was spoken, and of the man by whom it was championed, when degenerate Israel had forgotten it. The voice from the cloud for the confirmation of the words of Christ, just as at His baptism it had spoken in acceptance of His person. The servants were henceforth to stand aside. They had done their work, and done it well; but they were not needed now, and on the crest of the mountain they were to render up their commission to the Son.

In the last chapter of Malachi they appear,

Moses and Elias, closing up the old covenant. In the 17th chapter of Matthew they appear in the installment of the new. It is not a little remarkable that the circumstances attendant upon the giving of the law furnish almost a parallel to the circumstances of the Transfiguration, in which that early law-giver was superseded by a higher.

Aaron, and Nadab, and Abihu, instead of Peter, James and John; Mount Sinai instead of the Mount in Galilee. The face of Moses shining with reflected glory, instead of the indwelling brightness radiating from the Incarnate Son.

With these points of difference there was the same pomp of legislation, the same solemnity of utterance, and the same glorious and encompassing cloud. The conclusion of the marvelous scene answers to all the rest, like the stamp of the signet-ring, sealing and confirming the whole.

When the fainting disciples recovered consciousness and looked around, “they saw no man save Jesus only.” Moses and Elias had been aforetime the objects of their devoutest

reverence, the recognized teachers whom they felt bound to follow.

Where are they now? They have renounced all claims to empire. They retire willingly from the field. There is but One Royal Law-giver. There must be no division of authority, no admixture of legislative claim. Jesus only, reigning in unchallenged lordship over each heart and mind.

Christ is the Law-giver to His church for all time.

Prophets and apostles; they are valuable because they give to us transcripts of Christ. Holy men and confessors; we rejoice in them because they give to us transcripts of Christ—Laws, decretals, confessions, catechisms, creeds; we accept them only as they are embodiments of the words of Jesus Christ.

Let a thousand rubrics or canons condemn what Christ hath not condemned, we may snap them as Samson the withes with which they sought to bind him. Let a thousand enactments inforce what Christ hath forbidden, and disobedience becomes a Christian duty, and brave death were preferable to life unworthy and dishonored.

“Jesus Only.”—No surrender of personal thought or freedom; no binding of the conscience with the scorpion yoke of a consistory, or the binding of a man who, “as God sitteth in the temple of God.”

“Jesus Only!”—Then rejoice in your freedom, and in all matters of perplexed mediation “appeal” directly unto Cæsar.

Listen submissively to the faintest syllable from the lips which cannot err. Render homage more dutiful and willing than you have ever rendered yet.

Our souls exult and proclaim that there is but one authoritative Teacher; and just as one fond spot in landscape, hallowed by some tender or pensive memory, may fasten the gazer’s eye until he is insensible to the charms of woodland and waterfall, and copse and spire, so we, waking in bewildered trance and dim memories of shining visitants on the Holy Mount, seek not for accessories and backgrounds to the picture which fills the soul and fastens the eye—we see “No man save Jesus Only.”

We cannot help thinking, however, that the Transfiguration must be regarded also as the

solemn baptism of the Saviour into His priestly and mediatorial office.

The great purpose of the Incarnation was the offering upon the Cross. They who do not keep this in mind fall grievously short in their comprehension of the mystery.

It is not enough to explain the Incarnation as designed only for the spiritual teaching, or for the loving miracles, or the exhibition of the illustrious and perfect pattern. These were all collateral and subsidiary. They are not unimportant, any of them.

It is necessary that we should learn God's will from the lips of Him who was authorized to declare it. The Saviour's teaching was glorified by the dying, and the miracles were the smaller illustrations of that mercy whose heart in sacrifice, and the "obedience was an obedience unto death." This was the "Father's business," which he had offered, and was embodied to do. For the accomplishment of this end "it behoved Christ to suffer," and there was not a moment of His incarnate life, whether He taught in synagogues or prayed on hillside altars, or rested at Bethany, when this purpose was absent from His mind.

It will not be uninteresting to remember the history of the heavenly voices attesting the mission of Jesus Christ during His earthly stay. “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

And Again.—“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. Father, glorify Thy name.” Then came there a voice from heaven saying, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” Midway between these voices spake the one upon the Holy Mount at the Transfiguration—“This is My beloved Son; hear Him.”

Not only, therefore, do we witness on the Holy Mount the installation of the Royal Law-giver, but the great High Priest.

It is a grand valedictory service in which He is re-ordained to duty—as the banners are blessed before the army marches to the field. And the voice speaks from heaven as a sovereign gives audience to a chosen commander, and cheers with the encouragement of royal favor.

With what reverence and pleasure should we look upon the scene! As we see Him standing

alone upon the mountain—fresh from His ordination of glory—calm, and kingly in His heaven-imparted strength; and then as we see Him with firm step, treading the dark avenue which, through desertion, agony, insult, abandonment, terminates in His death upon the Cross; surely all distrust should vanish, and all doubting disappear.

It hardly comes within our scope to educe the various lessons which may be taught us in the Holy Mount. Our aim, very imperfectly fulfilled, has been to elicit the meaning of the great event of the Transfiguration, if happily some of its thoughts may linger in our hearts—like chimes heard within doors—softened by the silence and comfort in which we sit and hear them, and ringing on, long after the actual sound has ceased, in the melody of each remembered tone. We can but suggest how, when we have recovered from the thrilling consequent upon the glorious vision, we might learn much of collateral instruction and blessing.

First.—We might learn, for example, “The Immortality of the Soul,” from the real appearance of two men, who had long ceased to

be inhabitants of this earth, again revisiting the scenes of earth!

Second.—We might learn, “The Conscious existence of the spirit after its separation from the body, that it does not sleep, as some affirm, through many ages, but is possessed of intellectual vigor, and, in the case of the righteous, of a residence in glory.”

Third.—We might learn that “Christ Crucified is the grand theme of Contemplation and Converse, both to believing hearts on earth and to the ransomed spirits of the sky.”

Fourth.—We might learn that “God prepares for coming trial by special manifestations of His favor, and though we may fear as we ‘enter into the cloud,’ we shall come out of it with manlier hearts and truer courage.”

Fifth.—Those who are not, alas! partakers of Christ, might learn, and shudder as they learn, the value of that Divine communion from which they sinfully exclude themselves, and of that inheritance of glory which they so scornfully but aside.

Those who have believed, and rejoice in mountain fellowship with Jesus, might learn that, refreshing as is the difficult air, bracing as

is the steep ascent, rare and elevating as is the glorious companionship, we must not "build our tabernacle there."

In the valley below there is work for us to do, and we must hear our Master's voice as He asks us to descend, and lead us down into the great field of toil and travail and triumph:

"Think not of rest, though dreams be sweet.
Start up and ply your heavenward feet.
Is not God's oath upon your head?
Ne'er to sink back on slothful bed,
Never again your loins untie,
Nor let your torches waste and die,
Till, when the shadows thickest fall,
Your Master's midnight call.
He calls you angels—be your strife
To live on earth the angels' life."

CHAPTER XVI.

“STRIKING CHARACTERISTICS IN THE LIFE OF
CHRIST.”

NEARLY all the statements made by the four Evangelists cluster in and around the face, form, and bearing, and actions of Jesus. The word “character,” as applied to Jesus’ is a misnomer, as it is often confounded with the word “Reputation.”

Character seems generally to mean something outstanding from the person—a kind of dress worn outwardly; at least a faint index to the qualities within. Thus, to say of a man, “he has a good moral character,” is to say little. You still ask, what is he? What is the nature of his being? It is of Christ’s being, not His character, that we would speak. The company of the disciples in the “Acts,” have answered, as by anticipation, all questions about Christ’s being when they speak of “A Holy Child—a Divine Child.”

He seems still to sit "among the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions," while they, like the sheaves of Joseph's brethren, are compelled to bow down before Him.

His sermons and discourses, while they possess no logical sequence, yet His words flow up, in irregular yet calm succession, from the depth below. And yet all He says is "like an angel, vital everywhere," and each word is a complete whole.

Like jewels from a crown, the sentences drop down entire. He says: "Ye are the salt of the earth. Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." But wholesomeness belonged to more than Christ's words, it belonged to Himself and to His words, because they faithfully and fully represented Himself, even as the acorn carries in it the figure of the oak.

He was complete, and His possession of all the virtues was signified by the calm which reigned over and inclosed them within it. His eye concentrated all the rays of the Divine Omniscience into its mild and tearful orb. His heart was a miniature ocean of love. His arm seemed the symbol of Omnipotence. His voice was invested with supreme authority. "In

Him dwelt the fulness of the God-head bodily, as a willing tenant, not as a reluctant captive.” But, as a man, as well as the Incarnation of the God-head, He was perfect.

Beside the stately, ancient, and noble forms of the patriarch’s of the old world, He seems young and slender. He spake not, like Solomon, on trees, from the cedar on Lebanon, to the hyssop which springeth out of the wall. He had no Sinai for pedestal, as Moses had. He had not the mighty speech of Isaiah. But He possessed what all these wanted—He possessed perfection.

He was only a child, but He was a Celestial Child; He was only a lamb, but it was a Lamb without spot and without blemish.

In Him as God-Man, all contrasts and contradictions were reconciled.

You hear Him now in tones soft as youthful love, preaching concord to His disciples; and again, in voice of thunder, and with the gestures of an avenger, denouncing the Pharisee and scribe.

Hear yonder Infant weeping in the manger of Bethlehem. That little trembling hand is the hand of Him who made the world; that fee-

ble cry is the voice of Him who spake, and it was done—who commanded and it stood fast. See that carpenter laboring at Nazareth! The penalty of Adam's sin is standing on his brow in the sweat-drops of his toil. That carpenter is all the while directing the march of innumerable suns, and supplying the wants of innumerable worlds.

Behold yonder Weeper at the grave of Lazarus. His tears have a voice of eloquence. That Weeper is the Eternal God, who shall wipe away all tears from off all faces.

See again, that Wonder-worker, and that Majestic Teacher, whose works and words are felt in every age, and will continue for all time, and the results pass on into eternity.

Again.—“The reticence of Jesus is one of the most remarkable of His characteristics.”

What He might have told us, in comparison with what He has, of Man, of God, of the Future of the Earth, of the Eternal State!

“He knew what was in man.” “The Son only knoweth the Father.” “Thou, Lord, knowest all things.” But He was silent. Nor was His silence forced and reluctant. It was

wise and willing. It seemed natural to Him as is the twinkling silence of the stars. This marvelous silence surrounded Him with a peculiar grandeur. The greatest objects in the universe are the stillest. The ocean has a voice, but the sun is silent. The seraphim sing, the Shechinah is dumb. The forests murmur, but the constellations speak not. Aaron spoke, but the face of Moses shone with glory. Jesus, like a sheep before her shearers, was dumb in death; but still more marvelous was the Self-denial and God-like silence of His life. The secret of this silence lay partly in the practicalness of His purpose. He had three great things to do in the space of three years, and He could spare no time for doing or talking about aught else.

First.—He had to preach a pure morality.

Second.—He had to live a pure life.

Third.—He had to die a death of substitution so vast as to stop the motion of the universe until it was accomplished.

This was the full baptism wherewith He was baptized. He was straitened till it was accomplished. He bent His undivided energies to finish this three-fold work, and He finished

it. He led a life—and such a life!—of poverty and power, of meanness and grandeur, of contempt and glory, of contact with sinners and of personal purity; a life from Whom demons shrank in terror, round which men crowded in eager curiosity, and over which angels stooped in wonder and love; a life which gathered about the meek current of its benevolence the fiery chariots and fiery horses of all miraculous gifts and all divine energies.

And having thus lived, He came purged as by fire, to the death which seemed to have borrowed materials of terror, from earth, heaven and hell, to bow down along with its own burden upon His solitary head. But to humble Him to submission, the fearful load of Calvary was not required. He was humble all along life's journey, and never more so than when working His miracles.

But this lowliness was mingled with sweet gentleness. The chief scene for the exercise of this exceeding gentleness was the company of publicans and sinners. The sight of personified purity mingled with the greatest of sinners, with condescension, blame, hope and pity ex-

pressed in His countenance, instead of disgust and horror, was touching beyond the reach of tears.

Let the moon, looking full in upon the group of evil-doers, at once rebuking, softening, and spiritualizing the scene, so at Simon's table shone on the sinners around, the shaded orb of the Redeemer's face, and it seemed as if heaven were dimly dawning upon the unholy company.

And yet, with this mildness, there was blended a certain “ Ineffable Dignity.” The dignity of a child approaches the sublime. It is higher than the dignity of a king—higher, because less conspicuous. This dignity blending purity with unconsciousness, was united in Christ to that which attends knowledge and power. It was this which made the people exclaim, that “ He taught with authority;” that wrung from the Roman officers sent to apprehend Him the testimony that, “ Never man spake like this man.”

A dignity this which deserted Him not, even when He wore the scarlet robe, and carried the reed for a sceptre, and the thorns for a crown; nay, which transfigured these into glorious em-

blems in the blaze of spirit which shone around Him.

Again.—“Superiority of knowledge and power was a distinguishing feature of Jesus of Nazareth.” Pride cannot, indeed, co-exist with perfect knowledge and power, for it implies as certainly something above, as well as something below it.

The proud man looks up as well as down, measuring himself with what is beyond, as well as what is beneath him.

But this superiority in our Blessed Lord was only a part of that unconsciousness which so signally characterized Him.

He seemed conscious of God only. He overflowed with God, and could say without a tremor, “I and My Father are One. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” This is all that we can conceive of absorption into the Deity. This Jesus of Nazareth spoke as God, and His matchless voice gave no uncertain sound.

Many of the sayings of Jesus would have been sheer presumption, if uttered by a man devoid of all consciousness of indwelling divinity. Yes, more! It would have been arrogance, in-

consistent with either humility or holiness, for any mere human being to assume such prerogatives as Jesus took to Himself.

Divine, indeed! for if any man doubt His claim to the title, let him pass from Christ's pictures of earth to His aspirations after heaven; let him hear the musical voice amid the storm as He drew near to the shores of eternity and His Father's house.

The last words of Jesus are surcharged with feeling for His disciples, forgiveness to His enemies, and desire after renewed communion with His Father. His soul springs up as He sees His Father's throne in view. A smile of triumph rests, as by anticipation, upon His lips. “Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.” His last command is, “That ye love one another;” His last legacy is, “Peace.” He is going to the Father, but leaving the Comforter, and promising to return again; and, ere going, He breaks out into a prayer which, ere it closes, seems to bind in one chain of glory earth and heaven, Himself, His father, and His people. “That glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are One. Father, I will that they also whom

Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory.”

This prayer seems to be the conscious link of the spiritual world—the living bond between the Father and His children.

The Father can never on earth come nearer to us than through His Son; we can never get nearer to the Father than through the Son.

Jesus has passed up every step of the ladder, from the child to the deity, from the manger to the throne. He looked into the dim eyes of the poor, and saw therein the image of the Father.

Herod became grave in His presence. Pilate washed his hands from the shadow of the blood. Peter wept when he saw the face of his Master, and Judas went out and destroyed himself when he thought of his Lord. Angels ministered to him, the grave was ashamed to hide His body; the earth opened its doors and gave up its dead; and heaven sent forth all its guards, and opened all its gates to receive Him into its bosom, to be exalted, glorified, and worshipped by all the hosts of heaven.

Thus faintly have we sought to depict the character and the grandeur of the Man of Naz-

areth. Scripture writers did not, nor need we do it. They never say in so many words that Christ was eloquent, nor very wise, nor very humble, nor very holy.

But they record His sermon on the Mount; they register His tears at the tomb of Lazarus, and they tell of His washing His disciples' feet. We have no new facts to record of Him, but only to say of that life so marvellous, yet humane, “ It is finished.” “ It is finished.” It is unique! It is glorious!

CHAPTER XVII.

“THE LORD’S SUPPER.”

IN the midst of the last week of our Lord’s life on earth, before His crucifixion, and during what is known as “Passion Week,” one of the interesting things that Jesus did was to keep the “Jewish Passover.” This Passover feast had been kept by the Jews every year for nearly 1,500 years. It was the most solemn religious service they had. It was first observed by them in the night on which their nation was delivered from the bondage of Egypt, and began their march towards the promised land of Canaan. We read about the establishment of this solemn service in the book of Exodus, 12th chapter. It was a memorable deliverance wrought out for the children of Israel. Think of a land retiring to slumber under the threat of a terrible destruction; some of its dwellers unconscious, some scornful, others apparently heedless; but troubled by a strange misgiving, and in the mid-

night hour, when all the world was still, hark! That frantic wail resounding through the midnight air, rising in simultaneous sorrow from palace, and from mansion, and cottage; rich and poor touched into fellowship by the great leveler, trouble, and amid the glare of torches and the tramp of hasty feet, each cheek blanched into an ashen paleness, and on each lip the same dread words of agony.

Gradually the knowledge is gathered that the destruction is a common one, and that from every dwelling the fondest and most treasured had departed, for “ throughout the whole land there was not an Egyptian house in which there was not one dead.”

Well might there be “ a cry in Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall there be any more.” But see in the land of Goshen, those dwellings whose door-posts are sprinkled with blood; dwellings which the proud sons of Egypt would have scorned to enter; dwellings of menials and slaves, but within them on that night of disaster there is no bleeding heart, nor one beloved one slain; but everywhere songs of thanksgiving and joy.

God had set His token upon those dwellings

of Israel; they are the Lord's favored ones, and as He passed them by the avenging angel smiled. See them thrust out in haste, enriched with the spoil of their oppressors; driven into liberty before the blast of a nation's fear; leaving the land of bondage behind them, pitching their tents as freemen, and do you wonder that their hearts should feel and voices sing, "It is a night to be observed unto the Lord."

This was the memory uppermost in the minds of the disciples when the Saviour "took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave to them;" and though the veil was on their hearts just then, so that they knew not the full significance of the act, nor comprehended the grandeur of their Master's mission, in after time, when they had been schooled in the upper-room, and shared in the baptism of Pentecost, they would understand it better, and would see, as we see in the light of a perfected revelation, how fitly on the night of the Passover was instituted the memorial of deliverance from a bondage greater than Egyptian, and from the deadlier perils of a death that never dies?

But if the minds of the disciples were filled with thoughts of the Passover and its great sal-

vation, what were the thoughts of the Redeemer ? He was just entering within the shadow of His Passion. There stretched out before His conscious eye the whole course of suffering which He had set Himself bravely to travel. His betrayal, His arrest, the garden, the judgment hall, the cross, the sepulchre, then the drear and lonely time of desertion by the Father, that most terrible of all possible endurance, all these were before Him, and distinct and near.

He saw the approach of the great sorrow. “ It was the same night on which He was betrayed.” It was the “ Last Supper ” table.

He gazed with ineffable tenderness upon His disciples whom He had chosen, and who were so soon to be orphaned of His love.

He knew them, save the betrayed, to be true at heart though infirm of purpose, and earthly in conception, and dazzled with high imaginings of a temporal kingdom. “ With desire,” then broke out the strong affection which many waters could not quench. “ With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer,” as if He had said, “ My time is at hand, I can no longer delay the completion of My solemn purpose. I go to My Father and ye see Me no

more, yet a little while and I must die!" This is the Passover. Ye have been remembering its deliverance, but ye will soon have a tender memory. "Take, eat this bread, it is My body," soon to be broken for sinners. Take, drink this wine, it is "the New Testament in My blood." Forget Me not when ye no longer see Me. "This do in remembrance of Me."

Such is the account we have of the first establishment of "the Lord's Supper." It was to take the place of the "Jewish Passover," and to be observed by the followers of Christ all over the earth, until the time when He shall come again to receive His saints.

And this solemn sacrament, this holy communion, this supper of our Lord, ought to be observed, or kept, by all who love Him. First, "Because He commands it." "This do in remembrance of Me." This commandment is plain, positive, and authoritative. "This do." And the meaning of what he says is, "This do," all ye who profess to be My followers, all over the world, and through all ages. And this is one of the commandments He expects all His people to keep. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

“ This do.” No matter whether we wish to do it or not ; here are our Master’s words, “ This do.” No matter whether we see the use of it or not : Jesus says, “ This do.” It is enough for each follower of the Lord Jesus to say, “ Here is My Lord’s command, and I must obey.”

The second reason why we ought to “ do this ” is because of its connection with the memory of His sufferings. We are taught this by the word “ remembrance ” which our Saviour here uses.

He says, “ This do in remembrance of My sufferings for you.” And this is the most important word used by Jesus when He established this sacrament. In the study of music, there is always one special note in a tune, which is called the key-note,

The sacrament of “ the Lord’s Supper ” is like a solemn song ; and the key-note of the music to which the song is set is the word “ remembrance.” It teaches us that the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is a “ memorial service.” In it is shown “ the Lord’s death till He come again.” His death, not His life, though that was lustrous with a holiness without the shadow of a stain.

His death, not His teachings, though that embodied the fulness of a wisdom that was divine. His death! Still His death! Grandest and most consecrating memory both for earth and heaven.

When He broke the bread, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "This is My body, which is given for you," it was intended as a memorial of His suffering. And when He gave them the cup, and said, "This is My blood of the New Testament," He meant that we should understand Him as saying, "This is the memorial of My blood."

Third reason : "Jesus has connected this sacrament with the hope of His coming glory." This sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the point of the meeting between the sufferings of Christ and the glory that was to follow, between His cross, with its shame and anguish, and His kingdom with its honor and blessedness.

It is prophetic. It leads the minds of the disciples to the great marriage supper of the Lamb, and a voice from heaven declares, "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." That marriage supper represents the highest joys of heaven. It gathers into itself

all the glory and happiness that awaits His people in the heavenly kingdom.

Besides this sacramental service is the type, or shadow, of all the bliss connected with that great event in the future.

If we are true and faithful partakers of this solemn sacrament, this memorial feast, we shall certainly be among the number of those whose unspeakable privilege it will be to sit at the marriage supper of the Lamb in the heavenly kingdom.

There we shall be in the personal presence of Jesus, our glorified Lord; our eyes “ shall see the King in His beauty.”

Hence the “ Lord's Supper ” confirms the two things which it exhibits, namely, “ The atonement and the second coming of the Lord.”

It links the humiliation and the royalty, the scornful trial and the session of judgment, the accomplished past and the assured future, together. It is the Lord's sign on earth, as the sun is in the heavens. It is the wedlock of the believer's memory and hope. Memory which lingers round the cross, hope which already revels in the glory of the throne. “ This do in remembrance of Me.”

Here in the sacrament is the rainbow of the new and better covenant, the ever-renewed pledge of salvation purchased, and strength imparted, and blessing conferred on all believing souls.

And as we covenant in this sacrament to give our all to God, He, the Infinite, in boundless condescension, stoops to whisper, "My light, My strength, My grace, My purity, My joy, My heaven, all are yours."

CHAPTER XVIII.

“THE CLOSING SCENE: THE BEGINNING OF
THE END.”

IMMEDIATELY after the institution of the “Lord’s Supper,” and when Judas, the traitor, had departed, Jesus opened His mind to His disciples, and such words as He then spoke to them were never uttered by mortal man, never was farewell more tender or touching.

It is the outpouring of His ardent love, revived, as it were, by the approaching separation, and passing direct from His heart into the hearts of His silent and sorrowing disciples.

Not one of these divine words was forgotten by the beloved disciple John in penning his gospel, so deeply were they impressed upon his heart. What follows is only a portion of this memorable discourse, “Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me.” As if He had said, “I leave you, it is

true, but I only go to prepare a place in My Father's house.

“I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you.” “Before we separate, I give you this commandment, ‘That ye love one another as I have loved you.’ I will not now call you servants, but friends. Remain in Me, and I in you. I am the Vine; ye are the branches. A little while, and you shall not see Me. Peace I leave with you, peace I give unto you, and I will send you the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Remember My word that I said unto you: The servant is not greater than his lord; if they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but have confidence, I have overcome the world.” Such was the Saviour's farewell. How many tears must the disciples have shed while listening to these parting words of the Lord, Who spake them then for the last time!

Afterwards they saw Him raising His eyes to heaven, and heard Him saying: “Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee. I have glorified Thee upon the earth. I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. I have manifested Thy name

to men, and now, glorify Thou “ Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had with Thee, before the world was.”

“ Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me. Sanctify them in truth. And not for them only do I pray, but for those also who through their word shall believe in Me.”

Here He prayed for all mankind, that His word might not be frustrated, that His toils and His sufferings might not be without fruit; “ that they may be in Me as I am in Thee, and that they may be one as We are also one.”

For this am I come to establish perpetual love, eternal union between men and the Father.

“ Jesus then goes to the Mount of Olives.”

Jesus at length concluded this discourse, which He had protracted to some length, as though He found it difficult to leave His disciples. He then departed and took His way towards the Mount of Olives. It was night; Jerusalem lay hushed and silent, darkness covered the city and the mountain. The disciples walked on within a few paces of their divine Master without speaking a word.

Their way led them through one of the city

gates, down the steep sides of the ravine, across the stream Kedron, and up the green slope beyond it. We are told but of one incident in that last and memorable walk through the midnight to the familiar garden of dark Gethsemane. It was a last warning to the disciples in general, to St. Peter in particular. It may be that the dimness, the silence, the desertion of their position, the dull echo of their footsteps, the agonizing sense that treachery was even now at work, was beginning already to make them afraid; sadly did Jesus turn and say to them that on that very night they should all be offended in Him, and the old prophecy should be fulfilled, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad." And yet, in spite of all, as a shepherd would He go before them leading the way to Galilee.

They all declared their love and loyalty to Him, but Peter was loudest and most sympathetic in his loyalty. Even if all should be offended, yet never would he be offended.

And Jesus only listened in mournful silence to vows which should so soon be scattered into air.

"Jesus goes into Gethsemane." So they

came to Gethsemane, which is about half a mile from the city walls. It is stated by the sacred writers that on going into the garden He left eight of His disciples at the entrance, and that He took with Him the chosen, favored three, Peter, James, and John, and went further into the garden. It is also said, that then He “ began to be sorrowful, and very heavy,” and He said, “ My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.”

Then He withdrew from the three disciples, and there, alone with God, He bowed Himself to the earth, and prayed, saying, “ O, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.” And after offering this earnest prayer, He returned to his disciples, and found them asleep, and said to Peter, “ What! could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.”

Then He went away again, “ and being in agony He prayed more earnestly, and He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” In the depth of His agony, “ there appeared unto Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him.”

We are not told what the angel said to Him.

No doubt he brought to Him some tender, loving words from His Father in heaven, to comfort and encourage Him. Jesus returned to His disciples again, and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.

He then went away and prayed again, saying, "O, Father, if this cup may not pass from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done."

He returned the third time to His disciples and said, "Sleep on now and take your rest: Behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go hence."

And immediately after He had spoken these words, Judas appeared, and with him a band of men who came to take Him a prisoner.

These are the facts told us by the evangelists respecting Jesus and His agony in Gethsemane. They are wonderful facts, and the scene which they set before us in our Saviour's life is one of the most solemn and awful that ever was witnessed in this old world.

"The kiss of Judas."

When Judas and the band of soldiers arrived, Jesus advanced to meet them, and said, "Whom seek ye?" The question was not without an

object. It was asked, as John points out, to secure His apostles from molestation ; and we may suppose also that it served to make all who were present the witnesses of His arrest.

“ Whom seek ye ? ” They answered, “ Jesus of Nazareth. ” “ I am He. ” While they stood cowering and struggling there, He again asked them, “ Whom are ye seeking ? ” Again they replied, “ Jesus of Nazareth. ” “ I told you, ” He answered, “ that I am He. If, then, ye are seeking Me, let these go away. ”

Judas then approached and kissed Him. This was the signal agreed upon. And Jesus looked at the traitor, and said : “ Friend, whereto art thou come ? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss ? ” Then addressing the armed band, He said to them : “ Are you come out, as it were, against a thief, with swords and staffs ? When I was daily with you in the temple, you did not stretch forth your hands against Me : But this is your hour, and the power of darkness. ” They then took hold of Jesus and bound Him. Peter, indignant at seeing his Master thus roughly handled, drew a sword wherewith he had armed himself, through a wrong conception of his Master’s words, and

striking one of the servants of the high priest, cut off his ear. But Jesus rebuked him for his imprudent zeal. "Peter," said He, "put up thy sword into the scabbard. For all that take the sword shall perish by the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot ask My Father, and He will give Me more than twelve legions of angels? How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?" Seeing their Master in this condition, all the disciples deserted Him, and fled.

"Can I Gethsemane forget?—or there thy conflict see.
Thine agony and bloody sweat,—and not remember
Thee?

Remember Thee, and all Thy pains,—and all Thy
love to me;
Yes, while a breath, a pulse remains,—will I remember
Thee.

And when these failing lips grow dumb,
And mind and memory flee
When Thou shalt in Thy Kingdom Come,—Jesus,
Remember Me."

CHAPTER XIX.

“ JESUS BEFORE PILATE.”

WE now come to a dark and sad chapter in the Life of Christ. We have seen how He was betrayed by one of His disciples, and forsaken by all the rest. Then how His enemies seized Him, and led Him away to be mocked and cruelly treated by the priests and rulers of the Jewish church. We speak of what then took place at the trial of Nazareth.

But it was only the form, or mockery, of a trial. It was not conducted, at all, in the way which regular trials were required to be conducted among the Jews. The simple truth is that the enemies of Jesus had made up their minds to put Him to death, and they merely pretended to have a trial because they were afraid to do it without a trial. When the band of soldiers and servants had seized Jesus, and made Him prisoner, they led Him away to the

house of Caiaphas. He was placed before Annas, the aged, dignified, ex-high priest, and before Caiaphas.

The high priest gathered together the chief priests and other members of the Jewish high council, called the Sanhedrim.

This was the highest court among the Jews. It was composed of seventy, or more properly seventy-two of the oldest, the most learned, and honorable men of the nation. The high priest was generally the president of this council.

But, on special occasions, they met in the house of the high priest, as they did at that time. Jesus was brought before this council. Here they tried to bring some charges against Him for teaching false doctrine, or of doing something contrary to the laws of their church. But though they had hired many false witnesses, their testimony did not agree, and they found it impossible to prove anything wrong against Him.

Two witnesses looked more promising than the rest, testified as follows. One of them said: "That he heard Jesus say, I can destroy this temple;" and another said, "That Jesus declared, I will destroy this temple." The fact

was that He had said, “Destroy this temple, and I will build it again in three days.”

He simply suffered His false accusers and their false listeners to entangle themselves in the coil of their own lies, and the silence of the innocent Jesus atoned for the excuses of the guilty Adam. But that majestic silence troubled, thwarted, confounded, and maddened them. They felt, before that silence, as if they were the culprits, He the Judge. And as every poisoned arrow of their perjuries and lies fell harmless at His feet, as though blunted on the diamond shield of His white innocence, they began to fear lest, after all, their thirst for His blood would go unslayed, and their whole plot fail.

Were they thus to be conquered by the feebleness of their own weapons, without His stirring a finger, or uttering a word?

Then Caiaphas was overcome with fear and anger. Starting up from his judgment seat, and moving in their midst with a voice and an attitude we may well imagine!

“Answerest Thou nothing?” he exclaimed. “What is it that these witness against Thee?” But still Jesus remained silent.

Then, reduced to utter despair and fury, the false high priest, still standing as it were with a threatening attitude over his prisoner, exclaimed, "I adjure Thee by the living God to tell us." What? Whether Thou art a sinner? Whether Thou hast secretly taught sedition? Whether Thou hast openly uttered blasphemy? No, but "Whether Thou art the Christ, the Son of God?"

This was a strange question to a bound, defenseless, condemned prisoner; and a strange question from such a questioner, a high priest of the people! To such a question Jesus could not be silent; on such a question He could not leave Himself open to misinterpretation. In the earlier days of His ministry He had kept the Messiahship in the background, but now, at this awful, decisive moment, when death was near, when humanly speaking, nothing could be gained, everything must be lost, by the avowal, there thrilled through all the ages, through all the present, and all the past, the solemn answer, "I am; and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." In that answer the thunder rolled, a thunder louder than at Sinai,

though the ears of the Cynic and the Sadducee heard it not then, nor hear it now.

Caiaphas exclaimed, “Blasphemy!” “What further need have we of witnesses?” What is your decision?

And the confused multitude cried out, “He is a man guilty of death;” and the second stage of the trial of Jesus was over. Then the priests, and other members of the council, seem to have gone home, leaving Jesus to the mockery and insults of the servants.

As soon as morning was come the priests and scribes met again. They asked Him once more if He were the Christ, the Son of God. Again He declared that He was. Then they arose and led Him to Pilate, the Roman Governor, to secure his consent to put Him to death.

“Jesus before Pilate.” This was unlike the idle inquisition of Annas, the extorted confession, the illegal decision of the Sanhedrin; for here His judge was in His favor, who made an effort to deliver Him. This last trial is full of passion and movement. It involves a threefold change of scene, a threefold accusation, a threefold acquittal by the Romans, a threefold rejection by the Jews, a threefold warning to Pilate,

and a threefold effort on his part to baffle the accusers, and set the victim free. It was probably about seven o'clock in the morning that the imposing procession, consisting of Caiaphas and the members of the Sanhedrin conducted Jesus, with a cord round His neck, from the hall, in the presence of all the people, with hands bound, a spectacle to angels and to men.

Pilate goes out to meet them, and, beholding the fierce passions of the accusers, and noting the meek ineffable grandeur of their victim, his question is sternly brief: "What accusation bring ye against this Man?"

The question took them by surprise. They answered, "If He were not a malefactor we would not have delivered Him up unto thee."

"Very well," Pilate said, "take ye Him and judge Him according to your law." But this did not suit their purpose, and they said unto Pilate, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

It was written that Christ should die, not by Jewish stoning or strangulation, but by that Roman form of execution—crucifixion.

"That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spake, signifying what death He

should die.” The accusers dropped the present charge of blasphemy, which did not suit their purpose, they burst into a storm of invectives against Him, in which is seen the triple accusations, that He perverted the nation, forbade to give tribute, and that He called Himself King.

All of those charges were false, and the third all the more so because it included a grain of truth. Pilate leaves the impatient Sanhedrin and the raging crowd, and takes Jesus into the judgment hall to make inquiry upon the third charge only.

St. John alone preserves for us the memorable scene. Jesus, though not “in soft clothing,” though not a denizen of king’s houses, had been led up the imposing stair-way, over the floors of marble, under gilded roofs, ceiled with cedar, and painted with gold. There amid such splendor, Pilate asking Jesus in pitying tones, “Art Thou the King of the Jews? Thou poor, worn, tearstained outcast, in Thy peasant garments, with Thy hands bound, and marks of violence on Thy face, art Thou the King of the Jews?”

“Sayest Thou this of Thyself?” he answered with gentle dignity, “or did others tell it thee of Me?” Pilate said, “Am I a

Jew?" "Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered Thee unto me. What hast Thou done?" "Done?" He might have answered, "I have done works of wonder, and mercy, and power, and innocence, and these alone." Pilate still presses the question, "Art Thou a King then?" Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a King, to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." Pilate impatiently asked, "What is truth?"

And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and saith unto them, "I find in Him no fault at all."

Amid much confusion and passionate exclamation the ear of Pilate caught the name "Galilee," and he understood that Galilee had been the chief scene of the ministry of Jesus.

Pilate seized the opportunity, and sent Jesus to Herod Antipas. And through the thronged and narrow streets, amid the jeering, raging multitude, the weary Sufferer was dragged once more.

"Herod Antipas" was rejoiced beyond all

things to see Jesus. He had heard much about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle performed by Him. Herod propounded many questions to Jesus, but gained not so much as one syllable in reply. Our Lord confronted all his questions with the majesty of silence. For the second time Jesus is derided, derided this time as Priest and Prophet.

Mocking His innocence and His misery, the wicked Herod sent Him back to Pilate. And now began the sixth and last, the most agonizing part of this terrible inquisition.

Now was the time for Pilate to have acted in a clear and just manner, and saved himself forever from the guilt of innocent blood. Pilate summoned the priests, the Sanhedrin, and the people before him, and told them that he had come to the conclusion that Jesus had committed no crime which deserved the punishment of death. And now came the golden opportunity for him to vindicate the grandeur of his country's imperial justice, and, as he had pronounced Him absolutely innocent, to set Him absolutely free.

But at exactly that point he wavered and temporized. “Whom shall I release unto you, this

man, or Barabbas?" said Pilate. The people persuaded by their priests clamored for the liberation of the robber, Barabbas. To him every hand was pointed; for him every voice was raised. For the holy, the harmless, the undefiled, for Him Whom a thousand hosannas had greeted but five days before, no word of pity or pleading found an utterance.

"He was despised and rejected of men." Pilate then said: "What then shall I do with Jesus?" The infuriated cry went out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" In vain did Pilate plead when he exclaimed, "Why, what evil hath He done?" "I found no cause worthy of death in Him." But Pilate finally yielded to the frantic ravings of an Oriental mob, and said: "I will chastise Him, and let Him go." Such half-willed opposition was wholly unavailing.

Again and again, with wilder and wilder vehemence they rent the air with their cries: "Away with this Man. Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Loose unto us Barabbas!" Then Pilate delivered Jesus to be scourged. This scourging was the ordinary preliminary to crucifixion.

It was a punishment so truly horrible, that the mind revolts at it ; and it has long been abolished by the compassion of mankind, by the gradual comprehension of Christian truth.

The unhappy Sufferer was publicly stripped, was tied by the hands, fastened with his face to a pillar, and then, on the tense quivering nerves of the naked back, the blows were inflicted with leathern thongs, tipped with bone or lead, and uplifted with such terrible barbarity, that the victim would sink faint and exhausted to the ground. And this awful cruelty was followed immediately by the third and bitterest derision the derision of Christ as King.

In the presence of this maddened mob they went through the heartless ceremony of a mock coronation, a mock investiture, a mock homage. And they saluted Him with, “ Hail, King of the Jews ! ”

Even now, at that stage of the proceedings, Pilate wished and hoped to save Him. And as Jesus came forth and stood before him with that martyr-form, with the marks of the suffering upon Him, there was a holy calm, a strange pre-eminence, a sacred nobleness, that Pilate broke forth with that involuntary exclamation

which has thrilled with emotion millions of hearts, "Behold the Man!"

But the mob still cried out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Then Pilate in utter disgust said, "Take ye Him, and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him." Strange admission from a Roman judge! Once more Pilate leaves the assemblage, and takes Jesus with him into the quiet judgment hall, and asks Him again, "Whence art Thou?" Alas! It was too late to answer now. Pilate had committed himself to injustice; and Jesus gave him no answer.

And Pilate spake again, "Dost Thou not speak even to me? Dost Thou not know that I have power to set Thee free, and have power to crucify Thee?" Power! How so? Was justice nothing? Was truth nothing? Innocence nothing? Conscience nothing?

In fact, Pilate had no such power. And Jesus pitied the hopeless bewilderment of this man, and gently answered him, "Thou hast no power against Me whatever, had it not been given thee from above; therefore, he that betrayed Me to thee hath the greater sin."

Pilate in the depths of his soul felt the truth of the words, and silently acknowledged the su-

periority of his bound and lacerated victim. Then Pilate led Jesus forth, and looking at Him, as He stood silent and in agony, but calm and dignified, he said :

“Behold your King?” “Shall I crucify your King?” And the people responded, “We have no King but Cæsar. And if thou let this Man go, thou art not Cæsar’s friend.”

At that name Cæsar, Pilate trembled. This completely mastered him. Then Pilate gave Jesus up to be crucified.

CHAPTER XX.

“THE GREAT TRAGEDY.”

THE crucifixion is the third and closing scene in the heartless tragedy. There is no time now to question about the guilt or innocence of the thrice condemned victim.

The sentence of death has been passed, and the law must be speedily executed. “As a Lamb He is led to the slaughter, so was Christ led from the garden of Gethsemane; and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so stood He in the hall of Caiaphas and at the bar of Pilate; and now on the hill of Calvary He is lifted up upon the cross, and there endures the sentence, not of Pilate, but of a greater Judge passed upon Him as our surety.

The soldiers stripped the scarlet robe, stained with innocent blood, from the royal Redeemer, and they clothed Him in His own artless apparel. They prepared the huge cross, and laid it, in part at least, upon His shuddering shoul-

der. The centurion marched the Paschal Lamb out, in company with two malefactors, amid myriads of spectators, coldly inquisitive, or furiously hostile, and the sad procession moved on towards the place of a skull.

This was, indeed, a sad procession, but the most memorable that ever moved upon the earth. It was more significant than any triumphal march, and far more sorrowful than any funeral cortege the world has ever known.

See “ The Man of sorrows ” on His way to death! Sadly, silently, sorrowfully He moves toward Golgotha, with the cross, the dread instrument, resting on His lacerated back. The air was rent with taunts, and insults, and blasphemies, as He dragged His weary, aching limbs toward Calvary, to die, that His vile tormentors might live. But on the way to the place of execution the Son of Man fainted, and fell under the heavy burden; and the cross was laid on one Simon, a Cyrenean. They hurry Him on, in His weakness, to the agonies of Calvary.

Let us take our stand upon the neighboring hill and view the awful tragedy. Three crosses rise high above the heads of a maddened populace. The Roman soldiers have pitched guard,

and with measured step, uplifted spear, and flashing helmets pace the arena of death. Standing by the cross is a group of women, the Mother of Jesus, the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene.

The place where the Saviour died is the most sacred spot on earth. Men may revere the memory of their illustrious dead. They may rear monuments in honor of the Patriot, the Statesman, and the Philanthropist; but in all the archives of history there is no name like that of Jesus, and no shrine of devotion before which men bow, to be compared with the cross of Calvary.

The cross of Christ is the central point in human history, the boundary line between earth and heaven. We love to contemplate the Saviour in His life-work on earth; for each act has its place in the divine plan, and every achievement its lesson of love for suffering and sinning humanity.

But we love most to view Him in His self-sacrificing love and devotion to the human race, because the lessons associated with the most precious memories of Christ cluster around the cross, and lift us nearer to heaven. We delight

to revel amid the serene, sublime virtues of the life of Jesus; but it derives pleasures infinitely deeper and purer, beneath the shadows of His crimson cross, and the gloom and glory of His new sepulchre, left empty on the morning of the third day. But the hour had fully come for the offering up of the great sacrifice, and the Voluntary Victim was ready to die.

The curtain rises at nine o'clock in the morning, and the last scene in the divine tragedy begins. The meek and lowly Jesus stands face to face with the king of terrors, but shudders not during all the lingering agonies of His most dreadful death.

The rude soldierly placed Him upon the rugged cross, exposed His lacerated flesh and bleeding wounds to the gaze of the vast multitude of spectators. And with deadening blows they drove the huge spikes through His tender hands, hands that had been lifted and dropped benedictions upon the poor and the needy.

They, also, with relentless stroke drove nails through His feet; feet which had always run upon willing errands of love and mercy for suffering humanity. Now the crimson, gory cross, with its living burden hanging helpless upon it,

was lifted up, and with cruel force dropped into its place, causing the most excruciating pains and agonizing groans. Then there was placed over the head of the Nazarene an inscription, written in three languages, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

So the chief priests sent and besought the Governor to change the timely title, which he had given to the crucified Nazarene. But it was all in vain. "What I have written, I have written, it is true, and changes not," was the reply which Pilate made.

So the dying King, the truest, the greatest, and the noblest of the race, still reigned, though His throne was but a rugged cross, and His crown a bloody wreath of piercing thorns.

It was probably at this moment of inconceivable horror that the voice of the Son of Man was heard, calmly praying in divine compassion for His brutal and pitiless murderers, and for all who in their sinful ignorance crucify Him afresh, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The Saviour, Who knew no sin, was numbered with the transgressors. On either side was placed a thief, as if to make His humiliation

more complete, and if possible to add to His ignominious death.

For a time these criminals joined the merciless persecutors in casting insults into the face of the dying Saviour. But at length the suffering Innocence, which hung in meekness, shamed into silence, and deepened into penitence, and at last, one of the criminals cried out, “Lord, remember me,” and the miserable malefactor received pardon on the cross. One word from the lips of the Son of God lifted the heavy burden of guilt from the bleeding heart of the dying thief, and his soul went up into Paradise.

The loving ear of the Saviour, even amid the agonies of the cross, was quick to catch the faintest ascents of faith, though they fell, in weakness, from the lips of a dying thief.

The soldiers in charge of the suffering Saviour divided His garments among themselves, and for His seamless coat they cast lots. Thus they fulfilled the prophecy which said, “They parted My raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots.”

The fierce heat of the sun beat down upon the head of the Royal Victim. The sufferings of the crucifixion were intensified by the fearful

thirst following the painful convulsions on the cross.

So He called for water, but they offered Him vinegar mingled with gall instead, but He refused it. Human sympathy would, at least, have let the victim of such agony die in peace.

But the malignant hatred of His enemies ignored all the claims of compassion; and, with the most vindictive irony, the rabble mob, for three long hours, with sneers and taunts, they poured insult and mockery upon their crucified King.

But Jesus knew what the victories of the cross demanded. Hence He bore its indignities and agonies with unwavering submission and fortitude. Despising its shame, He endured, most patiently, all its sufferings. Not a murmur escaped His fevered lips.

He was reviled, but He kept His peace. Smit-ten, but resisted it not; mocked, but bore it all in silence; and afflicted, but opened not His mouth.

All nature sympathized with the crucified One in His agonies. At twelve o'clock the heavens were gradually darkened, and night climbs up to the sun at noon day, wrapping in

awful gloom the awe-stricken multitude who stood in blank amazement around the cross. The darkness increased, until a thick veil shrouded the face of the fading firmament.

The stars shone out like funeral torches, shedding over the tragic scene a pale and lurid light. Midnight darkness had mantled the earth at noontide. It was night at high-noon in the streets of the doomed city. It was night all over the Holy Land, where Jesus had let His light shine as a sun for many days.

The rulers of Israel had attempted to blot out of existence the Sun of Righteousness; and God had smote all the people with midnight blindness. The Holy City had closed her eyes against the Light of Life; and Jehovah veiled the heavens in deepest darkness. The keepers of the city sat sad and silent in their watch towers by the gates. The sentinels stood still upon her lofty battlements. All nature gave signs of desolation, and this dark noontide struck the multitude with terror as they groped their way, they knew not where, in the darkness of a day swallowed up in the blackness of night.

The darkened sun and the shadowing earth both testified to the magnitude of the crime of

crucifying the Son of God. They both gave evidence of deepest grief at, and closest sympathy with, the sorrows of their Creator. The sun in all his journeyings, had never looked down upon such a sight as that on Calvary.

The earth refused to let her inhabitants gaze on such an awful scene without feelings of deepest awe and reverence.

Hence, while the rocky sides of Golgotha were bursting open, a wonderful reaction took place in favor of the dying Nazarene. The rocking earth filled the hearts of friends and foes alike with terror and dismay; and the cries of the multitude went up amid the convulsions, in humble acknowledgments of His Messiahship.

It was probably at this time that Jesus gave vent to that mournful exclamation, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me."

The cause of this complaint is stated in the complaint itself. Christ was now forsaken. This is a very mysterious subject.

Christ now stood at a great moral distance from the Father. In this sense was He forsaken. Two classes comprise all rational beings in the universe—the holy and the unholy. Be-

tween these two there is a great gulf fixed. It was amid the unholy that Christ now stood. In His personal character, as the Son of God, He had no sin. He was the holy One of Israel. But in His official character, as the surety of lost men, He had sin; and therefore was now removed to that moral distance from God to which sin removes all on whom it is found; and of this distance He had at this time a most painful sense.

Sin not only divides between God and the sinner, its tendency is to break the links which bind the sinner to other creatures, and places him alone in the universe. Christ as the Sin Bearer was now forsaken. Such was the position of Christ our Surety, at this time. He looked around upon hosts of men on earth; He looked along the ranks of angels in heaven; He looked up to the divine throne, but every eye was averted, every face was hid.

He felt that He was forsaken; and even forsaken of God the Father. We do not mean that He was forsaken of the divine essence, for in this sense no creature can be forsaken of God.

Nor was the union between His two natures

now dissolved; but God was dealing with Him as He would have done with the real offender had he now stood before Him.

Nor do we affirm that the Son now ceased to be the object of the Father's love. The earth was dark, and the heaven's shone not; but from the cross came a moral effulgence which irradiated both earth and heaven beyond the splendor of a thousand suns.

The Father, therefore, did not cease to love the Son, but He ceased to manifest that love. Christ now endured the direct infliction of the divine wrath. The curse denounced against sin falls upon the sin-bearer.

To a spectator of the scene, it must have appeared as if the throne of righteousness had fallen, while wickedness had resolved to celebrate its fall by walking in triumph through the universe.

What a scene was this! This was the hour, above every other, when Christ needed comfort and help; and yet this was the hour when He was forsaken. And never was any being more completely forsaken than the Son of God now was.

No wonder that He should cry out, " My God,

My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!” The centurion expressed the sentiment of thousands, when he said, “ Truly this Man was the Son of God.”

In thickest folds the storm clouds gather round the bleeding victim, lashed into fury by fierce lightnings which, falling upon the silent habitation of the dead, as if to wake into life the slumbering atoms of mortality, and reanimating the long-forgotten dust of ages.

Amidst the commotion the veil of the temple is rent from top to the bottom, and the holy place was exposed to public gaze.

There are other witnesses than those upon the sacred mount. Calvary is enriched with a coronet of living stars, and from the shining portals of the twelve-gated city the angels and arch-angels are watching with intense anxiety every move in the awful drama.

The glorious Prince of Peace calmly awaits the approach of the final charge. For a moment the Redeemer bows beneath the strong arms of His antagonists, apparently defeated, and hell rings out tones of victory; but ere the jubilant song had ceased to echo along the gloomy abode, the dying Victor planted His bruised heel on the

serpent's head, and cried with a loud voice, "It is finished!"

Justice dropped her pointless sword; and Mary's tears and pleading voice were turned into tears of joy, while hovering angels catch the song as it quivers on the Conqueror's lips, and, "It is finished" becomes the sevenfold chorus of earth and heaven.

Hark! "It is finished" rolls from throne to throne in glory. "It is finished" trembled on the lips of every seraph. "It is finished" is the song of choral angels as they travel to their thrones of light. Hark! How it reverberates through all the temples and pavilions of eternity. Raise it every voice, sound it every harp; ye thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, pass along the rapturous acclaim; ye archangels, seraphim and cherubim, raise! raise! the overpouring symphony, until every dwelling-place of universal being shall vibrate with the triumphant sound.

"It is finished," Redemption's work is consummated, the Atonement for Sin is accomplished. "Truly this Man was the Son of God."

CHAPTER XXI.

“THE BURIAL.”

WE return from Calvary. The sorrows of the Son of God are now ended, and His body hangs lifeless upon the cross.

The sun was fast sinking toward the Western horizon, and the chief priests were much alarmed lest the sanctity of the Jewish Sabbath should be defiled, if the bodies remained on the crosses.

Hence they besought Pilate that the legs of the victims might be broken, in order to hasten their deaths, that they might be taken down before the setting of the sun.

But when they came to Jesus, seeing no signs of life, they preserved the symbolism of the Paschal Lamb of which He was the great anti-type. But, to be certain that His soul had passed out of the body, a soldier thrust a spear into His side, from which flowed blood and water, proving the certainty of His death.

Death brings out the true meaning of life. It

uncovers its virtues, reveals its fragrance, and adorns all its grand achievements.

No man was ever so great, in the estimation of men, before, as after he had passed with heroic fortitude through the trying ordeal of death. So it was, that the noble self-sacrificing death of Jesus did more than anything else to give tone, caste, and emphasize the grand life He had lived.

The noble life would long ago have ceased to move the hearts and shape the destinies of men had it not been crowned with a still greater and grander death in which it survived, and has swept on down the centuries, molding the lives and brightening the hopes of the children of God. Pilate says, "Towards evening I threw my mantle around me and went down into the city towards the gates of Golgotha. The sacrifice was consummated. The crowd was returning home, still agitated and sad. What they witnessed at Calvary had stricken them with terror and remorse.

I returned to the pretorium, sad and pensive. On ascending the stairway, the steps of which were still stained with the blood of the Nazarene, I perceived an old man in a suppliant

posture, and behind him several women in tears. He threw himself at my feet, and wept bitterly. It is painful to see an old man weep.”

Pilate said: “Who are thou?” and “What is thy request?” and he replied, “I am Joseph of Arimathea, and I am come to beg the body of Jesus, and to ask permission to bury it.” And Pilate gave him leave. We can easily imagine the struggle which took place in the breast of Joseph before he made his request of Pilate.

He was, indeed, a disciple, but hitherto he had concealed the fact, and there was nothing now to prevent him from concealing it forever.

Joseph knew that after going to Pilate to beg the body, he could no longer conceal his relation to the crucified Nazarene.

This act, then, was not more kind toward the Saviour than it was heroic and magnanimous in itself. It displayed astonishing faith, it evinced a self-denial of no common kind.

His credit with his countrymen, his place in the synagogue, his rank as one of the counselors of Israel, all were now placed in jeopardy, and willingly so by this noble-minded and self-devoted man. Joseph and his associates took

the body of the crucified Saviour down from the cross, and tenderly bore it to the tomb. St. John states that Nicodemus took part in the burial, for he "brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, as the manner of the Jews is to bury their dead." This was the saddest funeral procession ever seen on earth. The company was small, but their grief was too deep for utterance. Their demeanor was in keeping with the solemnity and sacredness of the occasion.

The light of a life dearer to them than their own had gone out in darkness and death. The darkest night that ever mantled the earth was gathering its evening shades around them when they reached the garden, and came to the new sepulchre.

Here the faith of His followers must have faltered. Here they felt that they were to bury the hopes of the world, and they laid their sacred burden down in tears at the mouth of the open grave. The necessary preparations for the burial were soon made. The mangled and blood-stained body was carefully washed and clothed in fine linen. It was also perfumed with myrrh and aloes provided for in its imperfect embalmment.

His obsequies were so humble, and His burial so unostentatious.

Never did death gain such another triumph as this. But ah! this was a triumph which cost him dear, for by this triumph he destroyed himself. This sepulchre in which the Saviour lies is not His own, for as He had no roof of His own to shelter Him when He lived, so He had no grave of His own in which to be laid when dead. As He was born for others, and died for others, so was he buried for others; and, therefore, He was laid not in His own grave, but in that of another man. To this grave was He borne by a small company of very humble followers; for of all the vanities of this world of vanity, perhaps there is not a greater than a splendid and pompous funeral. Still a proper respect is due to the body of every man, from the consideration of what it once was, and especially the body of the just and the good from the consideration of what it shall yet be.

A magnificent funeral the body of Jesus did not receive, for neither the circumstances in which He died, nor the feelings of the disciples admitted of this; but with seemly re-

spect and decent solemnity was it carried to the tomb of Joseph.

And the hour was such as befitted this deeply solemn scene. The body of the Saviour was carried to the grave, not at the hour of morn, or amid the effulgence of noonday, but when the last and setting rays of the sun were falling on the earth.

Amid the shadows of the approaching eve did this little band tread in tears the path which led from the summit of Calvary, down the valley to the garden and the grave. The work of the Son of Man is at an end, as far as sacrifice is concerned, and now He rests.

Jesus had lived in poverty, had been crucified as a malefactor; but was buried as a King. Joseph and Nicodemus, both men of means and honorable counselors, were interested in His burial.

The one furnished the sepulchre, the fine linen and robes, and the other the costly perfumes which gave Him a burial "with the rich in His death."

The last kiss, the pledge of undying love for their slain King had been given. Then they laid His sacred body in the new tomb, hewn

out of a rock, and then rolled a great stone against its entrance, and the burial was over.

The body of Jesus was left in the grave, while the disciples went their way to mourn over what they conceived to be an irreparable loss. The buried Saviour slept quietly in the new sepulchre that night. The next day was the great Paschal Sabbath.

The courts of the holy temple were filled with formal worshippers. The white robed priests were busy with their offerings for the sins of the people. The voices and the trumpets of the Levites were loud and long in their calls for devotion.

The high priest, in his sacerdotal robes, showed with generous splendor before the gazing multitude. But it must have been with feelings mingled with tears that they passed through the services of that memorable day. The holy of holies, for centuries veiled in awful majesty, save to the high priest who was only permitted to enter into the sacred enclosure once a year, and then not without blood. The presence chamber of deity no longer filled with divine glory, was now exposed to the gaze of the whole congregation. The scenes of the past

eventful day still crowded their melancholy memories.

The innocent blood called down upon their own and the heads of their children was still fresh upon their crimson souls.

But the chief priests fearing the resurrection of the crucified Nazarene, went to the Governor at evening fall, and obtained permission to place the seal of state upon the mouth of the sepulchre, and station a company of soldiers to guard the sacred place.

This was done under pretense, that His disciples might come by night and steal Him away, and proclaim His resurrection from the dead, as an evidence of His Messiahship. The soldier guard was consequently appointed, and took up their station at the sepulchre.

The account of the burial of Jesus is closed with a very touching picture, a picture of singular truth and beauty.

“And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.” Such an incident as this, an impostor is not likely to have thought of, for the purpose of filling up His picture, and yet how true to nature is it!

The most trying circumstance of all in the death of our friends is to lay them in the grave, and to leave them there.

These two women had followed the Saviour to Calvary, and from Calvary to the grave; no farther can they follow Him; here must they leave Him; but, oh! how can they go away from that grave?

Their hearts are buried with their Master in the tomb, and the only happiness they can feel now is to sit and watch beside the sepulchre. All the other friends of Jesus had departed.

The evening is fast setting in. The sunlight has faded on the Mount of Olives, and the thick shadows of the city lie across the valley of Jehoshaphat. There is silence now on that hill of Calvary; and a deep calm amid the gardens around the place where the Lord lay. Every moment are the shadows deepening, still are the two Marys sitting beside the grave.

They mark not the approach of the darkness, for love still binds them to the spot.

They can only think of the grave, and the honored Master Who sleeps within it. And here would they have continued to sit and watch till the third day had dawned, and the Crucified One had come forth, had not the arrival of

the Roman soldiers compelled them to depart.

There is one important fact which has never been denied, and that is "that Christ was buried." No one ever doubted that, no one ever denied that, no one ever controverted that.

He was buried, in a particular manner, just as He died, in a particular manner. The sepulchre of Christ was an aperture in a rock; a cavity hewn out of a natural rock.

So there was no approaching the sepulchre of Christ but by the mouth of it; there was no undermining it; there was no way of the body getting out of the grave but by the way it got in, namely, "by the mouth of the sepulchre."

But the mouth of the sepulchre was shut up, sealed up, fortified with a great stone rolled against its mouth. The stone was sealed with the royal arms, the imperial signet was attached to the stone, so that it was supposed it could never be infringed upon, never could be violated; and to make it still more inviolable, it was guarded by Rome's veteran legions.

Jesus the Nazarene died on the cross, and was laid in the sepulchre, and there He rested until the morning of the third day.

"He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death."

CHAPTER XXII.

“THE EMPTY SEPULCHRE.”

TWICE had the setting sun and the gathering shadows been seen in the west, and once had the East brightened with the early light, since the disciples bore away the body of their crucified Lord to the grave; and now the third day is about to dawn.

Let us take our station on one of the eminences, and watch the opening of the day. The mountains of Moab run along on the east like a waving line traced on the sky. The pure light springs up peacefully behind them, revealing once more the soft beauty of the hills and valleys of the land of Judah.

The clouds hang motionless in the sky; not a breath of air stirs the trees, or moves the grass, or ruffles the waters.

Below is the slumbering city, and on the east of it, like a lofty pyramid of gardens and fig-trees, stands Mount Olivet.

Softly does the light break on this lovely scene. Now it tints the summit of the mountains, now it gladdens the vines in the valley, now it flickers on the roofs of the little Bethlehem, now it lights up every ravine and streamlet, and overhanging rock, and now it rests sweetly on the broad bosom of yonder plain—the valley of palm-trees, silvering its winding stream, and burnishing the surface of its lake, which, spread out in the hush of dawn, reflects like a mirror the light of the early day.

Such was the morning on which Jesus rose from the dead.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were last at the sepulchre on the evening of the first day, and these steadfast friends were the first to visit it on the morning of the third day.

They rested on the Sabbath according to the comandment. Strong as was their love, they visited not the grave of their Lord on that day; but, ah! we can easily imagine the sorrow in which this Sabbath day was passed. The grave had closed above their Master at the very time they expected His Kingdom to appear.

That beautiful life of Christ seemed to be closed; friends were broken-hearted, His ene-

mies were triumphant. The gloom of disappointment settled over His disciples. They said: “We trusted this had been He who should have redeemed Israel.” How human they were! In the dark hour of adversity they forgot His teachings when in prosperity.

Those women wished that the Sabbath might pass away, that they might enjoy the only comfort now left them, that of visiting the grave of the beloved Master.

As they who watch for the morning, so did these women wait for the return of the light; and when at length the first ray broke over the mountains which girdled the city, they rose up, and at an hour when we would have thought fear and darkness would have kept them from going abroad, they began their journey to the sepulchre. The third day all the prophecies and all the types had pointed as that on which Christ was to rise.

Christ Himself had said: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it again.” It was fitting that some competent time should elapse between the death of Christ and His resurrection.

Had he revived immediately on being taken

down from the cross, men might have doubted whether He ever had been dead. But when we see Him consigned to the grave, and continuing in it for the space of three days, there is no room for any doubt as to His death. As the two women go on their way, we hear them saying, one to the other, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" Concerning the resurrection of their Lord, they appear not even to have thought, although it had been the theme of prophecy, and had lately been foretold in their own hearing by Christ Himself. So dark was the cloud that enveloped them.

The object of their present journey was not to meet their risen Master, but to anoint the body of their buried Lord with sweet spices which they carried with them for that purpose.

The stone which covered the mouth of the sepulchre, and which now occasioned so much uneasiness to the women, was part of the arrangement by which the enemies of Christ hoped to falsify His prediction—to prevent His coming forth from the grave.

One would have thought that now His persecutors would have been at rest. Jesus was dead

and buried. But in truth, fear had as much to do with the measures to which His enemies had recourse as hatred. The words which He had spoken while yet alive still haunted them, and though they affected to treat the prediction of His resurrection as a vain boast, and spoke of Him as a deceiver, yet the embassy they sent to Pilate clearly shows the fears under which they labored that the prediction might after all turn out to be true. Even in the hour of victory they anticipated defeat.

As if the bands of death and the bars of the grave had been too weak, they affix the stone and the seal, and then they place around the tomb a guard of Roman soldiers.

How much do we owe to these men? To the malice of the enemies of the Gospel are we indebted for the clear evidence of the great fact by which the gospel is established. Around the sepulchre every precaution had been taken which fear could suggest or malice employ. This is a new tomb, and should any one come forth from it, it must be He and no other. This tomb is hewn in the rock; it has only one entrance, and that is carefully sealed and strongly guarded. Neither force nor fraud,

therefore, can violate it. But all these precautions we owe not to the care or the foresight of friends, but to the fears and the malice of enemies. The means which man in his weak counsels devised to prevent the resurrection have become the great vouchers to the world of the truth of that resurrection.

The more numerous the guards posted at the sepulchre, the more numerous the witnesses of the triumph of Christ over death and the grave. But other and mightier guards were around this sacred spot. Here were the angels of God keeping watch over the sepulchre to guard and attend to God's anointed Son.

Still we hear the anxious inquiry of the women, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" as they pass on the way, and the only answer returned is a repetition of the question, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" Still they press on their way, and love impels them to go forward. The stone was already rolled away.

Ah, how thankful would these women have been for the sight of their dead Master! Little did they anticipate the joyful surprise that awaited them. While they were going to the

sepulchre, other events were taking place. The dawn of the third day found matters around the grave the same in all respects as they had been on the evening that Christ was interred.

The door of the sepulchre was still closed, the seal remained unbroken, Jesus still slept within, and the early light beamed upon the helmets of the soldiers who kept watch without.

As yet nothing betokened a return to life on the part of the sleeper within the tomb. All was still, both within and without, but now matters begin to be changed. Amid signs of awful terror did Jesus die; amid signs of light and glory did He rise again.

Amid the shadows of the eve did weeping friends carry Him to the grave; but He comes forth from the tomb amid the shouts of the rejoicing earth and the songs of the exulting heavens.

St. Matthew records it as follows: “As it began to dawn.” Yes, that is just what it did. It began to dawn, a new tender light shot up in the eastern sky, the Orient trembled with a new presence, and glowed as with an infinite surprise.

Christianity is a continual “dawning.”

When Christ comes the light comes; when Christ shines upon the life the darkness flees away. The light of the newly sun had just visited the earth, but scarcely has his first ray been reflected from the battlements of the city when all things around the grave are lighted up by a brighter splendor than the light of day.

The gardens and the fountains, the roofs of the temple, the valleys and the hills around the city, all now glow beneath a radiance more dazzling by far than was ever shed by an earthly sun upon the earth. But whence is this light? It is the Sun of Righteousness rising. And now an earthquake shakes the world.

This is the summons to men to rise and greet the Redeemer of men. Lebanon trembles and all its cedars. Bashan trembles and all its oaks; and Tabor, and Hermon, and Carmel, and Jezreel's plain, and the beautiful Sharon. But was it terror that now made the earth to shake, or did it not rather leap for joy? Did it not exult and shout that its Lord was returning from the grave?

“Lord, when Thou wentest out of Seir, when Thou marchest out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled; the mountains melted from be-

fore the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel!”

While the earth yet trembled, the terrors of the scene are still further increased by the descent of an angel. He approaches the tomb, and breaks the seal and rolls back the stone from the door of the sepulchre. This visitant was the servant of Him who clothes Himself with light as with a garment, and in the same glorious robe had He now arrayed His minister.

“His countenance” as he stood beside the tomb was radiant with light, and without challenge from the soldiers appointed to guard it, he threw open the door, “His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of Him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.” There was no earthly foe which these soldiers would not have dared to meet.

He whom the soldiers now encountered was no warrior of earth; he was one of God’s special messengers; and a single look at him was like lightning, and it sufficed to overwhelm them with terror, and to lay them prostrate on the earth.

The ministry of this angel served an import-

ant purpose. It indicated to the world the concurrence of the Father in the resurrection of the Christ. Christ did not steal out of that sepulchre. He came forth only when the angel of justice opened the door of the prison. What more certain token can we demand that the Father accepted Christ's death as a full atonement for the sins of the world? "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again."

The soldiers were yet trembling under the terror of the angel. For to them the glory of this angel was most marvelous. When a glory more dazzling and terrible than even that of the angel beamed upon their sight. This new splendor came not from above; it shone forth from the tomb of Joseph. But can it be that He, who for three days has lain here the prisoner of death, is now to come forth? Yes. Prophets have sung of His resurrection. Jesus Himself has foretold it, and it must needs be. To the decree of heaven, man had the audacity to oppose, and rolled a stone against the door of the sepulchre, and sealed it, and placed a guard over it.

Vain attempt! Although mountains had

been piled on mountains, till the towering mass threatened the heavens, though the seal of Cæsar had been affixed to the tomb, before the presence of Him who lay within, that seal would have been broken, these mountains would have skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.

He comes! He comes! The same Christ who stood before Pilate, the same Christ who so lately wore the purple robe and the crown of thorns, the same Christ who died on Calvary, the same Christ Whom Joseph carried to the tomb.

He comes; the soldiers recognize Him. But, oh! what majesty and glory encompass Him! Now, behold all ye warriors of Rome! Now is the moment to put forth your prowess. Why do ye hang back, and exhibit such dismay and fear? Why are the joints of your loins loosed, while your knees smite one against the other?

Why fall prostrate on the earth as dead men? Alas! the armies of hell could not retain the body of the Lord in the grave, and shall the legions of Rome attempted to do so? “The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep; and none of the men of might have found their

hands. At Thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a deep sleep.”

The two women are still on their way to the sepulchre. Memory is busy within, and in this short journey they have reviewed all the scenes of sweet intercourse which they had enjoyed with their Lord, every word He spake, every act of power he performed as He walked with them by the waters of Galilee.

Instantly they turn to the tomb; and lo! the stone is rolled away. They bend and look into the sepulchre, and here they behold the grave clothes and an angel who filled with celestial light and fragrance the place where the Lord had lain.

“Fear not ye,” said the angel, “for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen as He said. Come see the place where the Lord lay. He is risen!”

What sounds are these which now come from the empty sepulchre?

He is risen! From the morning of Time till now had sounded forth the steady and unvarying peal, “He is dead! He is dead!” But now a new sound is heard in the musical

scale of heavenly song. It is, “ He is risen ! ”
Of Elijah it was said, “ He is ascended.”

Of Lazarus it was said, “ He was raised ” ;
but for the first time it is now said, “ He is
risen.” Yes, and in rising He broke the bars
of death, and left open the portals of the grave
that all His people might follow Him in due
time.

Meanwhile, one of the holy women who came
to embalm the body of Jesus, but had not seen
the angel, lingered sad and disconsolate around
the empty tomb. The stone rolled back, and
the empty sepulchre made her think that her
Lord had been carried off, and not knowing
where to find Him in order to render the last
sad duties, she began to weep. Bending over
the tomb, she saw two angels clothed in white,
one at the head and the other at the foot of the
place where Christ had lain. These angels
said to her: “ Woman, why weepest thou ? ”
and she said unto them: “ Because they have
taken away my Lord, and I know not where
they have laid Him.”

Turning at the moment, she saw Jesus Him-
self; but, not recognizing Him, and supposing
Him to be the gardener, she said: “ Sir, if

Thou hast taken Him away, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." Jesus said, "Mary!" and immediately, she recognizing Him, she fell at His feet, saying, "Rabboni!" that is, "Master." Then Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and what things He had said unto her.

Here are the indisputable facts which prove His resurrection:

1. "Jesus was dead."
2. "He was laid in the new tomb."
3. "A guard of Roman soldiers was placed in charge of that tomb."
4. "The soldiers themselves announced the resurrection of Jesus."
5. "The folded clothes show that Jesus was not stolen."
6. "He appeared to Mary Magdalene, then to two disciples going to Emmaus, then to Cephas, then to the twelve, then to five hundred brethren when assembled at Jerusalem, then to James, to all the apostles, and this occurred at several times.

Thomas must not only see Him, but with his hands and fingers feel the prints of the nails

and the scars of His wounds. They eat and drink with Him, receive instructions and commissions from Him, and see Him taken up into heaven.

Stephen, Paul and John the Divine saw Him after He was ascended into heaven. The soldiers who were set to guard the sepulchre are forced to be witnesses, as of His death, so of His resurrection.

The coming of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, the miracles done, the gifts of the Spirit received in His name, and the faith of the world in Him do testify to the same; so that there can be no reason in the world to doubt His resurrection.

Christ is the resurrection; therefore, its source and spring, its author, and finished in a sense in which no other can be.

When He emerged from the tomb on the morning of the world's great Sabbath He brought life and immortality with Him, by which the perils of the deep sea, before awaiting the plunge of the diver, the treasures, before lying in the deep mine, were by Him seized and brought up to the light of day. Look and

see the place where the Lord lay, and tremble—but rejoice with trembling.

Is the stone there yet? If it is, if the stone is not yet rolled away, if the grave-stone and spices yet shroud and embalm the corpse, then let the darkness come and blot out the sun, and bid a long, long good-night to all the world's hopes of life, for existence is a feverish dream, and death shall be its ghastly but its welcome end.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

“THE ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST.”

“HE led them out as far as to Bethany. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.” The sentence was left incomplete; the benediction was broken off, as it were, at a semi-colon. “While He blessed them.” It is as the song of an ascending bird, now so clear, so sharp, so sweet, and now less so, and now, and now—and now—and it is gone, away into the light, away into the nativity of the morning, away into heaven! We should bless God for broken benedictions, for incomplete farewells. The way of the going seems to intimate the certainty of the coming. As if Christ had said: “You have heard half the sentence now, the other half you shall hear in the morning.”

“Forty days” had now elapsed since the crucifixion. During those forty days nine

times had He been visibly present to human eyes, and had been touched by human hands.

But His body had not been merely the human body, nor liable to merely human laws, nor had He lived during those days the life of men. The time had now come when His earthly presence should be taken away from them, until He returned in glory to judge the world.

He met them in Jerusalem, and as He led them out toward Bethany He bade them wait in the Holy City until they had received the promise of the Spirit. He checked their eager inquiry about the times and the seasons, and bade them to be witnesses in all the world. These last farewells must have been uttered in the same wild, secluded upland country that surrounds the little village; and when they were over, He lifted up His hands and blessed them, and, even as He blessed them, was parted from them, and as He passed before their yearning eyes "a cloud received Him out of their sight."

Between us and His visible presence—between us and that glorified Redeemer Who now sitteth at the right hand of God—that cloud still rolls. But the eye of Faith can pierce it;

“The Ascension of Jesus Christ.” 245

the incense of true prayer can rise above it; through it the dew of the blessing can descend.

And if He is gone away, yet He has given us in the Holy Spirit a nearer sense of His presence, a closer infolding in the arms of His tenderness than we could have enjoyed even if we had lived with Him of old in the home of Nazareth, or sailed with Him in the little boat over the crystal waters of Gennesareth.

We may be as near to Him at all times—and more than all when we kneel down to pray—as the beloved disciple was when he laid his head upon His breast. To ears that have been closed His voice may seem indeed to sound no longer. The loud noise of war may shake the world; the calls of avarice and pleasure may drown the gentle utterance which bids us “Follow me”; after two thousand years of Christianity the incredulous murmurs of an impatient scepticism may make it scarcely possible for Faith to repeat, without insult, the creed which has been the regeneration of the world. To all who will listen He still speaks.

He promised to be with us always, even to the end of the world, and we have not found His promise fail. It was but for thirty-three

short years of a lifetime that He lived on earth ; it was but for three broken and troubled years that He preached the gospel of the kingdom ; but for ever, even until all the Eons have been closed, and the earth itself, with the heavens that now are, have passed away, shall every one of His true and faithful followers find peace and hope and forgiveness in His name, and that name shall be called "Emmanuel," which is, being interpreted, "God with us."

The Ascension of Our Lord was in strict accord with the words by which He had prepared His disciples to expect it.

He had begun to speak of it as far back as the conversation recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John, when He said: "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven."

This gave offense, and they thought it a hard saying. To their murmuring He replied: "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?" As the time drew near, He spoke with greater distinctness: "I go to prepare a place for you. Whither I go ye know. Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father. Ye have heard how I said, I go away and come again unto

you. If ye love Me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto My Father.” And when their minds were bewildered, questioning what He could mean by the phrase, “a little while and I go to the Father;” He said yet more plainly: “I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father.” Then on the eventful morning of the resurrection, when Jesus showed Himself to Mary in the garden and she was about to worship Him, He said unto her: “I am not yet ascended to My Father, and your Father; and to My God and your God.”

So clear are these statements that if the history of His life had closed with that interview, the conclusion would be that He had ascended to heaven with the body which was raised from the tomb.

But the Ascension is not a matter of inference, for a chosen few were permitted to behold it. The eleven were with Jesus. He had given them reason to expect his withdrawal. Before His crucifixion He had “been with them” by day and by night, in the crowded streets and on the seashore, and in the desert place.

After His passion "He showed Himself alive" for forty days, and as that period drew near to a close, He gave them commandment not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which they had heard from His lips, and which would be accomplished before many days; and then, as if He realized that He would not long tarry with them, they seized the opportunity to ask: "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?"

So He was preparing them for His departure; and when the event occurred they were competent witnesses of the fact.

It is in the day time; the eleven are together; Jesus leads them along by a familiar path which they have often trod with Him till they come even to the borders of Bethany.

There the din of the city is hushed and they are concealed from view. There He talks with them, still in familiar speech, and gives them His benediction; and while He speaks, while His hands are lifted to bless them, He is parted from them; He rises into the air; their eyes follow; they look intently until a cloud receives Him out of their sight. And while they still

are gazing with wonder, two men stand by in white apparel to testify that Jesus has indeed gone up into heaven and shall come again in like manner.

Thus did they behold the crowning glory of the Incarnation. Thus were they permitted to see the fulfilment of the Saviour's words as He left them and went to the Father.

Thus did they see that His resurrection from the grave was one step in the transition to a higher form of existence; a reunion of soul and body for “an unbroken eternity of life.”

Then they went back to Jerusalem with great joy, and made the temple arches bear witness to the ardor of their praise.

This fact of the Ascension, while definitely recorded by Mark and Luke, is also interlinked with the whole system of Christian doctrine. The resurrection, as a fundamental truth of the Christian system, implies an Ascension to Glory. Its significance and value depend on His return to heaven. When death came, it caused a separation of the soul and body. The Saviour's body was insensible, lifeless, dead; but on the third day it was revived, it left the grave. Then it was seen by man, and touched

by human hands; not a phantom, eluding the grasp, but a true body with flesh and bones, that talked and ate like men even as before it slept in the tomb; but what was to be its final destiny?

There was no occasion for its remaining here as a living body; the work of Christ was finished; the object of the Incarnation was accomplished; there had been suffering enough and humiliation enough. Nor could the body die again. Here was the victory over death, that the Saviour's body did not see corruption.

To suppose the soul to leave it again after the reunion takes away the glory of the resurrection.

On that supposition, how was Christ's resurrection superior to that of Lazarus? What value or significance had it if it was not a final resurrection, a reunion for eternity?

That could not be; and so we find Paul's confident statement: "Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him."

So the Ascension was the crowning testimonial to His truth and power, confirming to the letter what He had said, and strengthen-

ing the faith of His disciples at the time they were to go forth to testify of His majesty and love.

The heavens had been opened and God's voice had been heard; the powers of nature had been subject to Him; the prince of this world had trembled before Him; everything but the wicked heart of man had recognized his claims; but the kings of the earth had set themselves, and rulers had taken counsel against the anointed of the Lord; they had scourged and mocked and condemned and crucified Him. That was indeed a dark hour for the disciples.

But the resurrection had dispelled that gloom. They were begotten again to a living hope. They had now an obvious and an infallible token that the plan of redemption was no failure, but a glorious success.

“So He was parted from them, and a cloud received Him out of sight.” So the Everlasting Doors were lifted up, and the Gates of Pearl stood wide ajar; while the conquering Nazarene swept in, and up the golden streets of the Heavenly City. He mounted the Father's Throne, and began to share that glory with Him

again which He enjoyed before the world began.

In ancient times all noted conquerors followed their conquests with triumphal marches. Returning, with the spoils of war and the captives taken, the conqueror, in the van of his victorious army, with kings and noted captives chained to his chariot wheels, would march, in triumphal procession, to marshal music which stirred the public heart, and fired the patriotism of the populace, until the city rang with the shouts of applause and honor to the victor and his victorious army.

These processions were the glory of nations, marked new epochs in the history of nations,—the consummation of long repeated struggles and conquests—the crowning days of hard battles and bloody victories. They were days of national triumph and personal honor, and which gave fame and fortune to the world's historic heroes.

So our ascended Lord is only waiting the consummation of His work on earth, to have His triumphal march. He is only waiting the day of finished victory, when, accompanied by legions of angels, He will come, gather up the

redeemed of the earth—the trophies of His matchless victory.

Grand, glorious and triumphant, indeed, will be the march of His victorious army, with the Captain of our salvation in the van of His shining retinue, which will fill the heavens with its glory. There will be no captives in that procession, groaning at His chariot wheels. But the Conqueror and the conquered will all rejoice together, as they speed on in triumph over the plains of light, toward the blessed city.

Listen, ye lovers of martial music, to the grand chorus which bows the lofty heavens to lend a listening ear to its melting strains—music far sweeter than the chorus of the morning stars which sang together at Creation’s birth. Oh! for the tongue of a Nightingale to sing, as, from the highest circle of Paradise, when she beholds the magnificent vision of all the events of all time consummated in this heavenly vision.

Oh! for the vision of a Kepler to discern, in the movements of the planets, the timing of Messiah’s advent, and see all the heavenly bodies marshaled to do Him homage, and furnish music for the celestial march. Oh, for

the fire of George Frederick Handel to kindle prophecy, story and suffering into song, and set all things in earth and heaven, from the symphony of shepherds to the grand chorus of archangels, aglow with the music of the Conquering King's triumphal march!

But neither Nightingale, nor Dante, nor Kepler, nor Handel, though they call upon all things celestial and terrestrial, physical and moral, visible and invisible, ever reach the lofty strains of the sweet singer of Israel, when He tunes his lay to immortal eloquence, and sings, as the heavenly hosts sweep on toward the new Jerusalem, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." "Who is the King of Glory?" inquire the keepers of the gates. And the answer comes, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."

Then the grand chorus salutes their ears again, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates! even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory."

The pearly gates fly open; the ascending

“The Ascension of Jesus Christ.” 255

Lord passes in, in triumph, with His ransomed hosts, and the inquiry comes: “Who are these?” And the answer is given: “These are they, who have come up through many tribulations, have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

And the Eternal City rings with the loud hosannas as the King and His royal subjects pass in. And all the host of heaven unite in ascribing “Honor, majesty and dominion unto Him Who sitteth upon the Throne of thrones, as Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, for ever and ever, for He is the King of Glory.”



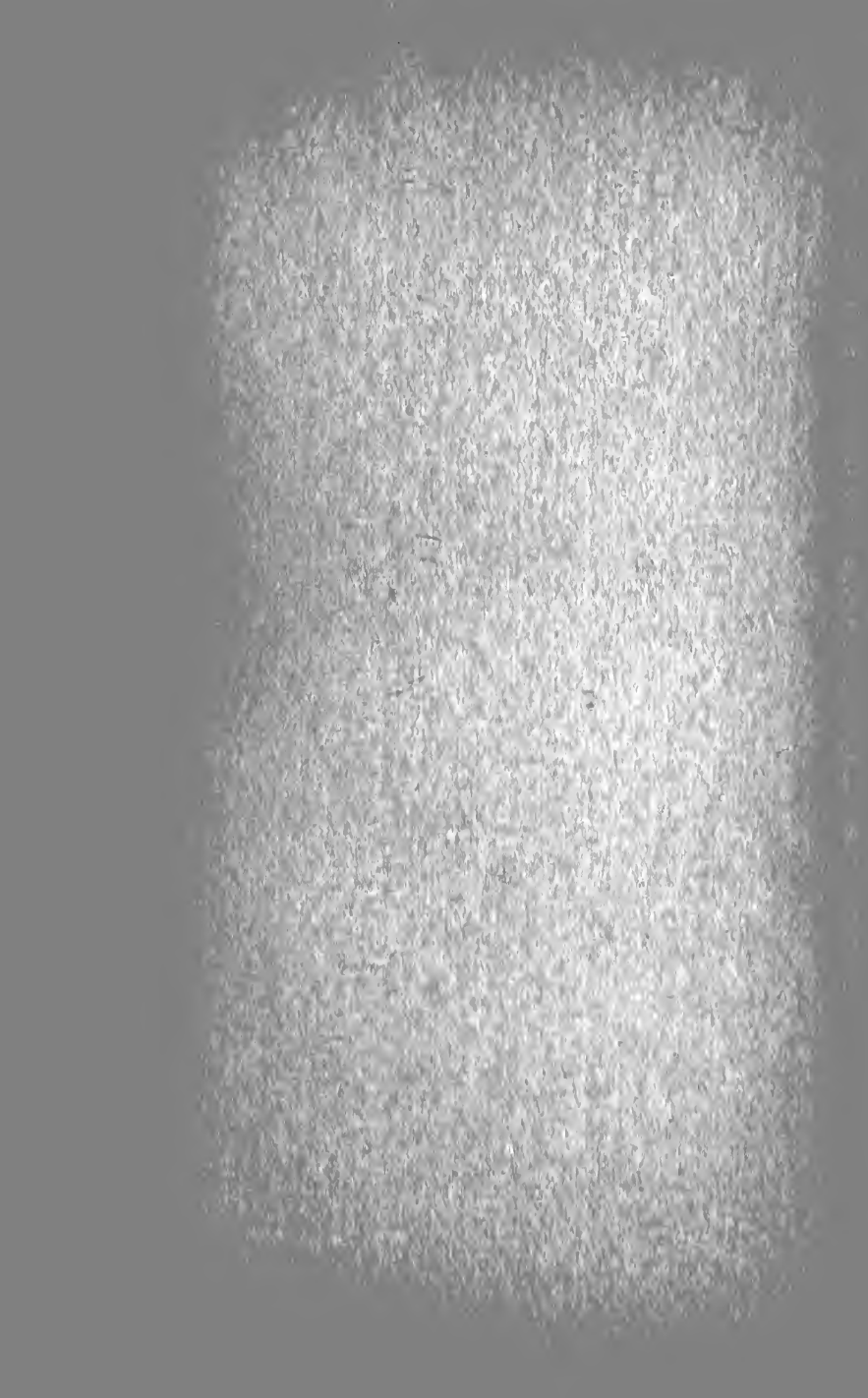
OCT 10 1902

OCT. 8 1982

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: July 2005

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 227 575 2