THE LIFE OF CHRIST

ABBÉ CONSTANT FOUARD

AN ANGELUS BOOK

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In a narrative of the utmost beauty and power, Abbé Constant Fouard makes real and immediate the moving events of Christ's earthly life. From His humble birth and childhood, through the years of His ministry, to His passion and resurrection—all these happenings are recounted with marvelous clarity and related to other historical events of the time.

The author describes the daily life of the people of Judea and brings vividly alive all those close to Jesus—His mother, Mary, His faithful disciples—as well as the many persons whose lives were transformed by the power of His teachings and the awesome drama of the miracles He performed.

The reader will find here an affirmation of the living Faith which is as real and sustaining today as when Christ walked upon this earth.

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INTRODUCTION

Abbé Fouard calls attention to a fact which appears seldom to be borne in mind. He says it was only in the Middle Ages that men began to write the life of our Lord. From the beginning until then the living and Divine tradition of faith, in which the name, the person, the character, the words, and the works of our Divine Saviour pervaded the Christian world, was enough to draw the hearts of men to Himself. With a living consciousness of the faith, they wrote of their Divine Master as of a Person to whom they bore a personal relation. They interpreted the Scriptures of the New Testament as it were in His presence and by the memory of His own teaching. Their baptismal creed, which came to them "by hearing," filled them with "the word of Christ" and the knowledge of His mind—for instance, the Homilies of Saint John Chrysostom in the East, and of Saint Augustine in the West. Their teaching was not historical, but didactic and devotional.

The intellectual state of the following ages took an historical form. Then began the compilation of the life of our Lord. Men began to reduce the sacred history to chronological order. From that day to this the life of our Lord has been elaborated more and more in the way of history; until at last some men, ceasing to realize their personal relation to a Living Person, have come to regard Him as an historical person to whom they owe no duty, or as a mythical person who never existed.

Not so among those who inherit the living and Divine consciousness which animated the early ages of the faith. The name, the person, the character, the words and the works of our Divine Master have ever been perpetuated in the daily life of those who adore Him in the unity of the faith. The history of Abbé Fouard unites the sacred narrative of the three-and-thirty years of our Saviour's earthly life with the living consciousness of faith, in which the mutual personal relation and the mutual personal love of the Divine Master and His Disciples are as living and sustaining at this day as they were when He ascended into Heaven. To all such this Life of Our Lord will be a golden book.

Henry Edward Cardinal Manning.

BOOK ONE

The Childhood of Jesus

JUDEA IN THE TIME OF JESUS

JUDEA in the time of Christ was despoiled of all her splendor. The Machabees, pontiffs and kings of Israel during one century, had in that time seen their glories vanish, together with their virtues. The power, so nobly exercised by Judas and his brothers, degenerated into despotism under their successors; their religious zeal became ambition; and the concord which had existed among the sons of Mathathias gave place to such profound divisions that, sixty-six years before the Christian era, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, two brothers sprung from this illustrious stock, were compelled to invoke the arbitration of Pompey to adjust their feuds and dissensions.

The Roman general, already master of Syria, solemnly adjudged their differences at Damascus, and pronounced in favor of Hyrcanus. Resorting to arms, Aristobulus hazarded a desperate defense from the Mountain of the Temple; but in vain—defeat was inevitable. Hyrcanus remained sovereign of Judea, but under the authority of the governors of Syria with the simple title of Ethnarch.

ROMAN EAGLES

Jerusalem for the first time saw the eagles within her walls. Pompey crossed the threshold of the Holy of Holies, and gazed in astonishment upon that sanctuary, devoid of idol or image. The sovereignty of Juda had run its course; the servitude of Israel was begun.

Very soon Hyrcanus lost even the shadow of command which had been spared him. Cæsar, the conqueror of Pompey, united Palestine to the Kingdom of Edom, and gave the government of

these countries to an Idumean of noble race, Antipater. Phasael and Herod, two sons of this prince, lent him their aid in the administration of affairs—one assuming the government of Galilee, the other that of Judea; but their united efforts were ineffectual for the maintaining of a peace of any long duration. A descendant of the Machabees, Aristobulus, the brother of Hyrcanus, made his escape from Rome, where he was held as a captive, and essayed to regain the throne of his fathers, aided by his sons, Alexander and Antigonus. The arms of the last-named prince alone achieved any success; he made Phasael prisoner, and constrained him to take his own life. Herod, more fortunate than his brother, eluded their conqueror, hurried to Rome, and was declared by the senate King of Judea. After three years of conflict, the victorious Latin legions re-established his rule in Jerusalem. This was in the year 37 before Jesus Christ.

HEROD, EVIL GENIUS

The patronage of Rome, which never belied its promises, Herod's own native genius for ruling, his union with Mariamne, the daughter of Hyrcanus, their former ethnarch—all seemed to insure him a tranquil reign. Yet the Idumean found in his nationality, his unhoped-for successes, his own restless and suspicious nature, too many sources of disquiet to permit of any peaceable enjoyment of his power. He could take no repose while a remnant of the Machabean line remained alive. Two princes of that family, as well as his father-in-law—Hyrcanus himself, broken down by years and misfortunes—were the first victims of Herod's distrust; then came the turn of Mariamne, the only one of his wives whom he had really loved; and finally, neither the two children he had had by her, nor Antipater (son of Doris, and his firstborn) were spared the penalty of such suspicions. Only the death of the tyrant could set a limit to these cruelties.

In vain did Herod beautify Judea with splendid monuments, in order to divert attention from the bloody tragedies which encrimsoned his marble palaces. To the Jews, his vast amphitheaters were the scenes of spectacles as detestable as they were abhorrent. The baths and the porticoes introduced novel customs; and the Roman eagle which spread its wings within the Temple pro-

faned its sanctity. For thirty-four years the prince wearied himself in fruitless endeavors to make the people forget his origin and their servitude. Everything did but remind this nation, shuddering under his yoke, that the scepter had indeed passed from the sons of Jacob to those of Esau.

Amid this universal demolition of Judaic institutions, one body alone withstood the tempests and retained its authority; this was the Sanhedrin—the national council, established by Moses according to some, while according to others it was first convened after the Captivity. The power which the prophets and doctors possessed over the people in those days of exile, the absence of the priests and of all external surroundings of their worship, the debasement into which the royal family had fallen after the return from Babylon, the difficulties surrounding any political and religious restoration—all these considerations had led the Jews to regard this sovereign assembly as a substitute for the monarchy.

The functions of the Sanhedrin were to interpret the Law, to adjudge more important cases, and to exercise an exact surveillance over the administration of affairs. Hence it became at one and the same time parliament, high court of justice, and the supreme resort of instruction in Judea. Its seventy-one members represented the three classes of the nation: the priests (that is to say, the chiefs of the twenty-four sacerdotal classes), with whom were associated, under Herod and the Romans, the pontiffs (who were in this manner deprived of any temporal authority by their foreign masters); and the scribes, as doctors and interpreters of the Law; together with the ancients, chosen from among the elders of each tribe and family.

THE SANHEDRIN

During four hundred years the authority of this council had remained absolute. Herod was the first to sap its strength; but shrewd as he showed himself in usurping all other powers, he could not entirely cripple the Sanhedrin. That mighty assembly continued its sittings in the very face of the tyrant, and survived his dynasty; for we see it, under the Romans, asserting its right to settle all questions of doctrine, to administer justice, and to direct in secret the movements of the people.

This, then, is the poor ghost of authority to which the power of Israel was finally reduced; yet what must be said of the deterioration of religion and manners? The last of the Machabees had allowed the pontificate to be dishonored by permitting the scribes to assume a predominant influence. Relinquished to these doctors, so zealous to discuss in their elaborate commentaries the most trivial minutiae, the laws became mere matter for futile argument; and the numerous sects, each one arrogating to itself the right of interpreting the Law, furnish a most striking proof of the decline of Israel. The fame of three of these great parties has lived up to this day—the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, and (according to the testimony of Josephus) to be acquainted with this trio is to understand the ethics and the morals of all their contemporaries.

THE WAY OF THE PHARISEES

Whatever uncertainty we may feel as to the origin of Pharisaism, we believe its sources should be sought in that isolation which the Law of Jehovah imposed upon the Jews as a nation. To shun contact with idolatrous peoples, in order to preserve the worship of God in its purity, was one of the precepts constantly reiterated by Moses and the prophets. On the return from Babylon, Esdras and Nehemiah insisted upon this point with all the more earnestness because the defenses which they could erect about the Holy Land were so feeble and so frequently infringed upon. This exclusiveness became a duty still more rigorous when the Syrian kings made apostasy obligatory, and when the High Priests Menelaus and Alcimus betrayed the faith by becoming the allies of their persecutors. All the generous hearts that Israel could count upon henceforth entrenched themselves in their despair, forming a band of picked souls whose zeal procured them the name of the Pietists—the Assideans.

Under the leadership of Mathathias and his sons these children of Abraham had proved themselves invincible. Nothing was wanting of all that goes to make true heroism—austere, indomitable courage, a noble scorn of death, a living faith in the God who was their protector, and in the angels, who were their ministers and His. But peace once re-established, this impetuous virtue knew not how to restrain itself; zeal developed into fanati-

cism; the love of fatherland gradually narrowed into a hatred of strangers; to fly from their impure contact became a law for these Assideans—a law which they desired to impose upon all Israel. From this, in fact, came the Aramaic name of Parousch, Pharisee (that is to say, a separatist), which was given them by those Jews who opposed their teachings.

...AND THE SADDUCEES

Neither the Machabees nor the priests who surrounded them followed the Pharisees in these views. Obliged to maintain political relations with other countries, yielding moreover to the attractions of power and wealth, the new princes of Judea rejected the maxims prescribed by these zealots; they confined their observance to the letter of the law, to the *sedacha,* so highly praised in the Holy Books, and it was from this trait that they got the name of Sadducees (or the Just), to whom they were fond of likening themselves. Such, in the days of the Machabees, were the diverse tendencies of the Pharisees and Sadducees; let us see how far they had developed their theories at the time of the birth of Jesus.

Each proceeded along the downward path it had marked out for itself. The Pontiff kings and chiefs of the sacerdotal body fortified themselves in their holdings, endeavoring, in the administration of public business, to conserve their tottering forces by intrigue and shrewdly-planned alliances; while, with the neighboring nations, they maintained their reciprocal relations with more rigor in proportion as the independence of Judea began to be more generally menaced. From this habitual intercourse with the pagan world the faith of the Sadducees grew weaker, and the epicurean doctrines, which so largely obtained at Rome, attained an influence over them also. If they really retained their belief in the Creator, God, they did not concede to Him any active participation in the government of the world. "The Law once given to the people," they said, "Jehovah withdrew into the repose of eternity, and abandoned man to his own free-will, unchecked and unheeded." Very soon they came to deny the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the existence of the angels. Priests of Jehovah, for the most part, they still continued to observe the laws, and acquitted themselves of their

sacred functions; but, even so, they railed against the scrupulosity of the zealots.

"The Pharisees," they would say ironically, "torment themselves to no purpose in this life of ours, since they will gain nothing for their pains in this world or any other."

The laxity of this aristocracy, full of disdain for the people and of friendly toleration for the Gentiles, had been at all times a scandal to the Pharisees, who therefore showed themselves the more ardent to protect the orthodoxy which was thus threatened. According to the rabbinical expression, they multiplied "hedge after hedge" about the Law, and would have had their prescriptions as strictly obligatory upon all as were the precepts of the Lord. To lend some show of reason to their pretensions, they asserted that there was no commandment of which Moses had not given an oral interpretation. To collect these traditions and from them to construct a complement to the entire Mosaical ordinance, became their aim. Colleges of learned doctors were formed to enter into the minutiae of these rules, and the people who, since the captivity, had ceased to understand the original Hebrew of the Holy Books, received these decisions as the words of God Himself. The instruction which they received from the Pharisee-Scribes is, therefore, at this epoch all the religion that Israel retained; to discover what that doctrine was, it suffices simply to open the Talmud.

No speculative theology, no consideration concerning the Divine Being, or the soul, or the end of man, or the things of eternity; only ardent discussions as to puerile observances; scrupulosity as to what was lawful pushed to the last extreme of absurdity, while but faintly and infrequently does some inspired sentence recall the God of Horeb and Sinai. Past all doubt the Pharisees guarded the Law of their God most faithfully; yet, in that Law, the exact payment of tithes, interminable ablutions, and especially the observance of the Sabbath, absorbed all their attention. It would be useless to enumerate the one thousand two hundred and seventy-nine rules which a Jew must have always before his eyes, if he would not violate the "quiescence of sanctity"—the precepts ordained for the conduct of guests at public banquets, the innumerable contaminations to which all were declared to be exposed.

Such a yoke as this was intolerable; the Sadducees threw it off openly, the Scribes resigned themselves to enduring it, merely for the sake of appearances; but, for the most part, under their religious exterior, they concealed nothing but bigotry and hypocrisy. The Talmudic writers have torn the mask from the true features of the Pharisaism of their times; nothing could be imagined more mind-deadening and wretched in its effects than the rules observed by these zealots, in order to regulate their comportment and to overawe the masses. And so we see them, presently, in order to give an added gravity to their carriage, shortening their steps so that their feet might always meet in their mincing gait. Again, that they might never look upon a woman, some kept their eyes so obstinately fixed upon the ground as often to result in sudden collisions with the walls, while others, preserving a still more exact modesty, enveloped their heads in sacks and walked the streets like blind men.

If disposed to believe that these are but satirical exaggerations, that this picture overdoes the reality, you need only turn over a few pages of the Talmud to discover how far hypocrisy was elaborated into a practical science. Read the ten chapters devoted to the "Eroubin," that is, the expedients to which it was permissible to resort in evading the Law, in the event of its becoming too inconvenient. For example, the "Sabbatic rest" forbade the transporting of any load or burden further than two thousand cubits. In order to double this measure, it was enough to have deposited some food, the night before, at the furthest point in the legal distance. By this act a presumptive domicile was conferred from which it was allowed to proceed again for another two thousand cubits in any direction. Should the Pharisee perceive that one of his animals was about to die, he was permitted to kill the creature without violating the holy Sabbath rest, providing he swallowed a morsel, of the size of an olive, taken from the beast's carcass, thus indicating that he had been obliged to butcher it for nourishment. It was allowable for him to buy and sell also; the only precaution he must observe was not to pay until the morrow. We would not venture to add to this list the licentious excesses tolerated by the rabbis, merely on condition that they were concealed under an impenetrable mask of secrecy.

Is it necessary to mention the fact that, however widespread

among the masses was this decadence, there were many noble exceptions still to be found in Israel, many Scribes who were worthy descendants of the Assideans, true heirs of their faith and virtues. The Gospels speak the praises of more than one, the Talmud names still others, and, among the first of all, stands Hillel. His poverty, borne with such dignified serenity, his steadfast unswerving constancy, his zeal, his charity, have rendered him justly celebrated. It was he, indeed, who instructed the contemporaries of Jesus in maxims almost Christian in spirit:

"Love and strive after peace."

"Love mankind and reconcile it to the Law."

"He who magnifies his own worth debases it."

"What am I, if I neglect my soul? If I have no care for it, who will take care of it for me? If I do not think of these things now, when shall I do so?"

Dazzled by his epigrammatical brilliancy, many have unreasonably exalted this rabbi by attempting to make him a historical peer of Christ. They forget that Hillel never accomplished anything which can be compared to the works of the Saviour. Like the other doctors of his day, while commentating upon the Pharisaic laws, he confined his efforts to making that yoke bearable, and spoke only in the schools of Jerusalem to a small group of chosen disciples. Indeed he even shared in the disdain of the Scribes for the poor and humble; this haughty saying comes from him: "No man without education can escape evil-doing; no man of the common people has ever attained unto piety." In a word, Hillel was an illustrious Scribe, Jesus is God. Between such there is no comparison possible.

THE ESSENES

And finally, we have still to speak of the strangest of all the Jewish sects—the Essenes. All that any one knows today is that they worshipped the sun; that they believed, like the Pythagoreans, in an ethereal soul, which is, for a time, confined within the body. Their aversion to the sacrifices of the Temple, and for the flesh of animals, their linen vestments, their prohibition of speech, all remind one of the Orphics whom Plato knew. Yet what was, in reality, the teaching of this sect? No one can say with any certainty, for it was not long-lived, and it kept its secret

to the end inviolate. However, it matters little or nothing as far as it affects the history of Jewish religions since the doctrine of these ascetics was never popular; being confined to the initiated, it had but a feeble influence upon the general populace of Israel.

In the midst of this carnal Israel, the spiritual Israel was still alive, a chosen band, predestined to be of the Kingdom of Christ; holy souls who, by piously pondering the inspired truths, had therein discovered the proper lineaments of the picture which prophecy had painted of the true Messiah.

In the very hour of man's fall God had declared to Adam that One should be born of the seed of the woman; and thereafter He set apart, from the race of Sem, one people, of the stock of Abraham, and from that people one tribe—the tribe of Juda—from which was to be born the Messiah.

THE MESSIAH IN PROPHECY

That mysterious Figure stands forth still more clearly as the years hasten on toward the realizing of all expectation of Him. As Moses sees Him, He is a Prophet, his equal in power; in David's eyes He is a king, his son, heir to his glories, as well as his misfortunes. His very Name is discovered to the Psalmists; this King of all times to come and of the timeless eternity is to be called the Anointed of God, the Christ, the Messiah. One after another the Prophets added each a line to the painting of this portrait which foreshadowed the advent of Divinity. Bethlehem is to be His birthplace, Galilee His native land, a virgin His Mother. He will preach the good news to the pure and humble of heart. He will enter Sion mounted upon the foal of an ass. He shall be despised and rejected, led to the slaughter as a lamb; His vestments shall be parted, lots shall be cast for His tunic, His hands and His feet pierced; vinegar shall moisten His lips. Yet shall He become subject to the malefactor's death only that He may show forth the glory of His resurrection; His soul snatched from the deep pit, and His body from corruption, that He may seat Himself upon the right hand of Jehovah, henceforth to reign forever in the world of human hearts.

Prophecy has been advanced to this point of certainty when Malachy appeared, the last of the seers. It was he who finished the painting, by his foretelling of the precursor of Jesus. This

herald of the Messiah would arise from among the children of Levi; so then the Prophet fixes his gaze upon that tribe. If he scourges the vices of the priesthood, their scandalous alliances with the daughters of Gentiles; if he proclaims a new sacrifice, offered from the rising unto the setting of the sun, and casts aside as worthless the defiled oblations of Israel, it is to prefigure the Forerunner, as he was to separate himself from the Levites, going forth before the face of the Messiah, preparing the way for Him: "Presently shall He come to His Temple, the Saviour whom you seek, and the Angel of the Testament whom you desire. Behold, He cometh, sayeth the Lord of Hosts."

Such was the Messiah for whom all true Israelites waited in expectation; such the Precursor to be sent before Him, and of whose birth Saint Luke will give us the account.

VISION OF ZACHARY

For four centuries the world had waited for the fulfillment of these prophecies. The reign of Herod had almost reached its end; and the old king, beginning at last to realize that he was descending slowly, surely to the tomb, stands out a lonely figure in the palace which his bloodstained hands had made so bare and empty. Uneasy forebodings disturbed the souls of men. Suddenly from Jerusalem, and from the Temple, a voice broke the silence of suspense in words that spoke deliverance and salvation.

Among the many Levites of that time, there was a priest named Zachary, of the family of Abia, the eighth of the divisions which, by turns, took part in the divine service. Reduced as they were upon the return from captivity, the sons of Levi were not slow to increase in number; and thus they were soon forced to seek residences outside of Jerusalem, in the ancient sacerdotal cities. Hebron and Youttah had seen their levitical population returning to the old homes, and it was probably the latter of these towns which was the dwelling place of Zachary. Situated to the south of Hebron, and at some considerable distance from it, Youttah stretches along the slope of a hill, in the heart of the mountains of Juda. In this retreat Zachary lived with his wife Elizabeth, who was also of the sacerdotal tribe. The sequestered pair "were just in the sight of God, and walked without reproach in

the commandments and laws of the Lord." Yet they found their piety put to a severe test; for, childless while they were both far advanced in age, they had finally lost all hope of God's ever blessing them by raising up offspring to the barren daughter of Levi.

The time drew round for Zachary to join his associates of the class of Abia, and to fulfill his functions in the Temple; he therefore took his way to Jerusalem. Each class was accustomed to decide the division of the various offices by lot; that of incense-burner fell to the husband of Elizabeth. It was the highest of all the sacerdotal duties, and was performed with a solemnity of ritual which it behooves us to describe more in detail.

ALTAR OF SACRIFICE

The altar of gold, whereon was offered the sacrifice of perfumes, stood in the midst of the Holy Place, between the seven-branched candlestick and the table of the Bread of Proposition; only a single veil separated it from the Holy of Holies, despoiled in Zachary's time of its Ark of the Covenant. Everything about the sanctuary must be made ready beforehand—the flames of the lamps trimmed and brightened, the ashes removed from the altar, and a fresh fire enkindled upon it before the entrance of the priest. Upon his appearance all stood aside, and the people, crowding back beneath the porches, prayed there in silence. The officiating minister alone advanced within the Holy Place, and, at a signal given by a prince of the priesthood, must cast the precious perfumes upon the flame; then, having bowed down before the Holy of Holies, he receded slowly, stepping backwards, that he might not turn his face away from the altar. A bell gave warning of his withdrawal and the benediction which he bestowed upon the people. Immediately Levites intoned the sacred hymns, and the music of the Temple, combining with their voices, formed a symphony so powerful (the rabbinical writers say) that it could be heard in Jericho.

PRIEST OF THE MOST HIGH

Although this ceremonial was observed twice every day—in the morning and at evening—the Jews never assisted thereat

without a secret tremor of anxiety; for the priest, who entered within the sanctuary, was their representative, and the incense burned beneath his hands was for a figure of the prayers of all. Should Jehovah reject his offering, if He should strike him to the earth for some legal impurity, then indeed would Israel be overwhelmed by the same blow. It was from this cause the impatience of the crowd arose and the promptitude with which the minister acquitted himself of his functions, that he might not prolong the general emotion.

But on this day these fears were quickened to terror; for Zachary tarried much longer than the usual time in the Holy Place. He appeared at last, trembling, dumb; his lips so suddenly sealed, his gesticulations, his agitation, all declared that some portentous spectacle had burst upon his sight. Did he write down his marvelous vision at once? The sacred text would not seem to imply as much. "He remained dumb," it says; as if it would signify that his heart, as well as his tongue, refused to reveal immediately the celestial apparition, or that he would await that hour for disclosing it in which God Himself would open his lips. This, then, is what Zachary at last made known.

AN ANGEL SPEAKS

He was about to enter within when, to the right of the altar from which arose white clouds of incense, of a sudden an angel appeared. Seeing this, terror overwhelmed the priest; but the angel spoke to him:

"Do not be afraid, Zachary, for thy petition has been heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great before the Lord; he shall drink no wine or strong drink, and shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. And he shall bring back to the Lord their God many of the children of Israel, and he shall himself go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just; to prepare for the Lord a perfect people."

Malachy, whose prediction the angel here recalls, had foretold that two forerunners should herald the Messiah's appearance:

one, John the Baptist, was to announce His first advent; Elias, the other envoy of heaven, in the latter days of the world, shall descend from his chariot of fire to prepare men for the return of Christ. Yet in spite of the diversity of their missions, John was to be another Elias, because in him would be enkindled the very soul of the Thesbite—the same strong spirit, the same glowing genius—a fiery nature which should lead captive the sons of Israel by word and example, and bring them back to the virtues of their fathers. Engrossed in the contemplation of so perfect a resemblance, the Jews had never, in their thoughts of them, separated these two forerunners of the Messiah.

God did not demand of Zachary a more illuminated intuition, nor that he should foresee clearly everything that the angel's announcement implied; all that was required of him was that he should believe implicitly in the message, however mysterious it might seem. Too haughty for such simple faith, the Levite still demurred; he dared to demand a sign before he would yield any credence to the divine communication.

"How shall I know the truth of these words?" he answered. "I am old, and my wife is advanced in age."

To overcome and dissipate this incredulity, the angel deigned to disclose his own dignity.

"I am Gabriel," he said, "one of the ministering spirits, standing ever in the presence of God, whom the Lord has sent to speak to you and to announce to you these good tidings. Look you, therefore, you shall be dumb and shall not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall take place, because you have not believed my words, which shall be accomplished in their time."

ZACHARY IS STRUCK DUMB

Zachary must needs have humbled himself under the hand which chastised him. He retreated from the sanctuary dumb; only by his signs of awe and terror could he respond to the breathless throng, now quite disquieted by his long delay, and at once all the people knew that he had seen a vision in the Temple.

The days of his ministry being fulfilled, he went to his home. A little later Elizabeth, his wife, conceived, and for five months secluded herself "because," as she said, "the Lord hath dealt thus

with me, since He has willed to take away my reproach among men." Nothing could be more natural than this desire to retreat from the world. It was but seemly, indeed, to prevent the curiosity and malice of rumor from busying itself with such a marvel as was this unhoped-for conception.

BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

The time being come for Elizabeth to be delivered, she brought forth a son; and her neighbors and kinsfolk being made aware that God had manifested His mercy towards her, shared in her joy, and on the eighth day they all gathered unto the circumcision of the infant.

This consecration to the God of Abraham was celebrated in every family with solemn festivity. Ten witnesses surrounded the child; while the father, or some other of the relatives present, made with an instrument of stone the bloody incision. Zachary did not perform the sacred rite in person, for his moveless lips could not pronounce the benedictions incidental to it. So also, when at the close of the ceremony they desired, according to ancient custom, to confer a name upon the child, and would have called him Zachary after the father, the latter neither heard nor comprehended.

Elizabeth, however, opposed them. "No," she said; "he shall be called John."

"But," it was objected, "none of your kindred bear that name."

She persisted none the less in her design. Turning toward the father, who stood before them a mute and wistful spectator of this scene, she asked him by signs what name he wished to give the child.

Zachary, taking up his tablets, wrote thereon, "John is his name."

Then, while they were still filled with astonishment, suddenly the lips of the old man were opened, his tongue was loosed, and he spoke aloud in thanksgiving to the Lord. At this prodigy their wondering delight gave place to fear and awe. From that dwelling, endeared to God, the thrill of emotion spread swiftly throughout the surrounding country; so that shortly, among the mountains of Juda, nothing else was spoken of beside these mar-

vels; and those who heard the tale treasured it up in thoughtful silence, musing in their breasts, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of God was upon him.

With his hearing and speech Zachary recovered the divine favor, and, filled with the Spirit, he prophesied. As sung every night in our churches, the hymn of the holy old man is like an echo of the ancient prophecies of Israel. Jehovah visits His people to save them from their enemies—from the hand of those who hate them; the Redemption is revealed unto the eyes of this Levite, even as the dying Moses beheld it, and as Ezechiel and countless others had represented it—mighty and resistless as the horned frontal of the savage beast which spreads terror round about its path. Yet, beneath this rude imagery—the last vestiges of an almost vanished era—there is a tenderer tone which predominates withal. The salvation of Israel is no longer that which the carnal-minded Jews had fancied—the triumph of their race, the joys and riches of this world. It is salvation in righteousness and holiness, won by penitence and the remission of sins. The God of Zachary is no longer a Jehovah who, as He moves among men, sows horror and death about Him, but a God with bowels of merciful compassion, shining upon the world like a holy, beneficent light. It is as if, very different from the mornings of earth, this marvelous Orient, this great New Dawn, would be made visible, not on the horizon, but on high, within the heavens, thus to make it manifest to the world that He came, not to consume it with the scorching heats of noontide, but to spread about His pathway the pure light of a clear, cloudless daybreak. Hence, though Jewish in its form, this chant is essentially Christian. Struck with its beauty in the original Aramean, Saint Luke sought to reproduce, not only the thoughts, but the figures as well, foreign as they are to the genius of the Greek tongue. To this fact is due the obscurity and, at the same time, the peculiar charm of this hymn:

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
because He has visited and wrought redemption
for His people,
And has raised up a horn of salvation for us,
in the house of David His servant,
As He promised through the mouth of His holy ones,
in the prophets from of old;

Salvation from our enemies,
and from the hand of all who hate us,
To show mercy to our forefathers
and to be mindful of His holy covenant,
Of the oath that He swore to Abraham our father,
that He would grant us,
That, delivered from the hand of our enemies,
we should serve Him without fear,
In holiness and justice before Him all our days.
And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High,
for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord
to prepare His ways,
To give to His people knowledge of salvation
through forgiveness of their sins,
Because of the loving-kindness of our God,
wherewith the Orient from on high has visited us,
To shine on those who sit in darkness and in the
shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace."

The halo which overhung the cradle of John might not last in all its early splendor; for the design of God was, in silence and in solitude, to form of him the greatest of the children of men. The glorified dwelling place of Zachary disappears immediately from our range of vision. All that we know is that God's Spirit came upon the Baptist even in his childhood and impelled him to retire to the desert. "The child grew," says Saint Luke, "and his soul was strengthened, and he was in the desert until the day of his manifestation in Israel."

THE ANNUNCIATION

Six months after the conception of John, Gabriel received of God a new mission. This time it was neither to the Temple nor to the holy city that he must needs betake himself, but to Nazareth—an obscure village of Galilee. He was sent there to a young kinswoman of Elizabeth, named Mary, who was betrothed to a descendant of the house of David called Joseph. Sprung likewise from the seed of the Great King, she was according to the testimony of tradition the daughter of Joachim and Anna, and had but one sister, named like herself, Mary. Her parents, being deprived of male offspring, had been forced in order to insure the legal transmission of their property, to affiance the two sisters to two young men of the same lineage.

We do not know what combination of circumstances had banished these descendants of the kings of Israel from Bethlehem, the home of their family; yet we must believe that, sharing in the destinies of their race, they had all fallen into poverty and obscurity; for neither their ancestry nor the prophecies which promised the throne to a Son of David awoke the morbid suspicions of Herod. The lives of the betrothed pair in the retired village of Nazareth were passed in complete separation from each other, and in a state bordering upon destitution. Joseph was a carpenter; Mary worked, as he did, with her hands. Thus, then, it was a humble dwelling place, this cottage of Joachim and Anna, which the angel from Heaven visited; for, in accordance with the custom of the daughters of Juda, Mary was expected to seclude herself in the privacy of her home from the day on which her troth was plighted.

But it was not merely for these few days that Mary had hoped to shelter her virginity within that lowly retirement. A light, which never before shone upon the mothers of Israel, had discovered to her the value of perpetual continence and she was resolved never to know man. How was she to reconcile this inspiration from heaven with the promise made for her by her parents? It was a period of perplexity and an agonizing ordeal, this to which Mary was subjected from the time of her betrothal, and it was destined to cause her an even more profound trouble on the day of the angelical message.

A little to the westward of Nazareth there is a fountain which bears the name of Mary. The Greeks have erected close at hand their Church of the Annunciation. They hold that the angel uttered his salutation to the Virgin on that spot, when at evening she had set out from the village on her way thither to draw water. This legend, taken from the Proto-gospel of Saint James, is not based upon any reliable foundation, and Christian art is more truly inspired when it represents the Virgin as kneeling in the privacy of her chamber at the hour in which the angel appeared to her.

Doubtless by those same vows of chastity she had hastened the day of the coming of the Messiah, when the celestial messenger appeared before her eyes and said: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women."

Yet, having heard this, she was troubled at his saying, and she thought within herself what could be the meaning of such a salutation. But the angel resumed:

"Fear not at all, Mary; you have found grace in God's sight. And behold you shall conceive in your womb and shall bear a Son, and you shall give Him the name of Jesus. He shall be great, and He shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of David His father: He shall reign eternally in the house of Jacob, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end."

Mary had meditated much upon the prophecies; she could not therefore mistake the purport of the angel's announcements. This child, Son of the Most High, King and Saviour of men for all eternity—this could only be the Messiah; and to her was to accrue the honor of bringing forth the Desired of Days. But the daughter of David had resolved to remain a virgin for God's sake, and despite this promise that she should be the Mother of God she continued steadfast in her inspired design. Unable to make the angel's words harmonize with this vow, "How shall this happen," she replied, "since I do not know man?"

Gabriel immediately enlightened her. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon you," he said, "and the power of the Most High shall enfold you within His shadow; therefore it is that the Holy One which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God. And behold your cousin Elizabeth also has conceived a son in her old age; and it is now the sixth month for her who is called barren, because nothing is impossible unto God."

This was sufficient to insure Mary's entire abandonment to the will of the Almighty. She bowed down before the seraphic messenger: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," she said, "be it done to me according to thy word." And forthwith the angel withdrew from her sight.

What happened then in the little house of Nazareth?

In one line John has expressed the unspeakable thought: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The Word—that is to say, the Eternal and substantial utterance of God, His own, and only Son; a Son who was not born at the commandment of His Father, but who flashed forth from His Bosom, God of God, Light of Light.

Of the Word we can learn little enough from the first three Evangelists; so intent are they upon tracing the footsteps upon earth of the God made Man that they speak of His Divine nature but rarely; yet this is not at all the case with John. The beloved disciple of Jesus had drawn from the heart of His Master a relish and a perception of the highest mysteries. So when, following Matthew, Mark, and Luke, he took up his pen to write "that which his eyes had seen, his ears heard, that which his hands had touched of the Word of life," stifled in the thick atmosphere of the lower world of thought, he spurns the air with strong eagle-pinions, and rising far aloft above the earth and the heavens, he penetrates to the throne of Him whose life he would recount. From those fearful heights his first word rang forth like a peal of thunder upon the ears of the Christians of Ephesus, who knelt in prayer and fasting round about him.

"In the beginning was the Word,
"And the Word was with God,
"And the Word was God;
"He was in the beginning with God.
"All things were made through Him, and without Him was made nothing that has been made.
"In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

"And the Word was made flesh," adds Saint John; that is to say, has formed unto Himself a body out of the most pure blood of Mary—the Eternal Father has produced, in the bosom of the Virgin, that same Son whom He has, from all eternity, begotten within His own bosom. In that all-happy moment, this blood, this virginal body found itself pervaded and absorbed by God: "The Word was made flesh, that the flesh might become God."

And this union was not to be transitory; for the purpose of the Word is to consummate His union with man, "to dwell amongst us," "to pitch His tent in our midst," which is the force of the words used in the original text. This last word of the Evangelist carries an allusion to the luminous cloud which had enveloped the Tabernacle long ago to show that Jehovah sojourned in the midst of His people. In the time of Jesus, the sanctuary of Herod was empty of its Ark of the Covenant, nor did its curtain of glory any longer screen the holy receptacle. John shows how the Word did take up its abode in the midst of Israel, of a truth. "He has

pitched His tent in our midst," he says, "and we have seen His glory," not blazing by brilliant intervals, as did that of the ancient Cloud, but streaming upon the world in rays of splendor, which are the effulgence of grace and truth—grace, by which we mean the Life divine that animates our souls; truth, by which we mean the Light of God that illuminates them.

"We have all received of this fullness," he pursues; "a grace more abounding has succeeded the ancient gifts of Jehovah to the Jews." "Moses did but give us the Law, we have gained grace and truth by Jesus Christ. Moses had never beheld Jehovah save through the splendrous mists of Sinai—for never has any one seen God; He, the one and only Son (the only-begotten God, according to another reading), He who, in the Bosom of God, exists in His very Presence—He alone can declare to us, of Himself, what He is."

Such, in the eyes of Saint John, was the salvation which the Son of Mary came to accomplish. The Truth must, then, at its Incarnation, illumine the eyes long blinded to the light; grace must flow in cleansing streams there where sin has soiled the very springs of our natural life; and the Word, embodied in our flesh, must repair the ruined handiwork of the Creative Word, of the Word which was in the beginning.

THE VISITATION

In those days Mary, rising up, went in haste toward the mountainous country, to the city of Youttah. What prompted her to undertake so long a journey?—one so unusual, too, when we recall how strict was the seclusion which custom had imposed upon a young Jewess after her betrothal? Are we to believe that Joseph, having had knowledge of Mary's state, rejected her, and that she sought consolation in the society of Elizabeth, as well as escape from the hardheartedness of men; or, better still, was she not led by a longing to unburden her heart, which was now overbrimming with its new gladness, and so sought the company of a soul capable of understanding her? Elizabeth shared with her in these bountiful blessings of the Lord; thus she had been designated by the angel as Mary's natural confidant. Was there not in

all this an adequate motive for the Virgin's disregard of those rigorous Jewish customs?

It took only a few days for Mary to go from Nazareth to Youttah. She traversed Judea, screening herself beneath the veil of a humility already perfect—indeed, so forgetful was she of the eminence to which she had been elevated over all Creation, that she gladly humbled herself thus, in order to discourse with her kinswoman of the divine honors vouchsafed to them. Wherefore, as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's salutation within her dwelling, the child leaped within her, and revealed to her the presence of the Incarnate God.

"Blessed art thou among women," she cried out, "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb! And how have I deserved that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

This knowledge of the secrets of heaven, Elizabeth owed to the Precursor, who was aroused within the maternal bosom, that so he might salute Jesus; this is what she declared, adding—

"For behold, the moment that the sound of thy greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leapt for joy." Then, reflecting upon the incredulity and chastisement of her husband, which set the serene faith of Mary in so much higher relief—

"And blessed is she who has believed, because the things promised her by the Lord shall be accomplished."

Amid these transports of surprise and joy Mary remained calm and collected; her lips opened at last, but it was to praise God for this new largess of His bounty toward her, for His providence toward the world, for His merciful goodness to all Israel; these three ideas sustain the burden of the whole Magnificat.

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;
Because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid;
for, behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed;
Because He who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is His name;
And His mercy is from generation to generation
on those who fear Him."

Turning from the marvelous effects of the Eternal Holiness, the Love Eternal, in her regard, Mary's glance sweeps over the world; it seems to her flashing vision as lying prostrate at the

feet of that Almighty One whom she knew she was soon to bring forth unto it.

"He has shown might with His arm,
He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and has exalted the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich He has sent away empty."

This great upheaval in human destinies must result in the triumph of the veritable Israel, and in this thought the sacred Canticle finds its final note of joy.

"He has given help to Israel, His servant, mindful of His mercy—
Even as He spoke to our fathers—
to Abraham and to His posterity forever."

Nor need we marvel at the sight of Mary pouring forth her feeling under this poetic form. In the East, where song is the natural expression of every emotion, only a few thoughts are requisite to the development of a poem. Inspired simply by the remembrance of the hymns of Israel, and by the grace of which she was the spotless vessel, the Virgin, uplifted upon the wings of the Divine Spirit, drew from her enraptured soul the measure of this canticle, as simple as it is sublime.

AN ANGEL COMES TO JOSEPH

After nearly three months passed in her cousin's home, Mary returned to Nazareth. That she was soon to be a mother was, of course, at once made known, and Joseph was made acquainted with the most bitter of all human sorrows. He could not hesitate as to the duty of repudiating this affianced maiden, whom honor would not permit him to retain; yet, as "he was just," and knew the severity of the Law towards the sinning woman, he resolved to spare Mary. The betrothment, considered among Jews as sacred as the marriage tie, like it could be broken by divorce; but although the act of separation was public in its nature, yet, in certain cases, usage allowed of its being drawn up in secret. Joseph chose this plan, which was at the same time in accordance with his duty and his grief.

But while he was sadly pondering this step the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said to him, "Joseph, son of David, be not afraid to take unto you Mary, your espoused; for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit. She shall bring forth a Son, and you shall give to Him the name of Jesus (which means a Saviour); He it is who shall save His people from their sins." "This," adds Saint Matthew, "was done to accomplish what the Lord had said by the mouth of the Prophet": "Behold a Virgin shall conceive in her womb, and shall bring forth a Son, and He shall be called Emmanuel, that is, God with us."

When Joseph had arisen from his sleep, he had no other thought beyond the desire to fulfill the command of the angel. He was eager to repair the unmerited outrage Mary had suffered in his thoughts. Nuptial ceremonies at once ushered the young spouse into his house, but "he knew her not," pursues the sacred text, "until the day wherein she brought forth a Son and gave to Him the name of Jesus." Not that after His birth Joseph ceased to respect the virginal temple in which Jesus was incarnate. Christian tradition has always shrunk with horror from the thought that Mary, whose taintless blood had mingled with the blood of God, could ever have forfeited the purity of God's tabernacle, the habitation of His overshadowing cloud, and the Ark of the Lord. Saint Matthew's only thought here was to emphasize the miraculous nature of her maiden motherhood, and to declare the fulfillment of Isaiah's prediction that "a Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son."

Nazareth, which was to be the abode of Jesus for many long years, did not witness His birth. The prophecies had reserved that glory for Bethlehem; and the whole world, at the destined hour of His birth, was disturbed, that these predictions might be accomplished. "In those days," says the sacred text, "an enrollment of the empire brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, the edict which prescribed it emanating from Augustus." This prince, at that time, held the whole world in his sovereign grasp. The adopted son of Cæsar, he had inherited his projects, and of these the most considerable and wide-reaching in its consequences consisted in a registration of the Roman world. This general taking of statistics was to include a valuation of all the resources of the provinces, and a reapportionment of the tax-list. Interrupted

for a while, the work of Cæsar was pushed forward again by Augustus, who besides a description of the various lands, added a recapitulation of their subjects. Twenty commissioners, whose probity had recommended them to the favor of the prince, were dispatched into the countries which bore the yoke of obedience to him, and there they devoted twenty-five years to this work. The result was inscribed by the hand of Augustus himself, in a book called by Suetonius, "Statistics of the Empire." "It was," says Tacitus, "a pictorial reflection of the imperial acquisitions; herein one might see how many of the citizens and of the allies were under arms, the number of fleets, kingdoms, provinces, the revenues from tribute and toll gatherers, an estimate of necessary expenditures as well as of perquisites."

THE CENSUS OF QUIRINIUS

In what year did the decree for this universal census become operative? It is difficult to decide. The three censuses attributed to Augustus upon the bas-relief at Ancyrus seem to refer simply to the regular numbering of the people of Rome, made by the censors once every five years. Apparently Augustus promulgated this edict when, feeling himself to be at last absolute master of the Empire, he forthwith devoted all his energies to its consolidation.

Even the allied kingdoms must needs make this act of submission, and Saint Luke informs us that its performance was brought about in Judea at the time in which Jesus was born. "This first enrolling," he adds, "was made by Quirinius, Governor of Syria"; in other words it was made authoritative by Saturninus, as Tertullian tells us; was continued under his successor Varus; and hence it could not have been consummated until the time when Quirinius first took in hand the government of Syria.

Ten years later this same distinguished ex-consul, having been dispatched to Judea to reduce it to the condition of a Roman province, found himself obliged to rectify his earlier efforts, and to make a new census in order definitely to regulate the tribute. From this fact comes the care with which Saint Luke would distinguish between the two enrollments. If the first has left fewer traces among Jewish annals, and caused no such bloody revolts as

did the second, it is because it was merely a description of the peoples and their goods, involving neither any levy of taxes nor military service; but most of all is it due to the fact that Herod was still alive, and, by shrewd political address, was able to manipulate the workings of this enforced enrollment. In fact we can see how this Roman census, taken under the eyes of the imperial commissioners, was, notwithstanding, administered according to Jewish forms.

Now the Israelites were in the habit of taking an account of their population, not in their place of residence or birth, but by assembling themselves according to the family and the tribe whence each one had sprung. A muster of Judea, therefore, was nothing less than a revision of the genealogical tables. These precious archives were carefully kept and highly treasured by the particular city which was by way of being regarded as the first fatherland of each family. David was born at Bethlehem; it was to this town, therefore, that Joseph must betake himself, "for he was of the tribe and family" of the Great King.

Two of the Evangelists had held in their hands the genealogical tables of Bethlehem; naturally each searched therein after what would most clearly support his individual point of view. Saint Matthew, occupied in the collection of evidence which would reveal in Jesus, the King and the Messiah promised to Israel, for his part only demanded of these archives an endorsement of Joseph's royal ancestry. Saint Luke, writing for the Gentiles, interests himself solely in the natural filiation, and he shows us in what order of generation the second Adam traces His lineage up to the first man, and thus to God Himself.

One might very well marvel that the sacred historians, who have given us these genealogies of Joseph, should have passed over in silence that of Mary, if it were not so well known that, according to the teaching of tradition, the Virgin was a near relative, probably the niece, of Joseph, and that, in consequence, her paternity corresponded with that of her husband. The family trees of the parents of Jesus being the same, nothing could be more natural for the Evangelists than to set down these pedigrees just as they found them in the records at Bethlehem; for the Jews were prone to overlook the descent of their womenfolk, by giving only that of the men.

THE NATIVITY

So then, to inscribe himself in the public registers, the carpenter of Nazareth quitted his native hills of Zabulon. His young wife, too, made the journey with him. Everything drew her to Bethlehem; a secret inspiration from heaven as well as her affection for Joseph. Perhaps, too, there was some obligation for her appearance in person at the enrolling, as being the heiress of her family.

Four days of foot travel separate Nazareth from the city of David. Mary, as her time was so near, made the distance very slowly, for winter makes the roads rough, and the holy family journeyed on foot, doubtless, like other poor pilgrims. Leaving behind them the plain of Esdrelon, En-Gannim, Sichem, and Sion, about two hours from the last-named town they perceived at length the dwellings of Bethlehem.

This village is located upon a long and whitish hill, whose slope, covered with vines, olive and fig trees, forms a circle of terraces, rising one above another in regular curves, like steps in a stairway of verdure. On the summit rests today a heavy pile of somber buildings; it is the Church of the Nativity, which screens the holy grotto, and round about it are the three convents built by the Latins, the Greeks, and the Armenians. From these heights, at a glance of the eye, we discover, far below us, the fertile valleys, the ancient domain of Boaz and of Jesse, the far-away pastures, where, protecting their herds from the mountain lions, there had grown up that intrepid race of shepherds which once supplied Israel with the noblest of her captains.

As they entered Bethlehem they would first encounter the hostelry, of which the khan of modern Oriental villages is still a fair copy, a huge square enclosed by porticoes; here, under the shelter of some rude galleries, the ground being raised a foot or two above the level, travelers are spreading out their mats upon the narrow platform, while all about them beasts of burden block up the courtyards; such was the aspect of the place before which Joseph and Mary presented themselves.

The concourse of strangers in those busy days of the registration, the poverty of these late comers, the very condition of Mary, all promised the humble pair a cold welcome. So it happened that they received the reply, "that there was no room for them";

and despite their fatigue they must needs seek elsewhere for some resting place. The chalk-hills of Judea are honeycombed with innumerable caves. One of these excavations, close by the inn, was used as a shelter for such beasts as the public stables were unable to accommodate. Mary, according to the testimony of tradition, could find no other refuge but this. And there, amid the straw which served as bedding for the beasts, far from all assistance, on a cold winter's night, the hour came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth unto the world, Jesus.

The object of assault for nineteen centuries, this humble birth, the adoration of some, to others has seemed but a folly and a libel.

"Preserve me from it all!" cried the impious Marcion, in the very first centuries. "Away with these pitiful swaddling bands and this manger, unworthy of the God whom I adore."

In vain did Tertullian reply, "Nothing is more worthy of God than that, in order to save man, He should trample under foot our perishable grandeur, and so adjudge these joys unworthy of Himself and His." In vain have all our doctors who have followed Him made manifest to us the High Counsel, so full of wisdom and merciful compassion, which moved the Word Incarnate to this Self-abasement; the God that was born of a woman and laid in a manger has offended the haughty spirit of man, and Marcion's cry is repeated still from century to century.

Without going as far as this in their impatient scorn, the Christians of this same era sought to dignify the humility of their God by fanciful prodigies. They would have us believe that the glory, which Jesus rejected, enveloped His cradle; that Mary, upon her entrance into the somber grotto, filled it with a noontide radiance; that the angels in robes of splendor hung over them in trailing legions; that the stars retarded their heavenly motions to contemplate the birth of God, to shed upon Him their gentle rays; that the manger itself was resplendent with a great luster, and that all eyes were veiled, unable to sustain the gorgeous glare.

Very different from this is the simple story of the Gospel; here there is no outward pomp; all the glory of the crib lies in its inherent loveliness. It is only the soul that is illumined by it; 'tis to the heart alone it speaks. Furthermore, we must not forget that here, by anything we add to the majesty of Christ, we detract just so

much from His love. The Word, in order to save us, has not disdained the womb of a Virgin; why, then, should we blush at the lowliness of our God? The more profound it appears the more it forces us to love Him.

Nevertheless, though Mary knew all the natural cares of motherhood, she was yet unacquainted with all those evils which are the penalty of sin—the sorrows and the heavy-heartedness into which all daughters of Adam must fall. We should not even say that her motherhood was like that of Eve in the age of innocence; for as she was greater than Eve so hers was the unparalleled happiness of preserving her virgin purity in bearing the Divine Child. When Jesus was born, it was as when the ripe fruit is parted from the branch that bore it, so cheerful, so comfortable, and attended with all joys was the coming of the Christ Child into the world.

So Saint Luke shows us this Virgin Mother, immediately upon her deliverance, lavishing upon her Holy Infant the cares ordinarily left to strangers; she envelops Him in swaddling bands and lays Him to rest amid the straw of the manger. "She must cloak the New Adam from the cold winter air; reverence, too, bade her clothe the Babe, as well as did necessity. Cover Him, Mary; cover that tender Baby body; shield Him in thy maidenly bosom! Dost understand thy Motherhood? Hast thou not any perturbation at beholding this thine infant One? Hast thou no fear to bare unto Him thy maternal breasts? For what Child is this, who reaches up to thee His divine hands? Adore Him even whilst thou dost nourish Him, what time the angels summon new hosts of invisible worshipers."

THE SHEPHERDS ADORE

To the east of Bethlehem there extends toward the Dead Sea one of the greenest of valleys. In olden times there stood in that place "the Tower of the Herds," near which Jacob had pitched his tent, there to mourn his dearly loved Rachel. Ruth had gleaned in those happy fields, and the boy David tended there his father's flocks. Today, in that same valley, the olive trees overshadow a lonely crypt. Consecrated to the holy angels, this sanctuary marks the spot over which the heavens were opened to

reveal to earth the coming of its Saviour.

"Certain of the shepherds," says Saint Luke, "were guarding their flocks and keeping their watches through the night. Then suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared unto them, the glory of the Lord enveloped them in light, and they were seized with a great terror." For to the sons of Israel no splendor could emanate from the skies without recalling the flaming heights of Sinai and the dread Jehovah, whom no man might look upon and live.

ANGELIC MESSAGE

Straightway the angel reassured him. "Be not afraid," he said; "I am come to announce good tidings of great joy unto you and unto all your people. Today, in the city of David, is born to you a Saviour, the Christ, the Lord; and behold the sign by which you shall know Him: you shall find Him an Infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

A manger, an infant, to work out their salvation! What strange tidings are these! The wonderful, the mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Messiah, for whose glorious coming Israel was in expectation, has revealed Himself at last in nakedness, in abandonment, in the midst of the straw of a stable! What a sudden reversal of the most dearly cherished dreams of the Jews! They must be simple and docile hearts who could receive this message. And so the angel bore the glad tidings, neither to the doctors of the law nor to the great ones of the earth, but to these shepherds; and in them he found that which he was seeking—the faith of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob.

Their gentle souls were all aglow upon his words, and suddenly, while their eyes were still drinking in the celestial radiance, all at once they saw that the angel was not alone; a multitude of spirits, all hosts of heaven, surrounded them, and the angelic choir entoned the chant whose echoes resound each day in the holy mystery of the Mass—

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men of good will."

The shepherds heard with rapture this concert of the angels; and when it had faded away into the far depths of the skies, and the messengers of God had gone from their sight, "Let us go over

to Bethlehem," they cried to one another immediately, "and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us."

And making haste to depart, they ascended the hill. Upon its heights they found the cave; in the dumb beast's crib lay an Infant, wrapt in swaddling bands and laid amidst the straw; over Him knelt a young Mother, and a thoughtful, silent man.

It was the sign given from on high; they recognized it; and their faith bursting forth into joyous transports, they recounted to those who surrounded them all that had been said to them concerning this Child. The sudden arrival of the shepherds, their search throughout the village had attracted attention. Soon the throng of listeners grew in numbers, and "all were in admiration at this tale which the shepherds related."

Having rendered their testimony to the heavenly origin of the Babe, "the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken to them." Amid all this concert of delighted homage the Mother of Jesus was silent. "Treasuring up all these things, she pondered over them in her heart," until the day when Saint Luke wrote them down at her inspiration; for it would seem certain that in this portion of his Gospel, which is so entirely different from all the other accounts, we are reading the very words of Mary. This story, at once so simple and so tender, betrays the Virgin's hand and the Mother's heart.

THE CIRCUMCISION

What happened after the departure of the shepherds? Were the emotions which their tale had excited lasting? Did the citizens of Bethlehem make all haste to offer Mary that dwelling where the Magi were soon to find her?

The Gospel, while it notes this change of abode, does not tell either at which time or in what manner it was effected; certainly, to worldly eyes, there was nothing of distinction about this poor family of the Saviour; and therefore it is most probable that the attention, so suddenly attracted to them by the shepherds, was as promptly drawn away by the more exciting incidents of the census taking. For, eight days later, when the Babe was to be circumcised, the same Evangelist, who tells us how great was

the gathering on the same event happening in the life of John the Baptist, now simply remarks of Jesus: "On the eighth day He was circumcised."

Apparently it was Joseph who performed the sacred rite, and so shed the first drops of the Blood Divine. The Christ, in order to fulfill all justice, was required to endure this humiliation, and bear in His body the stigma of the sins which He had taken upon Himself. Yet He only underwent circumcision that He might set us free from its bondage, by substituting for it a purification more elevated, one wholly spiritual—that of the heart and of the heart's evil desires.

It was the time for giving the Child His Name. The angel had apprised them by a heavenly mandate that He should be called Jesus—a name that spoke of salvation to the Jews, and recalled thoughts of their entrance into the promised land and of the return from Captivity. The most sublime title of Christ—the Messiah only compasses in its meaning the majesty of the Son of God—that anointment by which he was consecrated King and Pontiff; the name Jesus signifies One who has loved us even to the dying for us; it bears in upon the heart with a profounder impress of love, a celestial sweetness, a secret relish of salvation, and a foretaste of our deliverance.

The Law commanded that this firstborn should be presented in the Temple as it is written: "Every male child that cometh from the mother's womb shall be consecrated to the Lord," and it was necessary for Mary to be purified, since the Levitical canons declared every woman unclean after the birth of her offspring. During forty days, if it were a son, eighty if a daughter, she was forbidden to approach the sanctuary. The custom among the mothers of Israel was to pass this time secluded in their homes until the day on which the expiatory sacrifice was to purify them. They offered, then, a year-old lamb for a holocaust, and a turtle dove or a young pigeon for a sin-offering. In kind consideration for the poor, the Law permitted them in place of a lamb, which would have been too costly, to make presentation simply of two turtle doves or two young pigeons. Such was the obligation to which the Virgin submitted herself, although she knew nothing of the common misfortunes of women in her stainless generation.

On the fortieth day following the Nativity "the time of their purification was accomplished." The sacred text extends the expiation entailed upon the mother so as to include Jesus also; for since the Law considered everything impure that had been touched by the woman during this period, the child she bore in her arms was excommunicated as much as the mother. So Joseph and Mary went up to Jerusalem to consecrate Jesus to the Lord; the five shekels of the Sanctuary relieved Him of the obligation to remain as a server at the altars, and the "sacrifice of the poor" was offered for the purification of them both.

PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE

"And behold, there was in Jerusalem a man named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord."

The terms of which Saint Luke makes use in speaking of this aged man indicate that he had in mind a distinguished personage, perhaps even the famous scribe Rabban Simeon, son of Hillel. Indeed there is a perfect resemblance in this sketch of his to the historical Simeon—a similarity in age and residence, an equally high-souled zeal, with the same saintliness of life. The Talmud, which expatiates complacently upon the grandparents and sons of Hillel, preserves an expressive silence as to Simeon; and this doubtless because it would gladly bury in oblivion a president of the Sanhedrin who celebrated the birth of Jesus, and who had thoughts anent the Messiah which differed very widely from those of his contemporaries, so widely in fact that the latter finally deposed him from the presidency of the Supreme Council.

At the moment when Mary and Joseph were approaching the Sanctuary that indwelling Spirit, moving within the old man's heart, was conducting him to the Temple. There was nothing in their exterior to draw his gaze upon them—a poor family making their sin-offering, while in the arms of the mother there lay a little Child; and yet it was enough for him. To the eyes of the seer this Infant appeared, what indeed He was, the long expected salvation, the consolation which he had waited for so long, the

one and only object of his vows. Simeon took Him into his arms, and in an ecstasy of the Divine Spirit he intoned this Canticle:

"Now thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord,
according to Thy word, in peace;
Because my eyes have seen Thy salvation,
which Thou hast prepared before the face of
all peoples:
A light of revelation to the Gentiles,
and a glory for Thy people Israel."

Meanwhile "the father and the mother of the Child were filled with wonder at the things which he had spoken of Him, and Simeon blessed Him," but as his eyes fell upon Mary, he perceived in prophetic vision all that this Mother was to suffer. Then, holding up the Babe before her—

"Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce."

Then, reverting to the Son of Mary and to the trials that awaited Him, he revealed what would ensue: "And thus," he added, "the thoughts which many hide in their hearts shall be revealed"; that is to say, in the presence of Christ—He who was to be for the scandal and the scorn of this world—before Him all secret thoughts should be unveiled. He would distinguish in this way between those who dreamed of riches, glory, and temporal happiness as part of the coming of the Messiah, and those who, seeking Him for Himself, are prepared to welcome Him under whatever form He may appear.

Mary listened in silence to this menacing prediction. Such as she appears to us now in the Temple, such she ever remains throughout the whole Gospel—enveloped in her modesty, her heart at times flooded with joys which no language can express, but more often resigned under the sword which even now tore this Mother's heart in expectation of the end.

"There was present also a prophetess named Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser, of a very advanced age. She had lived seven years with her husband since her virginity, and she had remained a widow up to her eighty-fourth year, never leaving the Temple, and serving God night and day in fasting and prayer." It was this zeal for the house of God which merited for her that she should find therein, and therein adore, her Saviour.

As she was coming into the Temple at that same moment, she recognized the Child whom Simeon had blessed, rendered thanks to Heaven for unveiling to her eyes this mystery, and praising the Lord her God, she spoke of Him to all those who awaited the redemption of Israel.

The Lord, the God praised by the prophetess, is manifestly Jesus; to Anna, daughter of Phanuel, belongs, then, the signal honor of having first announced to Jerusalem the Divinity of the Christ, which other most illustrious witnesses were soon to publish to the world.

HEROD AND THE MAGI

While Joseph and Mary were leaving Jerusalem, a rich caravan was entering it. "These were certain Magi of the Orient," says Saint Matthew.

Ministers of a religion far superior to any of the numerous forms of paganism, the Magi appear to have worshiped at all times One Supreme Divinity, toward whom they observed an austere cult. There were neither altars nor statues in their temples; their choirs never marched with other than reverent gravity, sending up to God their solemn chants and prayers.

These noble beliefs had survived intact among the Persians up to the time when, under the guidance of Cyrus, they ascended into the plains of Mesopotamia. There, mingling with the Chaldean Magi, if they did not preserve the purity of their faith, they however came under the potent influence which the Israelite captives exercised upon their conquerors at that period, and in particular under the teachings of Daniel. It is a fact which we know from Scripture that this prophet, after his introduction into the palace of Nabuchodonosor, showed himself ten times as wise as the priests and soothsayers of Chaldea, and hence he was placed at their head through the favor of the prince. His ascendancy only increased under the four succeeding princes and the three dynasties, and was afterwards confirmed by the triumph of the Persians; for these new victors sympathized with the hatred which Israel had ever felt for idolatry.

Being made subject in this manner to the authority of Daniel, the Magi—Chaldean as well as Persian—could not possibly have been ignorant of his predictions concerning a Messiah, in which

he had gone so far as to mark the year, the month, and the hour of His Birth. They had learned from him that the Saint of Saints, who should receive the divine anointment, was that very One whom Balaam had beheld rising from Jacob like a star. From the Magi these prophecies were disseminated among the people; and in the time of Jesus there was a settled conviction, cherished likewise throughout all the East, that a King was to arise from Judea, who should conquer the world.

In the midst of this expectancy a strange star shone out suddenly in the eastern sky. The Magi always followed the course of the stars attentively; in the clear nights of the Orient, when the heavens hang out all their glittering lamps, they had remarked this star and recognized it as a signal for some great marvel. And at the same time their hearts as well as their eyes were opened to admit the light which heralded the Christ; they recalled to each other the star of Jacob and of Judea, and three from among them resolved to travel afar in search of Him of whose approach the heavens were telling.

Whether they set out from Babylon, from Persepolis, or from some other city of the Parthian Empire (at that time master of the East), the Magi must have been many long months journeying; and they had proceeded apparently without any further guidance from the star since we see them entering Judea quite uncertain as to the spot where the Messiah was to be found, and coming to Jerusalem to clear up all their doubts. The Holy City was accustomed to seeing within her walls caravans from the far distant Orient, with their striking costumes, and long files of camels laden with luggage. But great was the surprise when these strangers were heard to inquire, "Where is the King of the Jews who has been born? We have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him."

This question, flying from lip to lip, came to the ears of Herod. No one could be more disturbed by it than he, conscious that his unhoped-for good fortune and his thirty years' reign had not been able to sanctify his pretensions to royalty in his subjects' eyes. In vain had he espoused the daughter of the last kings of Judea in order to make them forget his origin; none the less did the blood of Ishmael and of Esau flow in his veins; and the scribes loved to recall that he had been "the servant of the Asmoneäns."

Powerless to appease this bitter hatred, the usurper could know no repose; and in his dread of any rivalry, he shed the blood of his family in torrents. No remnant of the race of the Machabees being left alive, he had hoped, at last, to reign without further strife, when the rumor noised abroad reached his ears—that certain strangers were seeking in Jerusalem for a newborn King of the Jews. At once the tyrant's jealousy was aroused to a more savage intensity than ever. So it was no longer the extinguished race of the Machabees, but that of David, which now threatened him; for this unknown Babe, destined to the throne, could be none other than the Messiah; and it was easy to see from the excitement which pervaded the city that all Jerusalem was reading the occurrence in that light.

Dissembling his fears, in order to strike a better directed blow, Herod convened a council composed of high priests and scribes, and ordered them to declare where the Messiah should be born. The answer could not be misunderstood.

"In Bethlehem of Judea," they said; "for it is written, 'And thou, Bethlehem, land of Juda, thou are not the last among the principalities of Juda, for from thee shall spring the chief who shall feed the flock of Israel, My people.'"

These members of the Sanhedrin did not so much quote the words of the prophet Micheas as they interpreted his thought; but Herod saw only too clearly what he had wished to know, and his plans were at once settled.

He resolved to separate the Magi, not only from the Jews who must naturally be all afire with emotion at this tale, but even from his own associates who might well have warned them against his hypocrisy. He summoned them to him therefore in secret, and feigning great interest in their quest he made exact inquiry as to the star, particularly as to the time when it had made its appearance.

As soon as there was nothing more to learn, "Go to Bethlehem," he said to them; "seek zealously for the child, and as soon as you have found him make it known to me, in order that I may go also to adore him."

And he dispatched them on the instant, without guides, without escort, thus giving no time for any warning, in order that no one, either at Jerusalem or at Bethlehem or among the retinue of

the Magi, might suspect his intentions and rob him of his victim. Night had fallen upon the city; Herod saw in all this the very moment adapted to his designs. It was but to result in their confusion.

Scarcely had the Magi passed beneath the gates of Jerusalem, when the star shone out anew upon their gaze. "This sight filled them with great joy"; for the star, leading them on their way, preceded them to Bethlehem, and rested above the place where they were to find the Babe.

There they found only Mary and Jesus. Whereupon that holy night witnessed a wondrous spectacle; at the feet of a Virgin, clasping within her arms a young Child, these three sages fell prostrate in the dust and adored the Godhead enshrined within this poor abode. Round about them, their attendants were eagerly bestirring themselves on all sides; the camels too had bent their knees, while the retainers lightened them of their precious burdens. Then the Magi, opening these treasures, made offering of them to Jesus. These were gold, incense, and myrrh.

Such is the scene in the Gospel. Pious legends there are, which add more details than one. They robe these wise men in the royal purple, set crowns upon their brows, depict their features and their expression; their names even are made known to us.

"The first was called Melchior," says the Venerable Bede. "He was an old man, with white hair and long beard; he offered gold to the Lord, as to his King. The second, Gaspar by name, young, beardless, ruddy of hue, offered to Jesus, in his gift of incense, the homage due to His Divinity. The third, of black complexion, with heavy beard, was called Baltasar. The myrrh he held within his hand prefigured the death of the Son of man."

Unhappily, these details have no authority at all; for it is only in the sixth century that Saint Cæsar of Arles confers upon the Magi the title of Kings, now so generally attributed to them, and it is in the ninth that we find their names cited for the first time. Two points only appear to be certain; these are, that the Magi were three in number and that Persia was their native country.

FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

This their pious duty being discharged, the Magi were relieved from the fulfillment of their promise to Herod; for God, who

had been leading them thus far, would still take care of their return. Being warned in dreams not to appear again before the king, they returned to their own country by another road.

As soon as the Magi had departed, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph while sleeping.

"Arise," he said to him; "take the Child and His Mother, and flee into Egypt. There you will dwell until such time as I shall declare to you, for Herod is searching for the Child to destroy Him."

It was still night; Joseph, rising up, took the Child and His Mother, and set forth.

Egypt has ever been the refuge for those unfortunates whom persecution and famine have driven forth from the land of Israel. From the mountains of Juda it only takes a journey of three days to reach Rhinocolura. Beyond that valley, with its narrow watercourses, Herod had no further power; it was Egypt. To all fugitives it offered safety and an assured asylum; and for this reason the Jews of the Dispersion had once spread their colonies throughout all the land of Mizraïm, the ancient abode of their fathers.

The Gospel tells us nothing concerning this flight of Jesus; doubtless this is because nothing occurred worthy of remark. The long stretches of the desert alone witnessed the passage of the Holy Family; some unknown dwelling sheltered them; while there was nothing of any note about them to betray their own unparalleled distinction. The design of God in sinking these early days in the shadow was thereby to throw out in higher relief the future splendor of the divine Life, and not to dazzle the gaze by such wonders as are found only in the apocryphal Gospels.

All in vain have the great painters of Italy immortalized these legends; the dragons of the desert couchant before their Lord; the lions and tigers bounding forward to adore Him; beneath His feet the sand grows green and flowering as the Field of the Roses of Jericho; while the palm trees bow down their fronded crests, disclosing their fruits to the fugitives. All these lovely pictures are but reveries born of a fanciful devotion.

Certain local traditions merit perhaps more consideration. To the east of Cairo a sycamore is venerated as having once overshadowed the Holy Family; and near by there bubbles up a stream whose waters (or so say the Copts) were sweetened be-

neath the touch of Jesus. This legend points out Heliopolis, the ancient On, as the abode of the Saviour in Egypt; but they cannot tell us what possible reason Joseph could have had for conducting the Mother and the Child so far away, when he might have found a secure shelter on the frontier. Indeed the time of their exile was so short that it was probably here, on the border, that the fugitives remained.

THE HOLY INNOCENTS

The precipitate departure of the Magi upset all Herod's plans. The morbid jealousy of the tyrant, little used to finding himself thwarted, vented itself in savage fury. Lacking any precise information, but only recalling what the Magi had said about the time of the star's appearance, he concluded from this that the young King must be yet unweaned; and as it is the custom with Jewish mothers to nurse their babies for two years, he ordered a slaughter of all the children of that age and under in Bethlehem and the outlying territory.

This cruel order was executed at once, with a brutality which wrought most horrid anguish in those mothers' breasts; for Saint Matthew tells us of the shrill screams re-echoing round about the mountains. Rachel herself awakes from the tomb, where she sleeps at the foot of Bethlehem, to mingle her mournful cries with those of the afflicted women. Then was accomplished that which had been foretold by the prophet Jeremias—"A voice has been heard upon the heights, great weeping and an unceasing wail of lamentation: Rachel mourning her children, and she will not be comforted, because they are not."

Certainly, if we take these words in their literal sense, it was over the Jews made captive under Nabuzardan and collected at Rama to go together into exile—it was over these wretched ones that Judea laments with the voice of Rachel, the beloved spouse of Jacob; but, most reasonably, Saint Matthew sees in this passage a portent of the tears which should be shed over the Holy Innocents. Indeed, nothing had ever occurred to the Israelites which had not some secret reference to the Messiah; sufferings and joys, humiliations and triumphs, each after their own manner, were a figure of that which should be perfectly fulfilled in Jesus. The

bereavement celebrated by Jeremias was thus in reality a prophecy of the moanings and wails which would rise over the first fruits of our martyrs.

This massacre made little stir in Judea; and Rama alone hearkened to the piercing shrieks of the mothers. In those days what mattered the sacrifice of a few little children to a monarch's caprice? Antiquity had small respect for babyhood, furthermore, the reign, now just at its close, had been nothing but a tissue of murders, tortures, and atrocious cruelties; so that, according to the address of the Jewish ambassadors to Augustus, "the living coveted the lot of the victims." Under such circumstances one can conceive how easily profane historians might pass over a deed so unimportant in their eyes.

Nevertheless, Augustus seems to have had some knowledge of the fact, for Macrobius has preserved this characteristic speech of his: "Upon the news that Herod had sacrificed his own son, among the children of two years of age butchered by him in Syria, 'It were far pleasanter,' quoth the Emperor, 'to be Herod's sow than his son.' " This imperial pun supposes a confusion as to the facts—quite natural on the part of Augustus, who must have learned of this massacre as coincident with the news of the murder of Antipater, who had been the fomenter of a new revolt against his father. It could not have been invented later on, in the Christian centuries; for then the immolation of these first martyrs had attained an unparalleled importance in all minds. At all events, this sally of Augustus is not simply a valuable witness of the fact as recounted by Saint Matthew, but it even enables us to fix the date also, since it was but five days before his death that Herod delivered his son into the hands of the executioner.

HORRIBLE DEATH OF HEROD

Not that God had delayed his visitation of the tyrant until this moment. A horrid disease, which heaven seems to reserve for persecutors, had been corroding and consuming his body, little by little. Our pen would refuse to copy the picture drawn by Josephus; it is enough to say that the corruption of the tomb devoured him during life itself. A prey to insupportable agonies, he sought some relief in the warm baths of Callirhoë; but he was

forced to return to his superb palace, overshadowed by the palm trees of Jericho, and there stretch himself upon a bed of torture. Vexatious tidings found their way thither to irritate his frenzied spirit. A rumor of his death had reached Jerusalem, and a golden eagle, placed by him over the gate of the Temple, had been torn down. The culprits were two famous Scribes, Judas and Mathias. After being dragged to Jericho with forty of their disciples, they were burned alive; but their death only added to Herod's hideous terrors. Succumbing at last to the extremity of his sufferings, he attempted to shorten their duration, and thereafter recovered consciousness only long enough to order that horrible execution of his son. His last thought was worthy of such a life; he was determined that tears should be shed at his funeral, and, knowing it was impossible to expect those of affection, he collected into the Hippodrome of Jericho the chiefs of the great Jewish families, that he might have them butchered at the hour of his death. The order was not executed; but it is well to recall it just here, as it enables us to comprehend how the massacre of the Holy Innocents would be passed over almost unnoticed in the midst of the torrents of blood which the tyrant spilled in the delirium of his last days.

Herod's end was so impatiently awaited that the news must have been carried, far and wide, in a short space; but the angel of the Lord anticipated its arrival in Egypt.

He appeared to Joseph during his sleep, and said to him: "Arise, take the Child and His Mother, and return to the land of Israel, for they are dead who sought the life of the Child."

Joseph rose up immediately, and set out toward Judea. Saint Matthew, always intent upon setting forth the accomplishment of the prophecies in Jesus, upon this event refers to that line from Osee: "I have called My Son out of Egypt," whose terms apply both to the exodus of Israel and to the return of the Child Jesus. It was a habit with the Jewish people to consider their very existence and their history as the outlines of the coming Messiah; and this made the connection very striking for the first readers of this Gospel.

Joseph's intention was to settle in Bethlehem; his thoughts often recurred to that place; and, more than all else, was it not expedient that the Child, who was destined to rule over the

world, should dwell near to Jerusalem and His Temple? But on the road the Holy Family learned that Archelaus reigned in the place of his father. Judea had only changed the person of her tyrant; for, as his first essay in infamy, the son of Herod had already put to the sword, within the Temple walls, three thousand of his subjects. Joseph dared not expose the treasure confided to him to such perils. He lifted his eyes heavenwards, and Heaven made answer, in a dream, that he should retire into Galilee. At his death Herod had bequeathed this province to another of his sons, Herod Antipas. Under this ruler, of a corrupt but careless character, the Divine Child would incur fewer dangers; for this reason Joseph returned to dwell in Nazareth; and thus was fulfilled what had been said by the Prophets—"that Jesus should be called a Nazarene."

This was not so much any particular prediction (as Saint Matthew refers to it), as it was a thought often uttered by the prophets; the Messiah was to be "The Netzer," that is to say, the Flower, that shall crown the rod of Jesse. On its side, Nazareth took its name from the same stem, in allusion to the beauty of its site—for "it was the flower of Galilee." We do not know how this word, which from its origin could evoke none but the sweetest reminiscences, in the end lost all loveliness in their eyes; indeed, for the Jews, "the Nazarene" was unmistakably a term of contempt, and apparently it was in order to upraise it to a new dignity that Saint Matthew recalls how Jesus once dwelt in Nazareth, was hailed by its name, and was thus the Flower of Israel.

CHILDHOOD OF JESUS

All that we know of the childhood of Jesus is comprised in those words of Saint Luke: "The Child grew, and became strong. He was full of wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him." There was therefore a transitional period in the life of Jesus—a period of growth in body, which grew like that of other children —a period of progress, even "of a soul, which fortified itself," according to another reading of the sacred text.

How are we to understand this interior development of Jesus? The common feeling is that His wisdom and His power declared itself by degrees, although He possessed them in their

plenitude even from His conception; and hence this increase in strength was only an apparent progress. However, we should not forget that the Saviour willed not only to appear, but to be in reality, a Child; now, it is the law of childhood that, just as the organs, at first imperfect, develop little by little, so the intelligence awakes in perfect concord with it. Since Jesus was once a child, did He too submit Himself to the gentle influences of age and its changeful growth? Yet, if we admit this point, how are we to reconcile that absolute omniscience possessed by the Man God in virtue of the hypostatic union, with any intellectual increase, however small we may consider it to have been, even were it no more than an experimental knowledge, as many theologians define it? Here there is, we must confess, an inexplicable problem; and it were wiser by far to humble our minds before it, than to insist stubbornly upon a satisfactory solution. We believe, with firm faith, that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is God even as is the Father, and by this He is always infinitely wise, infinitely mighty; on the other hand, we read in the Gospel that Jesus was really a child, and that He grew, in age, in grace, in wisdom. No one of these truths involves a contradiction; certainly we do not know how they were reconciled in Him; and yet, if it were otherwise, the Incarnation would cease to be—what God has willed that it should forever be—a mystery, which escapes the grasp of our reason without shocking or contradicting it.

However it may have been with the interior life of Jesus, outwardly at least there was nothing to distinguish Him from the children among whom He lived, and in Mary's arms He appears to us as Bossuet has painted Him: "Thou lovely Babe! Happy were they who gazed upon Thee, stretching forth Thy arms from out the swaddling bands, lifting up little fingers to caress Thy holy Mother; now, upheld by her firm hands, adventuring Thy first short steps; now practicing Thy baby tongue with stammerings of the praise of God, Thy Father! I worship Thee, dear Child, at every stage of Thy divine growth, the while Thou art nursed at her pure breasts, or while, with feeble wails of infancy, Thou dost call for her, or while Thou dost repose upon her bosom, clasped in her warm arms."

The mysterious tide of this divine childhood passed away in the obscure village in which Joseph and Mary dwelt. We know

already the name of their retreat; it will suffice to subscribe its site, to make it understood why Jesus loved Nazareth, and preferred it to any other abode.

Judea is scarcely more than a succession of hill ranges running from the north to the south, at some distance from the Mediterranean. In the west they slope down to the seashore; in the east they are broken suddenly, to leave a passage through which the Jordan flows, hemmed in by their steep walls and that of the mountains of Hauran. Thus four parallel lines of hills make up the whole of Palestine; the plains along the seaboard, the highlands of Juda, the bed of the Jordan, and, beyond that, the hills of Perea. Only one valley, that of Esdralon, breaking through it transversely, cuts the first chain into two parts: one of these stretches north to the Libanus—this is Galilee; the other extends south as far as the desert—that is the land of Juda.

Nazareth belongs to Galilee, and nestles down along the mountainside, shielded from the plain of Esdralon, by the many hilltops which are crossed by those winding footpaths and steep, hilly roads. On the confines of the village these crests stand apart for a space (as it were), so to encircle with their wooded heights a grassy vale. Some scholars have presumed that this verdant amphitheater was once the crater of an extinct volcano, and indeed the fertility of the spot supports their conjecture. In fact, Palestine has no more smiling glade than this little valley of Nazareth. Antoninus the Martyr compares it to a paradise. "Its women are of an incomparable grace," he says, "and their beauty which surpasses that of all the maidens of Juda, is a gift from Mary. As for its wines, its honey, its oil and its fruits, it yields not the palm even to fruitful Egypt." Today Nazareth has lost these glories; but it still has its meadows, its shady hollows watered by cool springs, its gardens of nopal and fig trees where the olive mingles with orange and pomegranate trees, in fruit and in flower. To the southwest, the village spreads down the slope of the mountain, and the campanile of the Latin convent marks the location of the abode of Jesus.

Nazareth has no other horizon beside this circle of wooded eminences, which shut it in on every side, but from the brow of the hillside on which the village is built Jesus could in one glance embrace all that territory which He had come to conquer; to the

north, the mountain peaks of Libanus and Hermon, covered with eternal snows; to the east, Mount Tabor, like a dome of verdure, then the deep riverbed of the Jordan, and the high tablelands of Galaad; from its southern side, the plain of Esdralon reached from His feet as far as the mountains of Manassah; on the east was the sea, and Carmel, with its many reminders of Elias.

Galilee of the Gentiles, as its name indicates, did not form a little world by itself like the land of Juda. Its inhabitants were of various races. Phœnicians peopled the frontier of Tyre and of Sidon; mingling with the Jews were Arabs and Assyrians, who together cultivated the fields of that province; a few Greek colonies occupied the towns of the Decapolis; and, over all, the garrisons of Rome held the whole country in their grasp.

Amid these surroundings the early years of Jesus were passed. Outwardly the same as other children, He received from Mary and from Joseph the simple lessons which the Law prescribed; at His Mother's knee He learned to read the Scriptures, which only spoke of Him; but Mary knew what He was, and though charged with the duty of instructing Him, she never forgot that He must be the object of her adoration.

JESUS AMONG THE DOCTORS

Along about His twelfth year, the young Jew found Himself, in a certain measure, exempt from the family government. Having entered the synagogue, He had begun already to bind about His brows the phylacteries—long bands of parchment covered with sacred texts—and was become "a Son of the Law," and so subject to its prescriptions. One of paramount importance was to visit Jerusalem at the feast of the Pasch. The parents of Jesus acquitted themselves of their duty faithfully; and although custom did not insist upon the presence of the women, Mary accompanied her spouse. The Saviour was twelve years old when, for the first time doubtless, He made the journey to Jerusalem with His family.

The pilgrims from Galilee, because they feared the violence of the Samaritans, usually were loath to cross over their country. It may be believed that the hatred of the sectaries was not so active at this moment; for the traditions declare that, both going and

coming, the Holy Family followed the direct road which passes close by Sichem. By this route Nazareth is distant from Jerusalem some thirty-two leagues, and the trip would take a slow-traveling caravan not less than three or four days. To the south of the valley of Esdralon, the springs and groves of En-Gannim afford a first camping spot for the pilgrims. From thence, after crossing the hill country of Manassah, on the second evening, the tents are pitched near Jacob's Well, at the foot of Mounts Ebal and Garizim. Beëroth with its fountains was the customary stopping place for the third day. After this there remained only some three hours travel, and hence, the next morning would find them within the walls of Jerusalem.

In that city the Holy Family passed the seven days of the Passover. And on the day following the caravans were gathered together for their departure; that of Galilee, which was composed of many thousands of persons, was never ready for the start until near midday; for tradition points out Beëroth as the spot where, at nightfall, Joseph and Mary were first made aware of the absence of Jesus.

One is at a loss to understand, upon first thought, how they were so slow to take alarm; but it must be remembered that Jerusalem, during the Passover season, was thronged with two or three million pilgrims, and in consequence caravans were formed amidst the greatest confusion. It was only when the long files of travelers with camels and mules had left the city gates far behind them, that it became possible to collect together one's own party, and to keep some order. Kindred and friends were then united, the women and the old people mounted upon beasts of burden, the men on foot, leading the way, while, as they journeyed along, they chanted their sacred hymns. The parents of Jesus not seeing Him, would think that He had joined some other band, and thus they would pursue their way, expecting Him to rejoin them when the caravan came to a halt at eventide.

But their search for Him then among the crowd was a vain one: Jesus was not to be found; and their anxiety was very great, for Judea was then in an uproar of sedition. The exile of Archelaus, recently deposed by Augustus, had resulted in the reduction of his kingdom into a Roman province and the imposition of

additional taxes. At this new badge of servitude the people revolted, and the excitement raised by the insurrections of Sadoc and Judas the Gaulonite was still agitating them. In such troublous times, amid the wild crews which were scouring over the country, what perils might not menace a lost child!

FINDING CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

Joseph and Mary returned immediately to Jerusalem. For the space of two nights and two days, all along the wayside and through the Holy City, they continued the fruitless search. Only upon the third day did they discover the Child, "seated in the Temple, in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions, the while all those who heard Him were astonished at His discretion and at His answers."

How came it that Jesus should be found in this place and in such noble company? The Jewish doctors were accustomed to meet upon Sabbath days in one of the lofty halls of the Temple, and would there solve any difficulties occurring in the interpretation of the Law. In the time of the Pasch particularly, when Jews from all over the world flocked to Jerusalem, there were great throngs about these far famed masters, eager to be instructed by them. The Divine Child mingled among their auditors; those questions of His, so profound in their simplicity, attracted the attention of the doctors, who were soon surrounding Him, eager to question and to hear Him. And such was the charm of His discourse that it held these sages of Israel fast captives to His voice.

This congregation was not unworthy to hearken to Him, for it was made illustrious by men of most venerable authority; Hillel, revered as the peer of Moses, habited still in all the majesty of a noble old age; the unyielding Shammaï, who bound all that Hillel loosed; Jonathas, son of Uziel, whose speech was so fiery that the birds (says the Talmud), as they passed above his head, were either burned, or were transformed into seraphim. Grouped about these, probably were Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, whom grace was shortly to allure. But even more than the aspect of this company did the part played by their Son overwhelm them with amazement. He in whom, thus far, they had seen only

a thoughtful recollected Child, sedulous to conceal the Divinity inherent in Him—He now discloses Himself suddenly as a superior Being, overawing by His questions and replies these old men of consummate learning.

Still the marvelous character of this scene could not make Mary quite forget all that she had been made to suffer, and her tremulous heart overflowed in this tender reproach:

"Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold, in sorrow Thy father and I have been seeking Thee."

Jesus was content to recall to Mary's mind that His only Father was in the heavens.

"How is it that you sought Me?" He said: "Did you not know that I mùst be about My Father's business?"

But even this reply—the first sentence from the Saviour's lips which has come down to us—this His word neither Joseph nor Mary comprehended. The humble Virgin herself makes the avowal by that line in Saint Luke's narrative: "And they did not understand the word that He spoke to them."

All she could do, then, was to engrave upon her memory everything she saw and heard that day. As for Jesus, He invested Himself again in the same serene silence as of old, and now the veil which had covered His Childhood once more screens from the view the eighteen years which are to follow.

HIDDEN LIFE AT NAZARETH

Jesus went down to Nazareth with His parents; there He was subject to them, and He increased in wisdom, in age, and in grace before God and before men. He grew in accordance with the laws of that humanity wherewith He had clothed Himself, and this external life had nothing to the outward view but what was natural and ordinary: only it was an irreproachable life and an unpretentious one. Those who saw Jesus in the days of His hidden life, beheld before their eyes only a poor laborer toiling in his workshop.

Joseph was a carpenter; Jesus was one like him. His countrymen recognized Him as such when He preached in the synagogue of Nazareth.

"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" they cried out.

It was a custom among the Jews for every child, whatever his rank of fortune might be, to learn some mechanical art. It was then doubly necessary for Jesus to work with His hands, for the Holy Family was poor, and their only means of livelihood were drawn from this handicraft of Joseph.

Everything leads us to suppose that the latter died during the hidden life of the Saviour; indeed his name appears no more in the Gospel, neither at the bridal banquet in Cana, nor at the departure for Capharnaum, nor amid any of those other circumstances in which the relations of the Christ are mentioned. Besides this, would Jesus have left Mary to Saint John if her husband had been still alive? Joseph died in Nazareth, therefore, in the arms of Mary, and with the kiss of peace upon his lips from the Lord Himself. Jesus was left alone to be the support of His Mother; and so He busied Himself in that carpenter's workshop at Nazareth, handling the saw and the plane. In its infancy, the Church was wont to recall, for the reverent remembrance of the faithful, those ploughs and yokes which His divine hands once fashioned from the rough wood.

It may be that Jesus did not always dwell alone in that quiet home. According to a tradition mentioned by Eusebius, a sister of the holy Virgin, like her called Mary, had married a brother of Joseph, named Alpheus or Cleophas. He too must have died during Jesus' sojourn in Nazareth, for the Gospel observes the same silence concerning him that it does as to Joseph. But for the two sisters, it would seem that they kept together; and the numerous children of Mary, wife of Cleophas, are those brothers and sisters of Jesus of whom the townspeople spoke in these terms: "Are not His brethren named James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude? and are not His sisters all here amongst us?" It is the usage in sacred Scripture, and is, in fact, a general custom in the Greek language, to call even distant kinsfolk brethren. That term, therefore, only refers to these four cousins of Jesus. As for the daughters of Mary and Alpheus, who lived in the household of the Saviour, we know neither their names nor their number. However these words: "Are they not all here among us?" leave it to be supposed that there were at least three.

Two of their brothers are better known; we shall encounter them shortly among the Apostles. James, son of Alpheus, is that

"brother of the Lord" whom Saint Paul wanted to see, together with Peter, and whom he hailed as one of the pillars of the Church. His sturdy virtue got for him the surname of The Just. "Consecrated to God from the womb of his mother, he drank nor wine, nor strong liquor, and abstained from animal food. Never had the razor been passed over his locks, never did he use fine oil to anoint his limbs." Jude, the brother of James, had not, like him, this austerity of the Nazarite; but it was as a tribute to his generosity that he was given the name of Lebbeus (Thaddeus), "the man of heart," by which he is distinguished in the Gospel.

These characteristics were not, however, unfolded until later on, beneath the breath of the Holy Spirit. At Nazareth the kindred of the Saviour had no higher thoughts than such as were common to their contemporaries; all their desires limited to the enjoyment of the good things of this earth. At the outset of the ministry of Jesus, they understood so little about His divine mission that they set out upon a day to bring Him back by force to their home, and to constrain Him to take some nourishment. "He has gone mad," they said. Used as they were to see in Jesus one of their own household, the cousins of the Saviour were apparently the last to believe in Him; and if, seeing the marvels worked by their "Brother," they did finally follow Him, it was in the hope of finding the wealth and honors they coveted.

"Come out from Galilee," they cried, "and go into Judea, so that Your disciples may see the works which You do; for no man does such things in secret when he wishes to show himself publicly. Since You are doing these things manifest Yourself to the world."

"Even His brethren," adds Saint John, sadly, "did not believe in Him." And still it was in their society that Jesus of Nazareth lived. These laborers, more engrossed in earthly cravings than careful for the things of heaven, shared in His tasks, gathered around the same family table, sat by the same fireside, were witnesses of His days and nights. And thus, Jesus, by partaking of them, has hallowed those daily trials of our daily life, which heaven mingles with the joys of home and family, and which make for the probation and salvation of so many souls.

BOOK TWO

The Beginnings of the Ministry of Jesus

LOCALITIES WHERE JESUS EXERCISED HIS MINISTRY

"IN THE YEAR fifteen of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being Governor of Judea, and Herod Tetrarch of Galilee, Philip, his brother, ruling over Iturea and the land of Trachonitis, and Lysanias over the country about Abila, under the Pontificate of Annas and of Caïphas, the word of God was spoken to John, son of Zachary, in the desert." Saint Luke, in using these terms to announce the mission of John the Baptist, has not thought so much of giving us, in this summary of the times, an accurate chronology, as he desires to recall the various circumstances surrounding the appearance of the Precursor of Jesus; nevertheless, he is not so wanting in precision but that we can infer from his words the very year in which the Saviour commenced His ministry. Indeed, the public life of Jesus was begun by His baptism; and as this baptism followed close upon the first preaching of John the Baptist, it must have been in about the fifteenth year of Tiberius that the Saviour leaving Nazareth, descended to the banks of the river Jordan.

With Tiberius, Judea entered upon a calmer era, and during the twenty-three years of his reign it received but two procurators —Valerius Gratus and Pontius Pilate. Of the former, the only fact on record which is remembered of him is the facility with which he deposed the high priests; for finding Annas invested with these lofty functions on his entering into office, he substituted Ismael, son of Fabi; then, after him, Eleazor, son of Annas;

a little later, Simon, son of Camith; and, finally, Joseph Caïphas, son-in-law of Annas.

Pontius Pilate, who succeeded him, has attained a sad renown. In the twelfth year of Tiberius, being charged with the government of Judea, he showed himself, at the outset, such as he was to the last moment—a man with a predisposition to justice, but rendered unreliable by a combination of ambition and cowardice. One of his first acts was to send a Roman garrison, with their standards, to Jerusalem. His predecessor, more politic than he, had been careful not to intrude within the Temple walls with those Roman ensigns, emblazoned with idolatrous legends and insignia; they even forbore to interfere with the troops of Zealots. But at the command of Pilate legionaries broke down the gates in the night time, and at dawn the populace saw with horror those impure images contaminating the Citadel of God. A suppliant throng was dispatched to Cæsarea, and for five years kept beseeching Pilate with their clamorous petitions. The Governor, wearying of their persistency, ordered the soldiers to surround the crowd and disperse them by force of arms. At their approach the Jews cast themselves flat upon the ground, preferring to die rather than to endure any violation of the Law. Pilate was compelled to yield to their stubborn resolution, and withdrew his standards.

At another time, a little later than this, he was even less successful in a similar enterprise. He suspended, along the walls of his palace in Jerusalem, golden shields with the names of pagan divinities graven upon their glittering surfaces. Again the people rose up in revolt, and Tiberius himself ordained the removal of those emblems, which were so abhorred by his new subjects.

EARLY TROUBLE FOR PILATE

It was not merely this vacillation between rashness and timidity which militated against Pilate's authority; even his favors were treated with disdain. Jerusalem lacked a sufficiency of water; he decided to bring the needed supply from a distance of about three leagues, introducing it into the city through one of those majestic aqueducts, such as remain to this day a grand memorial of ancient Rome. But the people, upon learning that

the revenues of the Temple were to be devoted to this project, laid hold upon the workmen and put a stop to all labor upon it. Much blood was spilled before the rebels were suppressed.

This persistent hostility put Pilate's capricious nature out of all patience, and he decided to follow the example of his predecessors. He retired to Cæsarea, upon the borders of the sea, administered the government while keeping aloof from the people, and contented himself with levying taxes and putting a check upon unruly spirits. It was only during the feast of the Pasch that he would condescend to occupy the fortress Antonia with a detachment of his troops; for from this seat he could dominate the Temple with its throngs, while he held his forces in readiness to crush out any insurrection.

Of all the members of the Sanhedrin, those who conceived the bitterest animosity against Jesus were the princes of the priesthood. And so, because they had such a preponderating influence in that Council, Saint Luke mentions this fact at the outset of his Gospel—that Annas and Caïphas were the two leaders of the great sacerdotal body during the public life of the Saviour. Annas, it would seem, held the first place there. Although deposed from his office by Valerius Gratus, the predecessor of Pilate, he not only retained enough influence to procure the elevation of his five sons, together with this same son-in-law Caïphas, to the pontificate, but he even managed to maintain a rigorous authority in all the councils of the high priests who succeeded him. Undoubtedly the Jews who held the more tenaciously to their theocratic institutions in proportion as the Romans infringed upon them more insolently, in this instance, would regard the continual changes imposed upon their royal priesthood as illegal and without force. Exasperated by such sacrileges, they would, to all outward appearance indeed, submit to the leader put over them by the will of Rome; but all the same they would look upon one man alone as their legitimate head. This man was Annas whom, as we shall see, they loaded with attention and honors.

Such was the government of Judea in the time of Jesus Christ, such the circumstances amid which He appeared, and to which Saint Luke has been careful to call our attention. As he was addressing readers who were familiar with the period and the places of which he speaks, a few words sufficed for his purpose;

today we need to know much more of detail in order to give the words of the Evangelist their original clearness and importance.

MISSION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

In a westerly direction from Jerusalem and near the village of Aïn Karim, you will find a cave which still bears the name of John. It is a large cavern, difficult of access, and retains no sign of habitation, save a stone bench hewn out of the rock, made to serve for a bed or couch; a few stunted shrubs surround the mouth, and close by there is a spring, beneath which a basin has been hollowed out. It is here, as the local traditions tell us, the son of Zachary grew to manhood. The solitary expanses round about are called "John's Desert," and some would even go as far as to make this neighborhood the birthplace of the Precursor. We have seen that much weightier evidences have secured that distinction for the region about Hebron. So, then, Aïn Karim is only one of those numerous retreats in which the Prophet passed the solitary days and years of his early life.

From his very infancy, in fact, John had given signs of a strength of soul far from common, and though by right of inheritance he might have claimed the office of Sacrificer, he quitted the Temple to bury himself in the desert. By this term is to be understood the wild hill country which reaches from Hebron to Jerusalem, being no more than a series of steep ranges, cleft and broken into by a number of parched and arid valleys; a patch of dry underbrush, here and there, is all that varies the monotony of those chalky stretches, whose glare so wearies one's eyes. Even this dreary undergrowth disappears as you near the Dead Sea; the desolation now is complete, an absolute waste; the sight can discern nothing but an undulating moorland, as it were, made up of gray fields of ashes; while in the distance the attainted lake exhales its noisome breath, recalling the memory of Sodom's awful condemnation. Such is the appearance of the desert where John dwelt until the age of thirty, not as a hermit, but wandering about, like the prophets of olden time, without other shelter than the caverns of the mountains or the scanty foliage of the thickets.

In the midst of this wilderness, blasted by the thunderbolts of

divine Justice, John grew to an understanding of his mission. All things must have revealed it to him, both the wondrous happenings at his birth and the prophecies which foretold his coming. Two of these predictions are mentioned in the Gospel. That of Malachy prophesied that the Lord would send before His Messiah a messenger, to prepare the way for His coming. In the other, Isaias tells us to hearken to:

> "The voice of one crying in the desert,
> 'Make ready the way of the Lord,
> make straight His paths.
> Every valley shall be filled,
> and every mountain and hill shall be
> brought low,
> And the crooked ways shall be made straight,
> and the rough ways smooth;
> and all mankind shall see the salvation
> of God.' "

These impassable ravines, these mountains rising around him on every side, these steep pathways, forced by the great boulders and precipices to make innumerable curves and windings—all these were before the eyes of John; and to him, as to Isaiah, these all only betoken that desolation, midmost the wilderness of souls, which he must needs make ready for the coming of the Messiah. As the Precursor of Jesus, he was to run before Him, just as heralds announce the sovereigns of the East, with trumpet and loud voice, bidding all make clear the thoroughfares to do honor to the royal progress.

John was preparing himself for his ministry, not only by meditating on what Heaven revealed to him, but by the practice of the most austere virtues. Consecrated to God by the vow of the Nazarite, he never tasted either of the fruit of the vine or of strong liquor, nor had his locks ever been shorn. But soon this abstinence seemed to him too common and too slight. All his food, in the desert, was limited to locusts, and the wild honey found among the rocks. His frame became reduced by fasting. Gaunt and half-naked, wearing no other covering than a leathern girdle about his loins, while over his shoulders hung a cloak of camel's hair.

Therefore, as soon as John entered the valley of Jericho, all

eyes were drawn to him, while forthwith they recalled how Elias was caught up in the chariot of fire, from these same fields of theirs. They had always believed that the Thesbite had been but lifted up into the heavens that he might descend again upon some future day. This Malachy had declared. But that famous prophecy, in which he alluded to both precursors, had only perplexed the minds of the Jews. They could not distinguish John, the herald of the living Christ, from Elias who was to precede the last coming of the Lord; and as Elias was alone named by the prophet, it was to him solely that their hopes had reverted. And hence always, upon the least rumor that God had raised up a new seer, one single question sprung to the lips of the whole people:

"Is it Elias?"

The hope of finding a prophet so famous thrilled the heart of all Israel, and on every side they flocked to the Jordan. Here it was that John commenced his mission. "His voice resounded through the desert of Judea," says Saint Matthew, by which we are to understand (following Saint Luke), "throughout all the country which borders upon the Jordan."

The prophet generally remained near some ford; for he baptized by immersion, and everywhere else the steep riverbanks make it difficult of access. John the Evangelist, at this point, speaks of a place named "Bethany or Bethbara, over beyond the Jordan." Both these words signify alike "the house at the passage," and hence we know that the river used to be crossed at this spot. The tradition which locates this ford opposite Jericho says that Jesus received baptism here, together with a great number of those who had come from the south. John remained a long time at Bethany, for that route was frequented by the Jews who traveled between Perea and Jerusalem. Only toward the end of his life do we see him ascending the course of the stream, as far as Oenon (The Springs); this was near Salem, and above the Pass of Succoth, over which Jacob crossed on his return from Mesopotamia. So that, with Jericho on the south, Oenon to the north, keeping to the valley of the Jordan, we have marked out for us the region within which John preached and baptized. He exercised his ministrations there with entire freedom, passing from one bank to the other, but without ever withdrawing far from

the streams of water, which were necessary for baptism and the symbol of his mission.

It is often asked whence the Precursor borrowed this rite, and some believe that it is to be connected with the ablutions which were ordained for Jewish proselytes. But why need we look to an origin so uncertain as this? What moved John with the desire of baptizing was, in the first place, the example of those frequent purifications commanded by the Law; but, most of all, the exhortations of the prophets, which urged them to wash away the stains of sin from their souls, while they thus purified their bodies. John's baptism was only figurative of this cleansing of the heart, and, to make it clear that true contrition must penetrate through all secret recesses of the soul of man, the Precursor chose to immerse the whole body of the sinner.

JOHN DEMANDS REPENTANCE

One other ordeal was enjoined upon his penitents by the Baptist—that of confessing their sins. The sacred text seems to insinuate that he even made it an express condition of baptism. Did it only go so far as an acknowledgment that all men are sinners? Christian antiquity never tolerated any such belief, for it was in remembrance of the confession prescribed by John that the catechumens made a voluntary declaration of their sins.

And, after all, the persuasions by which John incited them to penance leave no doubt as to the motive animating his thought. It is all summed up in those words:

"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

The Kingdom of Heaven, no longer the kingdom upon earth, of which Israel was in expectation. The Jewish doctors, deluded by their own chimeras, had but travestied that expression, "the Kingdom of Heaven," by making it portend the temporal triumph of the Messiah; but John restored to it its real significance, and by this proclaimed the divine character of the coming reign.

This message thrilled them with all the more emotion since everything about the Baptist spoke to their souls so insistently, moving them to true contrition. He was a voice—a voice crying in the desert, make ready the way of the Lord. He was listened to by the sons of Israel, who were just then celebrating a solemn

Sabbatical Year, and so, during the leisure hours of those holy days of rest, felt their hearts stirred with deeper yearnings than ever before for the coming of the Messiah. More than that (let us never lose sight of this fact) there are certain times when grace moves upon the spirit of this world in more notable abundance; the appearance of John the Baptist was the signal of one such great epoch. The hand of God laid hold upon the agitated throng and bore them on towards the sacred stream. They came from either bank, from Jerusalem, from Judea, and from the countries lying round the Jordan. Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, publicans, soldiers, courtesans, one and all, hurried to listen to this man's word, so stern and relentless to all imposture, all pride and luxury.

The poor and humble ones were the first to kneel before the envoy of heaven. One after another they stepped down into the stream of the Jordan, weeping, confessing their sins, and, by their penitence, giving an efficacy to John's baptism which it had not in itself. But when it came to the turn of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and when the stern prophet saw them advancing to play a hypocritical part in the performance of the sacred rite, then rang out those thundering words bringing them to a halt there upon the bank:

"Brood of vipers," he cried, "who has shown you how to flee from the wrath to come?"

These great ones of Judea had never listened to such language as this; they were used to see foreheads bowed down to the ground before them, while all Jerusalem hailed them as her masters. John tore away the mask:

"Show me some worthy fruits of repentance," was his command, "and do not venture to say among yourselves: 'We have Abraham for our father.' For I say to you, God is able out of these stones to raise up children to Abraham."

It were impossible to strike these haughty men with a better aimed or a more trenchant blow. It was useless for them to pride themselves upon their ancestry. John had declared that to be sons of Abraham by the flesh was of no avail to them, if they were not the true offspring of his virtue and his faith. The same Hand which had formed Adam out of clay, and brought Isaac from the bosom which was chill and barren as a stone, could likewise bring forth from the very pebbles of this riverbed the seed prom-

ised unto Abraham, innumerable as the stars of heaven, or as the sand upon the shores of the sea.

Thus, finally, the ancient alliance was declared to be dissolved, and with it went the loftiest prerogative of Israel—that ancient privilege which had exalted it above all the nations. For, John added, "Already the axe is at the root of the trees. Every tree which will not bear good fruit shall be cut down and thrown into the fire." And yet this warning was to be of no avail. Humiliated, but not converted, the Pharisees and Sadducees withdrew from the Jordan, while only a very few of their number bowed down beneath the hand of John, and received his baptism.

Though he was unsparing, even to harshness, toward these supercilious formalists, the Precursor had only words of mercy and kindness for the common people. When, in their turn, the crowd gathered around the prophet, asking, "And we too; what must we do?" John did not tell them to imitate his penitential life; he was content to preach to them the duties of almsgiving and fraternal love.

"Let him who has two coats give to him who has none, and let him who has food use it in like manner."

The publicans drew near as well. Hateful to the Jews from their office as collectors of the Roman tax, they came to seek John, ready to sacrifice everything for this baptism.

"Master, what shall we do?" they asked him.

He did not oblige them to throw up this despised business of theirs; but rising above the narrow views of his countrymen, he recognized that they might serve the public authority without wronging the people.

"Demand nothing," he said, "above that which has been commanded you."

Certain soldiers, upon their march, passed near to where John was preaching, and witnessed some of these scenes of pardon. These also, yielding to grace, questioned the prophet, and he told them: "Do not do any violence, nor any fraud; be content with your pay." This was the way he chose to throw open the gates of the celestial kingdom, and thus he prepared them for the coming of Jesus, by preaching, not a visionary perfection, but a godly and upright fulfillment of man's daily duties, and the ordinary virtues of each one's state of life.

Yet, notwithstanding, every day the excitement increased with the growing concourse of people about the Baptist. Very soon it was not only of Elias that they spoke, but the whole country began to cherish the thought that this might indeed be Christ. John heard them, and his reply came quick and sharp:

"I indeed baptize you with water, for repentance. But He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to bear. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

No longer a baptism of water, unquickened and lifeless, as was that of the Precursor, but an ablution made fruitful by the Holy Ghost.

These are but fragments recalled from the many sermons which John preached; for "with many different exhortations he kept on preaching the gospel to the people." If that message of his had come down to us in its entirety, throughout all his speech we should find the same eloquence, alive with the figures of the desert, with its scarped cliffs, hissing serpents, and gnarled tree-trunks, among which he had lived for so long a time.

Yet sometimes, too, he spoke of their fields and harvests, as when he depicted the Messiah as a thresher, with the huge cradle of the harvester in His hand, throwing upon the air the good grain, mingled with all its impurities, to be winnowed by the wind, even as He does today in His Church upon earth; whose wheat are the elect, whom He receives again purified for the heavenly storehouse; the chaff, those profitless souls which shall forever be consumed. "The fan is in His hand," he said, "and He will cleanse His floor; He will gather together the good grain into His granary, and will burn the chaff in a fire which shall not be extinguished."

He whom John announced under such animated imagery followed close upon the footsteps of His herald. The Baptist began his ministry in the month of September, with the beginning of the Sabbatical Year; three months after this Jesus appeared upon the banks of the Jordan. According to the primitive traditions they were then in the middle of winter; for the mild climate of Jericho permitted John to pursue his practice of immersion during this season.

Although united by ties of kinship, Jesus and His forerunner

do not seem to have had any intercourse until this time. One had grown up in Galilee, the other in the desert. "I did not know Him," is said twice, in fact, by John the Baptist, "But He who sent Me to baptize with water said to Me, 'He upon whom Thou wilt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon Him, He it is who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' " Watching solely for the fulfillment of this promise, John awaited the covenanted signal from on high.

But even before this marvel did actually take place, the prophet recognized Jesus. It may have been by revelation from heaven; it may have been by some divine lineaments making the Master known to His messenger. The Lord had followed the throng of Galileans to the Jordan; He was therefore surrounded by the surging crowds when He was seen by the Precursor. John had thought to finish his ministry when the Christ should appear; so what must have been his awe and wonder when he saw Him descending into the waters of the stream with the penitents, and heard Him ask for baptism at his hands!

"I ought to be baptized by Thee," he exclaimed, "and dost Thou come to me!" and he withstood Him.

"Let it be so now," said Jesus; "for so it becomes us to fulfill all justice."

It was indeed the decree of heaven that the Christ should efface our sins by placing Himself among the ranks of common sinners.

John resisted no longer, but immersed Jesus in the Jordan; and lo, at the moment when the Lord arose from the waters, and was in prayer, the heavens were thrown open, the Holy Ghost came down upon Him in the form of a dove, and rested over Jesus; at the same time a Voice came from the far heights, which said: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

This vision does not seem to have attracted the attention of the Jews towards Jesus. Without doubt they did not hear the Voice of God, but only, as it were, a noise as of thunder; but John could not have misapprehended the spectacle which was intended for his eyes alone. In that instant he perceived all that appeals to our reverent thoughts of it—the Trinity made manifest to man for the first time: the Father in the Voice falling from the heavens, the Son in Jesus, the Holy Ghost in the dove, symbol of grace, whose reign was now begun in the world. Then, too, he saw the

waters of earth sanctified by the presence of the Christ, receiving of Him the power to purify souls in baptism.

THE TEMPTATION

The Holy Spirit had rested upon Jesus not only to bear witness outwardly to the grace which abounded within Him, but to exercise an active influence over Him. And therefore, as soon as Christ had received this consecration, He was "led by the Spirit," Saint Matthew recounts; "impelled," says Saint Luke; "thrust out," borne away, driven "into the desert," according to Saint Mark. The energy of the terms chosen by the Evangelists plainly indicates that though the Spirit of God never failed to guide the steps of the Saviour, yet there was, here and now, a more sensible and lively motion than was customary upon the part of the Holy Ghost.

Intrusting Himself to this divine compulsion the Lord went up into the desert. By this name all the traditions understand a certain hill to the west of Jericho, which now bears the name of the Fortieth (Quarantine), in memory of the fasting of Jesus, rising above the fountain of Eliseus, its sides all honeycombed with caves. Long ago, whole communities of hermits dwelt there, anxious to lead their solitary life in imitation of their Redeemer, in the very spot where He consecrated, by His example, the way of abstinence and prayer.

But no monastic discipline ever equaled in austerity the penance done by Jesus; for it was in the midst of winter that He buried Himself in that retreat—at a time when the wilderness is more desolate than ever—the very skies are pitiless, and the trees are bare of fruit, and stripped of their leafy screens. Here He abode in entire solitude, "alone with the wild beasts," surrounded by lions and leopards which lurk in the thickets of the Jordan, amid the jackals whose mournful howling is still heard along the mountains. And they harmed Him not; for the creatures are but armed against a sinful race, and the holiness of Jesus held absolute sway over their savage natures.

But it was to attain far other triumphs than these that the Saviour had gone up into the desert. He had come here that He might be tempted. The New Adam, He was come to take up the combat at the point where the first had failed and fled, and to

turn defeat into victory. Yet what manner of trial was this with which He must needs make issue? Must we really, with the rationalists, treat it all as a vision, in which Christ, like the heroes of ancient fable, was given to choose between the paths of virtue and of vice? Did the Saviour, in relating His temptation to His disciples, represent it as being merely an allegory? There is nothing in the Gospels to suggest such a thought; and it is only by a preconceived idea of stripping the scene of everything marvelous that one can be brought to consider it as otherwise than an actual happening.

However it is a profitless effort at best; for what astounds us in the inspired record is not so much the wonders wrought, then and there, as it is the simple fact of a God being tempted. Theology has no problem to offer us requiring more delicate discrimination in its solution. Could the world have anything wherewith to seduce a Divine nature? Where was the merit in such a victory for a soul which could not sin? At every step the mind must halt before the brink of an abyss, and of necessity we must acknowledge that here the mystery of the Incarnation presents one of its features which still remains shrouded.

This was a season of penance for the Saviour, through which He passed without eating or drinking. It would seem that during that long fast, wrapped in prayer and inward strife, He remained unconscious of the needs of the body; "but when the forty days were spent, He was hungry," and the demon profited by that hour of weakness to attack Him in person. Under what semblance did he present himself before Jesus? Was it as a spirit of darkness, as an angel of light, or with the features of man? This the Lord did not disclose; and there is little to be gained for us by forming any conjectures.

Not less clouded in obscurity is the character of the conflict in which such mighty powers were brought to battle. Was there only that threefold attack of sensuality, vainglory, and ambition? Surely to concede only such feeble weapons as these to Satan, now in arms against his Lord, were to underrate the artifice and cunning of the fiend. Though the Saviour passed through all our common trials, yet all that was during the forty days which preceded the last combat; at this hour, wherein the Prince of Darkness entered the lists, it would be only natural to expect that the

allurements would take on somewhat of nobility commensurate with Him toward whom they were directed, and at the same time something super-subtle and strange worthy of the fallen angel, whose wiles were all exerted then. The aim of the tempter seems to be betrayed even in his questions. He wanted to know surely who Jesus was; for that keen intellect, which still remained in spite of his overthrow as clear as ever, had seen in the divine counsels that his ruin and the salvation of the world would be consummated on the day when the Son of God should become Incarnate.

SATAN'S SUPREME MOMENT

So then he approached the Saviour. "If thou art the Son of God, command that this stone become a loaf of bread!"

The snare was worthy of the hand that fashioned it. Satan did not offer to those eyes hollowed by long fasting, to the lips parched with thirst, to that famished body, the enticement of luscious fruits or savory meats. He was content to remind Him whom no lust could have mastered that He, the Son of God, held nature at His beck, and that one word from Him would suffice to change the stones into bread. Was it fitting that Christ should perish of hunger in this wilderness, where Heaven seemed to have abandoned Him? Was it not high time to have recourse to His almighty attributes?

But Jesus could not forget that it was the will of His Father that He use this power of miracles which belonged to Him, not for Himself, but for others. With one word He thrust back the tempter:

"It is written: 'Not by bread alone, shall man live, but by every word of God.' "

Even as Israel was nourished with manna during the forty years in the desert, so Christ would intrust Himself to the divine loving kindness, seeking above all else that support of the soul, which is the Word of God, His Truth.

Jesus had not responded to that query: "If you are the Son of God"; but the Devil knew that a superior being stood before him—in all likelihood the Messiah promised to Israel. Thereafter he had but one intention—to bring Christ to unveil His mission, and thereby His nature.

Therefore he transported Him to the Holy City, and placed Him upon a pinnacle of the Temple. Then, pointing to the crowds which thronged its courts, He insinuated that the Saviour might well perform some notable miracle in the sight of His people.

> "If thou art the Son of God, throw Thyself down; for it is written,
> 'He will give His angels charge concerning Thee;
> And upon their hands they shall bear Thee up,
> lest Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.' "

To descend encircled by angels, to appear before the upturned eyes of men in this celestial pomp, would not this be to compel their wondering worship and to draw all hearts unto Him! Satan could not have conceived a temptation more alluring to the Messiah than was this, and that he might render it irresistible he fortified it by the very language of Scripture.

Vain and useless wiles; for Jesus was come to irradiate the eyes, not of the flesh, but of the spirit, and to conquer souls by a grace unknown to the haughty. So He was content to add: "It is written further: 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' "

Then the devil transported Him to the top of a tall mountain, whence he showed to Him in an instant all the empires of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "To Thee will I give all this power and their glory; for to me they have been delivered, and to whomever I will I give them. Therefore if Thou wilt worship before me, the whole shall be Thine."

We would not attempt to imagine what the surroundings of that last scene in the temptation were like; for from the summit of the Quarantine, pointed out by primitive traditions as the locality, the view only extends from Libanus to the desert of Tekoa; while, of course, it were useless to look for any height whence in the twinkling of an eye one can embrace all the kingdoms of the world. But if we are to see in the very high mountain only a figure of that power over the whole face of the world which the demon arrogates to himself, still we may ask what is the nature of this his empire, whereof we see today only too signal proofs, and what object had he in view by thus tendering it to Christ? Did he hope to see Him prostrate Himself at his feet? Such blindness as this can hardly be attributed to Lucifer. In this

assault of the tempter, there is evidently nothing but despair at seeing himself overcome by a man, though it be the Man God; and hence we have this cry of rage and madness. Satan asked no more: "Art Thou the Son of God?" For him there was no longer any room left for doubt; but now, made certain of his downfall, he sought at least to gratify his hate, and so blasphemed openly before the Presence. His last speech upon the mountain is but an echo of that cry of revolt which of old he had flung in the face of heaven itself. "I will ascend," he had said long since, "and I will be like unto the Most High!"

At sight of this monster of pride, Jesus so calm until then, might well have felt a movement of horror.

"Be gone, Satan!" He said to him; "for it is written: 'The Lord thy God shalt thou worship, and Him only shalt thou serve.' "

The demon had discharged his last darts. All the temptation being accomplished, he departed from Him for a time—until the hour of the Passion, until that desolation upon the Cross, when for the last time he was to attack Jesus with all the fury of despair. During the public life of the Saviour we shall see him retaining such a vivid memory of this first defeat that he is fain to fly distraught from His presence, now groveling at His feet, while he confesses His divinity, now crying out to Him in his terror: "Wherefore comest Thou to destroy us before the time?", now beseeching Him for the bodies of swine, as a last and only refuge.

After the tempest, sweeping wildly over the Mount of the Temptation, suddenly, after the storm was spent, there came a great calm; the angels drew nigh unto Jesus, and they served Him. Jewish legends tell how Moses, during his forty days of fasting on Sinai, was nourished by a wondrous harmony—the hymning of the spheres. Of yet more celestial concord was the banqueting of the Saviour, since He had for ministers unto Him those spirits of light before whom the stars of the firmament wax pale and wan, and are hushed in silence.

TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

All the while that Jesus was sustaining that struggle in the desert John continued to preach along the banks of the Jordan. The gatherings grew every day greater, the enthusiasm more

intense. Very soon it was spread abroad that a heavenly Voice had marked out One from among the penitents, and that the Baptist had cried aloud to the multitudes: "Behold Him of whom I have said: 'There cometh after me a Man who hath been set over me, because He was before me.' "

So, though they had been for a long time indifferent to anything said by this rude preacher, who vouchsafed only anathemas and rebuffs to the princes of Israel, yet at last the members of the Sanhedrin were aroused by these rumors which arose from all round about him. Ablution was to be one of the tokens of the mission of the Christ. They began therefore to question whether John might not be the Messiah, or at least one of the prophets who were to announce Him. In order to clear up this doubt the Supreme Council dispatched some of its members to the Precursor. Those chosen for this office were priests; because all that pertained to the ablutions lay within the province of the sacerdotal body; and the delegates were also taken from the sect of the Pharisees, noted for their scrupulous respect for all such observances. Certain of the Levites acted as a sort of escort in order to enhance the dignity of the embassy.

"Who are you?" asked the ambassadors.

"John confessed it, and denied it not; and he confessed that he was not the Christ." The Evangelist by this repetition shows with what insistence the Precursor reiterated his testimony before the Sanhedrin's envoys: "I the Christ! I am not; no, I am not He."

"What, then?" was the response; "are you Elias?"

"No," answered John.

"Are you the Prophet?" they said thereupon, making allusion to the seer of whom Moses had told them.

"No," replied John.

"Who are you, then?" persisted the members of the Sanhedrin—"in order that we may render an account to those who sent us here. What do you say of yourself?"

"I am the Voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the Lord!' as said Isaias the Prophet."

This response, far from touching the Pharisees, seemed to them incompatible with the right of preaching and of purifying by ablution, which John claimed for himself.

"Why do you baptize," they said, "if you are neither the Christ,

nor Elias, nor the Prophet?" John replied: "I baptize with water; but in the midst of you there has stood one whom you do not know. He it is who is to come after me, who has been set above me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to loose."

Such steadfastness and humility before one greater than himself disconcerted the councilors of the Sanhedrin, who turned away, disdaining to interrogate him any further. "These things took place at Bethany, on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing"—that is to say, opposite Jericho, as we have seen, and at one of the fords which allow of the stream being crossed near that city.

The Saviour, on His descending from the Mount of the Temptation, would find His way naturally to this same spot. Indeed, upon the morrow John saw Him coming towards him.

"Behold the Lamb of God!" he said; "behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world!"

This was enough to recall to the minds of the Jews who surrounded him the oracle uttered by Isaias: "The lamb standing dumb before his shearers, the Man of Sorrows, who shall bear the sins of the people."

"Look," continued the Precursor, "see, and behold Him of whom I have said: 'There cometh after me a Man who hath been set above me, because He was before me.' And I knew Him not; yet I am come, giving you the baptism of water, that so He may be made manifest in Israel."

Plain as these words were, they did not impel any one of those who heard them—on the same day at least—to follow Jesus. The impression which they produced was soon effaced; only a certain few souls cherished the presentiment that salvation was close at hand, and began to turn their eyes to the Saviour. As for the Baptist, he was so used to waiting the divine action that he left all for grace to operate upon the people, contenting himself with simply showing them the Lord, who must needs call unto Himself those whom He willed, and at what hour He willed to have them come.

FIRST THREE DISCIPLES OF JESUS

On the following day John was walking with two of his disciples when Jesus passed on before them. The Precursor, casting

upon Him a glance of infinite meaning, in which shone deep love as well as wondering awe, thus gazing after Him, exclaimed:

"Behold the Lamb of God!"

Then these two disciples yielded to the prompting of those words, which had touched them the night before, and they parted company with John to go after Jesus. The Saviour very soon turned about, and seeing that they were following Him, He said: "Whom are you seeking?"

"Rabbi, where do You dwell?" was their reply.

The title they gave the Unknown and this demand of the disciples both declared what hunger and thirst for the truth filled their hearts.

"Come and see," said Jesus. And they went with Him and saw where He dwelt.

The Lord was living in one of the huts which were then built along the banks of the Jordan; perhaps it was merely one of those shelters woven from the boughs of turpentine and palm trees, beneath which the traveler spreads his mantle of hairy skins. It was about four in the afternoon (the tenth hour) when the disciples entered the abode of Jesus, and "they passed the rest of the day with Him." The Evangelist does not tell us of their conversation, which was doubtless prolonged until it came to be one of those intimate communions most dear to holy souls, and from which they issue forth filled with new strength and light, with the unassailable certitude that God has revealed Himself to them. When night came on the two disciples were gained unto Jesus; they had recognized in Him the Prophet—a greater than Moses, Him for whom Israel had been waiting for so many ages.

One of these young men who in this way came to be the first to attach themselves to Jesus was Andrew, the fisherman of Galilee, born on the shores of Lake Genesareth. The second was no other than John the Evangelist. It is easy to divine this fact from his characteristic modesty, which makes him here, as elsewhere, conceal even his name; beside this, there is the minuteness of the narrative, which enters into the slightest details, even to making note of the hour in which Jesus drew these first disciples to Him.

Simon, Andrew's brother, and a fisherman like him, had also quitted the Lake of Genesareth to go down to the Jordan. An-

drew came across him. "We have found the Messiah," he said (that is to say, the Anointed, the Christ), and he brought him to Jesus.

The Saviour looked long upon him. In this Galilean He saw the immovable rock on which He would build His Church.

"Thou art Simon, son of Jonas," He said to him; "hereafter thou shalt be called Cephas." And this signifies, translating the Hebrew names of which the Lord makes use; Thou art Simon—child of a dove, feeble and timorous as she, but hereafter thou shalt be impregnable as the cliff in which she finds her hiding place; or again: Thou art the son of feebleness; hereafter thou shalt be firm as a rock—a play of words made sublime by their depth of meaning, and by the effects which followed upon their utterance; for from that same hour there began the slow working of a wondrous change within the son of Jonas, which was to discover itself to the whole world shortly.

AND THEN TWO MORE

The Church, at its birth, numbered already three members eager to spread abroad their faith. Not far from this spot there was still another Galilean, named Philip; "he was of Bethsaida, the village of Andrew and Peter." The Lord encountered him on the morrow, when he was preparing for his departure to Galilee.

"Follow Me!" He said to him, thus inviting him to share henceforth His life and His sufferings.

Philip only vaguely understood what was implied in this vocation; nevertheless, so docile was he that he abandoned himself to grace and followed Jesus.

There were two ways of returning to Nazareth open to the Saviour. The one made its way through Scythopolis and by the sea of Tiberias, keeping to the banks of the Jordan; but the Galileans only took this road, which wound along the riverbanks, when they wanted to avoid the territory of the Samaritans; whenever the animosity of this people had for a time subsided they preferred a shorter road, which ascends by Bethel, and thence by Sichem and En-Gannim, coming out upon the Plain of Esdralon. A few months later we shall see Jesus taking this direction on His return to Jerusalem, and stopping at Sichem, close by Jacob's Well; but outside the season of Israel's feasts this route

was fraught with no perils, and the Saviour would therefore choose it for their journey from Jericho to Cana.

Having reached the heights of the hills of Ephraim the little company were passing through Bethel and the meadows which had once witnessed the vision of Jacob, when they perceived a Jew seated beneath a fig tree. It was Nathanael, the friend of Philip, who was to become the fifth disciple of the Saviour.

The son of Tolmai (Bar-Tolmai), this newly elect, was of a lineage more noble than the other four, and apparently he always retained something of an air of distinction in the midst of the rest, just as he is represented, in the paintings of the Middle Ages, with his purple mantle broidered with precious stones. He was versed in sacred literature, and perhaps he was meditating there beneath the fig tree; for the Jews were wont to seek the shade of this tree at the "hour of prayer."

Philip called to him: telling him, "We have found Him whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, have announced; 'tis Jesus the Son of Joseph of Nazareth!"

Of Nazareth! this name awoke at once in the mind of Nathanael an invincible objection. Was it not written that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem? What was to be expected of a man hailing from an obscure village of ill repute, and in Galilee?

"Of Nazareth!" he replied; "can anything good come from there?"

Philip still believed that Nazareth was the birthplace of Jesus, and of Joseph, His father; he did not know how to respond to the difficulties made by his friend; but with unshaken faith, all he could say was: "Come and see!"

They were indeed the very words of the Master which he repeated then; for he knew what had been their power over Andrew and John, and availed himself of them as though they were some divine charm to lure Nathanael.

As soon as the Saviour saw the latter coming toward Him: "Behold a true Israelite," He said, "in whom there is no guile!"

What a meed of praise those words bestow! What is there more to be desired than to recognize within one's self this true righteousness, and know that one is "of that Israel which is not of the flesh, but of God?"

Nathanael, in his surprise at seeing himself already known,

replied with quiet candor: "How do You know me?"

"Before Philip called thee," said the Saviour, "when thou were under the fig tree, I saw thee."

Evidently Jesus then made an allusion to something that had occurred under the tree, before Philip called to him—some action which must be still a secret to us, but one which was as well known to Him, as it was to Nathanael. By recalling it, the Lord revealed Himself as the divine seer whose glance pierces all mysteries.

"Master," cried out Nathanael, "You are the Son of God, the King of Israel!"

These two titles explain each other. Nathanael did not make use of the first as meaning that Jesus was the Son of God by nature, equal and consubstantial with His Father; but he recognized in Him the object of His nation's vows, the Son of God, the King of Israel.

Jesus followed out the thought: "Because I have said to thee that I saw thee beneath the fig tree, thou dost believe; thou shalt see things greater still. Amen, amen, I say to you," He said, "thou shalt see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

As we have hinted, the hills of Bethel undoubtedly suggested this allusion to the Lord. Therefore, that which Israel had once beheld in this very land on which they now trod, but had seen only in a dream, this it was given to Nathanael, the true Israelite, to contemplate in reality: the heavens thrown open, to shower down grace divine; Jehovah, no longer afar off, on the cloud-hung apex of the celestial ladder, but pitching His tent in the midst of us; earth united to Heaven, by ties not visionary but everlasting, by the communion of those angels who ascend to God bearing unto Him the prayers of men, and again descend to us, the bearers of His blessing. And this saintly commerce was no faraway hope held out to their longing hearts; for from that very hour Jesus commenced His office of mediator. He has given us assurance of this by the affirmation—the form of which Saint John has preserved for us, and which so well befitted Him who is the eternal Amen: "Amen, amen, I say unto you: You shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

WEDDING FESTIVITIES AT CANA

With these five disciples Jesus kept on along the road northwards. As they were journeying without any train or beasts of burden, they were able to make their camp at Sichem on the first night, taking En-Gannim for the second; and from this point, after crossing the plain of Esdralon, they soon reached Nazareth. On their arrival they did not find Mary; for "on the third day there was a wedding celebration at Cana of Galilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there." As He also was invited to take part in their merry-making, Jesus, in company with His disciples, pushed onwards to Cana that same evening. It was just at the hour when the ceremonies of the marriage were about to commence, and the Lord on His arrival could assist as a guest at the most brilliant spectacle of all—the procession formed by the bridal couple, surrounded by the whole family. Sacred writers allude so often to the nuptial festivals, that it would suffice merely to collect the words in which they have referred to them, in order to restore for us the bright pageant which was enacted before the eyes of Jesus.

The bride's preparations for this great day were matters of the weightiest moment. From the instant she stepped from her perfumed bath she shed around her such a wealth of fragrance that Solomon compares her, wrapped in her long veils, to a cloud of incense floating over the earth. These veils are a distinctive feature of the betrothed maiden; not only covering the head, but enwreathing the whole body, and concealing from sight the white and gold-embroidered robe, her jewels, the virgin's girdle (which no one might unclasp save only the joyous spouse), and the crown of myrtle that encircled her brow.

The young maid, thus attired at the hands of her girl companions, awaited the arrival of the bridal retinue. By her side the paranymph, or bridesmaid, kept watch with the ten virgins, who must accompany her with lamps in their hands. It was generally at a late hour that the cry rang out: "Behold the bridegroom is here! Come ye out to meet him!" In those lovely nights of the Orient, which well-nigh surpass anything our days can boast in the way of soft splendor and delicious balminess, the procession advances, led first by a troop of singers, their voices mingling

with the notes of the flute and the clash of tambourines; while, last of all, comes the bridegroom, gorgeously clad, his forehead wreathed with a golden turban entwined with myrtle and rose. About him march his ten friends, called sons of the groom, holding palm branches in their hands; while his kinsmen, acting as his escort, bear lighted torches, and the daughters of Israel greet him with their laughing compliments. The bridegroom and his companions enter within the dwelling of the maiden, and, taking her by the hand, he leads her toward the threshold; and here he receives the tables of stone on which is inscribed the dowry; whereupon, in merry marching train, the guests retrace their way back to the house of the fortunate youth.

A banquet is there made ready, which always lasted for many a long hour, enlivened by gay enigmas and bright sallies of wit. A whole week, sometimes even two, slipped by amid such rejoicings; and so, to put somewhat of a check on this immoderate joy, and to recall their minds to thoughts of graver things, it was the custom for someone to shatter the wineglasses of the happy pair.

In the time of Jesus, were there the same symbolic rites performed which today are peculiar to Jewish marriages besides the ceremonies already mentioned—the long white napkin stretched over the head of the newly wed, who sit with their hands clasped under the veil, while the ring is slipped upon the finger of the bride in token of their indissoluble union? The sacred writings make no mention of these; they only tell how the guests conduct the lady to the nuptial chamber, where her couch was set in state beneath a canopy, sometimes even under a bower of blossoms.

JESUS COMES TO THE WEDDING

Such were some of the ceremonies at which Jesus was a guest upon "that evening of the third day." In this instance the pomp and splendor were indeed of a somewhat modest degree; for everything seems to indicate that the family which had bidden Jesus as one of their friends was of as humble a station as He: the fact of the wine having given out so early in the feasting; the air of authority with which Mary, the wife of a carpenter, gives her orders; the respect shown her Son, who is invited, although at the time absent from home. The apparent luxury in the details of the

banquet do not really contradict this conclusion; for everything which they might stand in need of—ornaments, rich furnishings, service of all kinds—these even the poorest people could always borrow of their neighbors.

Mary, who had preceded her Son to Cana, had betaken herself there undoubtedly in order to lend her aid in the necessary preparations, thus she was able to notice how little wine her friends had to dispose of; and so too she was the first to perceive that it was falling short in the very middle of the repast. It was the unlooked-for arrival of the five disciples which had brought down this disgrace upon the young couple; for (according to an ancient witness on this point) "it happened that the wine gave out in consequence of the great number of guests."

Mary was distressed, and going herself to Jesus: "They have no wine," she said.

Used as she was to seeing her Son anticipate her least wishes, she continued to treat Him as she had always done hitherto still bearing herself as a Mother who is all-powerful and always to be obeyed.

But now the times were changed. In order to show Mary that He had ceased to belong to her (yet only that He might be entirely at the will of His heavenly Father), Jesus refused to pay heed directly to her.

"Woman," He said to her, "what matters it to you and to Me? My hour has not yet come."

This answer, which sounds so harshly to our ears, has not the same meaning in the Aramean tongue. It is in frequent use among sacred writers, sometimes to denote a lively objection, sometimes only a simple dissent; both, however, were in perfect consonance with the forms of the highest courtesy. As for the title "Woman," that was, indeed, a term of respect. In making use of it, Jesus tendered filial homage to her whom He loved beyond all other creatures, and whose prayer it cost Him so dear to deny.

And, furthermore, we must supply to this bare refusal some words which John the Evangelist either did not hear, or at least has omitted to report; for we see in the sequel that the response of the Saviour, far from disheartening Mary, gave her yet fuller assurance.

On the instant she gave orders to the servants to hold them-

selves in readiness at His word: "Do whatever He tells you."

They had not long to delay. The last drops of wine had been poured out; there was nothing now left for the young couple except to make a humiliating avowal of their insufficient stores. Now there were standing close at hand six great urns of stone, covered with branches, as is the custom in the East, in order to keep the water cool and fresh. These vessels, each containing two or three measures, were kept in readiness for the guests, who were required not only to wash their feet before touching the linen and drapery of their couches, but even during the meal frequently to purify their hands. Already there had been many of these ablutions performed, and the urns were being rapidly emptied. At a word from Jesus, the servants filled them with water to the brim.

THE FIRST MIRACLE

"Draw out now," said the Lord, "and take to the chief steward." This was one of the guests, selected to preside over the feasting and to keep watch so that there might be nothing lacking. The serving-men presented him with the drinking cup. He tasted the water changed to wine without knowing whence it came. Those who had drawn it out were not ignorant; but even so, the stupor that had fallen on them at sight of such a miracle now enchained their tongues.

The chief steward called to the bridegroom: "Every man," said he, "serves the good wine first, and when they have drunk freely, then that which is poorer. But you have kept the best until now!"

This bantering allusion to drinkers who dull the edge of their taste by overmuch indulgence—the familiar hint anent the usual excesses at other wedding banquets, where there is not (just as here there was) permeating the feeling of all a sense of some divine influence present among them—all this shows that the supposition arrived at by the master of the entertainment was that the young host had wished to surprise the company agreeably. But at once, to his amazement, the latter was made aware that a wondrous deed had been accomplished. His eyes turned to the servers, to Mary. Then in a few words all was disclosed. Jesus had performed His first miracle.

He did it to console a few Galileans, whose very names still remain unknown, and in order to sanctify the bond of marriage, which was to become in His Church a sacramental union. He did it to teach the world, which gives its best at first and leaves the dregs at the bottom of the cup, that Christ would not so deal with us—that He would reserve for eternity that wine of the elect which will inebriate us with holy raptures. And finally, He did it at the prayer of Mary whose faith, thus tested by a first refusal, shone out in its strength only the more triumphantly.

TOKENS OF DIVINITY

"Here then took place," the Evangelist adds, "the first sign given by Jesus, being given at Cana in Galilee; and thus He manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." This word "sign" tells us what the miracles of the Saviour were for John—the manifestation of His divinity. Elsewhere he goes so far as to call them the "works" of the Christ, as if miracles were but the natural attribute of Him, in whom resides almighty powers, and that the real miracle would be, not for God, whose name is Wonderful, to do wondrous things but for Him not to do them. And so the miracles which Jesus will work beneath our eyes should only be for us as signs and tokens, as the lustrous rays of His divinity piercing through the veils of the flesh. In those moments which will sometimes come upon us, when the humiliations of the Word Incarnate do well-nigh shake our faith, and force from us that cry of bewilderment: "Why, what is there godlike in all this?" then at once the answer should spring to our lips: "His miracles declare His might; and in these flashes of power He stands forth revealed, as in the fierce white glare of the lightning, the almighty Son of God."

What was it that occurred at Nazareth when Jesus returned there? The Gospel does not tell; but apparently something happened which rendered any tarrying in this village either painful or perilous for the Saviour, since Saint John adds immediately: "After that, He descended to Capharnaum with His Mother, His brothers, and His disciples." The uncouth violence of the Nazarenes was proverbial. Perhaps they refused to see anything but a clever imposture in the miracle of Cana, and so would force this "son of Joseph" to take Himself out of their country.

BOOK THREE

First Year of the Ministry of Jesus

THE FIRST PASCH IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

THE FIRST SOJOURN of Jesus at Capharnaum was of short duration. However at that time He manifested His power by the tone of authority which thrilled in His speech and by His miracles, insomuch that only a little later we shall hear the Nazarenes uttering their reproach: "Do some of the great works like those which you performed in Capharnaum here in your own country!" We do not know what deeds these were, whose renown had been spread throughout Galilee; no one of the Evangelists has given us any particulars in regard to them, and we are forced to resign ourselves to the bare knowledge of their occurrence, as must be inferred from Saint Luke's allusion to them.

Hardly had the Saviour awakened Capharnaum to a knowledge of His presence by these miracles when He withdrew from their countryside. The caravans which go up to the Pasch were being formed just at this time, collected from all the lands bordering on the lake. Jesus joined company with the pilgrims of Galilee.

Apparently they took the route through Perea and arrived in Jerusalem by way of Bethany and the Mount of Olives. There was nothing at that time to distinguish Him from the crowd of Jews about Him—neither the testimony of the Precursor which was almost forgotten by this time, nor the miracles wrought in Capharnaum, since no report of them had up to this date reached Jerusalem; the Saviour entered the Holy City unknown, unnoticed, and with nothing to mark Him out from the throng.

His first act was to go up to the Temple to pray; but it was useless for Him to seek any place on the holy hill for silent adoration; for He being a son of Juda, might not penetrate within the porches of the Levites; He must remain with His tribe without in the lower courts; but just now and during the feasts this part of the Sanctuary was given over to the merchants, and was thus profaned by an unhallowed traffic.

This abuse, unheard of before the Captivity, had crept in since the period when the Jews, who had been dispersed over the whole world, thronged into Jerusalem for the Passover. As they could not bring with them from those far distant lands the animals necessary for the sacrifices, it happened that for a long while the small number of victims was in disgraceful contrast with the multitude of worshipers. To guard against the dearth of oblations, one of Herod's favorite courtiers, Bava, son of Bota, gathered there great flocks of sheep, and generously offered them to the sons of Israel! What he had done prompted by liberality, others continued to do from motives of selfish interest. The priests were greatly in favor of these enterprises, whence they derived numerous perquisites! Protected by their political influence, the sellers soon slipped into every avenue of the Temple and all through the Porches of the Gentiles, turning that vast court into a market, where was set out for sale every requisite for the service of the altars—cages full of doves intended for the offerings of the poor; herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, for richer customers.

BANKERS FOR THE POOR

Indeed, it was not alone the paschal lamb which had to be immolated at this season; the Jews of the Dispersion, since they came to Jerusalem but once a year, were obliged to wait until this visit to make presentation of such victims as were required of them, either according to the prescriptions of the Law, or in fulfillment of some pious vow. And it must be remembered how innumerable these sacrifices were in order to conceive a just idea of the tumult, which was aggravated by the presence of the money-changers. Seated at their tables, these bankers of the lower classes provided every one with the half-shekel which he

must pay "as the price of his soul"; and this because the greater part of the visiting Jews, having come from Roman provinces, would have in hand only money stamped with idolatrous images, and therefore unworthy of being offered to the Lord.

Necessary as this traffic may have seemed, it profaned the house of God. Certainly the victims were always immolated and the rites celebrated upon the topmost terraces; but the chanting and the prayers were no longer audible in the lower courts; shrill cries, incessant bellowings, coin rattling upon the trays of the noisy brokers, a confused rabble of pilgrims and hucksters, with their beasts lying about the mosaic pavement of the porches as though it were the litter of their stables. This was what Jesus must needs hear and see within the very shadow of the Sanctuary.

JUSTIFIED ANGER

The spectacle aroused His wrath; seizing a handful of those flexible rushes which Orientals plait together like cords, He twisted them into a whip and advanced suddenly, with uplifted arm, beating before Him both buyers and sellers, cattle and sheep. Nor were the coin-changers spared; He put them all outside the gates, overturning their tables and scattering their piles of money upon the ground. The sellers of doves were less rudely treated; inasmuch as they sold the offerings made by the poor, they merited the Saviour's pity; therefore he did not touch their cages, but was content to say, simply: "Take all these away from here, and do not make a house of traffic out of My Father's house." What must have been the astonishment of the first disciples at the sight of Jesus in His indignation and the multitude flying before Him! Yet some of them remembered that it was written: "The zeal of Thy House hath eaten Me up." Thus their faith was only the more strengthened.

As for the throng, it offered no resistance at all but scattered like the startled sheep before the lash of Jesus. More than once in the annals of Israel the prophets had disclosed themselves in like manner, clad in shepherd garb, or as a hardy mountaineer, or other such man of the people; and further, all the while they were dishonoring the holy places the Jews knew themselves guilty of sin, and hence they were the more disposed to receive this

Voice, ringing out in denunciation of their disorderly conduct, as inspired of God. Though the usurers and merchants may have cursed the vindicator of the Temple's sanctity in secret and cast upon Him dark scowls of hatred, still none of them dared to face Him, who had driven them out in the Name of Jehovah.

"DESTROY THIS TEMPLE"

Much less could the scribes, or even the priests themselves (however much to their interest it was to condemn the Galilean), much less could they summon up the necessary courage, so conscious were they of the righteousness of His rage. But as soon as they had recovered from their surprise they came to Christ and demanded what sign He had to show as His warrant for an action of this sort.

"Destroy this Temple," Jesus answered, "and in three days I will raise it up." The thought concealed under these words escaped them; they only understood them in their literal signification, and thus saw simply an announcement of the destruction of this sanctuary, whose splendor was one source of their overweening pride. The enormous blocks of stone, the tessellated mosaics, the precious metals, the silver, the gold, the brass, now blended in beautiful brilliancy before their eyes—in a word, their Temple, the wonder of the world, a Galilean dared to talk to them of leveling and rebuilding this splendid fabric with so much ease! The work which Herod, having at his disposal all the treasures of India, was forty-six years in constructing, this royal task a poor artisan boasted that he could accomplish in three days! The saying made such an impression upon the Jews that ever after they kept repeating it; in the last hours of Jesus' life they related it before the Sanhedrin, as a blasphemy and the capital crime of the Saviour; but not content with making a simple accusation of it, they took care to distort it after this fashion: "I can destroy this Temple of God, and in three days I will rebuild it." Now note that Jesus really said: "Destroy this Temple" (as you have done by your faithlessness and corruption), "and in three days I will raise it up." He spoke of the Temple of His body, the Holy of Holies of the New Testament, which after three days He would rescue from the tomb. In His wording He

merely made use of the enigmatic spirit so familiar to the Oriental thought when they wish to give only a hint of their real meaning.

No one understood Him then. "What!" cried out the Jews. "Forty-six years has this Temple been in building, and you say that in three days you will reconstruct it!" and they retired in impatient contempt of such presumption. The disciples themselves, without partaking of the Jews' incredulity, did not comprehend all that this response of the Master implied; but after the Resurrection, they remembered what He had said, and they believed in the Scripture, and in the word of Jesus.

While He was at this time in Jerusalem, for the festival of the Passover, many believed in His Name, seeing the signs which He did. But Jesus did not confide Himself to them, because He knew them all, and because He had no need that any one tender unto Him the testimony of man; for He Himself knew what there is in man. The Gospel does not declare what miracles the Saviour performed during those days. Certainly they must have been of a striking character to attract to Him suddenly such a host of disciples; but their faith was only rooted in self-interest and ambition, and thus the Lord "did not intrust Himself to them" as he did to the Galileans. Having read their hearts, He put no confidence in these newcomers.

NICODEMUS

Among the Jews, attracted at that time by the word of the Lord, there was a member of the Sanhedrin named Nicodemus, a rich man, influential in Jerusalem, who was possessed of a high order of intelligence as well as the distinction of noble rank. He, without doubt, had been one of the few Pharisees who had humbled themselves before John the Baptist and received his ablution; for we shall hear Jesus reminding him "of that baptism of water and the Spirit" foretold by the Precursor. However, it was not what he had seen on the banks of the Jordan, but the wondrous deeds done in Jerusalem which had decided him to believe in Jesus. Prompted by grace, he was made desirous of a closer intimacy; and as he dared not take any such step openly, he stole by night to the house where the Lord was to be found.

Nicodemus opened the conversation with a tribute to Jesus: "Rabbi," he said, "we know that Thou hast come a teacher from God, for no one can work these signs that Thou workest unless God be with Him."

However respectful he was in tendering this acknowledgment, the scribe only rendered it to Jesus as to a man and a doctor like himself; but the Saviour knew Nicodemus' heart. He saw that the man was secretly stirred by strong feeling, eager to be enlightened as to that Kingdom of Heaven which John the Baptist had announced; and so, without prolonging his suspense, He made known to him at once that the reign of the Messiah so far transcends all human understanding that nothing less than the putting on of a new life can enable man to have part in it:

"Of a truth I say to you, if a man be not born anew he has no share in the Kingdom of God."

MEANING OF NEW BIRTH

The idea of the new birth, in the spiritual sense, was no novel or unheard-of conception in the doctrine of the Scribes; for they had often compared the proselyte to a newborn child. That a pagan must first take upon himself a new life in order to be of the seed of Abraham—no idea could be more in conformity with their beliefs than this; but that this obligation extended even to the sons of Israel was indeed a strange and new thought to Nicodemus.

"How," he exclaimed, "can one be born again when he has already grown old? Must he re-enter the womb of his mother to emerge thence once more?"

The Saviour proceeded to explain His thoughts so badly comprehended: "Amen, amen, I say to thee," He repeated, "unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."

To be immersed in water in token of purification was a rite known among the Jews; and John had already proclaimed that though he plunged them in water, which was without virtue in itself, yet after him there was to be an ablution of the Holy Ghost; that is to say, the spirit of God would vivify this water of ours, that thus it might renew the heart of man. Therefore it

was not within the womb of his mother, but into the streams of sanctifying grace, that Nicodemus must enter in order to attain unto the life which is from on high.

Jesus did not stop there; from this baptismal regeneration He stripped away whatever the carnal fancy might suggest: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," He proceeded; "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; be not astonished, therefore if you"—born according to the flesh and dead through sin—"if you must be born again." Then, in order to give Nicodemus some idea of the workings of the Holy Spirit, the Saviour added: "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear its voice, but you know not whence it comes nor whither it goes; so it is with him who is born of the Spirit."

This similitude was wonderfully apt; for the wind is akin to the Spirit, of which it is the symbol. It may be at that very hour, while Jesus and Nicodemus were conversing there, the murmuring of the night wind made itself heard; or it may be that the Saviour had in mind those light airs which spring up even at midday in fine weather. No one knows aught of their origin; you can scarcely feel their soft breath on your cheek. They only betray their presence by a gentle rustling among the leaves. Most like to this is the action of the Holy Ghost in the supernatural life. It blows where it pleases; without hindrance it works, nor is it subject to fixed times nor to constant laws. At its first touches we do not know whence it comes nor whither it goes; only it makes us feel its nearness, makes us hear its voice, then suddenly it departs, and leaves behind it within our hearts nothing but languor and silence, and thus it goes and returns by secret ways. All that the soul may know of it is that sometimes she feels its presence near her, and then she rejoices; sometimes she must weep its absence.

These workings of the Spirit of God could not have been unknown to Nicodemus. He himself without doubt had had experience of them in his inner life, and he had found them written down in the Psalms and the sapiential writings, where so many pious souls have recounted the ways of God within them. Therefore when Nicodemus answered once again: "How can this be done?" Jesus showed some surprise.

"Are you a master in Israel, and yet you are ignorant of these

things? Amen, amen, I say to you: We speak that which We know, We give testimony of the things which We have seen, and Our testimony man is not willing to receive. If you believe Me not when I speak of the things of earth, how will you believe Me of the things of Heaven?"

By "the things of earth" Jesus referred to all that He had been saying regarding baptism; since the sacred rite, as far as its external forms are concerned, has a terrestrial side which appeals to the senses. By "the things of Heaven" He alluded to the lessons that still remained to be given to the world—His celestial origin, His cross, raised aloft like the serpent in the wilderness in order to save men, the salvation promised to those who believe in Him, the judgment and condemnation of the unbelieving.

"And behold," the Saviour concluded, "the cause of this judgment! It is because the Light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness better than the Light, because their works were evil. For he who does evil hates the Light, and he comes not near it, for fear lest his works be discovered. But he who does the truth comes to the Light that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God."

NICODEMUS LACKS COURAGE

Uttered, as apparently they were, upon the threshold of the dwelling, just at the moment when Nicodemus was taking his leave, while already the dawn was lighting up the eastern sky, these words sound like a last exhortation, whereby Jesus would conjure this doctor of the Sanhedrin not to draw away from Him. But the rabbi, though qualified to discuss with Christ upon such lofty themes, was yet of a cowardly soul: he would rather steal away from the insistent promptings of grace within; and though he believed deep down in his heart, he would still strive to let nothing be seen. During the whole period of the Saviour's ministry we shall look in vain for Nicodemus in the number of the disciples; only once we shall hear him in the Sanhedrin essaying a timid speech in favor of Jesus, then, as if this feeble effort had exhausted his courage, he disappears, until amid the shadows of Calvary we meet him again, at the very last, close by the lifeless Body of his God.

The interview with Nicodemus is the only one among all the incidents of this Passover as to which we have any particulars. The faith of the Jews of Jerusalem, so ready and strong in outward seeming, was not to bear any fruit; this Jesus well knew. And so, leaving the town shortly, He went with His Galilean disciples into the land of Judea. This name was assigned to all the outlying territory about Jerusalem, and especially to the mountainous country which extends to the south. In fact, in a northern direction, it is but a few hours' walk to the confines of Samaria; to the east and west the city is surrounded by wild and rocky ravines, which on one side are channeled down to the shores of the Mediterranean, and on the other, straight to the uninhabited banks of the Jordan; so then it is principally to the south that we must look for the Judea to which Jesus consecrated the first year of His ministry.

However arid and mountainous were these countries, still Jesus could find there the water necessary for the immersion of His penitents; for "He baptized—not Himself but by the ministrations of His disciples." For many a day has the discussion been prolonged as to the nature of this baptism. Some of the ancient Fathers, comparing with John the Baptist's ablutions, consider it as a mode of initiation, the ordering of which Christ intrusted to His faithful Galileans. But for the most part commentators concur in regarding it as the sacrament which regenerates the soul; and they believe that if Jesus did not administer it Himself, it was to denote that the sacred rite has in itself a divine efficacy.

Remembering what was the prize which they of this new birth attained we may not suppose that the Saviour would make use of it so freely as did John with his ablutions in the Jordan. He enlightened these first converts as to the virtues of baptism—demanded of them an uprightness of heart, and unlimited self-sacrifice, and faith in the truths He had revealed to them; but there these first teachings stopped, for though before this Jesus had unfolded the plan of Redemption to Nicodemus, as yet He did not deal after the same manner with the common people. We know from Saint Matthew and Saint Mark what was the burden of His sermons at this period, and we hear, as it were, an echo of the message which John had brought them: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The design of Christ, by at first

simply repeating the words of His Precursor, was to confirm the mission of His Prophet, waiting the time to disclose His whole doctrine, when He could do so freely in Galilee. Therefore, as He was even then an object for the Scribes' jealous suspicions, He was content to purify the hearts of numberless sons of Juda, by gaining them unto the Kingdom of the Messiah which was so near at hand.

Although they flocked around Jesus, they still came to John; and the latter continued to baptize, joyfully gleaning after the footsteps of the Saviour in fields where hitherto he had harvested all alone. But his disciples, on the contrary, incapable of such self-forgetfulness as this, saw with secret vexation that their master's glory was being obscured just as that of the Newcomer increased. Something soon occurred to make them give vent to their envy.

LAST TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

It was but a little while before the imprisonment of the Precursor: they had entered into a dispute with a Jew upon the subject of purification. Undoubtedly the latter, enlightened by Jesus, refused to admit the efficacy of the earlier baptism. Up sprang at once a contest which gave John's disciples an occasion of manifesting their jealousy. They referred to the Baptist finally, and said to him: "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond Jordan, and to whom you rendered your testimony, behold now He baptizes, and all men are coming to Him."

But John, while mitigating the bitterness of their feeling, did not fail to render homage to the divine Master once more, by setting forth more clearly the limits of his own mission marked out for him from on high.

"Man," he said, "can have nothing which is not given him from Heaven. You yourselves bear me witness that I have said: 'I am not the Christ, but I am sent before Him.' "

Then, in order to explain better what his true position was in relation to Jesus, he borrowed from the Prophets the figure by which he compared the Saviour to a bridegroom, of whom Israel is the spouse. What Jehovah had been unto His chosen people, this the Word, from that hour has become for all faithful souls.

The advent of the Messiah, the throngs following after Him, typify the marriage festival, and the wedding procession which joyously conducts the Spouse unto Christ. But as for him, the friend of Jesus, he must needs be glad and rejoice in His glory. "He who hath the bride is the bridegroom," he said, "but the friend of the bridegroom, who is by His side, and listens to all, is transported with delight at the voice of the bridegroom; and thus it is that my joy is fulfilled. It is fitting that He should increase, and that I should diminish." Thus the Baptist concludes; and then, dwelling upon that brief sentence, he proceeds to compare himself to the Saviour, that so he might the more humble himself before Him.

Jesus comes from on high; John is of this earth. He, John, has not seen that of which he bears witness: he but accepts and delivers the message with which he is entrusted. Jesus has Himself seen all things, has heard all things, in the heavens; therefore He testifies nothing upon the belief of another; and nevertheless His testimony is not received, or rather, so pitiful is the number of those who accept it that the Baptist, kindling under the passion with which the vision stirred him, held this poor handful of souls as of no account! Then, reverting to his own mission, severely straitened, like that of the ancient prophets, John contrasts it with the mission of Christ, which is all-divine, sweeping over and beyond all bounds; for God, meting out His gifts unto His Son in the measure of His love for Him, has lavished all things upon Him. "The Father loveth the Son, and placeth all things within His hands. He that believes in the Son has eternal life; he that believes not in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

JOHN FEARS NO MAN

That wrath, whose thunders now threaten these disciples of the Baptist, reverberated more terribly still over the heads of haughty sinners. John never suppressed these outbursts. We have seen with what hardihood he menaced the great men of Israel at the outset of his ministry; and since then his zeal had been only the more aroused. No grandeur, no rank nor dignity, could act

as a shield against his just rebukes. Herod Antipas very soon made proof of this.

By ascending the valley of the Jordan, the Precursor had drawn near to Galilee; scarcely had the licentiousness of its prince been made known to him before he bestirred himself to stigmatize it. We know to what a pitch this tyrant had already carried his scandalous disorders. Casting aside his legitimate wife, daughter of Aretas, king of Petra, he lived with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. This princess, famous among the descendants of Herod, was the daughter of that Aristobulus who was strangled at Sebaste by his father's orders; she was granddaughter of Mariamne, whose execution had ever after haunted the old king with bitter remorse. Being married to her uncle Philip, she found in her husband merely a disinherited son of Herod, living like an ordinary private personage. Such a commonplace condition as that to which this union reduced her seemed insupportable to her brilliant nature; beautiful, fiery, imperious, holding Judaism and its observances in supreme contempt, she was one who would rule at any cost. And so when Antipas, while visiting his brother, saw her and became enamored of her, he had only to promise her his throne in order to ensnare her.

HEROD IS TROUBLED

The daughter of Aretas, being warned that Herod was about to repudiate her, anticipated his action by retiring to the fortress of Macheronte, then among the possessions of her father, lying to the east of the Dead Sea. But it was all in vain that the king of Petra took up arms to avenge the wrong done his daughter; in vain also that his troops routed those of the tetrarch: the monstrous and unnatural union of Antipas and Herodias was consummated, despite all obstacles.

So shocking a transgression of the Law could not fail to excite the mind of all Galilee. Did Herod, startled as he was, and fearful of some disturbance among his people, come to John the Baptist, thinking to obtain from him some words of approval and commendation? Some writers have so interpreted the facts. Yet it is more probable that the Precursor himself at once took the initiative. Pushing his way straight into the palace of the tetrarch—as

of old Elias came before Achab—he made the gilded halls re-echo with those words which the Church has so often since repeated to guilty princes: "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." And then John reproached him for all the evil deeds committed by him; whereupon having fulfilled his mission, he departed, leaving in Herod's heart a rankling memory, an incurable wound.

The prince dared not arrest the Prophet on the instant, for he feared the people who still thronged about him; but he was only waiting some favorable opportunity for laying hands upon him. As soon as it presented itself, he had him seized by his satellites, and from the Gospel account we may infer that the members of the Sanhedrin, always the secret enemies of the Baptist, were not entirely unconcerned in this act of violence. The prison in which John the Baptist was thrown was that same fortress of Macheronte where the daughter of Aretas had taken refuge. Josephus has described its strange appearance, erected upon one of the mountains which border the Dead Sea, while on the east it is surrounded by gorges so deep that the eye can scarcely fathom their dark chasms. Herod struck with the value of such a coign of vantage, had encircled the cliff with enormous ramparts, and raised upon the heights a town and a palace.

Such is the fantastic neighborhood in which Josephus locates the prison of the Precursor. Although held within these fastnesses, the latter retained his liberty so far as to be able to receive his disciples, and to charge them with divers messages. Herod himself, during his sojourns at Macheronte, sought converse with the captive; for he feared him, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and although he kept him in prison, he listened to him willingly. Thus he came to do many things by his counsel; and at the last did really halt for an instant, undecided, in the downward path of sin on which he had so far proceeded. But his wicked paramour was ever on the watch: she felt that the influence of John was ruinous to her own, and so, making a vow of merciless vengeance upon him, she went about procuring his death. For a long time Herod protected the Forerunner; for he was attached to him, and feared the people who venerated John as a prophet. Such halfhearted resistance as this was however powerless to withstand Herodias. We shall see very soon how,

in a night of debauchery, she snatched her victim from the hands which so feebly defended him.

Jesus having learned of the imprisonment of John the Baptist, retired into Galilee, not of His own desire, but "by the power of the Spirit"; apparently this interior guide revealed some impending danger to Him, for John the Evangelist states that the Saviour was not free to choose what way He would take: "He was of necessity," he says, "to pass through Samaria."

The frontier of this country was soon crossed, and toward the middle of the day Sichem appeared on the left, surrounded by rich meadow lands and gardens. Jesus did not push on as far as this; tired after the long foot travel, He Himself rested at the entrance of the valley wherein the town is situated, and near the well of Jacob. The disciples, however, proceeded on their way toward Sichem; for in the haste of their setting out not having made any provisions for a long journey, they now found themselves obliged to buy the necessities of life from Samaritans.

Jesus, left alone, sought shelter beneath the archway overhanging the well, and from this spot, as He sat gazing over the valleys spread before Him, the scene may well have brought up memories of many ancient happenings in Israel. Here, under the oaks of Moreh, Abraham had pitched his tent, and raised the first altar to Jehovah. Jacob, on his return from Mesopotamia, had bought this very land which Jesus now trod, and here too he had dug this well, although there were fountains of water round about him, because he wished to be free from any subjection to the neighboring domains. Still later, when his sons had rashly wiped out the dishonor of Dina in the blood of the Sichemites, the Patriarch, though obliged to flee, yet always retained such tender recollections of this valley that he bequeathed it to his dearly loved son. Here also was the spot where Joseph was to be endowed with every blessing, showered upon him from the heavenly heights and rising from the depths below, while he himself would be upheld by the blessings of his fathers, whose God was forevermore to be his helper. Here Ephraim, mindful of this same precious heritage, laid to rest the embalmed body of Joseph, and so for centuries made Sichem the principal city of all Judea. Over yonder, upon the opposite slopes of Ebal and of Garizim, the eleven tribes, with solemn anathemas against all

transgressors, had once vowed eternal fidelity to the Law. At the foot of these very hills for many long years Israel had held her councils and courts of law; and when Sion became the capital of Judea, we still find Roboam inaugurating his reign at Sichem.

But what was there now remaining of these olden splendors? The hills and valleys of Ephraim had forfeited their ancient renown by taking the name of Samaria—a new town of schismatic tribes. The field of Jacob was now an unhallowed region through which travelers passed in haste lest they should come in contact in any way with its inhabitants. How deeply must not Jesus have grieved over such sad changes of faith as these! Thus, in weariness of body and of soul, He sank down upon the low curb of the well.

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

And very shortly there came up from the little city of Sichar the woman whom Jesus had come to seek at the cost of so great weariness. She was a Samaritan of evil life. With her slender jar poised upon her shoulder, she passed by all the springs nearer the town, and wandered up to Jacob's well—drawn by the freshness of its limpid supply, and by something perhaps of traditional respect for the Patriarch. In fact, women of the East do not often go out to draw water in the middle of the day; fearing to encounter some insult, they are never seen around the fountains, except in little companies, and at sunset. But this one had long since lost all timidity and reserve, and she approached the well without concerning herself about the presence there of a man.

"Give Me to drink," was Jesus' quiet request of her.

The Samaritan looked at the Stranger; by His apparel and His accent she recognized a Judean.

"How," she said, "do you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, who am a Samaritan? The Jews have no dealings with Samaritans."

It was a refusal, rendered the more offensive by its ironical tones; and to appreciate its harshness it must be remembered with what readiness even Bedouins proffered this blessed service to the thirsty traveler. Nothing could show plainer to what extremes the animosity of the two nations had been pushed.

To this unmannerly reply Jesus only uttered a gentle objection:

"If you knew the gift of God," He said, "and who it is that

says to you: 'Give Me to drink,' perchance you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water."

This gift of God was grace, but the Samaritan did not understand; the thought of living water turned her mind to the streams she had often seen sparkling in the depths of the well.

"My Lord," she said, "you have no vessel, and the well is deep. Whence will you draw this living water?"

Her language had become respectful; for by the majesty of Jesus, and by the nobility of His utterance, she divined something in Him above any ordinary Jew.

"Are you greater," she continued, "than our Father Jacob, who has given us this well, and who drank thereof—he and his sons, and his cattle?"

"He who drinks of this water," answered the Saviour, "shall thirst again; but he who drinks of the water which I will give him shall never thirst. The water which I will give him shall become in him a fountain springing up to eternal life."

Jesus evidently did not speak of the springs which water the earth, but of those which are opened up in the heart, making it pure and fruitful. Under this figure He would typify His grace, and show her how man may find in it all that he can desire, without fearing that this bounteous repletion should ever turn to satiety.

Not grasping at all the deep significance of the words she heard, the Samaritan besought Jesus to disclose the whereabouts of this spring of life, as she conjectured it.

"Lord," she said, "give me this water, that I may no more thirst, and that I may be no more obliged to come here to draw water."

The Master was not disheartened; in the sinful nature of the Samaritan he saw only an illustration of the truth He had taught to Nicodemus, that the soul which is as yet in bondage to the flesh is incapable of conceiving things divine, and hence the surest way to enlighten the mind is to purify the heart; therefore He at once turned aside the current of her thought, that He might recall this woman to a sense of her sins.

"Go," He said, "call your husband, and come hither."

"I have no husband," she responded instantly.

"You are right in saying, 'I have no husband,' " replied Jesus;

"for you have had five such, and he whom you have now is not your husband; indeed, you have spoken very truly."

So it had been useless for the Samaritan to seek shelter behind that ambiguous answer of hers, "My husband! I have no husband." Jesus swept aside her feeble defenses, and throwing open the gates of her soul, He laid bare its ill-gotten stores, all the accumulations of a guilty past—divorce, and not death, that had freed her from each of her five husbands in a shameful succession; a faithlessness which soon degenerated into debauchery, into scandalous connections, no longer protected by any thin veil of legal formalities.

The Samaritan, in her confusion at finding herself so easily exposed, now ceased from any further feigning.

"My Lord," she said, "I see that you are a prophet."

Then, immediately turning the conversation from this humiliating theme, she took refuge in a question of doctrine, such as she thought would be likely to divert the mind of a rabbi of Israel. She recalled the rival pretensions of Sion and of Sichem; their own traditions, which told how the ancient Prophets were the ancestors of the Samaritans, and so represented them as sacrificing upon Mount Garizim.

"Our Fathers," she said, "have worshiped upon this mountain, and do you say that it is at Jerusalem we must worship?"

Jesus, satisfied with having awakened something like penitence in the heart of this sinning woman, would not refuse to follow her thought upon this new track.

"Woman," he said to her, "believe Me: the hour is coming when you will no longer worship the Father, either upon this mountain or in Jerusalem. You worship that which you do not know: as for Us, We worship that which We know, because Salvation cometh of the Jews."

By those last words Jesus recognized the primacy of Juda: to Juda alone belonged the Promises, the sacrifices acceptable to the Lord, the revealed Law, and the Ark of Alliance, overshadowed by the glory from on high, in token of the presence of Jehovah; but at the same time He announced the end of these prerogatives.

"The hour cometh, and it is already here, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for it is this that the Father wishes of those who worship Him. God is a

Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

The Samaritan, drawn to Him by something she dimly discerned shining through these words, but dazzled and lost in this strange new world of thought, was now vaguely reminded of the Messiah, of whom her fellow-countrymen were in expectation, who was to be unto them for a guide.

"I know," she said, "that the Messiah, the Christ, is to come, and at His coming He will teach us all things."

Jesus made answer to her, "I am He; I, who am speaking with thee."

A WOMAN WITH COURAGE

He went no further at that moment; for the disciples were coming up towards them; but the woman, forgetful of all else beside, leaving her jar lying there at His feet, hastened back to the town, calling to every one she met, "Come, see a Man who has told me everything I have done. Is He not the Christ?" And the latter were so thrilled by her words that they hurried out from Sichar in throngs, taking the way which leads up toward Jacob's well.

But the disciples had returned, just on the closing words of this interview, and great was their surprise at seeing the Master in private conversation with a woman—and, of all things, a Samaritan! Nevertheless, none of them said to Him, "What were you asking of her? Why were you talking with her?" They offered Him the provisions they had brought.

"Master," said they, "eat." But Jesus' mind was filled with gladness at having garnered the first fruits from among the Gentiles, in the person of this poor Samaritan; and so deeply replenished with delight was His heart that it caused Him to forget all other hunger.

"I have a food to eat," was His response, "of which you know not."

The astonished disciples murmured at each other:

"Has any one brought Him food?"

"My food," Jesus replied, "is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work."

Thus then the work of God was the conversion of the Samaritans who were now advancing toward Him. The swaying crowds with their white garments fluttering through the fields of the valley below, which in four months more would be ready for the reapers, now gave them somewhat of the appearance of a harvest ripe for the sickle. The Saviour, with a glance, pointed them out to His disciples.

"Were you not just now saying: 'Four months more and the harvest time will be here'? And now I say to you: Lift your eyes, and look over these plains; they are already white for the harvest."

Those words, "four months more," had doubtless been pronounced by some one of the disciples, looking at the fields lying around Jacob's well. Jesus, taking up the simple words, turned them in harmony with His thought; imagining to their minds a harvest which was ripening more rapidly than any of this earth —the harvest of souls, now coming toward Him from Sichar, who were to find a resting place in the storehouses of Heaven. And from this, using the occasion to compare the Apostles' duties with the toils of those who reap, Jesus proceeded to utter some instructions to His disciples, of which (it would seem) Saint John only retained the memory of a few detached sentences.

A FIRST LESSON

He explains how he who harvests in the field of the Gospel receives a wage, and garners in fruit which is life eternal. Far different is it here upon earth, where frequently before the time of reaping, the sower is in the tomb; whereas that festival in the heavens shall unite in one common gladness both sower and reaper.

Again Jesus recalled the proverb: "One man soweth, and another reapeth"; showing them how perfectly applicable this was to the evangelical ministry. "I have sent you to reap where you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labors." By this is to be understood not only the Prophets who had prepared Israel for the coming of the Messiah, but it also refers to the Christ and His teachings, of which the Apostles were to reap the fruits.

However, the inhabitants of Sichar were now gathered round the Saviour; they begged Him to tarry in their town and He abode there two days. Many believed in Him, upon the word of the woman who had given that testimony, "He has told me everything that I have done"; but a far greater number believed because of His own teachings. And these said to the woman—

"We believe now no longer because of your story. We have heard, and we now know of ourselves, that He is verily the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

Thus the Divine Master needed but two days to capture the heart and the faith of the Samaritans; and this is to be explained not merely by their docility, but rather by the idea they had formed of the Messiah. Though much less complete than those of the Jews, their notions of Christ's Kingdom were purer by far; they were not, like the latter's, all directed to the realization of fleshly desires and carnal hopes such as the end of all foreign rule and the restoration of the royalty of Israel. Hence, so long as He was in Judea, fearing they would make Him King against His will, Jesus concealed this dignity of the Messiah. But in Samaria, on the contrary, He proclaimed it without reserve, and freely revealed Himself both as the Christ and the Saviour of the world.

After two days spent in Samaria, Jesus resumed the journey to Nazareth, but He lingered in many places along the road. Saint Luke shows Him teaching in the synagogues; and Saint John says that the Galileans welcomed Him because they had seen all He had done in Jerusalem during the Feast. He was extolled by all men, and His fame was spread throughout the whole country.

PORTRAIT OF JESUS

Jesus knew that no prophet is honored in his native land, and that He had nothing to expect from His own home; but He would wait until such time as His Heavenly Father saw fit to make known His desires before He would quit it forever. He returned therefore to the little town where He had been brought up, and once more appeared before the eyes of the Nazarenes, just as formerly had been His custom—outwardly, with the same simplicity of demeanor and garb as of old; wearing a long

tunic, girt about His loins with a leather belt; sandals upon His feet; a cloak drawn about Him; for headcovering, a loose veil bound about the forehead by a cord. Nor was there anything in His features which would startle the beholder; it was such a countenance as we may trace out among the paintings of the catacombs—an oval face; the beard scanty and very fine, ending in a double point; the complexion of austere whiteness; the eye dark and burning; His long hair parted over the brow and falling upon the shoulders; the expression one of gentleness habitually veiled in sadness. Although the exterior of Jesus was so familiar to His fellow citizens, none of them had as yet any knowledge of the power of His Word, for always in His youthful days He had been one who rather sought retirement and silence. All were then eager to hear Him, and they gave Him a warm welcome when, on the Sabbath following, He came to the religious services of Nazareth.

JESUS IN THE SYNAGOGUE

We shall so very often find the divine Master in the synagogues of Judea, that we shall surely be pardoned for delaying the narrative an instant, if by so doing we may give some idea of those edifices, and of the ceremonies which were conducted therein.

Of different degrees of richness and grandeur, that varied according to the importance of their respective towns, the synagogues were, however, built all upon the same plan—a long hall extending between two porticoes, terminating in a sanctuary. Here there was neither image nor altar to be seen, but only a casket of wood, covered over with a veil and enclosing the Sacred Books of Israel. This part of the structure was held in the highest honor. It was there were to be found "the first seats," much sought after by Scribes and Pharisees, and the places of distinction, to which were conducted such of the faithful as were renowned for their wealth. Near the center there was a raised platform upon which the reader of the holy books would ascend with the rabbi who was to exhort the gathering. As to the faithful they kept to the nave of the edifice; this was divided by a balustrade into two parts, one of which was reserved for the men, the other for the women.

Every synagogue had at its head a chief, who was assisted by elders and pastors. This body presided over the religious exercises, passed judgments, decreed punishments, excommunicated guilty parties, or sent them back in chains to the Sanhedrin. The most active of its members was the angel or legate of the synagogue, who read the prayers and was the representative of the assembly abroad. Below all the various dignitaries was an inferior minister, the Chazan, who presented the reader with the holy books, guarded the doors and was a general caretaker.

SYNAGOGUE SERVICE

As to the order of the services, it was fixed by rules most scrupulously observed. To the chanting of the Psalms succeeded the prayer: "Hearken, Israel, the Lord thy God is the One and only God: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." Then came the eighteen benedictions, followed by the instruction, which held a high place in the religious service of the synagogue. From the evidence of Saint James we learn that Moses was read every Sabbath, from the most ancient times; and as this reading was given in Hebrew, which the people no longer understood since the captivity, an interpreter repeated the sacred text, phrase after phrase, in the vernacular. He did the same for the reading of the Prophets which succeeded that of the Pentateuch. Ordinarily it was read by a rabbi, who made a running commentary upon it, and addressed to his listeners "the word of consolation." But when some stranger or some Jew distinguished for his doctrine happened to appear in the assembly, they would press him eagerly to mount the platform so that they might profit by his instruction.

The renown which had now begun to surround the name of Jesus merited such honors for Him. The moment of His rising to speak was just as the reading of the Law was concluded. The caretaker of the synagogue handed Him the Oracles of Isaias. The Saviour, unwinding the long scroll of papyrus, rolled about a wand of wood or ivory, found the Lesson marked for the day, and read these prophetic words:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; therefore it is He has

consecrated Me by anointment. He had sent Me to bring good tidings to the poor, to heal the afflicted hearts, to announce to the captives their deliverance and to the blind recovery of their sight, to bring back, as free men, those who be broken beneath their fetters, to publish for the year of pardon of the Lord, and the day of His justice."

Jesus could not have happened upon a more favorable theme. His comments were made upon the Hebrew text whose full force we may well recall here. "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon Me; therefore it is He hath anointed Me, to announce the good news to the meek; He hath sent Me to heal the broken hearts, to announce freedom to the captives, to give unto the prisoners once more to see the light, and to proclaim the year of pardon of the Lord." The Vulgate adds the words of the Prophet, which are not given in the Greek text of the Gospel: "And to announce the day of His justice." The Saviour could not, indeed, deliver the lowly and the desolate, save by humbling those who oppress them.

The reading finished, Jesus rolled up the manuscript, handed it back to the servant, and, according to the custom of the rabbis, seated Himself and began to exhort the faithful. The eyes of all were fixed upon Him, and we may easily fancy what emotion thrilled the audience on hearing Him declare that on this day this same Scripture is found to be fulfilled. They were the poor, the captives, the blind, the sorrowful hearts, to whom He was bringing salvation; and in their own times they had seen "the year of pardon," the jubilee of the Lord, above all others. His language, so full of grace, amazed them at first; it sounded in their ears with all the weight of one having authority in the synagogue. All were delighted with the words which fell from His mouth, and they said: "Is not this the son of Joseph?"

But this wonderment soon turned to suspicion. The son of a mechanic, a carpenter Himself, whom they had seen so many a day working with His hands in their midst, could He be a prophet, unless indeed He could prove His mission by some prodigy, at least? Certainly He had spoken of healing souls, and there were gossips who said that elsewhere He had done such miracles; then why doesn't He begin now and here among His fellow-citizens?

"Physician, heal Thyself!" a mocking voice cried out at Him, as though it would say: "Do for Yourself and Your own that which You have procured for others!"

With perfect sweetness Jesus put aside this attack. "Of a certainty," He said, "you may apply to Me the proverb: 'Physician, heal Thyself. The great things done at Capharnaum which we have heard spoken of, do the same in Thy native land.' But in truth, I say to you, a prophet is not received in his own country. There were many windows in Israel in the time of Elias, when the heavens were closed during three years and six months, and there was a great famine over all the earth, and Elias was not sent to any one among them—no, not to any, but only to a widow woman of Sarepta, a city of the Sidonians. So also there were many lepers in Israel, under the prophet Eliseus, and not one among them was purified save only the Syrian Naaman."

At these words a sudden access of fury brought the assembly to its feet: "Dares He compare them, the sons of Abraham, with pagan women and lepers!"

JESUS IS DRIVEN OUT OF NAZARETH

There were now no longer the mutterings of a few dissatisfied hearers, but cries of rage against Him. All surging forward together, they seized Jesus, and swept Him along up to the summit of the mountain on which their town was built, thinking to cast Him headlong over the heights into the rocky hollows below.

But His hour was not come; although it was permitted to the Nazarenes to push and thrust Him before them, to heap blows and abuse upon Him, yet, when they had reached the edge of the precipice some superhuman power held their arms fast. Helpless, speechless, transfixed, they saw Jesus pass through their midst and go upon His way, leaving them spellbound with a sudden stupor.

Jesus, driven out of Nazareth, dwelt for a certain length of time at Cana—long enough for the news to be spread through all the cities around the lake. We do not know His reasons for remaining in this village but we still find Him there when one of

the king's officers hastened to Him from Capharnaum, beseeching Him to cure his son who was dying.

Although little was known of Jesus among Herod's courtiers, His Name was always regarded with something of respect and awe among them, and cherished with longing hopes as well, by such as admired Him in secret. The Saviour greeted the Jewish nobleman, not without pity; and yet, comparing His self-seeking supplications with the generous forgetfulness of self shown by the Samaritans, it made Him grieve the more over the incredulity of Israel. "Unless you see signs and wonders," He said, "you do not believe." In uttering this reproach, it was not His intent to repulse the supplicant, nor to extinguish the glimmering spark of faith which He saw in his heart. This the officer must have gathered from the compassionate glance of the Master and from the tones of His voice, for he redoubled his urgent suit:

"Lord, come down before my child dies."

What a note of terror is sounded in this prayer!—in the touching terms in which he mentions the son whom he fears he may never see again; but, too, how great was his mistake when in his anxiety and alarm he dreaded lest Jesus Himself would be rendered powerless if death were to anticipate and prevent Him! This man did not know that it is no more difficult for God to resuscitate the body than to cure it, and that neither time nor space can impose limits upon His power. The Divine Master took compassion upon this father's blindness, distraught with grief as he was.

"Go," he said; "your son lives."

And at that same moment when He healed the body of the child He worked so powerfully upon the heart of the father that the latter rose up to return home, filled at once with glad hope and confidence.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon when the officer parted from Jesus. Even in the shortest days of winter he could have reached Capharnaum by nightfall, since Cana is not more than a six hours' journey; but some obstacle delayed him upon the road; he slept at some posting-place on the way, and did not arrive until the morrow.

As he neared his mansion the servants hurried out to greet him with the announcement that his son was living.

Immediately he asked them at what hour the child had begun to revive.

"Yesterday," they replied, "at the seventh hour, the fever left him."

He knew then that it was the very moment in which Jesus had said to him "Your son lives." And he believed, he and all his household.

CALLING OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES

Cana, though more hospitable than Nazareth, was not to be the center from which Jesus would extend His labors throughout Galilee; this glory was reserved to Capharnaum; and Saint Matthew, studious as ever to trace throughout the life of the Saviour the fulfillment of the prophecies, quotes here the famous oracle:

"Land of Zabulon and Nephthali! Borderland of the sea! Country beyond the Jordan! Galilee of the nations! The people that abode in darkness have seen a great light. The light has arisen upon those who were seated in the region of the shadow of death."

This prediction, the theme of long-cherished hopes, was accomplished on the day when the Christ took up His abode upon the shores of the lake and made Capharnaum His own city. He came there accompanied doubtless, as at the beginning of His public life, by His Mother, His brothers, and His disciples. However, the foremost among the latter, Peter, Andrew, James, and John, whom He had chosen upon the banks of the Jordan, are not now found with their Master; and that we know so little of the doings of the Lord in Judea is due probably to the fact that they did not follow Him into that country. John the Evangelist seems to be the only one who made the journey through Samaria with the Lord; but he did not go on as far as Nazareth; for the Saviour, upon coming down to the shores of the lake, found him again at Bethsaida, in the boat of his father Zebedee.

It was Jesus' first care to go to this village that He might gather together the princes of His Church. He was walking along the strand when he saw some fishermen busy casting their nets from out their boat; they were the two brothers Simon and Andrew.

Jesus spoke to them: "Come follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

At once dropping everything, they followed Him. Having advanced a little further, He saw two other brothers, James and John; these also were in a boat, with their father Zebedee. Some accident had caused a breakage in their nets, and they were busy mending them. The Lord would not wait for the work to be finished; He called them, and upon the instant they followed Him, leaving behind them their father Zebedee, with his hirelings, in the fishing boat.

It was not that the Christ chose these humble fishermen at random, but it was because the divine handiwork must needs be supreme in the work of our Redemption; and therefore it was needful that the ministers of Jesus, though unfitted by nature for such great designs, should nevertheless be so devoid of self-confidence, so free from self-love, as to let themselves be guided by grace. The first disciples were men such as this mission required—simple, upright of heart, and of generous inclinations. At the call of Jesus, they followed Him without hesitation and without casting a glance backwards; all that they left behind was little enough doubtless—a fishing craft, and a few nets; but that little was their all, and in sacrificing it they showed what docile instruments Jesus was to find in them.

Furthermore their trade could not fail to have developed in them such qualities as are most suitable to the apostolic ministry, above all the religious spirit, natural to those who live by the sea; the life of these men, always exposed to perils, their powerlessness to contend with the great tempests, with that breath from on high which stirs up storms and calms them again in an instant—all these things combine to keep before their mind the feeling that they are in the hands of God. At the same time, because they are thus inured to danger, their courage is of the hardiest, and self-denial and devotedness become as habitual to them as sturdy prudence. These simple virtues were sufficient for the Master; surely they were as nothing in comparison with the sublime work which He had in mind; but thus to construct an edifice upon nothing is manifestly a work of creation; it is to perform an act of God. This indeed is why the Saviour, instead of calling to Himself the wise and great ones of Israel, chose rather for the foundation stones of His Church four fishermen of Bethsaida—Peter and Andrew, James and John.

A SABBATH DAY AT CAPHARNAUM

The first Sabbath after the return of Jesus to Capharnaum is an exceptional day for us; perhaps it is the only one during which we are able to follow the Saviour from early morning until evening, and even as far as the dawning of the next day; and so this detailed account shows us how, for the most part, Jesus was wont to spend His days.

The religious service commenced in the morning at the synagogue; there the Lord found an attentive throng about Him, for His wondrous deeds were well known in Capharnaum; and, moreover, He could count among that gathering some faithful hearts—Mary His Mother, the sons of Zebedee, and of Jonas, the disciples who had followed Him from Judea, the officer of the court of Herod with his family, who were eager to hear the prophet whose word had already worked such marvels.

When the prayers were finished the Master ascended to take the chair. There He bore Himself very differently from the Scribes and the doctors, who were only accustomed to cite certain texts which would confirm their teaching by the authority of ancient traditions, or perhaps explain those of other famous rabbis. But Jesus taught as one having power; He spoke in His own name, interpreted the Scripture with authority, not merely stirring over the surface of the soul by subtle reasonings, but plunging deep down into the hearts of men, so that they felt themselves penetrated with His persuasion.

THE DEMONIAC

All were in admiration of His doctrine, when a scream rent the air of the place; it was a demoniac in the throes of horrid frenzy. He had crept through the crowded doors, and at first had experienced a strange rapture while listening to the Divine Word; but unable any longer to withhold the foul spirit which held him in its clutches, he burst into shrieks of horror, perhaps even to unclean actions. "Let be!" he cried. "What is there between us and Thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know who Thou art—the Holy of God!"

What are we to see in this confession of the demon? Was it a ruse whereby Satan meant to interrupt the discourse of Jesus and publish prematurely His title of the Messiah, or was it an avowal wrung from the terror of the fiend—the fawning of a slave that trembles before the lash and seeks to mollify the master about to inflict well-merited punishment? Whatever may have been the motive of this homage, Jesus disdained it; at once He stood over the possessed, and threatening the devil which was torturing him.

SATAN IS OVERPOWERED

"Be silent," He said to it, "and depart from this man."

Satan obeyed: one last cry escaped the breast of the demoniac, who flung prone upon the ground for an instant writhed in terrible convulsions; then rose up before the eyes of all, free once more, completely calmed. His body, which had served as a dwelling place for the infernal powers, now showed no trace of their awful assaults.

At this sight fright and wonderment quite overwhelmed the crowds; for man can never feel the nearness of the invisible world without a stronger sense of emotion. And yet it was not so much the suddenness of the cure which astonished the Jews; indeed they were accustomed to the performance and the effects of various exorcisms, which were in fact much like the tedious ceremonials of their magicians. But that Jesus, without sprinkling water or any mystical rite, could expel the demon with a word—it was this that overwhelmed them with wonder. Hitherto they had only experienced the eloquence of the Christ; this miracle declared the invincible might of His word; and now their souls must needs tremble in His presence as before the Supreme Majesty.

"What is this?" they whispered among themselves; "what new and all-powerful doctrine is this? He commands the spirits, and they obey!"

In these sayings there is no trace of that bitter spirit which, in a short time would try to brand the miracles of the Saviour as a violation of the Sabbath, or as a proof of a compact with the fiends. The Galileans harbored no such suspicion as these; they

saw, they believed, and their faith, spreading ever farther and wider, finally penetrated throughout all the countryside.

The marvelous deeds of that Sabbath were by no means ended now. Leaving the synagogue, Jesus entered the dwelling of Simon. The son of Jonas the fisherman was married to a woman of Capharnaum; thus he had in this city, as well as at Bethsaida, both family connections and a home. Here the Divine Master found the mother-in-law of the disciple sinking under a raging attack of fever, her anxious kinsfolk grouped about her bed. At once all eyes were turned toward the Saviour; every voice was raised to implore His aid.

PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

Jesus drew near, and rebuking the fever with the same authority which He was only a little later to display in quelling the rebellious powers of nature, He now bade the disease to depart; and then, taking the hand of the sick woman, He gently raised up her shattered body, by the simple contact infusing a plenitude of health and life into her aged body. The fever disappeared, without leaving behind it any weakness, which is its usual sequel. On the instant the mother of Simon's wife arose, as it was the hour at which they usually dined—for on the Sabbath it was customary to have a noonday meal—she herself made ready what was needed for Jesus and His disciples, set the dishes in order, and herself served the guests.

Capharnaum was still talking of the miracle in the synagogue when the report of this other wonder was noised abroad; the excitement became general, and nothing but the inviolable quiet of the Sabbath could have held the ardor of the multitude in check. But as soon as the rays of the setting sun along the distant hills marked the end of the holy day, the throngs came hurrying through the streets, some bringing the insane and possessed folk to the divine Healer, others bearing pallets on which were laid those too ill to move themselves; soon the whole town had collected about Simon's door, displaying before the eyes of Jesus every form of wretchedness known to poor human nature—madness, deformity, and every hideous disease.

Not one of those who besought His help was rejected by the

Saviour, but without distinction laying His hands upon them, He healed them. As for the possessed, one word from Him was enough to deliver them; trembling at the sound of the Master's voice, the devils fled away, crying aloud, "Thou art the Son of God." But with threatening words Jesus forbade them to say that He was Christ.

The Saviour's ministrations were prolonged far into the night, and to everyone He showed such touching compassion, that in the wonders of that day's doings Saint Matthew sees the fulfillment of the words of Isaias: "He hath taken upon Himself our weaknesses and hath borne our infirmities." None ever understood so clearly as Jesus did how disease and death have entered into the world through sin; no one consequently has ever been so keenly struck with horror at sight of them. Hence arose that great pity in Him predicted by Isaiah; hence came His tears before the tomb of Lazarus; and so too, His sighs of sorrow at sight of the deaf-mute. His heart could never view the depth of our woes without strong throes of sympathy, and without reaching out His healing hand to dispel even the sin itself, which is its source.

The last sufferer did not quit the house of Peter until the dawning of another day. Without giving a moment to sleep the Lord arose and went out into the morning streets. The little city of Capharnaum was still all silent and at rest when He passed along its narrow ways, and reached at length the desert place wherein He wished to pray alone.

But his holy solitude was soon to be broken; the crowds, surprised at not seeing the Saviour upon their awakening, set to work seeking Him on every side. Peter and His companions were most noticeable in their eagerness; they found the Divine Master absorbed in God.

"Everyone is looking for You," they said to Him.

"Let us go elsewhere," replied Jesus, "into the neighboring towns, and into the cities, so that I may preach there also; it is for this that I am come."

THE MULTITUDE PRESSES JESUS

The throngs were coming up, close after the disciples; they wished to keep the Saviour among them; but He withstood

them, and told them, as He had told the rest, that His mission compelled Him to depart for a time, that He might carry unto others the good tidings of the Kingdom of God.

MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES

On going out of Capharnaum, Jesus followed the borders of the lake, and striking out toward the north, He stopped again at Bethsaida, the village home of His first disciples.

So the sons of Jonas and of Zebedee once more launched their little barks, and were out fishing all night long; for they were poor, and the necessity of getting something wherewith to buy bread for the morrow forced them back to their old occupation. But it was all a useless toil dredging and hauling over the sea; until finally the sun rose, and the morning heat put an end to their hopes. They had taken nothing, even during those hours most favorable for their work.

Greatly discouraged, they returned to the shore just as Jesus was coming down; there were glad crowds surrounding Him, eager to catch His words. But though they pressed close about Him, He at once espied the two boats, and His disciples, who, having landed upon the beach, were washing their nets. At once He went on board Simon's boat, and desired Him to draw a little away from the land; then, seated in this first chair of Peter, He began to instruct the people.

But His longing to spread the good news did not prevent His feeling a keen sympathy for the useless and tedious toils and disappointment of the fishers; so when He had ceased speaking to the people, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep"; and to His companions, "And lower your nets for a catch."

"Master," Simon responded, "we have labored all the night without taking anything, but at Your word I will cast the net."

They dropped it over the side, and thereupon drew up such a great quantity of fishes that the cords were breaking. As they were separated too far from the others to be heard in the neighboring boat, they made signals for their companions to come to their aid. When these were come, the draught of fishes filled the two boats to such a degree that they were almost submerged.

Seeing this, Simon Peter threw himself at the feet of the Christ:

"Depart from me, O Lord," he said, "for I am a sinful man."

By this miracle Jesus revealed Himself as lord and master over nature and her resources. And so Peter only yielded to a feeling of terror which was common to all Jews, since they believed that to see God was to die; the same dread fell also upon those who were with him, and on the sons of Zebedee.

Jesus reassured them, one and all, saying, "Be not afraid! Hereafter you shall be fishers of men."

It was the second time the Saviour had spoken these words to the disciples, and He showed them, by the miraculous draught of fishes, how fruitful the power which He would confer upon their souls was to be. This miracle was therefore a figure of their ministry; thus they were to come out from the plain of Genesareth to launch upon the stormy sea of events, to live in labor and trouble without ceasing, tossed about upon waves more restless than those of their little lake. Yet if their duties, hitherto so peaceful, were henceforth to be fraught with trials, by a just recompense there were the most glorious rewards assured to them; they were to exchange their rude trade for a celestial mission; instead of the rough meshes of their old torn and mended nets, they were to have the lovely snare of the Gospel, which kills not that which is taken in it, but protects it, and brings up to the sweet light of Heaven that which it has rescued from the depths of the abyss. Had the fishermen of Bethsaida any such full comprehension of this symbol of which He made use? We think not. God, however, let them catch some glimmerings of the light; for their fright gave place to confidence. They no longer prayed the Lord to depart, but rowed their boats back to the shore, and threw everything aside, once for all, to go and follow Him.

Surrounded by these companions, Jesus traversed all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all the ill and infirm among the people. The very poorest villages, even those which had no synagogues, were not forgotten. The Lord bore to all the good tidings; not waiting, like John the Baptist, for them to come to Him, but seeking out such as He could save. The days of the Divine Master among these little hamlets were passed much like that Sabbath day at Capharnaum; the places and the times were different, but always with the same patience and never-wearying tenderness He lav-

ished His good deeds upon all; with inexhaustible compassion He cured their souls and bodies, healed every malady, and departing, left behind Him, as it were, the perfume of His presence.

HEALING THE LEPER

Of that first mission in Galilee we know but one single event. Jesus had come to a town whose name is unknown, when a man, running toward Him, threw himself at His feet, and implored His mercy. The unfortunate well merited pity; leprosy had consumed his whole body. The scourge when it reaches this stage becomes an object of horror, for the corruption of death has then actually taken possession of a living body. No plague was dreaded more by the Jews; they called it the finger, or the handwriting, of God; and in its ravages they saw the counterpart of that sin which fastens upon the soul and poisons the very wellsprings of life within it. Banished from home, and not allowed to enter beyond the city gates, their garments tattered and torn to shreds like those of mourners, their heads shaven, and their lips covered with a veil—thus they were nothing more to the eyes of their fellow-citizens than living, moving sepulchers, obliged at every approach of man to send forth that lugubrious cry, "Unclean! Unclean!"

Although the leper of the Gospel had infringed this law by overstepping the limits of the city's enclosure, his misery was so piteous that at the first glance Jesus thought of nothing except to assuage it.

"Lord," cried the wretched creature, "if You will, You can heal me!"

Immediately the Master stretched out His hand, laid it upon his body with its repulsive sores.

"I will," He said; "be thou healed."

And on the instant the leprosy disappeared. It was because of the sufferer's faith that Jesus granted him so prompt a hearing, but it was also owing to his sad condition. No leper ever invoked His aid without being heard; the Lord always had compassion upon their desolate lives, and at once purified them.

However, after having yielded to the first movement of pity, Jesus now saw in this man only a law-breaker. He reproached

him severely, and bade him to go out of the city which he had presumed to enter unsanctioned.

"Be careful," He said, "to tell no one of this; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer in return for your cure that which Moses has ordained, in order that it may be a testimony unto them."

By this command Jesus not only testified His respect for the legal ordinances; He wished also to cover over in silence an act which revealed in Him the supreme lawgiver, able to touch the most dreaded and most anxious impurities without being contaminated, and thus working a cure reserved to the power of God alone. A marvel so manifestly divine could not fail to excite unbounded hopes in the multitudes, hopes which would be likely to interfere with the Saviour's mission. Therefore He spared neither commands nor threats in order to insure the silence of the man whom He had just healed. But these precautions were all thwarted by the indocility of the leper, who, remembering nothing but his debt of gratitude, went forth and published the news on every hand.

What the Saviour wished to prevent now occurred; the excitement among the people was so intense, their enthusiasm was so overpowering, that He could not enter publicly into a town any longer, but was compelled to remain outside the cities, in the wilderness.

Thither they flocked from all parts, and there Jesus pursued His ministry in perfect freedom; for at such a distance from the crowded centers He had not much cause for anxiety lest His hearers' ardor should call down upon His labors the vengeance of Herod.

HEALING OF A PARALYTIC

The precautions taken by the Saviour had not been unnecessary; not many days after the healing of the leper, on returning to Capharnaum, He found members of the Pharisees and Scribes gathered there—not only from Galilee, but from Judea and from Jerusalem. The hatred shown Him by the Sanhedrin, which had been the cause of Jesus' departure from Judea, leaves hardly any doubt but that these doctors were commissioned to spy upon the

new prophet in order to detect Him in some offense as well as to try and discover His ultimate designs.

Accordingly as soon as rumors of His arrival begin to be circulated through the town we see them hurrying along with the populace, and the first to enter the house where the Saviour was; there they seated themselves within the inmost circle of those about him, bent upon hearing and observing everything. A crowd of citizens, which on this day was denser than ever, had filled the dwelling, and kept surging about the outer doors; so that it was now quite impossible to find access to any part of it. Jesus, who had remained seated, was teaching them according to His custom, when suddenly, above their heads, hands were seen making an opening in the ceiling of earthen clods (of which the roofs of houses in the East are often composed), and then four men proceeded at once to let down a pallet, on which a poor invalid was lying. It was a paralytic, who had seized upon this expedient to reach the great Healer. Those who were carrying him losing all hopes of forcing an entrance through the multitudes, had drawn him up to the roof, and tearing away the rafters with the clay tiling, had by this means managed to deposit their burden at the very feet of Jesus.

This deed, more eloquent than any words, and their faith, which would not stop to consider any obstacles, touched the heart of the Divine Master, and He granted to the sufferer even more than he had dared to hope for.

"Son," He said, "thy sins are forgiven thee."

The sufferings of the paralytic were doubtless the result, or perhaps the punishment, of past wrongdoing; and Jesus, by His divine power penetrating to the very root of the evil, worked the cure of soul and body at one and the same time.

This speech scandalized the Scribes, seated about the Saviour; for the power of remitting sins, which He assumed, belongs only to God. Jesus saw their glowering countenances and the menace that gleamed in their eyes. In the bottom of their hearts, perhaps even upon their lips, He could easily hear their mutterings, "What does this man mean to say? He is blaspheming. Who can remit sins except God?"

"Why do you think evil things in your heart?" He answered them, "Which is easier to say to the paralytic, 'Thy sins are for-

given thee,' or to say, 'Arise and take up thy pallet, and go to thy house'?"

The question left them no room for evasion; for if upon the first of these claims He could not be convicted of imposture, still they thought it might not be the same as regards the second, although it would require a miracle to sustain it. Yet to make this avowal before Jesus might even be to furnish Him with another weapon against them, and they would thus repose themselves to be brought to confusion upon the spot.

The Scribes perceived this, and mistrustful as to what might be the power of Christ, they remained silent.

Knowing their thoughts, He proceeded:

"Now, that you may know the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins," He said to the paralytic, "I say to thee: Arise; take up thy pallet, and go to thy house!"

The sick man rose up directly, took the pallet on which he had been lying, and threading his way through the swaying masses of people, returned to his home, glorifying God.

Those who witnessed the miracle were at first as if struck dumb with amazement; but their wondering delight soon found tongue and voice, and they said to each other, with tremulous lips and bated breath,

"We have seen marvelous things today!"

While others began to glorify God, acknowledging in this deed a miracle such as never before had greeted their eyes, and they praised the Lord God for having bestowed such power upon man.

Of the six disciples Jesus had chosen on the banks of the Jordan, only four were now with Him constantly; and all of these were equally poor and of a like simplicity of mind and soul. But now it was to be from a class which the Jews looked upon as the vilest and most hateful in society, that the Lord would select His fifth companion in the person of Levi the publican.

TAXES FOR ROME

We know in what esteem that title was held in Latin literature of this age. It was the name employed to designate those knights who were engaged in farming out the tax revenues of the provinces. These opulent citizens should not be confounded with the

publicans of the Gospel. The latter were merely agents, of the lowest class, who collected taxes in the name of the great Roman companies; for in the course of time these enterprises had become too considerable for one knight to undertake the responsibility of discharging the duties. And so an administrator, residing at Rome, represented his associates and directed the subalterns whom he employed to supervise the incoming and outgoing of merchandise, and to compute more or less justly the value of the same. Naturally they preferred to appoint to this latter office native residents of the conquered provinces, whose familiarity with the language, manners, and resources of their native land, would make them much fitter for such difficult functions than any foreigners could be.

The disrepute attached to this career was enough to prevent men who were held in any esteem in the community from embracing it; and the Roman collectors were compelled to take their agents from among the lower classes of the populace. Delivered into such hands, the power delegated to these men by the great syndicates degenerated naturally into abuses and exactions, which finally rendered the name publican synonymous with that of robber. Cicero does not hesitate to call them the vilest of men; Stobæus looks upon them as the wolves and bears of the human race.

Beside the general aversion felt for such a trade, there was, in Judea, an additional reason for holding it in abhorrence. Every payment of tribute to foreign masters was, in the eyes of the Israelites, a forbidden act, a transgression of the Law of Jehovah; the publicans, by helping to consummate this sacrilege, were therefore regarded not only as traitors to their country, but as infidels and apostates, and for this reason quite as despicable as any criminals, courtesans, or pagans. It was, then, from among the outcasts of society that Jesus picked out this new disciple.

THE CALLING OF LEVI

Capharnaum, situated just where the great highways of Damascus, Tyre, Sephoris, and Jerusalem meet, and through which caravans were continually passing, had grown to be one of the central points best adapted for the handling of custom duties;

hence there were to be found here great numbers of publicans. Jesus, as He was threading his way down toward the shore of the lake, saw one of them named Levi, the son of Alpheus, sitting at his toll-office.

"Follow Me!" He said to him.

The publican arose, left all, and followed the Lord.

We are amazed at this prompt obedience; but Levi knew who He was who called him. He could not have been all this time an indifferent spectator, since every day he must have listened to the travelers repeating, or even heard himself, the noble utterance of the new prophet, who was now stirring up all Galilee to higher thoughts; surely his heart must have been already touched, and all his thoughts attracted to Jesus. So when the Divine Master, far from drawing away His garments in fear of any contact with the publican, as was generally done among the Israelites, addressed to him that quiet appeal: "Follow Me!" Levi, who until now had never met with anything but contempt, yielded to the grace which had been a long time moving within him, and joined the little band of followers around the Saviour, never afterwards to be separated from Him.

BOOK FOUR

Second Year of the Ministry of Jesus

THE SECOND PASCHAL SEASON IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

ABOUT THIS TIME the Saviour was minded to go up to Jerusalem for the approaching festival season. The Gospel does not mention this celebration by name; but the most ancient Fathers looked upon it as being the second Passover in the ministry of Jesus, and we entirely coincide with their conclusions. It was to be the last in which He could take part without hazard of His life; and so He interrupted His mission in Galilee, joined company with one of the caravans of pilgrims, and ascended with them to the Holy City. He went there in obedience to the commands of His Father, that He might once again offer His ungrateful city the salvation which they had disdained; and so His first thought now, as it had ever been, was to seek out the desolate and distressed that He might comfort and relieve them.

Now there is at Jerusalem, hard by the Gate of the Flocks, a pool called Bethesda (the House of Mercy). It was a huge basin, with five sides surrounded by porticoes. Here, lying upon the ground, was a great multitude of infirm, blind, lame and men with withered limbs, waiting for the water to be set in motion. For an angel of the Lord descended at a certain moment into the pool and stirred the waters, and the first to enter therein after that he had moved upon them was cured of whatsoever malady he lay under.

In the shadow of these porches a man was stretched, who had lain there for thirty-nine years. He had always been expecting to

be cured; but because he had no one to help him, each time was doomed to see some other of his fellow-sufferers forestall him. He was so lonely and desolate, his hopes had been disappointed so many times, that the wretched fellow was quite cast down and discouraged.

Jesus perceived him lying upon the ground, and knowing that he had been ill for such a long time was filled with pity for him.

"Do you wish to be cured?" He said to him.

CURING THE PARALYTIC

The paralytic scarcely grasped the meaning of this question; but he felt that it was a compassionate offer from a stranger, who would perhaps be willing to aid him at the favorable moment.

"Sir," he said, "I have no one to carry me to the pool when the water is troubled, and the moment I reach there another goes down ahead of me."

"Arise!" said Jesus; "take up your bed, and walk."

Instantly the poor creature arose, caught up the mat on which he was lying, swung it over his shoulders, and started to walk. Beside himself with joy, he looked about him to thank his benefactor; but Jesus had disappeared in the shadows under the crowded galleries.

It was on a Sabbath day that the Lord performed this cure. The witnesses of the miracle were too astounded to hinder the paralytic from carrying his bed off with him; but the elders of the people, whom he met on the road, were horrified at this violation of the holy repose.

"It is the Sabbath!" they exclaimed; "it is not lawful for you to carry your bed."

"He who cured me told me Himself: 'Take up your bed and walk,' " was his response.

"Who is the Man," they demanded, "who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?' "

The poor paralytic did not know; but the councilors of the Sanhedrin, whose deliberations were now constantly concerned with the doings of Jesus, detected His handiwork in this new miracle, and they betrayed their hatred and their suspicions at

the same time by their manner of questioning this man—not wanting to know "Who has healed you?" but, "Who told you to carry your mat?" or, in other words, to break the Law?

And so they let the humble offender go, whom under other circumstances they would have punished severely, and turned their whole attention to the fact that Jesus was present in their city. However, the delighted cripple, who had been made whole after so wonderful a fashion, wished at least to return thanks to God, and at once went up to the Temple for this purpose. There Jesus encountered him; always careful to renew the soul at the same time as the body, He said to him:

"I have given you back your health; hereafter guard against sin, for fear lest some worse evil should happen to you."

The man at once went in search of the Jews, and told them that it was Jesus who had healed him.

JESUS AND THE SANHEDRIN

By this act he did not mean to betray his benefactor, but on the contrary to glorify Him, and give some token of his own gratitude. The result was not such as to gratify his desires; for this news only increased the anger of the Sanhedrin by confirming its suspicions. In that same hour they resolved to put down this Man, who violated their observances. We do not know whether it was in the Temple or in Jerusalem that they found Him; but wherever it may have been, they were overcome with astonishment, when they heard Him, whom they had come to rebuke, declare in their presence that, as He was the Son of God, He had all power over the Sabbath.

To these who accused Him with having broken the Law, Jesus replied, that the repose of the sacred day is not the inertia of death, but a suspension of corporal labor, whose excess does indeed wither and destroy the soul; but that it is at all times lawful to do good, and that if God, after the Creation, has made His habitation within an everlasting Sabbath, this His attribute is not so to say, the offspring of sterile sloth; but rather He thus conserves the indwelling life of all creatures by continuing to be, what He is in His essence, the Life eternal, the eternal quickener unto life. In like manner He, being the Son of God, and God

even as is His Father, could not know any surcease of activity in His operations. "My Father ceaseth not to work," He said, "and I work likewise."

This response incensed the Sanhedrin councilors, who saw nothing in the Christ but an impious fellow and a blasphemer. Henceforth they were determined to compass His death, not only because He had broken the Sabbath, but also because He said that God was His own Father, making Himself equal to God. But for the present moment, not daring to proceed to extremities, they submitted to listen to His word, which like a sword of fire cleaved their spirit, piercing to the inmost recesses of the soul; for Jesus, far from concealing His office in the presence of the princes of Israel, proclaimed openly who He was.

Declaring that He is God as His Father is God, the Saviour added, moreover, that He possessed three divine attributes of the Godhead—the power of restoring spiritual life to those dead in sin, the power of judging, and the power of raising up from the grave unto life all flesh, at the last day. To establish such lofty prerogatives as these, the testimony of John was not enough, being that of man. Jesus appeals to three Witnesses which come of God—His miracles, the unmistakable sign of His mission; the Voice of the Father which at the Jordan had proclaimed Him His well-beloved Son; finally the authority of the Scriptures.

"Search them," He said, "since you think you find eternal life therein; they themselves give testimony of Me. And you will not come to Me that you may have life! . . . I know you; I know that you have not the love of God in you. I am come in the name of My Father, and you receive Me not. Let another come in his own name, him you will receive."

These reproaches show that the Saviour was not content to enlighten the Sanhedrin as to the truth, but he sought to move their hearts as well. Yet this effort was to be in vain; the great men of Judea were too haughty to adore the Son of a carpenter as their Christ. Though they did not dare to give vent to their hatred and contempt, they preserved a perfect secrecy as to what He had said to them; for His claim that He was the Son of God, confirmed and justified as it was by so many miracles, would have caused the people to proclaim Him as the Messiah. On the other hand, as Jesus had transgressed the Pharisaic precepts by

healing a man within the limits of the Sabbath, they directed all their public attacks upon this one point, and accused Him of contemning a day of the Lord, assuring themselves that the people would side with them in any quarrel which involved the sanctity of the day of rest.

Indeed there was no institution more holy in the eyes of the Jews. They looked upon it as the one individual characteristic which distinguished them from all other nations, and esteemed themselves as chosen by Jehovah solely to guard its observance. The ancient directions were far from satisfying their scrupulosity. After the Captivity, the Great Synagogue had drawn up a list of thirty-nine articles, called "Aboth," or principal prohibitions. These in turn had given birth to an infinite number of "Toledoth," or descendants; and these secondary restrictions, embracing every detail of daily life, did, so to speak, really render any action impossible during the Sabbath day.

We can see how the Pharisaic customs must have hindered and hampered the ministry of Jesus; and how easily the Sanhedrin, by exaggerating each least infringement upon its edicts, gradually so prevailed over the general mind that at last popular indignation demanded its Victim that had been thus made ready for the sacrifice.

A SABBATH WALK

As we proceed hereafter, we shall find the hatred of the princes of Israel evermore pursuing and annoying the Saviour. Everywhere—along the roads, in the fields, and in the wilderness, even when He seemed to be alone with His disciples—He was shadowed by spies who were stirring up the crowd against Him. From the first day, we find traces of this persecution. The Lord, as He was returning to Galilee, on the Sabbath which followed the Passover, happened to be walking through a field of wheat, now ripe for the harvest. The disciples moved by hunger, broke off some ears of wheat; rubbing it in their hands and blowing away the chaff, they began to eat the grain. In this there was nothing which was not lawful. Moses had permitted it in definite terms; and from age to age in the Orient the custom has always been cherished of never refusing the wanderer this charity which costs

so little. But although the Law allowed one to take a few ears, it forbade all reaping and gathering and threshing of the harvest on the Sabbath day; but the Scribes had decided that to pluck an ear, and to bruise the grain between your palms, was the same as "to reap, to gather in, and to thresh the crops."

Some Pharisees who were following the little band had no mind to let such an infraction of their rules pass unnoticed. They approached the Saviour, and said to Him:

"Look! Your disciples are doing that which is not allowed upon the Sabbath day."

JESUS DEFENDS HIS DISCIPLES

Jesus walking before His disciples, had taken no heed of their action, nor participated in it; but far from disowning the responsibility, He covered their innocent indulgence with the mantle of His benign approval. To these councilors who reproached Him with having broken one of the precepts, He quoted the Law as opposed to them, and with something of irony confessed His surprise that men so deeply versed in the Scriptures should be ignorant of their teaching on this point.

"Have you never read, then," He said, "that which David did when he was compelled by necessity and urged on by hunger, he and those who were with him? How he entered the house of God, in the time of the high priest Abiathar, and ate the Loaves of Proposition, which it is not permitted to any one to eat except the priests, and gave to those who were with him?"

If David, in his extreme need, might lay hands upon the sacred bread and so transgress the precepts of the Law, how could they hold it criminal for His hungry disciples to have pulled a few handfuls of wheat that they too might sustain their strength? Furthermore, the Pharisees themselves acknowledged that the Sabbatical observances must have their exceptions; for this maxim was generally received among them: "In the Temple there is no Sabbath." Even on this day of rest, the priests might cut the wood, kindle the altar fires, replace the Loaves of Proposition, and sacrifice a double holocaust; the sanctity of the Temple itself kept them blameless.

Jesus pleaded with them for this generous reading of a law

which His adversaries insisted upon as being so inflexible, and He admonished them that their exceptions applied to Him as much as to the Temple. Indeed, had He not just now proclaimed before the Sanhedrin that He was the Son of God made man, and hence rightly to be revered as a sanctuary of Jehovah? These lawyers who were hounding His steps must certainly have known this; but once more He recalled it to their mind in these words:

"But I tell you, that one greater than the Temple is here."

The Master longed to gain His persecutors to the truth, much more than He desired to confound them. Therefore He sought to enlighten their minds by showing that "the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath." The Sabbath was instituted by God to lighten the burden of man's labors. During this day of mercy, to forbid the hungry from gathering a few grains of wheat were to change our heavenly Father into a tyrant and to turn His loving commands into hateful restrictions. Jesus mourned over these blind and stolid interpreters of the Law.

"If you but knew," He concluded, "what is the meaning of those words: 'I love mercy better than sacrifice,' you would never have condemned the innocent."

This response scarcely touched these men, stubbornly clinging to their mistaken views; and though at this moment they did not venture to move against the Divine Master, they decided to scrutinize His actions more narrowly than ever.

THE MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND

It was on the journey from Jerusalem into Galilee that the incident of the plucking of the wheat occurred. The Evangelists do not tell whereabouts on the journey Jesus tarried; but on one of the Sabbaths following they make mention of His being in the synagogue of a little town. Now there was a man present whose right hand was withered. According to the "Gospel of the Nazarenes," it was a poor mason, who had been hurt in some accident.

"I beseech You," he said to Jesus, "restore me to health, so that I need no longer beg my bread in shame and sorrow."

His prayer was overheard by the Pharisees, who were sharply watching these deeds of the Christ, "that they might have cause

to accuse Him." They whispered among themselves these words, which came to the ears of the Master:

"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?"

Jesus did not keep them long in uncertainty. "Arise," He said to the cripple, "and stand there in the midst."

Then turning to the Pharisees, seated, as was their wont, in the seats of honor,

"I ask you," He said, "is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do evil?—to save a life or to destroy it?"

Such questioning as this disconcerted them; they had only come to listen to His discourse in order to surprise Him in some error; confused at being anticipated in this way, they held their peace.

The Divine Master attempted to draw them out of their silence by recalling their own teachings on the subject. "What man is there among you," He pursued, "who owns only one sheep, if it fall into a pit on a Sabbath day will not take hold on it and draw it out? But how much more is a man worth than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day."

His reasoning admitted of no reply; this the Pharisees saw clearly enough, and they closed their lips the tighter. The Lord waited for their response; as His glance passed from one face to another He saw reflected there nothing but dumb rage, obstinate dislike, and bitter spite. At the sight His heart swelled with deep indignation; it seemed to all the bystanders that in another moment He would surely overwhelm these hypocrites; but almost immediately He recovered His habitual tone of compassion, and, grieving for their blindness, He merely said to the cripple:

"Stretch out your hand."

The man obeyed. At the word of the Saviour life revived in the withered limb, and at once it was become whole like the other.

Thus, not content at having discomfited His enemies in argument before the whole synagogue, the Lord would also manifest His power before their eyes; without handling, even without touching, the cripple, without performing any external act, one single word had been sufficient to effect this miracle. Would they dare to say that one word, one single word spoken in kindness, was a violation of their Sabbath?

That they were so powerless against Him was a maddening

thought for them; they went away from the place, beside themselves with rage, and took counsel together "as to what they might do to Jesus."

ENEMIES PLOT AGAINST JESUS

But nowhere else were their evil plottings destined to encounter so many obstacles as in Galilee. The people of this province, upon whom the Saviour had lavished every good gift, drawn to Him by His gracious doctrine, and much less imbued with the Pharisaical superstitions than were the Jews of Jerusalem, would not have permitted any assault upon their Prophet. More than this, the Sanhedrin had only a limited authority in this land, for here it could not stir without the sanction of Herod.

It was necessary, then, in the first place, to come to an understanding with the ministers and partisans of that prince. Hitherto the Pharisees of Jerusalem had displayed the most insulting scorn for these courtiers, alluding to them as "Herodians," and "the apostates," taunting them with having borne the Roman yoke quite willingly, and with imitating the manners of Gentiles, as well as the impiety of the Sadducees. But with their hatred of Christ they now brushed aside every one of their scruples, and the emissaries of the Sanhedrin only considered how they might lure their former enemies into these schemes of vengeance.

In this they succeeded without any trouble; for the austere morality which Jesus taught, the mastery He held over the hearts of the people, His claim that He was the Son of God—all these seemed to this king, so jealous of his authority, a perpetual menace.

The Saviour, seeing so formidable a storm brewing over Him, sought the other side of the lake, which is close by the territory of Philip, in order to evade His pursuers if they should become too relentless in their attacks. These safeguards having been taken, He did not cease to receive kindly those who followed Him into this retreat, and to heal the sick; but He did not do so without caution, warning them not to make it known. So He waited, before taking up His ministry again openly, until Herod's changeable nature should be diverted to some other more absorbing subject.

The obscure existence which for prudence sake Jesus led during this threatening period astonished and shocked the first converts among the Jews. Doubtless they recoiled from the idea that the Messiah should be forced to hide Himself and to work in the darkness; for we find Saint Matthew reminding them that these humiliations had been long since set down in the oracles of Isaias: "Behold My Servant, whom I have chosen, My Beloved, in whom My Soul hath been well pleased! I will send My Spirit to rest upon Him, and He shall publish My judgments unto the nations. He shall not be contentious, He shall not cry aloud, and no man shall hear His voice in the open streets; the bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench, until He triumphs in the strife."

During this retirement of the Lord the fury of His pursuers slackened; soon He was free to appear openly among men. "A great throng followed Him out of Galilee, Jerusalem, Idumea, and from the country beyond the Jordan; and others from round about Tyre and Sidon, having heard what things He did, came to Him in great numbers. Then He told His disciples to have a boat ready for Him, so that He might not be overwhelmed by the multitudes; for He had healed so very many that it resulted in all those who had any illness pressing upon Him to touch Him; and the unclean spirits when they saw Him fell at His feet crying out: 'Thou art the Son of God!' And he charged them strictly not to make Him known."

Here we find the Lord in His ministry bearing Himself just as we have seen Him hitherto at Capharnaum, consecrating His days by turns to the instruction of the people, to the healing of the sick, and to the deliverance of the possessed.

JESUS SPENDS THE NIGHT IN PRAYER

After one such day of wearisome labor, Jesus "withdrew to a mountain, and there spent the whole night in prayer." Certain traditions single out a hill lying between Capharnaum and Tiberias as the scene of this night watch and of the sermon which follows upon it. The Christians call it the Mount of the Beatitudes; the Arabs' name for it is Kourn Hattin (the Horns of Hattin), in allusion to the two peaks which rise above the village

of that name. To the west the hillside slopes gently up from the rolling meadows; to the east, on the contrary, its steep cliffs overlook a level stretch of ground, big and wide enough to hold a great multitude. In the hill country bordering this side of the lake we might seek in vain for any other highlands worthy the name of mountain. So, then, this is the spot to which we must follow the Lord.

At all times Jesus loved the lonely heights, the quiet of evening, the midnight sky with its glittering array of heavenly hosts; in the stillness His glance could pierce the depths until it was absorbed in the vision of the Father; here unhindered His soul could taste of that mysterious rest which is born of prayerful ecstasy. Yet this one night out on the hilltops had, in truth, something of a more solemn glory in it; we feel by the very words in which Saint Luke speaks of it that it was to be the forerunner of a great day. In the dawning light Jesus called to Him His disciples, who were slumbering, as we may fancy, at no great distance, and "from among them He chose out twelve, to whom He gave the name of apostles."

The Master by this act, to all outward seeming so simple, there and then laid the massive foundations of a work which was destined to be seen by all men and to withstand the fiercest onslaught of the foe. Growing ever more majestic upon our vision as we watch her progress down through the ages, we must recall to mind the while how this heaven-sent Church, built up under the Master Workman's hand, had for its mighty base simply these twelve apostles. At that time there was nothing about them to mark them from the masses; we have seen and we have still to see for a long time to come, how ignorant they were, how ambitious, so much more engrossed in the things of the flesh than in the things of the spirit. But the Hand which had gathered together from out the dark quarries of earth these rough and heavy blocks by the same supernal strength could cut and polish them. So Saint John once saw in the bulwarks of the heavenly Jerusalem just such huge bulks of stone, hewn from the shapeless rock; and these same were become twelve precious stones, whose glowing depths of color now uphold the glorious city of our God, our holy habitation in the Heavens.

Was there any thought in Jesus' mind of the symbolic signifi-

cance in the number He had chosen? Did He mean in this way to recall those twelve tribes of Israel, just as the high priest used to bear upon his breast twelve great gems as a memorial of them? Many such conjectures have been hazarded, and indeed there is good ground for similar concepts when we think how much stress was laid on the hidden meaning of numbers in olden times. The pagans were not alone in their belief that strange properties were to be found in such combinations; the Jews, and the first Fathers of the Church as well, scrutinize them with careful curiosity; and it is impossible to deny that very many of the numbers in Scripture itself have a mystic purport. So that we have in this way really a secret language, highly prized by those who are versed in its unique charms—like the full harmony which sustains the song by setting its pure melody in higher relief. Why should Jesus have scorned this feeling? Rather He deigned to make use of it; and thus, in this point as in so many others, He availed Himself of every usage of the world about Him. We may willingly grant, not only that He did not choose this number without a purpose, but that He attached so much importance to it that His disciples felt that their first duty, after the Ascension, was to complete the roll of the apostolic college by the election of Saint Matthias.

THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Of the twelve apostles seven had been chosen already. These were: Peter and Andrew, the two sons of Jonas; then the sons of Zebedee, James and John; Philip, who came from Bethsaida, like the first four; Bartholomew, from Cana in Galilee; and Matthew, the publican. Jesus now called five others: His two cousins, James the Less and Jude; the Galileans, Thomas and Simon the Zealot; finally, the traitor—the man from Kerioth in Judea—Judas, son of Simon. For the most part we know little enough of these apostles—their names, some few words spoken by them, certain deeds of theirs mentioned in the Gospels or the Acts, a number of traditions as to their after life—altogether hardly enough to furnish us with materials for a sketch of each one of them.

Bartholomew is the least known of all. It has been agreed upon that he is the Nathaniel whom Philip found meditating under a fig tree, and led to his Divine Master. Truthfulness and godliness

were the keynotes of his character; undoubtedly with these he combined modesty, for from that hour in which he obeyed the call of God we never see or hear anything more of the son of Tolmai. There is a tradition which tells of his having evangelized the Indies; that he was burned alive, and crucified with his head downwards.

CHARACTER OF THE APOSTLES

His friend Philip was among the first of the Galileans who were moved to seek John the Baptist, hoping to find in him the longed-for Messiah. The Gospel speaks of his gentle spirit, readily responding to Jesus' appeals, sympathizing with the distress of the throngs that followed the Master into the desert, but slow to believe that a few loaves would be enough to satisfy them; slower still to fathom the mysteries of faith, for even at the Last Supper he begs the Saviour to let him see the Father, of whom He is always speaking. Polycratus, Bishop of Ephesus, informs us that Philip had been married; his daughters were numbered among the first virgins; and he himself slept in the Lord at Hierapolis, in Phrygia.

As to Simon, we merely know that he was called the Cananean, a name which Saint Luke translates as the Zealot; and this term was also used to distinguish him from Simon Peter. Can it be that this apostle belonged to that famous sect which revenged every transgression of the Law, not simply with burning reproaches, like the prophets of old, but like Phineas, with unsheathed sword? We know what part these Zealots played in the last days of Jerusalem; how they became the terror and scourge of the whole countryside, making it reek with blood, spreading ruin and death on every hand. Would Jesus have called one of these fanatics to Him? Would He have thought it wise to admit into equal fellowship this Jew, Simon, who rebelled against every tribute extorted by the hated foreigners, and Levi, collector of the Roman taxes? Yet in this there would be nothing repugnant to the plans of the Master, for He made little account of human prudence in His works, and "chose that which is foolishness in the world's eyes to confound the wise, so that no man should glorify himself before Him."

Matthew has left behind him more than a name—a divine

book, his Gospel. In it he speaks in one single instance of himself, and that is only to tell us that he was a publican, a butt for the contempt and hatred of Israel, but that nevertheless Jesus chose him.

Thomas' character may be more clearly deciphered. With a frank, practical spirit, which was easily bewildered by the mysteries of faith, he declared with perfect simplicity, even in the very midst of the Last Supper, that he could not understand the words of the Lord.

"Master," said he, "we do not know where You are going, nor which way the road lies."

After all Jesus' ministry was finished, after all His miracles, Thomas had not become grounded in the firm faith that He was God; after the Resurrection we see him still unable to put trust in this new wonder—dejected, despairing, demanding that the Master permit him to touch His wounds with his hands before he would believe. And notwithstanding, he had a generous heart; for when Jesus braved the wrath of the Jews face to face, that He might raise up Lazarus from the dead, it was Thomas who incited the apostles with those words which all our martyrs have repeated after him:

"Come, let us also go and die with Him!"

James and Jude, the two sons of Alpheus and Mary, we have already seen at their home in Nazareth. Throughout the whole ministry of Jesus they continued to be just what they were then—hard-working mechanics, whose minds were filled with longings for earthly goods. It needed the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the day of Pentecost to transform these kinsmen of the Lord into apostles, to inspire Jude with that mighty Epistle of his, and to make of James the Less one of the most illustrious bishops of the newborn Church.

As pastor of Jerusalem during nearly thirty years, the latter fostered and strengthened the perfect good will which bound the pagan and Jewish converts together; at the first Council he suggested the wisest resolutions, and it was he who protected Saint Paul against the unreasoning and fanatic partisans of Judaism. All Jews who became Christians held this servant of God in veneration as their leader, and cherished with deep respect his Epistle, addressed to the twelve tribes dispersed throughout the

world, in which the apostle scourges the vices of his fellow countrymen, their strifes, their haughty and grasping character. The later years of James were passed in prayer; kneeling whole days and nights together in the Temple, he delayed by his intercession the ruin which overhung Jerusalem like a dark storm cloud; indeed, he was the rampart of his people, according to a common saying among his contemporaries. His death was worthy of such a life. At the festival of the Pasch, the high priest Ananias and the Council of the Sanhedrin commanded him to exhort the Jews to give up their faith in Jesus. The holy old man allowed them to lead him out upon one of the galleries of the Temple, and promised them he would speak to the people, but it was only that he might seize one last chance to glorify his Master.

"Wherefore would you question me concerning Jesus?" he cried out. "He is seated at the right hand of the Almighty, and will appear again upon the clouds of heaven."

His furious persecutors fell upon him and threw him down upon the pavement below, and there they stoned him. As he was dying, the aged apostle drew himself up, and remained kneeling long enough to beseech God to forgive his executioners; whereupon a man who had armed himself with a fuller's mallet strode up and put an end to his sufferings. His people buried him close by the Temple. Eight years later, Jerusalem was only a charred heap of ashes.

FOUR FISHERMEN

And now we have still to speak of the most illustrious of the apostles—Simon and Andrew, sons of Jonas; James and John, the sons of Zebedee. These four fishermen of Bethsaida form a group by themselves, and at their head we always find the Prince of the Apostles, Simon Peter. The least known one among them is Andrew, whose personality is, as it were, overshadowed by his brother's brilliant renown. After having brought Simon to Jesus, he disappears in the background. But if his life was hidden, his death shed such radiance about it, that the priests and deacons of Achaia sent tidings of the glorious event to the whole Church. Their narrative enables us to follow, step by step, every act of the martyr—the examination, the replies of Andrew, and his

protracted tortures. He died upon the cross, uttering such cries of love for Jesus as thrilled the hearts of those through whose soul the sound re-echoed, while they wept in silence.

PETER, JAMES AND JOHN

Beside Andrew, there are Peter, James, and John, who are always the chosen ones among the chosen few, the intimate companions whom the Master admitted to His confidence and familiar friendship. We see them, the only ones present at the raising of Jaïrus' daughter; the only ones at the Transfiguration; the only ones at the Agony of the Saviour. Jesus has told us what made Him so particularly attached to the two sons of Zebedee; it was because their great hearts burned in fierce flashes, like the lightning; whence it was that He gave them that beautiful name —"sons of the Thunderbolt"—Boanerges. They had something of its resistless rush, and sometimes, too, its destructive wrath. Witness the day when they called down the fire of heaven upon a Samaritan village which refused to harbor them. They had inherited this unbounded zeal from Salome, their mother. Having devoted herself to the Saviour's cause, faithfully following Him even to His Cross, the wife of Zebedee the fisherman dared to dream of a place for her sons at the side of Christ, and upon His throne. Jesus tried to curb this ambition by reminding them that His glory was to be bought at the price of suffering.

"Can you drink of My chalice?" He asked.

"That we can," instantly replied the sons of Salome.

This confidence touched the Lord; and it was then He granted to James that, before all others, he should not only drink this cup of sorrow but that he should drain it in a single draught. His zeal marked him out for a victim to the sword of Herod Agrippa, and he in fact was the first of the apostles to meet the martyr's death.

The other son of Salome was to survive them all. Soaring above the earth, to the inaccessible heights of his heavenly home, he led a hidden life as long as Peter and Paul held the Christian world in the bonds of faith. But at the end of the first century, when the witnesses of the holy Word had vanished one by one, and when heresy threatened the youthful Church, the voice of John pierced

the cloud. His Gospel, the Epistle which announced it, and the Apocalypse, were like so many sheets of lightning, now dazzling our sight, now thrilling us with peals of thunder, now blinding our eyes when we would descry the outlines of his awful visions: the showers of fire and of blood; the cups of gold overflowing with wrath; the steeds, with serpents for their manes and tails, having breastplates of fire, breathing out flame and brimstone; the red dragon, with the seven heads and the ten horns, drawing together with his tail a third part of the stars of the sky, and hurling them down upon the earth. Thus it was, with a loud voice, that the seer of Patmos was constrained to reveal the great matter of his ecstasies. Christian art has been prone to sink these raptures of the apostle into the shadow, and so we are too apt to forget them; painting has rather accorded him every grace of youth, with his eyes lifted up to the heavens, often with an almost virginal timidity. Undoubtedly "the disciple whom Jesus loved" had great tenderness of heart, but it was a heart which throbbed in unison with a soul of fire; and it was this latter trait which won for him the Master's love when He called him, "son of the Thunder"; and in like manner it moves us most strongly when we see the apostle drawing away in horror from the heretic Cerinthus, and filling the Apocalypse with those terrible mysterious images. John's rightful emblem is not the dove, but the eagle. This passionate ardor, penetrated with deepest tenderness, drew to him the heart of Jesus, and made John the beloved disciple.

THE ROCK

The character of Simon, son of Jonas, presents no such opposite traits. It is all summed up in the name which Jesus bestowed on him: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church." The great apostle, therefore, was to serve as the foundation of the church—was to be for his brethren as a guide and infallible Head. And after the election of the twelve, the Lord made known these prerogatives of Peter so publicly and so emphatically, in order that all might bow before him. Ever after this day we find him speaking and acting in their name. At Capharnaum, where the Master demanded sadly, "And you—will you too go away?" it was he who responded, in the name of all the rest,

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!"

It was he who, at Cæsarea, in the land of Philip, once again proclaimed the faith of the Apostles.

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

This lofty dignity conferred upon him became the occasion of his fall; it puffed him up with vainglory, turned his energy into presumption, his firmness into blind obstinacy; it went so far as to make him openly contradict his Master, and drew down upon him that severe reply,

"Get thee gone, Satan! thou art a scandal unto Me, for thy thoughts are not of God, but of man."

At the close of the ministry of Jesus, Simon, son of Jonas, is not any longer the immovable rock, but like a loose stone in the road, which a woman's hand may fling aside into the ditch. Yet even then it was not all over with Peter, since after his overthrow he but made for himself a surer abiding place, and in sorrow found firmer foundations. Overwhelmed with his humiliation, he nevertheless rose up in "the greatness of the power of God." Henceforth, neither his faith nor his mighty courage were ever to fail him; we encounter him everywhere at the head of his brethren, the first to grope his way within the tomb of Jesus, and to gaze upon his Risen Lord; the first to get into the little ship at that last miraculous draught of fishes; the first to cast himself into the sea, to go to meet the Saviour; first, too, to drag up on the shore the net, which had not broken beneath the weight of its one hundred and fifty-three fishes.

PETER'S CHARGE

Before He went away from their sight into the skies, Jesus laid upon Peter the charge of pasturing His flock, to feed His sheep, as well as His lambs. The apostle fulfilled the command of the Lord, stood at their head, ordered their manner of teaching and the form of their government, and by stamping the newborn Faith with his seal, gave it the character which it was to bear unto all future ages, making the first acts of the infant Church the acts of Peter.

In the apostolic college there is still one gloomy figure left,

which each of the Evangelists thrusts down to the lowermost rank —Judas, son of Simon, the man from Kerioth. Jesus asked only one apostle from Judea, and Judea gave Him a traitor. All that we know of him, apart from the tale of his treachery is that his skill in the management of money won him his position of trust as treasurer of the apostles. Hence he must have gained their confidence from the outset; and indeed he retained it up to that last Passover, for it was at his instigation that they murmured against the Magdalene, as she poured out her perfumes upon the head of Jesus. Though he grew ever more depraved and desperate, the man from Kerioth had always succeeded in blinding their eyes; so that on the night of the Last Supper, when the Lord foretold the crime in whose shadow they sat, no one dreamed of charging Judas with it; only the calm glance of Jesus could read the heart of the thief. How many were the words spoken by the Saviour to the multitude which in the ears of this faithless follower must have resounded in tones of appeal or reproach! Now He is urging them to true charity: "Do not heap up treasures upon the earth. . . . There, where your heart is, there is your treasure also . . . You cannot serve God and Mammon." Now He gives utterance to His feeling of horror: "Have I not chosen you twelve? And there is one among you who is a devil!" The Divine Master could not resolve to abandon "this son of perdition." At Gethsemani, once more, He kissed him, and called him His friend.

Composed of such different characters, the college of the apostles stands before us, from all we can know of its members. Henceforward they were to form a little band of chosen ones about the Saviour, journeying with Him throughout Judea, sharing His labors and His repasts; like Him, they had not where to rest their heads, and often laid themselves down by His side without other roof than the starry heavens, with no shelter save the providence of God their Father.

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Christian orators have always delighted in contrasting Moses upon cloud-capped Sinai with Jesus promulgating the New Law upon the Mount of the Beatitudes. On the one hand we see Jehovah wrapped in dazzling mists, that flash and thunder before

His awful Presence; and on the other, in the quiet of early morning, we hear a Voice whose beloved accents thrill the people's heart. Of old there was the dread hush of the desert; no water was there, nor any green thing—only the red-lighted peaks rising high above desolate mountain crags; but here we have every charm of a springtime in Galilee, the soft slopes of a little hill looking down upon sunny pasture lands, while the sparkling lake of Genesareth ripples along the shore; in a word, yonder was the Law of death, delivered to a disobedient and awestruck nation; here the Law of grace is announced to the believing and joyous throngs.

CHARACTER OF THE SERMON

Beneath such poetic parallels is there really any underlying truth? Can the Sermon on the Mount be set side by side with the tables of stone, graven by the hand of Jehovah, or in point of fact, did Jesus actually present it to us as a code of Christianity? There is nothing to prove that this discourse, as preserved by Saint Matthew, had any such distinctive character; that the Evangelist made choice of this one in particular was because no other seemed to him better fitted to convey an idea of the Master's teaching. Indeed Jesus could not have found any more favorable opportunity for disclosing His doctrine.

Up to this time He never had had gathered about Him an audience having knowledge enough of heavenly things to enable them to understand Him; later on, being surrounded by spies, He had not the same liberty, and was often forced to use mystical language and to speak in parables. But at the time of the Sermon on the Mount the Saviour's enemies were not tracking His footsteps so closely as to hound Him through every secluded spot like this; they were content to keep watch upon Him in the towns and synagogues. Freed for the time being from the hunter's pursuit, and speaking to people who were wholly devoted to Him, Jesus could ease His overflowing heart, and reveal in its fullness the light He had brought into the world. The Sermon on the Mount, although quite similar in form to other of the Saviour's instructions, has been chosen, however, for very good reasons, as being the completest expression of the doctrine of Christianity and a brief epitome of the Gospel.

We possess two accounts of it—Saint Luke's summary, written for the pagan converts, which contains no allusion to Judaic customs; and the text of Saint Matthew, in which the Master's words are reflected as in a clear and spotless mirror. In the latter record the whole scene about Him as He preached lives again before our eyes: the meadows dotted over with brilliant lilies, the thornbush thickets, the rich greenery of the vines, fig trees growing alongside the thistles, birds flitting across the clear blue sky, while over yonder, around the doors of those humble cottages, you can see the cattle grazing, or at rest; there are fishermen coming up from the neighboring shores of the lake—men who would be horrified at the thought of giving their children a serpent instead of a fish. From the highlands of Kourn Hattin, at one time, the Saviour could point out on the distant horizon some city built upon a hill; then again, close at hand, in the little hamlets among the mountains, He could remind these village folk how the savorless salt is thrown out into the street, or He would picture them a scene within the walls of their farmhouses, recalling the single flaring torch which they were accustomed to light at evening, hanging it over the heaps of grain so as to measure them off bushel by bushel; and from this He took occasion to say: "You are the light of the world; no one lights a lamp in order to put it under a bushel, but to set it within its socket, so that it may illumine the whole house; thus let your light shine before men."

By describing time and place so minutely, Saint Matthew lets us know that he was one of the listeners of the heavenly discourse on this occasion; but need we conclude from this that he has given us every word uttered by the Lord on that great day! The most learned expounders have always held the opposite opinion, and everything sustains their theory—the concise expression of the ideas, the abundance of maxims, the brusque transitions, the parables and the similitudes but barely suggested; indeed, the Divine Master was not accustomed to speak in such style. Suiting His words to the comprehension of the simple, earnest minds of His hearers, He would repeat one thought over and over again, putting it before them under a new form each time until it was fully grasped; thus He followed no order, save only such as was prompted by a Heart which would sacrifice

everything to its one longing to be known and loved. For Saint Matthew to recount these homilies word for word would have been to go beyond the scope of his Gospel, since we know that Jesus was never too tired to prolong His instructions while there were souls who needed His help. The Evangelist has chosen rather to select such sayings of the Master as he deemed best adapted to represent His teaching.

THE BEATITUDES

Of all the words that fell from His lips on that day none were more strange and surprising in their tenor than the Beatitudes proclaimed by the Saviour; for every prejudice of Israel was overthrown by them. In truth, Moses, by making use of material images to move this worldly minded people, had thought to reach their hearts by setting before their eyes the earthly rewards of righteousness, and had promised Israel that its glory or its shame would finally depend upon its faithfulness to Jehovah. The Jews had concluded from this that prosperity always attends upon the godly man; that wealth being a mark of God's favor, sorrow and trouble are sure tokens of his wrath. Hence arose, despite the spirit of charity which breathes throughout the Law, that scorn of poverty and their harsh usage of the unfortunate and sick, whom they regarded as sinners meeting with a just punishment; hence too they imbibed their mistaken ideas as to the Messiah, who was to raise up their nation to the pinnacle of glory and riches.

Few were the words which Jesus used to dispel such dreams as these. Instead of wealth He set before these Jews the happiness of the poor; to the passionate spirits whose visions are all of great victories He speaks of meekness; tells the hearts in love with pleasure that there is joy in the gift of tears; to the hungry and thirsty, He says that righteousness shall sustain them; preaches mercy to the pitiless natures, the loveliness of purity to the sensual man; teaches the blessedness of the peaceful and long-suffering to a people writhing beneath their yoke. What a disenchantment for the mighty ones of this world! But for the poor and the lowly of earth was there ever revelation so unhoped for? Only consider for a moment how dreadful their destitution was, even here in Israel; think of the oppressions endured by the weak and

gentle; imagine the despair of those whom misfortune had overcome, who had no one to wipe away their tears; and remembering this we can understand the joy of wretched and weary souls when they heard the Christ speaking these words to them:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth.
Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.
Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Seeing the Master destroy so many of their illusions, the Jews might well believe He wished to revolutionize all Israel, and indeed this is why He was so careful to add that His mission was not to abolish the Law, but to elevate it to the point of perfection. Moses had said: "Thou shalt not kill"; Jesus would even forbid angry words and feelings of hatred. Moses denounced adultery; Jesus condemned an impure glance or an evil thought. Moses tolerated divorce; Jesus restored marriage to its primitive sanctity. It was written in the Law, "Thou shalt not perjure thyself, but thou shalt perform thine oaths unto the Lord."

"And now," spoke the Christ, "I say to you: Do not swear at all, neither by heaven nor by the earth, nor by Jerusalem. Let your speech be: 'This is so,' 'That is not so'—'Yes,' 'No.' Everything which is more than this comes from an evil source."

THE ANCIENT LAW AND THE NEW

"You have heard that it has been said: 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.' And now I say to you: Do not withstand violence; but if any one strike you on the right cheek, turn to him the other. And if any one wish to enter into judgment with you, and contend with you for your tunic, let him take your mantle also. And if any one force you to go one mile, go with him two miles more. Give to whoever asks, nor rebuff him who would borrow of you."

Still these divine instructions lacked somewhat of fulfilling the ancient Law in its perfection. To develop completely its germ

of life, and to make it bear the fruits of grace, it was necessary that Jesus should shatter the close and narrow circle within which the Jews had confined it; therefore He must first work a change in their feelings toward other nations. Moses, knowing the weakness of his people had prohibited any commerce with idolators; the Jewish doctors had turned this precaution into an odious precept, looked upon every foreigner as an enemy, and wrote down such ruthless dicta as were afterwards to find a place in the Talmud: "Have no pity upon Gentiles." "The pagan is not our neighbor." Against this Law of hate, Jesus pleaded for charity, which finds its brothers in all mankind, and in God their common Father.

"Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; pray for those who maltreat you and slander you, in order that you may be the children of your heavenly Father, who makes His sun rise upon the good and upon the bad, and sends down rain upon the just and unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward shall you merit? Do not the publicans as much? And if you greet your brethren only, what more are you doing? Do not pagans the same? Be you therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

How differently the Law sounded, listening to the Lord's simple reading of it, and contrasting it with the hypocritical practices which the Pharisees had miscalled the Law! Jesus denounced these sectaries, zealous to preserve a decorous outside, but caring naught for the corruption and malice seething in their own hearts, sounding trumpets when they gave alms to publish their virtues before the world, disfiguring themselves to make a show of their fasts before men, haughtily standing up and praying with a loud voice in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

"Do not imitate them," said the Saviour, "for your Father knows of what you have need before you ask it of Him. As for you, pray thus:

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name.

"Thy Kingdom come,

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;

"Give us this day our daily bread;
"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;
"And lead us not into temptation;
"But deliver us from evil."

Nothing could show better than this prayer how Jesus would change the sons of Israel into a new people by diverting their desires from earth and raising them to heaven, by proposing nobler ends as the rewards of righteousness. Undoubtedly heaven existed for the Jew just as it does for us today, yet he never lifted his eyes on high, but looked for his recompense here below. The disciple of Jesus, taught to long after celestial goods, spurns such as are the creatures of time; for his thoughts are all fixed on incorruptible and eternal things. In this new realm of the Spirit he does not fail to fulfill all the duties of life, nor to endure its trials. He fasts as formerly, but with a serene countenance, seeking to attain by mortification a real detachment from worldly feelings, and a more complete union with God. He prays, but it is in secret he communes with the Father; he distributes alms, but without letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing. With toil and trouble he seeks his daily bread, yet without uneasiness or anxiety, without clinging to the treasures which rust can corrode and thieves filch away; not like the Jews seeking to share his heart between God and mammon, but rather putting all his trust in the Providence of the Father, he relishes, through all their loveliness, something of the holy Truth of his Master's words:

TRUST IN GOD

"Therefore I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, what you shall eat; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life a greater thing than the food, and the body than the clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they do not sow, or reap, or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you of much more value than they? But which of you by being anxious about it can add to his stature a single cubit?

"And as for clothing, why are you anxious? Consider how the lilies of the field grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which flourishes

today but tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more you, O you of little faith!

"Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or, 'What shall we drink?' or, 'What are we to put on?' (for after all these things the Gentiles seek); for your Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be given you besides. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow; for tomorrow will have anxieties of its own. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

To these instructions, which were the striking features of the discourse, Saint Matthew adds certain precepts, given by the Saviour at the same time. It is difficult to find the link which bound together these thoughts and images of widely different nature; probably it is useless to seek any connection of the kind, the design of the Evangelist being, not to present us with a body of doctrine, but to preserve such few sentences as still lingered fresh in his memory.

"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. . . . Give, and it shall be given to you; a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they shall pour into your bosom." Hereupon the Lord speaks so of the two blind men, one of whom cannot lead the other without both falling into the ditch; of the mote and the beam; of the pearls put before swine; of the door opened wide to whosoever knocketh earnestly. "Who is the man among you who gives his son a stone when he asks for bread? And if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you, then, wicked though you be, willingly give to your children of the good things which are given to you, how much more will your Father who is in Heaven give truly good gifts to them that have recourse unto Him!" Then, as the Master's thoughts follow one upon the other in swift sequence, we see the smooth and spacious highroad which sweeps on to perdition; the little gateway and the narrow path which lead to life; there are the false prophets clad in sheep's clothing, whom you may recognize as you test a tree by its good or bad fruits. Finally we find the true and the false disciples of Christ—"All those who say, 'Lord! Lord!' shall not for that reason enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who doeth the will of My Father who is in Heaven he shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

Jesus terminated these teachings with a striking figure. He had before His mind one of those sheltered ravines which had cut deep into the flanks of some mountainside, while its floor is strewn with rocks and sand. For the Oriental there is every temptation to build here in the bed of dried-up torrents; he has little more to do than to stoop and collect together the smooth stones; it costs but a little labor after that to level away the sand and erect his home. And yet, woe to the imprudent fellow who lets himself be seduced by the seeming security and safety of this sheltered spot, where no toil is needed to the making of his dwelling! Beneath those southern skies storms burst forth in an instant, emptying streams of water down upon the mountaintops; then of a sudden these parched channels which wind through the gorges are transformed into raging torrents once more. Before the mighty onrush of the waters everything is crumbled, crushed, and whirled away in confusion. It were wisdom to dig one's solid habitation deep and strong among the higher rocks; there, raised upon its firm base, his home can defy the fury of tempest and floods.

"Whoever," said the Lord, "hears these My words and puts them in practice I will show you to whom he is like.

"He is like to a man who built a house, and having dug deep beforehand, sets its foundations upon the rock.

"The rains fall, the floods come, the winds blow and beat about this house; but it has not fallen, because it is founded on the rock.

"And he who hears these words which I speak and does not put them in practice is like a foolish man who has built his house upon the sand.

"The rains fall, the floods come, the winds blow and beat about this house, and it has fallen, and its ruin has been great."

Such was the Sermon on the Mount. With deep respect we may thus gather together all that Saint Matthew and Saint Luke have remembered and recorded; but there is that which they were unable to set down here—the heavenly accents of the Master and the grace which exhaled from His lips. The listening throngs were touched with wondering rapture. That which charmed them more than all besides was that He spoke and "taught as one having authority, and not as their scribes." Never before, indeed,

had Israel hearkened to language like this; they no longer heard teaching like that of their doctors—a dry and heartless code of ethics, unending disputes about trivial subjects; here was no strained or tedious interpretation of the Law, no slavish attachment to the dead letter. Everything about Jesus bespoke the sovereign Master of the hearts of men lifting them up toward the Truth, yet without wrenching them away from earth; the loftiest subjects were set before them in such homely phrases that the lowly folk and their little ones could grasp His meaning. He spoke to the villagers of life in the open fields, of trees in fruit or with barren boughs, of wild flowers and of the mountain torrents; to the fishermen He spoke of their lake or of their nets; to all He told of what they knew and loved, and they all, bending forward with rapt and breathless interest, followed the Word in wonder and delight.

THE CENTURION OF CAPHARNAUM

Accompanied by a great concourse, Jesus descended the mountain and returned to Capharnaum. He went there to experience the joy of welcoming the first pagan who was to come to Him—one of the noblest souls of whom the Gospel makes any mention. He was a Roman centurion, commanding the detachment of legionaries stationed upon the borders of the lake. Galilee, though it was under Herod's rule, remained nevertheless under the overlordship of vigilant Roman governors; and Capharnaum was too important a position for the masters of the world to neglect to occupy it. The officer charged with representing the Empire here was worthy of that trust—resolute in his biddings, keeping his soldiers under perfect discipline. At the same time he was not so much the overseer as he was the protector of Capharnaum.

We know that he had been more than a little drawn toward the worship of Jehovah; for this pagan, who had remained upright and clean of heart in the midst of Roman corruption, could not have known the religion of the Jews without being touched by its pure morality, and to this he had himself borne witness publicly, by having a synagogue built in the town. With this high tone of mind he combined certain feelings of humanity, which were certainly rare enough at that period. There is no one who does not know what sort of a position the slave held in ancient

days; he was a machine with a human voice—a beast of burden, taken care of only in order to obtain a few years' longer service. Should he grow old and sick, it were the wisest course, according to certain most illustrious philosophers, to sell him along with the old cattle and rusty scrap iron. Yet this centurion, when we see him first, is leaning over the pillow of his old servant, watching and weeping; for he loved him much.

His grief, being known throughout Capharnaum, had moved his numerous friends to come to him, and they were gathered about the sick man, who was now racked with fierce agonies; death was drawing near. In this extremity the centurion learned of Jesus' return, and recalled all he had heard said of Him; yet not daring to hope that Israel's benefactor would listen to a pagan, he turned towards the ancients of Capharnaum, and asked them to intercede for him.

The latter, remembering only their debt of gratitude, set out in search of the Saviour, and besought His aid.

"This man deserves that You should assist him," they said, "for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue."

Jesus acceded immediately to their request.

"I will go," He replied, "and I will heal him."

He followed after them, and as He was nearing the house they informed the centurion of His approach. The Roman's surprise was great, for he had never expected to receive Him in his home, knowing that in the eyes of the Pharisees one who entered a heathen's dwelling was defiled. Desiring to spare the youthful Prophet such disgrace, he dispatched some of his friends, bearing this message:

RARE QUALITIES IN A SOLDIER

"Lord, do not trouble Thyself, for I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof; this is why I did not think myself worthy to come to Thee. But say the word, and my servant will be healed."

Then he himself, if we follow the text of Saint Matthew, came forward to meet the Divine Master, and upon the threshold of his mansion besought Him, as his only gift, to vouchsafe one single word from His mouth. Accustomed to command, he knew the power of a word.

"For I too am a man subject to authority, and have soldiers subject to me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

Hearing him speak, Jesus was filled with admiration, and turning to the company who had followed Him, He said:

"Amen I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith."

Praise like this, which exalted a heathen above the sons of Abraham, probably gave rise to some bitter murmurings of disapproval; it may even be that the Lord had discerned some of the Sanhedrin's spies mingling with the crowd, for all at once His language grew threatening. The Jews had pictured for themselves the reign of the Messiah as it were a banqueting board spread before them, and them alone; and they were fond of representing the confusion of the Gentiles, doomed only to gaze from afar upon their sumptuous repasts.

The Divine Master recalled this haughty dream in order to destroy it, and declared that pagans coming from the East and from the West would sit down to table by the side of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the heavens; while the Jews, though children of the Kingdom of Heaven, would be cast without the festal hall into the blackness of night. "There shall be weeping and grinding of teeth."

Turning then to the centurion, "Go thy way," He said, "as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee." And the servant was healed.

MODEL FOR ALL

The centurion of Capharnaum remains unto this day as the consummate copy set before every soul that seeks God. By praising his humility and faith the Lord has shown us that thus it behooves us to come unto Him. Of this the Church has been ever mindful; and since that time no one draws near the table where Jesus gives us Himself to be our Bread of Life without first rekindling in his heart the feelings of this great Captain, murmuring with reverent lips:

"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but speak only one word and my soul shall be healed."

THE WIDOW OF NAIM

Jesus lingered only a little while at Capharnaum; on the next day—so runs the record of Saint Luke;—He had traveled some nine leagues thence, and had come to the town of Naïm. There was nothing unusual about this rapid journey; for, by starting in the evening, a boat could soon bring Him over to the southern shore of the lake, and leaving there about sunrise He would easily reach the place for which He was bound before nightfall.

Naïm of today—a poor little village—has preserved no tokens of her past, except her girdle of tombs; there is nothing now to justify her name—"the Beautiful"—beside her site, upon the slope of a high hill, from which, in a glance, one can sweep the plain of Esdralon, and far away to Mount Tabor. But in the days of the Lord she was glowing with life, and by her faith was made worthy of receiving the good news, and beholding His wondrous works.

At that time, the most glorious period of His ministry, the Master walked always attended by an eager array of faithful souls. In this manner He was making the ascent of the steep pathway which still leads up to Naïm, when, from out the gates of the city, there came a funeral procession; it was advancing directly in the path of Jesus, moving toward a tomb which had been made without the walls. There is no sadder sight than a burial train in the Orient; certain of the kindred bear the body, resting on a litter and swathed in perfumes and linen bands; at their head march the flute players, who draw shrill plaintive notes from their pipes; the mourners send up a chorus of cries and wails, now beating their breasts, now tossing their hands to heaven, or tearing their disheveled hair. And on this day their demonstration of woe must have been more wild and clamorous than ever, for they were seeking to give utterance to sorrow such as no tears can wash away. The Gospel with one word makes us feel how great was that grief: "he was his mother's only son, and she was a widow." This weeping woman followed the body with a large company of the townsfolk.

Jesus could not look upon this piteous sight without being moved.

"Do not weep," He said to her; and, coming closer, He touched the bier.

The bearers understood His gesture, and stood still. The throng waited in suspense for what was about to happen; the flute players and the wailing women were hushed and still; through this expectant silence they heard the voice of the Saviour.

"Young man, I say unto you, arise!"

Instantly the dead sat up and began to speak. And Jesus restored him to his mother.

In this deed, who could help recognizing the Prince of Life, handling at His sovereign pleasure the keys of the tomb? Elias bringing back to life the son of the widow of Sarepta, Eliseus restoring her child to the weeping Sunamite woman, were evidently in everyone's mind. But what a difference between Jesus, breaking the bonds of death by a word, and these prophets, who must needs throw themselves upon the corpse again and again, while they revived it with their breath. Here, instead of the prolonged and laborious efforts of a restricted power, there is the simple authority of the mighty Master! "They all were seized, with fear, and glorified God, as they said 'A great Prophet has been raised from among us, and God has visited His people!' "

As for the child thus called back to life, and this widowed mother, assuredly it was not fear that moved them, but indeed a living faith which well nigh overwhelmed their hearts; for it was not Jesus' custom to cure the body without renewing the soul; nor can we believe that He would have awaked the dead youth from his funeral couch, that so He might restore in him the life of the senses, without, at one and the same time, inspiring the breath of immortality within his soul.

THE MESSAGE FROM JOHN THE BAPTIST

For more than six months now John the Baptist had been held as a captive by Herod; but from his frontier prison he still followed the course of Him for whom he had made ready the road; and this he could do the more easily since his disciples were permitted to visit him, and could thus keep him informed of all the doings of Christ. So, just at this juncture, he selected two from

their number, and dispatched them to the Saviour with this message:

"Art Thou He who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

What is the meaning of these words? Amidst the weariness and dejection of his confinement, did John feel his courage sinking? Did he begin to lose faith in Christ? For us to harbor such a supposition would be to misjudge his character entirely. The Precursor's only design was to direct his disciples' minds by this means straight to the only Teacher who could fully instruct them in the way of life. The Saviour, who at once fathomed John's motive, made answer by letting them witness certain deeds in which His almighty powers were manifested most strikingly. "In that same hour He healed all those who came to Him, curing them of all their disease and wounds, and of evil spirits; and to a blind man He restored his sight."

Then turning to these envoys, He said "Go, and report to John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise, the poor have the Gospel preached to them."

Isaias, whose words Jesus borrows here, had foretold that such marvels would mark the coming of the Messiah. He indeed had not spoken of any resurrection of the dead, but the Lord could not be silent concerning that which all Naïm was now publishing abroad, and therefore He alludes also to that sovereign might wherewith He holds the power of death at His will, adding yet another sign of which the Prophet had spoken: "the Gospel delivered unto the poor."

In making this humble duty the culminating note in an enumeration of His most striking miracles, Jesus designed to set the true character of His mission in highest relief; because He had come, not so much to do glorious deeds, as to teach and to comfort all such as the world despises. And yet this marvelous blending of grandeur and meekness shocked the disciples of the Baptist.

The Lord, seeing them draw away from Him, uttered that solemn warning before their withdrawal:

"Blessed is he who is not scandalized in Me!"

In their astonishment at this unceremonious departure, it would appear that the people conceived an unfavorable idea of

these messengers, and were even fain to suspect the fidelity of him who had sent them, for at once Jesus spoke out in his defense.

He reminded the Jews of those reeds which they had seen waving in the wind along the banks of the streams where John was baptizing, and with these he contrasted the strong, unshaken faith of the Precursor, taking the thin and tremulous stalks as the symbol of inconstancy. Then, as His gaze fell upon certain men among them who were clothed in splendid garments, He compared the lazy luxury of gay courtiers with the austerity of the Prophet, saying:

CHRIST PRAISES JOHN

"What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold, those who wear fine clothes and live in luxury are in the houses of kings. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before Thy face, who shall make ready Thy way before Thee.' "

Was it not enough to have exalted the holiness of His forerunner so strikingly? Yet Jesus went on to say that under the ancient Law "Among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist."

Still, such is the superiority of the Church over the Synagogue, that Jesus adds: "Yet the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist"; whereby He would teach us that the lowest place by His side is to be preferred before the highest rank among the disciples of Moses.

It is this new reign of the Christ on earth that all the Prophets had foretold, until John, and for which John himself, the new Elias, had made ready all things with such lofty zeal. His toils and trouble had not been in vain, for at this very hour all Judea was flocking to Jesus. Already men were taking this His kingdom by storm, and in dense throngs were hastening to the assault.

This declaration surprised the listeners, and was quite differently received. The people and the publicans, baptized by John, acknowledged the justice and the wisdom of these divine counsels; but the Pharisees and the doctors of the law, who had dis-

dained the baptism of the Precursor, now gave token of their contempt for the designs of God in their regard. Whereupon Jesus addressed to them these reproachful words:

"To what shall I compare the men of this generation? To what, indeed, can they be likened?" He added:

"They are like children seated in the marketplace, who cry to their companions, 'We have played for you on the flute, we have sung and you have not danced. We have chanted sorrowful hymns, and you have not wept.'

"John has come among you neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He is possessed by the devil'; the Son of Man comes eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold a man who is a glutton, and a wine drinker, a friend of publicans and sinners.' "

These words of the Master must have made the Pharisees and the Scribes wince and writhe under the justice of the mortifying rebuke; for it was in the presence of all the people that He thus charged them with cherishing childish caprices.

SIMON GIVES A BANQUET

A Pharisee, named Simon, invited the Saviour to a banquet. Curiosity, and the pleasure of entertaining an extraordinary personage—perhaps, too, a secret sense of the majestic character of this Prophet—had induced him to tender this courtesy to Jesus. However, from pride, or from fear of his sect, he affected an air of contemptuous coldness. The usual polite ceremonials were omitted: there was no one to bathe the feet of the stranger nor did anyone kiss this guest upon the cheek, nor offer Him perfumes for His hair.

Jesus made no complaint at meeting with so cold a greeting in the house of one who had bidden Him to a formal feast. He entered the banquet hall and took His place at table. In the primitive times the Hebrews used to partake of their repasts, after the manner common among the Orientals of today, seated upon mats with their legs crossed; but ever since the Captivity, they had dropped this custom in order to follow the prevalent fashion among the Greeks and Romans—slipping off their sandals at the threshold, they reclined upon couches, which were ranged about the board, and helped themselves to the dainties, while

leaning on the left arm, the body lying with the feet extended to the outer circle.

When the great banquet hall was thrown open to all comers (as was now the case) it was customary for a crowd of onlookers to surround the feasters with perfect freedom. In this interested circle of spectators there stood a woman known throughout the whole town for her disorderly life. Upon hearing a rumor that the Christ was coming to this quarter of the city, she had hurried there, clad in her usual rich garments, and clasping a vase of perfumes in her hand. She had pressed forward until she reached the Lord, and there she remained listening to Him in silence.

MARY MAGDALENE

Very soon, indeed, the words of the Son of Mary found their way to her sin-stained soul; she threw herself weeping at the feet of the Master, humbly kissing them, drying them with her hair, and then, breaking the alabaster vase, she covered them with the fragrant incense.

Simon looked across the table with haughty disgust at this woman who had prostrated herself before Jesus. Neither the woeful shame nor the great wretchedness of a heart torn by repentance could move him to pity; he could see in this sinful woman nothing but a disgraced and odious creature whose least touch would leave an ugly stain. His only surprise was that Jesus did not repulse her, as he or any other Pharisee would have done, in scorn and horror.

"If this man were really a Prophet," he mused, "He would know what sort of a woman this is who is touching Him; He would know that she is a sinner." These words were not uttered aloud; but the Pharisee, if only by his silence and his contemptuous manner, let his disdain be plainly seen by all.

Jesus answered his thoughts.

"Simon," he said, "I have somewhat to say to you."

"Well, Master, say on!" replied the host.

TWO DEBTORS

"A creditor had two debtors; one owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. As they had not wherewithal to pay

him, he remitted each one's debt. Which of the two now loves him most?"

Simon replied, without seeing what the Lord desired to prove from this, "Undoubtedly it would be he to whom he remitted the greater amount."

"You have judged rightly," answered Jesus; and then He turned His eyes full upon the sinner before Him. Huddled at His feet, she was shedding bitter, burning tears—tears which Saint Augustine has called the heart's blood. But because she was humble, and was therefore more enlightened than Simon, at the very mention of debt she knew that He was alluding to her. The Master pointed to this penitent figure, continuing still to address the astonished Pharisee.

"Simon, do you see this woman?

"I entered your dwelling; you gave Me no water for My feet, while she indeed has washed My feet with her tears, and has wiped them with her hair.

"You gave Me no kiss; while she indeed, ever since I entered here, has not ceased to kiss My feet.

"You have not anointed My head with oil, while she indeed has bathed My feet with ointments.

"And so, for this reason, I say to you, many sins shall be remitted unto her, because she has loved much. But he to whom less is remitted loves the less."

The heart of the Divine Master overflowed in this forgiveness which He now granted to one who was looked upon as the vilest object in all humanity, the very symbol of lost and depraved womankind. Not like paganism, which would have devoted her to a life of shame beyond the slightest hope of escape, Jesus cast upon her a look of such deep and pure tenderness that the Pharisees themselves dared not wrong Him by an evil thought. He raised her from the earth, and though He did not lay upon her brow that flower of innocence which once blighted never blooms again, He crowned her with a glory far more austere—the halo of repentance, and the great love of a pardoned soul.

And this divine fire blazed so brightly and so strong within this poor sinner's heart that it was purified at once of every ugly stain; "so much of sinfulness was forgiven her, because she had loved so much." And therefore Jesus had only to make manifest

the miracle which grace had worked within her by saying to the sobbing woman,

"Thy sins are forgiven."

Language like this, which had once roused the members of the Sanhedrin to a fury of indignation, here, among the Pharisees of Naïm, only excited mingled emotions of fear and awe.

"Who is this man," they said among themselves, "who even forgives sins?"

But as for Jesus, all intent upon comforting the penitent, His only thought was to complete her conversion by making her know His infinite compassion, and so revive her courage.

"Thy faith has saved thee," He said; and then He added, "go in peace!"

Forthwith, in the peace of the Lord, the pardoned sinner went away, never again to seek happiness in carnal pleasures, destined rather to amaze the world by the unflinching rigor of her expiation.

MAGDALENE IN TRADITION

This woman, whose name Saint Luke does not mention, is none other than Mary Magdalene. Although there is nothing in Scripture distinctly to settle this fact, there are very venerable traditions of the Church which assert it; and Jewish writers add their testimony in confirmation. According to all these authorities the pardoned sinner of Naïm, Mary of Magdala, and Mary the sister of Lazarus and Martha, are one and the same person.

Of her sinful past we have no knowledge beyond a few legends in the Talmud, which speak of the beauty of Mary, the fame of her lovely hair, her wealth, and her intrigues. Her husband was a doctor of the Law, Pappus, son of Juda, whose jealousy was so great that he was wont to keep her closely imprisoned whenever he left their home. The high-spirited Jewess soon broke away from this hateful restraint, joined fortunes with a gay officer of Magdala, and accompanied him to that town, where she led a life of such brilliant but unbridled indulgence that she has always kept the name of "the Magdalene."

And doubtless it was there that Jesus saw her, and so awakened in her stained and blighted heart the first seeds of a passionate regret for her lost soul. The few words at the banquet hall in

Naïm were all that was needed to bring her weeping to the Saviour's feet; and ever after that day the Fathers (whose opinion we are following now) delight in discovering tokens of her presence, as she follows the footsteps of the Master. She is among the Galilean ladies who went with Him, and waited upon their Lord. At Bethany she is seated at His feet, in deep speechless contemplation; then too, close by the tomb of Lazarus, and afterwards at the feast given by Simon the leper, finally upon Calvary, and at the Holy Sepulcher—everywhere whither she could tread in the pathway of Him who had saved her.

ILLUSTRIOUS PENITENT

These are the broad lines in the Magdalene's portrait, as she is depicted by tradition, which has thus filled out the shadowy sketch left us by the Gospel. Modern critics remark very truly that there is nothing in the sacred text to necessitate such a construction of the events; but surely they make a twofold mistake when they disregard tradition, which supplies facts omitted by Scripture, while without any sufficient proofs of their own, they contend that these three women were of different dispositions, whose like could never be combined in one person. Such writers feel sure that the noble ladies of Galilee, among whom Saint Luke mentions the Magdalene, would never have associated with an infamous character; and that Mary, the contemplative of Bethany, has nothing allied to that impetuous ardor which Saint John attributes to the Magdalene upon Mount Calvary. These difficulties will not be stumbling-blocks to those who know what changes repentance can work in the soul. Conversion does, in truth, bestow a tide of nobility which no companions of Jesus ever fail to recognize; it turns the thirst for pleasures into such passionate longing for heavenly delight that the most illustrious penitents have buried themselves in a life of contemplation. And therefore we feel no more surprise at finding the brilliant courtesan sitting silent and subdued at the Master's feet, than when we see her still clinging to her dying Lord, or disputing with the tomb for the body of the Incarnate God.

The public life of Jesus might be divided into two periods: one would be that in which the Jews did not directly interfere with His ministry; while during the latter epoch they actively attacked

Him. Up to this time the Master's glory had known no diminution of its growing splendor in the eyes of the people; although Judea rejected Him at the command of the Sanhedrin, He found a warm welcome awaiting Him in Galilee, and each succeeding day saw the throngs about Him increase in number and enthusiasm. For a long time the efforts of the Sanhedrin's emissaries, who strove to stir up the populace against Him, were altogether fruitless; we have noticed at the banquet given by Simon how the power and popularity of Jesus then overawed the Pharisees themselves. But now the hour had come for a complete change in the aspect of events; and hereafter the authority of the Lord begins to wane slowly and surely, until at last His enemies are again masters of the situation.

This reversal of affairs became most apparent during a second mission which the Saviour began in Galilee. It is Saint Luke who tells us of these new journeyings, when Jesus traveled again through towns and hamlets spreading the good tidings of salvation; but he does not relate any particular occurrences. He simply notes the fact that the twelve apostles were with Him.

FRUSTRATED ENEMIES

As always happened about this time, the multitude would besiege Him in such numbers that Jesus and His disciples could not even find time to take food. His kindred, hearing of this, entirely lost all self-control. "He is growing mad," they said, angrily, and thereupon took sides with the party who were abusing Him. Though indeed there were two of their number chosen by the Christ to be among the Twelve, who were now bearing their share in His toils and His glory, yet the other children of Alpheus—whether from jealousy, or from dread of being involved in some trouble with the vindictive Sanhedrin—shut their eyes to the light, and not satisfied with simply treating Jesus as a madman, they resolved to lay hold upon Him, and keep Him confined in their own house.

So they started out from their home, and came hither to seize Him; but they could not force their way into His presence, so densely packed were the townsfolk about Him! Just at this moment, too, there was additional cause for excitement; for someone had brought Him a possessed fellow, who was blind and

dumb as well, and Jesus cured him, so that the man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed and said, "Is not this the Son of David?"

But there were some Scribes from Jerusalem present. Though for an instant they were disconcerted by the cries of delight and wonderment, almost immediately they proceeded to whisper sly hints as usual, and began to disparage the miracle.

Why need any one be surprised, said they, that this man should cast out the devils? "He is himself possessed by Beelzebub; he therefore commands them in the name of their Prince."

Well knowing all their underhand dealings, Jesus summoned them to come nearer, and then said:

"Every kingdom divided against itself shall be made desolate; every city, every family, so divided shall not endure. If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall he endure?"

By this the Lord does not deny that the kingdom of Satan is a state of anarchy, but He rather insists upon the truth that it is from this single point of agreement—their hatred of God—that the divisions of hell draw the principle of their existence; were this their one note of unity to be lost (which is impossible) there would be at once an end of the realm of darkness. By the fact of His rescuing the poor victim from the infernal powers Jesus showed that He was no minister of Satan; for "No one can enter a strong man's dwelling and bear away his goods without first having bound the man of might; only then can he pillage his house."

Again the Master retorts upon His enemies that their own disciples exorcised spirits in the name of Jehovah, just as He did, and hence their sons would be their judges, since they could testify that hell yields obedience to other orders beside those of Beelzebub; wherefore if He, the Christ of the Lord, in His own Name and by the Spirit of God, put the fiends to flight, this indeed is proof that the Kingdom of God has really come.

FOR OR AGAINST

Then, in conclusion, Jesus called His faithful followers about Him. "Whoever is not with Me, is against Me, and whoever gathereth not with Me scattereth."

The Scribes had also accused Jesus of having an unclean spirit. What did they mean by this term? Was it in allusion to His contempt for Pharisaic ablutions or to His tenderness toward sinners? It is quite impossible to say; but we know that this calumny aroused His wrath, since it called from Him that dreadful warning of eternal death:

"I say unto you, every sin, every blasphemy, shall be forgiven men; but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whoever shall have spoken against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him; but the man who has spoken against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven, either in this world or in the other."

TEACHING BY PARABLES

In Saint Matthew's account Jesus told His slanderers that they ought at least to be consistent with themselves, and should judge the tree by its fruits. If He did actually drive out devils, why did they not acknowledge the fact? The tree is good which bears good fruit. And yet, after all, no one need be amazed at their blasphemies, for the mouth speaks from the fullness of the heart; and assuredly these creatures, this brood of vipers, could not fail to poison their speech with the venom of malice.

Jesus was still speaking when a man pushed his way up to Him.

"Your mother and Your brethren are without," he said; "they are seeking for You."

The Lord's kindred, hopeless of making any headway against the crowds, had probably turned to Mary for aid; and the Virgin, startled by their wild tales, had left her retreat to go with them. Used to seeing Him yield to the lightest wish of Mary, they thought He could not resist an appeal coming from her. But Christ could no longer be subject to His Mother. Hereafter He belonged to God and to the souls whom He had come to save.

"Who is My Mother and who are My brethren?" was His reply to the one who had informed Him of their arrival. And as the man was silent, Jesus' glance fell upon the disciples seated in a circle about Him; He stretched out His hands toward them.

"Behold My Mother and My brethren!" He said; "for every

one who does the will of My Father who is in Heaven is My brother, My sister, and My mother." Then rising, the Master left the house, and took the road leading to the lake, where He seated Himself by the beach.

The insulting charges which we have just noticed, the efforts made by Jesus to enlighten the people, the uneasiness shown by His kinsfolk—all indicate what great changes had taken place in Capharnaum during this second mission into Galilee. The creatures of the Sanhedrin had profited by the absence of the Saviour to disquiet public opinion; and though most of the citizens were still loyal to their benefactor, the number of His enemies had so far increased that Jesus thought best to forego any further teaching in the simple and direct style which He had hitherto used. However much He may have differed with the Scribes, He would, notwithstanding, submit to the limitations of their forms, and hence He determined to present His doctrine hereafter in parables, as was their custom. But while these masters of Israel only employed allegory in order to hide from the public the treasures of wisdom which they wished to confine to their disciples, the design of Jesus in using these veiled figures of speech was to gain the time which was necessary for the completion of His divine instructions; for He had yet to disclose the chief portion of His work—the establishing of His Church, her constitution, her hierarchy—an everlasting object of undying distrust and hatred to the great ones of earth.

ORIENTAL LOVE OF ALLEGORY

Such a sudden change in His manner must naturally have caused some surprise; we shall see, however, that it was not at all displeasing to their tone of mind, nor did it repel them. For, in fact, the Oriental genius which is so different from ours, loves the mysterious, and takes no less delight in piecing together stray hints of meaning than we in firmly grasping the thought in its fullness. Hence it is that we have so many allegories and proverbs in the Old Testament; such too are the enigmas in the stories of Samson, of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Even today, if an Arab chances to hear some fable or allegory, he will spend whole hours in turning it over in his mind—like a child, or for that

matter like every creature in whom the imagination rules the other faculties, he finds most pleasure in fanciful reveries, whose dreamy and indefinite forms he much prefers to the cold precision of our ideas. This fondness for mystic and figurative language, common to the Eastern mind, was an invaluable advantage for Jesus, because during the last year of His ministry it allowed of His giving the Jews just such glimpses of His meaning as were desirable for them, while it also permitted Him to display His thought even more clearly before the eyes of His apostles and intimate disciples. These were the circumstances which prompted the Master to take up with this new form of preaching.

Jesus was not left long alone on the lakeside. Out of Capharnaum there came a great throng who crowded all the open space around Him, and stood about the beach in little knots, waiting such time as He might choose to speak. There was a boat drawn up on the sand, and in this the Saviour found a seat from which He could be seen and heard. Over the heads of the people who covered all the strand His eyes could rest upon smooth fields sloping to the water's edge, beaten paths winding through rich meadows, while here and there a huge rock or clump of cactuslike thistles would give a sterner aspect to the pleasant harvest lands.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

"Behold," said Jesus, stretching out His hands toward those familiar shores of Genesareth, "the sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the birds came and ate them up. And other seeds fell upon rocky ground, where they had not much earth; and they sprang up at once, because they had no depth of earth; but when the sun rose they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And other seeds fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked them. And other seeds fell upon good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

There He stopped, leaving His listeners to fathom the meaning hidden beneath the parable. There was nothing to help them to an understanding of it; it remained a riddle not only to the

Jews who were strangers to His doctrine, but even to the Twelve as well. The latter pressed about Him, and upon their asking why He spoke in this way, Jesus at once explained His conduct. If He concealed the mysteries of the Kingdom of God under the form of an allegory, it was only that His enemies might "behold without perceiving, might hear without understanding," and thus, aided by this obscurity, He might (as we have said before) gain the necessary time for the development of His doctrine, which was to make out of these lowly disciples a Holy Church, the household of the most High God. The same truths were delivered to every hearer of His parables, but they were not fully revealed to any hearts which were not docile enough to beg more light of the Master Himself. As for the mass of the Jews, the Oracle uttered long since by Isaias was not fulfilled in them— "You shall hear with your ears, and you shall not understand; you shall behold with your eyes, and you shall not see. For the heart of this people is waxed gross; they have grown dull of hearing, they have shut their eyes, in such wise that they may no longer either see or hear or understand in their hearts; neither can they be converted nor be healed."

"But for you," continued Jesus, "blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. In very truth, I tell you, many Prophets and just men have desired to see what you are seeing and have not seen it, and to hearken to what you are hearing and have not heard it. Therefore listen to the parable of the sower." But the minds of the apostles were not yet sufficiently clear-sighted to grasp the meaning of this allegory; and for the moment Jesus was amazed at their blindness.

"Do you not understand this parable? How, then, will you be able to understand all the rest?" However, He took pity upon their weakness, and expounded His own words.

The Church is a vast field, through which Jesus walks scattering the grain from an unstinting hand; for the gifts of God are without measure. The seed falls everywhere in an equally generous shower—upon hearts as cold and hardened as those worn, beaten pathways, which offer it no resting place or nourishment; upon light and superficial souls, wherein the strength of the seed, spending itself in a sudden show of growth, sends down no deep roots, and so withers beneath the first wind of temptation;

upon the creatures of worldliness who no sooner receive the gift of grace than they proceed to stifle it "beneath a weight of earthly cares and the deceitfulness of riches." But those true followers of Him are "the good ground—they who hearken to the Word, who receive it, and bring forth fruit bearing thirty, sixty, and an hundred fold." Such was the first rough draft of the Church drawn by the hand of the Master architect—a field wherein the heavenly seed is sown with exceeding plentifulness, and yet it will bear no fruit if man's evil passions place an obstacle in its way.

Jesus dwelt more strongly still upon this last point by showing what perfect freedom of action He would bestow upon His earthly heritage, the Church. He likened it to a land which, once being sown, produces its fruit of itself—first the blade, then the ear, then the grain enclosed in the ear. And when it has borne its full crop, immediately they put sickle to it, because it is now the time of harvest. What matters it whether the workman sleeps or watches, will not the harvest still come round? The grain takes root of itself, and grows up while he is dreaming; when once the soil is planted, there is no need of him until the time of reaping is come. In like manner the Saviour has dealt with the Kingdom of Heaven in our hearts. He came to sow, but He need never more return unto the end of time—until the harvesting is come.

Strong, sharp, and clear though these first outlines were, they did not sufficiently prefigure the future development of the Church. And so Jesus cast about for new similitudes.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

"To what shall we liken the Kingdom of Heaven"; He said, "or to what parable shall we compare it?"

In order to depict the persecutions which were in store for it He gave the parable of the cockle: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men were asleep, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. And when the blade sprang up and brought forth fruit, then the weeds appeared as well. And the servants of the householder came and said to him, 'Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? How then does it have weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' And the servants said to him,

'Wilt thou have us go and gather them up?' 'No,' he said, 'lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will say to the reapers, Gather up the weeds first and bind them in bundles to burn; but gather the wheat into my barn.' "

Against this picture of the Church's sufferings Jesus set forth the scene of its day of triumph in even more striking contrast. He showed how humble its beginnings, how slow its growth, but at the same time how mighty is the seed of life within it; and so He called it a mustard seed—the tiniest of all seeds, which becomes a tree in which the birds of heaven find a resting place; or it is the leaven which a woman mixes in three measures of meal, and which ferments the whole lump.

"All these things," adds Saint Matthew, "He told to the people in parables, and He no longer spoke to them save in parables. Thus was fulfilled what had been said by the Prophet—'I will open My mouth in parables; I will lay bare things hidden from the foundation of the world.' "

Nevertheless the divine Master was careful, amid all this great number of similitudes, to say nothing which could not be comprehended by docile hearts, and in private He explained everything to His disciples.

To them, indeed, was committed the great trust of treasuring up the truths which were denied to incredulous Jews; not that they were always to hoard this wealth in secrecy, but that they might bring them forth at a fitting hour to be the light of the Church—to be as a torch, which is not put beneath a couch, but is set within its holder that it may light all those who enter the house; for there is nothing hidden in the Master's doctrine which must not be revealed, nothing done in the shadow which shall not be brought to the light. This is why Jesus so earnestly beseeches His apostles to listen to His words.

EARS ARE FOR HEARING

"Pay heed to what you are hearing. He who has ears to hear let him hear!"

Toward evening Jesus dismissed the throngs and returned to His dwelling. The disciples accompanied Him, and begged Him

to enlighten them as to the parable of the cockle. Thereupon interpreting the allegory word by word, He showed plainly how the devil is the enemy who sows the cockle; yet at the end of the world the angels shall gather together all the scandals, together with the evildoers, from out the Church, casting them into the furnace of fire; while the just shall shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.

To these parables Saint Matthew adds three similes which the Saviour uttered about the same time; and with these He completed the figurative description of what His Church was to become. For some it is a treasure buried in a field which the toiling laborer turns up with the plowshare; having found it, he hides it, and in his joy goes out and sells all he has that he may buy the field. For others it is the pearl of great price which falls into the hands of a merchant who is seeking rare gems. For all of us it is a net which drags the very depths of the sea, letting nothing escape its meshes, bearing mankind from out the fierce waves of the world up to the peaceful shores of eternity. As fishers seated on the strand collect together the good fish and cast away the bad, even so shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall come and shall separate the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Have you understood all these things?" added the Divine Master.

NEW VISION OF TRUTH

"Yes, Lord," the apostles replied; for now indeed their dazzled eyes were beginning to have glimpses of the truth, despite the surpassing splendor of His speech. Little by little they were still to descry new and lovelier verities, as the divine light grew in glory, until the time should come for all to be made partakers in the heavenly day. This was to be their commission; for, unlike those doctors of the law who communicated their doctrine only to a handful of disciples, the apostles of the glad tidings were to spread the good news over all the earth. Just as a bountiful father will plunge his hand deep down in his coffers, bringing to light the hoardings of long ago as well as of today that he may lavish

them upon the children of his household, even so the true Scribe, who has knowledge of the Kingdom of Heaven, must find in the Old Testament as well as in the New treasures of wisdom which shall become in his hands the noble heritage of all mankind.

The crowds which Jesus had dismissed after the discourse by the lakeside had now gathered about His abode once more. The Saviour, seeing that any needful repose was not to be hoped for inside the city walls, resolved that same evening to seek the lonely highlands of Perea. "Let us pass over to the other side," He said to the disciples. And they, after sending away the citizens, went aboard a boat; with them was the Lord, who made no preparation whatever for the voyage; for Saint Mark says they took Him into the bark just as He was. Several other craft sailed along in company with them, each one, amid the rustling night-winds and under the starlit sky, making quiet headway toward the opposite bank.

STORM AT SEA

Jesus, seating Himself in the stern, rested His head upon the pilot's pillow; very soon He was sleeping, wearied with the toils of the day. But hardly had His eyes closed in slumber when the whole outlook overhead and round about them changed. It is with surprising suddenness that the storms burst over the Sea of Galilee; from the icy peaks of Hermon the tempests precipitate themselves upon the lake, and in an instant whip its waters into wild and seething waves. Caught in one of these furious cloud-bursts, the little vessels were scattered far and wide, while that of the Master was left alone, with the waters beating into it on every side.

And now the fierce floods threatened to engulf them at every moment, yet all the time Jesus slumbered on, while the apostles dared not awaken Him. But when they felt the boat beginning to settle beneath their feet fear dispelled every other thought; they threw themselves about Him, calling with desperate eagerness, "Master! Master! save us! We perish!"

The wakening of Jesus was as tranquil to all seeming as His repose had been; and His first care was to calm their hearts rather than the angry waters.

"Why are you fearful?" He said, "O you of little faith!" Only after this did He arise and rebuke the winds; and immediately the winds ceased, and there came a great calm.

At sight of the unclouded plains of heaven, and the lake once again silent and placid, it was borne in upon the apostles' minds how Jesus might well complain of their little faith. No matter what extreme of peril they might encounter, it were too trifling to notice in His presence; while He is with us we have nothing to fear. Their wondering awe was shared by the sailors who were with Him.

"What manner of man is this?" they said one to another. "He commands the winds and the waves, and they obey Him."

The cry of these men of Galilee has been repeated many times since then; for the miracle performed upon the waters of Genesareth is but a type of those marvelous mercies which God has never ceased to operate by means of His Church. She likewise is sailing over blustering seas; often in the awful vortex of the whirlwind it will seem as though the Master were sleeping in forgetfulness of His own; but from age to age, at the very moment when all seems lost, Christ with one word saves the bark. Tossed and battered though she be, as long as Jesus rests upon the pilot's bench she is upheld by a promise which cannot fail of fulfillment—His promise to bring us all together to the farther shores of eternity.

SATAN'S FURY

Jesus did not find the quiet and repose which He had come to seek in the country of Perea. He had scarcely set foot upon the land of Gerasa when His glance encountered a mournful object. From one of the hills which rise above the lake a possessed creature had discovered the landing of the little ship, and, emerging from the caves hollowed out of the cliff, he rushed down toward where the Lord stood.

In ancient times there was no place of refuge where poor human beings could be kept when subject to such horrid afflictions as this; driven out of the towns and away from all houses, they must seek shelter in some ruined hovel or in the caverns which were used as graves. The horror overshadowing such an

abode in which no Jew could enter without being contaminated, would naturally but increase the fury of the demoniacs.

This possessed man of Gerasa was so terrible of aspect that no one dared as much as to cross his path. He roamed night and day among the lonely rock tombs, uttering wild shrieks and tearing his flesh with sharp stones. They had tried in vain to fetter his limbs and no number of men could get the mastery over him. This was the frenzied specter which confronted the Lord almost as soon as His foot touched the land.

SATAN IS CHALLENGED

According to Saint Matthew's report of the scene, this possessed being was not alone; another such wretched mortal came running up to Jesus with him. Frantic and violent though they were, yet (as all the others before them had been), these two were quelled by some divine charm in Him, and cowering in the dust before the Christ, they shrieked wildly:

"What is there between Thee and us, Jesus, Son of the Most High? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?"

For Jesus had said to one of the demoniacs, "Go out of the man, thou unclean spirit." And as Satan was loath to obey, the Saviour added, "What is thy name?"

The fiend answered by the mouth of the possessed man, "My name is Legion, for we are many."

Then shuddering and writhing before the Lord, this host of demons besought Him not to dismiss them forever from the countryside but to allow them some place of refuge.

Now there was a great herd of swine feeding far away upon the mountainside; and the devils begged and cried, saying:

"If Thou wilt drive us hence, let us enter into yonder herd of swine."

"Go!" He said to them.

And the unclean spirits, rushing forth, seized upon the swine, who were carried headlong into the lake, and were drowned in the sea to the number of nearly two thousand.

At sight of their herds borne in unmanageable fury to destruction, the men having charge of them at once conceived that those mad outcasts were the cause of this new misfortune; so, fearing

any encounter with such ghoulish wretches they took to flight, and spread the news as they passed along by quiet farmhouses and through the busy streets of the little city. The townsfolk sallied out at once to see what had occurred; and what must have been their surprise, on hurrying up to where Jesus stood, to perceive at His feet the much dreaded demoniac, now quietly seated, clothed, sane of mind, and whole—without a scream and without a single mark of recent struggle!

And those who had seen it reported to them how it had happened to the possessed and to the herds. So sudden a transformation overwhelmed them with alarm; they never thought either of denying or explaining the fact; they were simply seized with such terror that they began to beseech Jesus to leave their shores.

STRANGE REACTION

How can we account for this overpowering fear, the like of which was never produced by any of the Saviour's miracles in Judea—unless perhaps for the reason that this eastern shore of the lake was a very different territory, with a population far more pagan than Jewish in thought and feeling? The ten cities which gave the name of the Decapolis to these parts were Greek, both by their origin and in their manners. Gadara (which was the native place of the demoniac, according to very many manuscripts) could boast of some famous poets, among them Meleager —a singer of light love songs—and the Epicurean Philodemus, whose renown had reached Rome itself.

Keen in its enjoyment of earthly pleasures, this land had no desire to hear of the Kingdom of Heaven. And so, bowing to the wishes of the agitated citizens, Jesus re-embarked at once; but He did not quit their country without taking care that the good news should be published among them.

As the man who had been healed presently supplicated to be taken along with them, the Saviour, not consenting to this step, bade him to return home, and tell them what great things the Lord has done.

The man obeyed, and announced everywhere the works of the Christ, and all men wondered.

It was in the morning that Jesus delivered the two demoniacs of Gerasa, and by pushing out to sea without delay He could reach the fertile land of Genesareth again that same day. A long time before they hove to and dropped anchor in the little bay eager crowds had spied the vessel which had borne Him away, and hastening down along the banks, they waited to greet Him.

AN APOSTLE CAUSES TROUBLE

But none welcomed Him more gladly than Levi. Evidently this apostle had remained behind in Capharnaum, and having in the interval called together a number of his friends—publicans and sinners, like himself—he begged the Lord to partake of a great feast, which he immediately prepared for this assemblage. Jesus showed no hesitation about accepting the invitation, and in good time sat down to the banquet, surrounded by His disciples.

That the Lord was present at this feast soon began to be noised throughout the town. The Scribes and Pharisees were the first to make their way into the great hall, thrown open wide to all comers. There they saw, enacted under their very eyes, this sad scandal, the rumor of which had so shocked them.

True enough! there sat a master of Israel, at the same table with publicans, and familiarly talking with such low company!

They were too wary now to grumble and mutter in the Saviour's hearing; but feeling that they might act more freely with the apostles, they gave vent to their distrust and horror in their ear. "How comes it," they said, "that you and that Master of yours eat and drink with publicans and sinners?"

Censure such as this, coming from men they were accustomed to look up to with reverence, could not fail to disturb these simple minds, little versed in controversy.

Jesus, knowing every movement of their souls, discerned their trouble, and Himself replied to the formalists, that He was not come to call the just, but sinners. For men in good health have no need of a physician, but only the sick. Then, borrowing an expression common among their rabbis, He added:

"Go, ye, and learn the meaning of those words: 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice!' "—that is, charity rather than mere stickling for observances.

Some of John's disciples, attracted there by the hurrying throngs, had also entered the great hall. At sight of Jesus seated there, taking His part in the good things of the feast, mindful too of how the Baptist would neither eat nor drink, and even now was languishing in a dungeon—these sad memories quite broke down all their hopes. So then, the Christ had already forgotten His Precursor! Far from spending His time in fasting and tears, like these mourners over the downfall of their great Prophet, He was actually enjoying rich banquets, and diverting Himself in the company of sinners!

Such a spectacle embittered their minds the more against Him, and made their disappointment over their own master's fate all the harder to bear. Finding that the Pharisees were ready to make common cause against Him, they joined them in reproaching the Lord anew.

"Why," they began, "do we and the Pharisees often fast, whereas Thy disciples do not fast?"

NO TIME FOR SADNESS

Jesus forgave their presumption, because their zeal made it excusable; but He recalled to the minds of John's disciples how their master had compared Him to the bridegroom amid the marriage festivities, and continuing the figure, He said, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?" It is befitting for us to fast in seasons of mourning only; now John had foretold that the coming of the Kingdom of God would be like a wedding festival, wherein the Christ should celebrate His espousals with humanity; and therefore, on this day of gladness, to demand that the apostles, the friends of the bridegroom, should abandon themselves to grief, would be to discredit the testimony of John himself.

"But the days will come," He added, "when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they will fast."

For the first time Jesus allowed the multitude to have some inkling of the violent death which awaited Him; but He did not dwell at any length upon this dark foreboding; indeed, He rather made haste to restore happiness and peace among Levi's

guests, who had been disturbed by these ill-timed questionings.

Hereupon changing the tone of their talk, and looking round Him upon the gay furnishings which decked the board, the joyous company in their bright-colored festal robes, the tankards from which flowed sparkling wines, He began to speak in a parable, which had now come to be His usual manner of teaching.

Under this figure He propounded a truth which would be most apt to shock the Jewish mind; for He wished to have them know that in His Kingdom the ceremonies of the Mosaic worship were to be abolished—the bloody sacrifices, the symbolical ceremonies, circumcision, and everything else which in the Law was but a shadow of future things, would now fade away under the clear light of the Gospel. The Lord knew, were He to announce abruptly that the ancient Covenant had already passed away, He would arouse all Judea against Him; hence He must needs prepare men's minds, as usual, with gentle condescension.

"No one," he began, "puts a patch of raw cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse rent is made. Nor do people pour new wine into old wine skins, else the skins burst, the wine is spilt, and the skins are ruined. But they put new wine into fresh skins, and both are saved."

Mysterious and little understood though they were, these words could not fail to excite some surprise in the minds of His audience; perhaps they even caused renewed murmurs of disapproval. Jesus fully realized how strong the attachment to time-honored observances can be and so He added:

"And no man after drinking old wine immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.' "

THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

As He was speaking in this way, one of the great men of Capharnaum entered the happy circle. It was Jaïrus, chief of the synagogue—one of those notable men of the city who had very lately sought out Jesus to implore His aid on behalf of the Roman centurion; but this time he was to come to entreat help for himself. He fell down before the feet of the Saviour, pouring forth

his prayer; and in every word of it one can note how uncontrollable and distracting was his grief.

"Lord, my little child, my only daughter is dying—she is dead—but, O come! lay Your hands upon her and she shall live."

Jesus rose up at once, and followed Jairus. The apostles accompanied Him; behind them surged an excited throng of publicans, Pharisees, those disciples of John, and the people of the town, all eager to see what was about to happen.

Now, amid this motley mass of humanity, there was a sick woman who had been subject to a loss of blood for some twelve years. Such a malady was a dreadful humiliation for any daughter of Israel; because it was looked upon as a scourge that was only laid on women of wicked character, and hence those afflicted with it were avoided and despised. The poor sufferer had paid out all her means in fees to the physicians, but still in vain. She had undergone, without any benefits, all that peculiar treatment as to which the Talmud gives us some curious details, yet the disease grew greater every day.

She had now given up all other hope save in Jesus; but she was still held back by her timidity and shame, both because she had nothing at all to offer Him, and because her sickness was thought to be such a terrible disgrace; at last she resolved to get the gifts of grace by stealth, like a thief.

"If I can just touch His robe," she said to herself, "I shall be healed."

Urged on by this intense and lively faith, she glided through the multitude, pushed her way right up to the Master, and furtively seized the tassel hanging from His mantle in her thin and wasted fingers.

Scarcely had she touched it, when the issue of blood was stopped; her trust had been rewarded. With beating heart and half choked with fear, she fell back amid the crowd.

But though no one had noticed her act, Jesus knew of it Himself. Feeling at once that power had gone out from Him, He halted and turned toward the people,

"Who has touched My garment?" He said.

As each one began to plead innocence, Peter and those round Him replied, "Master, the people crowd about and harrass You, and can You ask, 'Who has touched Me?' "

Jesus answered, "Someone touched Me; for I perceived that power had gone forth from Me."

And as His eyes fell upon the throng He fixed one of those grave and piercing glances which fathom the depths of the heart upon her whom He had healed. The woman, seeing herself discovered, began trembling, then tottered to Him and fell at His feet, declaring before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how on the instant she had been cured. The Lord had merely looked for this simple acknowledgment.

"My child, be of good courage," He said to her; "go in peace, your faith has saved you."

While He was still speaking comforting words to her, some members of the household of Jaïrus came hurrying toward them.

"Do not trouble the Master any longer," they said, "your daughter is dead."

The unfortunate father had uttered no complaint at seeing Jesus delay so long by the roadside. Great and importunate as was his grief, it could not make him grudge this sufferer the happiness of being healed; for the nobleman's charity equaled his faith. The Master now turned back to him, and seeing him bowed in speechless sorrow, He spoke to him very gently.

"Do not fear, only believe; she shall be saved." And still followed by the throngs, He proceeded once more on the way.

At the house Jesus found the mourners already gathering, upon the first tidings of the child's death. The delicate body ready to be wrapped in its winding sheet and linen bands, was lying on the cold ground; round about it the women were moaning and wailing, while the shrill keening of the flutes made their cries the more dismal.

"Do not weep!" Jesus said to them; "she is asleep, not dead."

The mourners, hearing this speech, thought that He was mocking them, and would have continued their wail, but Jesus forbade them. He made them pass out of the darkened chamber, and allowed only the mother and the father of the child, together with His three most intimate apostles, Peter, James, and John, to remain in the room.

In their presence He took the hand of the young girl, and called to her—

"Talitha cumi!" "My child, arise!"

At once the little maid rose and started to run, in high glee, for she was only twelve years of age. The parents were beside themselves with joy, and the Lord had to remind them of such things as were necessary for the child, telling them to give her something to eat.

In working this new marvel of resurrection Jesus had yielded to His boundless love; but may He not have feared that so wonderful a sign of His Christhood would arouse all the enthusiasm of the people, and reawaken Herod's jealousy? He had not confined Himself, therefore, to merely commanding them to keep silence concerning the matter but had taken every precaution to conceal the deed beforehand. His first words had been, "The child is not dead, she sleeps"; and although these words were meant to signify that for Him it was as easy to recall her soul to life as it would be to awaken her from slumber, yet this sense of the words would be sure to escape the minds of the common people. The wondrous deed being accomplished, He probably remained in the house until the people outside, ignorant of what was going on within doors, gradually dropped away.

Thus Jesus avoided the first outburst of excitement; but the secret could not be kept for long. The sight of the little girl, brought back from death to life, the great gratitude of her parents, the wonder and awe of the apostles—all these soon betrayed the fact, and the fame of the miracle was noised abroad through the whole countryside.

MISSION OF THE APOSTLES

When Jesus left the mansion of Jaïrus it was in order to undertake a new mission through Galilee. It was the third (and it was to be the last) of those journeyings of His during which He preached in every little hamlet of that land. First of all, this time, He wended His way up to His old home in Nazareth, and on the Sabbath began to preach in the synagogue; but He met with as cold a reception as on a former occasion a year ago; the Nazarenes were as hard and dull to the words of their fellow-townsman as they were before.

"How does He come by His wisdom and His power?" they

kept on saying. "Is not this the carpenter? Is not His mother called Mary, His brothers James and Joseph, Simon and Jude? And are not His sisters all here among us?" And they were scandalized at Him—were shocked at His presumption!

Their phlegmatic bigotry and coarseness were well understood by Jesus; nevertheless on this particular day it would seem to have surpassed even His expectations; for Saint Mark tells us, He "was astonished thereat," as though He would indicate how entire and hopeless their incredulity was by the use of this striking expression, which sounds strangely enough when used in reference to God. The Lord grieved over their blindness, and, comparing the contemptuousness of the Nazarenes with the docility of their brethren in Galilee, He repeated what He had said of them once before—

"A prophet is not without honor save in his own country, and in his own home, and in his own family."

This was perforce the Divine Wayfarer's farewell to that ungrateful city, where His boyhood and early manhood had been passed; now all He could do here was to heal some few of their sick folk by laying His hands upon them; then He departed from the mountain valley, never more to return.

"He went through the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and curing every sickness and all infirmities." The dwellers in these lands touched His heart with a great pity—they lived so far from Jerusalem and in the very midst of pagans, "lying uncared for and spent with fatigue," panting for breath "like a flock of sheep attacked," by wolves, "who have no shepherd to lead them." However, they were all ready to receive the good news; for Jesus, speaking of them to the apostles, called them a rich and plentiful harvest, which only waits the coming of the reapers.

"The harvest indeed is great," He said; "but the laborers are few. Pray, therefore the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest."

COMMISSION GIVEN

The twelve apostles were to be the first to enter these fields, which had been made ripe for the coming of their Lord. Some

time before Jesus had finished His own wanderings through the length and breadth of Galilee He called them about Him, "gave them strength and dominion over all devils, with the power of curing diseases, and sent them out, two by two, to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick." Before entrusting them with so lofty and august a commission He laid down the simple and severe duties of their ministry.

For the present He wished to send them, not to the Samaritans, nor to the Gentiles, but rather to the lost sheep of Israel. All the burden of their message was to be this announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand, confirming the glad tidings by miracles performed in the name of the Christ.

"Heal the sick, raise the dead to life, cleanse the lepers, drive out devils; freely you have received, freely give."

HERALDS OF GOOD NEWS

A holy indifference to earthly cares was to be the peculiar feature of their ministry; they might not make any preparations, but must be ready at all times to set out, in whatever circumstances they might chance to be, taking neither gold nor silver in their belt, nor victuals in their wallet, having neither a change of raiment nor traveling shoes in the place of the sandals they ordinarily wore; it would even be useless for them to get themselves a staff for the journey. Having arrived in town, their first care must be to seek out some hospitable household, which they were to accost with that ancient greeting, "Peace be to this house!" This peace of theirs should precede them and abide upon the inmates, if they proved worthy of it; if otherwise, the heavenly gift would rather return and rest upon the heralds of the good news. Should they be rejected and repulsed, they were merely to shake the dust off their shoes outside the dwelling, thereby proclaiming that they were not responsible for the judgment, more terrible than that of Sodom and Gomorrah, which should one day befall its misguided occupants.

Up to this point the Lord had been speaking to the twelve concerning their present mission only; but now, as though He would explain the duties of the apostolic ministry more generally, He began by marking out its two principal characteristics.

"Be prudent as serpents, simple as doves. Mark how I am sending you forth like sheep in the midst of wolves."

Just at this moment (according to a tradition of the first century) Peter interrupted his Master.

"But if it happen," said he, "that the wolves devour the sheep?"

"When the lamb is dead," replied the Lord, "it no longer fears the wolf. Even so fear not those who can only kill the body and have no power over the soul. But rather fear that which can send both soul and body down to hell."

Then the Master forewarned them that they would be dragged before the judgment seats, flogged in the synagogues; while still in the face of the magistrates of Judea, as in the presence of the praetors of Rome, they were to bear testimony, even to the shedding of their blood for His sake; but that during all their tortures the Holy Spirit would be with them and would make answer for them. Yet the Lord did not command them to go out to seek such impending perils; rather, on the contrary, He exhorted them to fly from one town to the other, and to persevere in the faith; for in truth they should not complete their tale of wanderings through all the cities of Israel before the Son of Man should come.

The future, then, had only gloomy things in store for the apostles; therefore, in order to strengthen and inflame their courage, Jesus reminded them of the obstacles which opposed His own mission.

DUTIES OF APOSTLES

Like Him, they must be calm and fearless; the heavenly Father who numbereth even the hairs of their head, who lets not the littlest sparrow fall from the skies upon the earth without having care thereof—their Almighty Father would be with them, would acknowledge those as His own children whom His Son claimed as His disciples, and would reject all such as He disowned.

Then He added that He had come to cast a drawn sword upon the earth; that very soon they should see their fathers and their children in league with the world, and eager to deliver them up to death. In the midst of raging war and of unbridled passions He bade them remain steadfast, publishing upon the housetops that which the Master had spoken in their ear, preferring Jesus

above all whatsoever they held most dear and glorious, losing their life to find it again in Heaven—in a word, they were to take up their cross and follow Him.

After this mystic allusion, by which He foretold His Crucifixion, the Lord uttered only words of loving consolation and splendid promise. He told His apostles that they should stand in His stead in the eyes of the world; that to receive them as ambassadors of God would be to receive Christ—would indeed be to entertain God Himself and to merit the rewards laid up for the just and the prophets.

Then, with one hand pointing to the poor folk and little children, who crowded about Him now as always, He concluded with those touching words:

"Whoever gives to one of these little ones but a cup of cold water to drink because he is a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

THE CROWN OF APOSTLESHIP

Such were the instructions with which Jesus prepared this college of the Twelve. It may be that all were not delivered on this particular occasion, and that, following his usual custom, Saint Matthew has here collected counsels which were actually uttered at various times. But whether Jesus spoke the whole discourse before this one audience, or whether the Evangelist, divinely inspired, has connected maxims scattered through many lessons of the Master, none the less Saint Matthew's work stands as a finished and complete model for every apostle of the evangelical ministry; and indeed, though every priest of the Lord Christ be not bound by the letter of these instructions, it does behoove all to be quickened by their spirit. Truly everyone is not bid to press forward to the prize of the martyr's crown, yet all must follow the Master in the paths of sacrifice; the Lord God does not demand of each one of us a complete renunciation of all things, for He Himself has declared that every workman is worthy of his meat; and yet, in proportion as zeal in the hearts of His apostles burns higher, and the holy flame waxes purer and whiter, by so much more joyously do they strip themselves of everything in the race unto their high calling which is in Christ Jesus, our

Lord. Saint Paul converted the nations of the earth while he himself toiled at tent-making for his day's bread; Saint Francis Xavier took with him nothing but a cross of wood when he went forth to conquer the eastern world.

Obedient to the commands they then received, the apostles departed, going two by two. Without doubt the intimate friends and the brothers would bear each other company in this sacred comradeship. Peter, of course, would associate himself with Andrew; those two whom He had called "Sons of the Thunderbolt" would start out together, with all their characteristic impetuosity; Philip would join Bartholomew, whose two lives had been heretofore so closely linked together; then would come Thomas and Matthew; while the two cousins of Jesus, James and Jude, would naturally be companions; and finally it was probably Simon's sad and unenviable fortune to have Judas for his fellow-laborer in the harvest.

Jesus, left alone in His own field, continued to preach in all the cities of the lake country, when the news suddenly reached them that John the Baptist was dead; his head had been struck off in the dungeons of Macheronte.

LAST DAYS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

After being for twelve months imprisoned in that "dark fortress," John still displayed the same spirit which had made him so terrible to sinners upon the Jordan's bank; neither caresses nor threats had moved his stalwart courage one whit, and though they did not heed him, his stern voice fell upon the ears of the tyrant in no less unsparing denunciations. Herod trembled as he listened, torn in the strife between remorse and passion. Too weak to rid himself of his fearless accuser by a crime, yet too deeply corrupt at heart to subject his will to duty, he made shift to compromise with his conscience by simply shielding the Baptist from the insatiable hatred of Herodias. The struggle between these two was prolonged and stubborn; for the rancor and venom in the heart of the adulterous woman embittered her the more against her victim, the longer she was thwarted and balked in her schemes of vengeance. This creature being determined to compass the prophet's ruin, was ever on the watch for some opportune moment; it came soon enough.

After the fashion among the Roman princes, Herod and his sons always celebrated certain memorable epochs in their lives with the greatest pomp. The anniversary of his birth chanced to occur while Antipas, with his court, was at Macheronte; there he made high festival, gathering about him all the courtiers, rich officials, and nobles of Galilee. From what we know of the wealth of the Herods, their lordly extravagance, and their gorgeous pageants, we are warranted in fancying the grandeur of the ceremonial and the brilliancy of their sports, together with the bright hangings which adorned the rugged walls of that gloomy old castle, as being altogether beyond anything ever seen among those desolate hills. Yet, besides all this, Herodias had devised for the king a night of revelry, which was fitted to intoxicate him even more surely than the fumes of wine, and would thus be likely to place him completely at her mercy.

All wanton dances brought over from Italy were well known to her; she knew which of the movements in those horrid orgies would be most apt to hold him in besotted fascination. Such shameless pastimes had for some time been of common occurrence within the palace of the Tetrarch; but on this evening it was Herodias' will that her own daughter should be one of the damsels taking part in those unmaidenly carousals. This young princess, descendant of Herod the Great, sprung from the seed of the Machabees, and later on destined to be the wife and the mother of kings, on this night appeared in all her brilliant state, the central figure in a circle of dissolute companions. By her dancing, she so tranported the prince with delight that, as the wild applause of the revelers died away, he swore that he would give her whatever she might desire of him, were it even the half of his kingdom.

Salome sped quickly to her mother.

"What shall I demand of him?" she said.

The royal harlot had a ready response for this her moment of triumph:

"The head of John the Baptist."

Not even a shudder stirred the drapery of the young dancer; tripping back to the king she repeated her mother's words, without a touch of pity or a thrill of shame.

"Give me here on a dish the head of John the Baptist." And

as she spoke she caught up one of the great dishes with which the table was loaded.

DEATH OF JOHN

On this request Herod was struck sad at heart; he was just awakening from the madness of passion, only to see the snare into which he had been led by his blind, brutal nature. But the vanity of the Tetrarch was proportional to his weakness; he saw the looks his highborn guests were fixing upon him, and he had neither the courage to excite their satirical remarks, nor did he dare to brave the anger of those two unscrupulous women who now claimed their promised prey. Seeking to shield himself from any responsibility by pleading the sacredness of his oath, he gave the fatal order. The headsman (according to the usage of Oriental courts) was standing behind the person of royalty, ready for the deed; a few moments later John the Baptist was no more.

That very obscurity in which the Prophet had desired to be eclipsed has in fact completely overshadowed his martyrdom. No witness has ever related how he received the iniquitous decree, or with what tokens of inward peace he faced death. The executioner returned very shortly, bearing upon a dish the head of the Nazarite; he handed it to the royal dancer, who carried the bleeding trophy to her mother. If we may credit certain traditions, Herodias pierced with needles the tongue which she had been powerless to check in life, and then commanded that his torn and disfigured body be thrown into the chasms around Macheronte, to become food for the dogs and foul birds of prey. But the disciples of John were keeping watch at every point; gathering together the remains of their master, they piously buried him, and then went and told Jesus.

God's vengeance fell upon the slayer of His Prophet without delay; from the moment when the head of the Baptist was shown to the conscience-stricken Tetrarch, there was never another hour of quiet repose for the tyrant. Always thereafter he would see now and again the tables spotted with blood, and the Prophet's cold brow, seeming more severe than in life, so drawn and white in death, while the thin lips appeared as if just about to open and rebuke the guilty adulterer.

Now, instead of his former habitual indolence, he lapsed at

once into a wretched humor, fluctuating restlessly between fearful horror and vague suspicions. The fame and power of Jesus had moved him scarcely at all heretofore; but now he grew suddenly angry at the tales which his courtiers brought him.

Only a few days later, a rumor reached Macheronte that the Saviour was drawing still greater concourses of people, and that every day He performed new and more wonderful miracles. At this, Herod shuddered in great terror.

" 'Tis he!" he cried out. "It is John the Baptist who has risen again!"

It was useless for the prince's associates to endeavor to quiet his alarm—some assuring him that Jesus must rather be Elias, once again returned to earth from his flaming chariot; others asserting that He was merely one of the prophets; while the more skeptical among them would have it that He was but a seer, like those who were common enough in the time of their forefathers. But as for Herod, whose vision was continually haunted by the grim specter of his victim, his trembling lips kept repeating, "It is John; it is the man who baptized! He has been raised up from the dead; that is why he can work such miracles." And eager to ascertain the truth of his forebodings, he cast about for some means to see Jesus for himself.

THE APOSTLES REPORT TO CHRIST

The Lord would have incurred the greatest danger from any such encounter with the furious and terrified Tetrarch. Unquestionably He would have been constrained to suspend His ministry at once, at least in Galilee, while He would have been forced to forego His Paschal pilgrimage for that year, and the time for the caravans to start was already drawing near. The return of the apostles finally decided Him to pass into the realm of Philip without delay. Whether their mission had been finished just at this time, or whether that also was interrupted by the death of the Forerunner, at any rate, the Twelve had now returned to their Master, and at one and the same time. To Him they rendered their report of what they had done and taught; how they had cast out devils, anointed very many sick folk with oil, and cured their illnesses. Tired and spent with their long journeyings and

saddened by the fate of John, they came to seek rest and comfort by the side of Jesus; but the Lord could offer them no quiet relief, because of the crowds which came and went, and left Him not even time to eat.

And therefore He said to His wayworn little band:

"Let us go apart by ourselves into some desert place, and there you may rest yourselves for a little time."

The sea of Tiberias was not far off from where they stood; at the Master's bidding they sought out a boat for the passage, and speedily shook out sail, heading for the north.

In the northwestern region of the lake, and near the spot where the Jordan empties its water into the little sea, there stood a flourishing town. Its name of Bethsaida, which it bore in common with that other village in the neighborhood of Capharnaum, would indicate that at no very remote time it had been but a fisherman's station; but in the time of Jesus, Philip, Tetrarch of Iturea, had transformed this little settlement into a city, and had called it Julias, in honor of the daughter of Augustus. Round about this young and vigorous town stretched great tracts of moorland, bordered on the east by hills which were as bleak and lonely then as they are today; it was toward this wilderness that the Lord fixed the course of their little ship. Here His disciples counted upon finding that repose of which they stood greatly in need; but their hopes were destined to be disappointed.

Despite the privacy and quiet with which Jesus had screened their sudden departure, some witnesses had marked the sail being hoisted and the boat drawing away from land. But as they met with only contrary winds, little progress could be made; hence their arrival was anticipated, and Jesus, coming to land close to the river-mouth, found there a multitude as great in number as that which they had tried to escape. Besides the inhabitants of the neighboring villages, there were many pilgrims among them, who had come from distant lands; for it was now close upon the Paschal season, and caravans were being collected all along the seaboard.

Yet the Saviour would not swerve from His first design; setting out inland, He led the way to a lonely and retired hill, and there seated Himself with the weary little circle of apostles. But hardly had He done so, when on raising His eyes, He saw the

multitude coming toward Him—a fatigued and huddled throng, like sheep without a shepherd. Something in their forlorn and uncared-for condition so touched the heart of Jesus that at once He forgot His own weariness and gave all His thought to them. He spoke to them of the Kingdom of God, and healed all their sick.

MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES

The sun was sinking over the distant hills of Zabulon, yet still the Saviour continued His blessed office of charity; then in a few moments (for twilight lingers for such a little while in the East) night was come upon them, surprising this footsore and fainting flock far away out here in the wilderness. At last the disciples began to show signs of uneasiness, and gathering about the Master, finally spoke out their fears.

"This place is a desert," they said, "and the hour is late; send away the people, so that they may go into the nearest farmhouses and villages, where they can find lodging and provisions."

"They have no need to go," replied the Lord; "do you yourselves give them to eat."

And as the apostles stood staring and speechless at such an astounding proposition, Jesus turned to Philip and said—

"Where shall we buy bread to feed all this multitude?" (He spoke in this way to try him, for He Himself knew what He would do.)

"Two hundred denarii," Philip answered, "would not buy enough bread for each one to have even a small portion."

"How many loaves of bread have you?" asked Jesus.

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, returned immediately saying: "There is a young boy here who has five barley loaves and two fishes; but what is that among such a crowd as this!"

Jesus bade them bring the loaves and the fishes.

"Make the men sit down," He said to the apostles.

They obeyed His behest; and the people sat down upon the long grass, in companies of hundreds, and fifties.

And Jesus took the five loaves and the two fishes into His holy and venerable hands, and with His eyes lifted up toward Heaven, He gave thanks to God, blessing and breaking the bread, gave to

His disciples, and the disciples to the people; with the fishes He did likewise. Whereupon, in the hands of the Lord, the broken bread and the portions of fish multiplied without ceasing; and so He continued to give unto these His ministers until all were satisfied. Then, to mark more clearly still how plentiful are the gifts of Heaven, yet at the same time to guard against any squandering of His bounties, He said to his disciples:

"Gather up what fragments are left, for fear they should be lost."

Each one of the apostles, taking up his wicker pack, threaded his way through the orderly bands; on their return, the twelve baskets were filled with the fragments.

THE BREAD OF LIFE

In the eyes of the Evangelists this miracle assumed the greatest importance; for each one gives us an account of it, and Saint John, by proceeding at once (as though it were the only natural sequel) to record His promise of "the Bread of Life," shows us what a lofty meaning Jesus attached to this miracle of love. The sight of the pilgrims wending their way to Jerusalem, the nearness of the holy festival at which He might no longer take part without great danger to Himself, the thought of the Last Supper, whereat, just one year hence, He was to substitute for the paschal lamb an immortal food—all thoughts like these impelled Jesus to declare at once and forever the great mystery of His love.

The primitive Church was so assured of the truth of this interpretation that during five centuries, when she would figure forth the Eucharist, she represented not the Last Supper, but the Multiplication of the Loaves; and this scene she set over against the very table of the Lord, together with the fish, which is the symbol of the Christ, and the baskets overflowing with fragments gathered up by the apostles.

And thus we know that by working this miracle Jesus sought to prepare their minds for the reception of higher truths; but far from responding to the lofty designs of the Lord, the emotion now stirring the excited throngs had sprung from the belief that their dreams of earthly happiness were at last to be realized.

"This is He!" they exclaimed to each other.

"This is surely the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

And so without doubt they had understood the promise, thinking that Jesus would stretch forth that scepter which Balaam had foreseen, whereupon at once their oppressors would crouch before Him. He would be like to Elias descending from his chariot of fire; another Jeremias, who should restore the Mosaic worship in all its olden splendor; and unto the Temple He would be the Ark which, since the days of Babylon and the Captivity had been hidden from the eyes of the faithful.

The Saviour knew these passionate aspirations, as He knew well that they were already planning to bear Him along with them, and by force of arms proclaim Him king. He saw, too, that the hearts of His disciples were beginning to burn high as they listened to these visions of glory, while they were gradually being filled with these ardent hopes of their fellow-countrymen. It was indeed time to forestall an uprising which would have drawn down upon Him and upon His mission the wrathful vengeance of Herod, the Sanhedrin, and Rome.

Immediately He called the apostles, bidding them follow Him to the beach. There He commanded them to embark forthwith, and to head for Bethsaida in the vicinity of Capharnaum; then as they were loath to obey, the Master obliged them to set sail at once, leaving Him there upon the shore.

JESUS ALONE IN PRAYER

When they had disappeared over the darkening waters, Jesus dismissed the crowds attending Him, and, profiting by the shades of night, He sought the lonely heights of the mountain, unseen by any man. He went there to fortify His soul against the onslaught of other and sadder trials, for on the morrow Capharnaum would reject Him, even as Nazareth had done; nor was it to be long before all Galilee would follow their example; and so on, during all that last year of His ministry, until His eyes could discern before Him only one unbroken succession of base desertions and thankless perils.

In the meantime, at midnight, a tempest had descended upon the valley of the Jordan; beaten upon by wild winds, the waters rose in their might and broke over the little ship of the apostles. The whole night long they struggled against the storm, rowing

with all their strength, in the hope of making the port of Capharnaum; but the gale, wrenching the bark from its track, kept them tossed and buffeted amid the great seas.

CHRIST ON THE WATER

At the fourth watch of the night, they had gone barely halfway on their course, and were still fighting against the storm, when of a sudden they saw someone afar off, walking over the waves; it seemed to them as though He were making toward them, as if to cross before their bows. Believing that what they saw was a phantom, they were filled with dismay, and in utter terror cried out aloud. But at once the calm voice which they knew so well came over the raging elements, quieting all their alarms—

"It is I, fear not!"

And, indeed, it was Jesus, who had taken pity upon their troubled toils. They felt sure of His divine help, and eagerly made ready to welcome Him; but Peter impetuous and fiery of soul as ever, cried out—

"Lord, if it be Thou, bid me to come to Thee upon the waters!"

"Come," replied the Lord.

Straightway the apostle sprung from the vessel's side, hastening to meet the Master. And at first he trod the waves with unfaltering footsteps; but when he felt the fury of the whirlwind about him, terror clutched at his heartstrings, and he began to sink.

"Lord!" he cried, "save me!"

Jesus, reaching out His hand, upheld and sustained him.

"Oh, thou of little faith!" He said to him, "why didst thou doubt?"

Meanwhile the others besought the Saviour with all manner of prayers to come to them, certain that the divine Pilot would bring them safely into the haven. Nor was their faith disappointed. Scarcely had Jesus entered with Peter into their ship when the winds fell; and presently they found that their vessel had reached the harbor toward which they had been so long fighting their way.

The effect which this sudden stilling of the tempest had upon the disciples' minds was altogether different from the enthusiasm caused by the multiplying of the loaves. "They had not under-

stood the latter miracle at all," says Saint Mark, mournfully, "because their heart was blinded." Too dull and too sordid of soul to conceive of any spiritual Kingdom as yet, their fancy filled with flattering dreams of high fortune awaiting them, they had met the brave hopes and resolutions of the excited people with daring encouragements; for they hoped that the Master would be moved by such zealous courage, and with a word establish His throne upon earth. Accordingly, when they saw that He meant to refuse the scepter now offered Him, they were so sore at heart and so dissatisfied that they quite forgot the almighty attributes of their Lord, and dared to resist His commands. It required a night of anguish and terror, like this through which they had passed, to bring them to a knowledge of their fault. But this trial tore the veil from their eyes; as they beheld Jesus bidding the roaring floods be still, and holding the powers of nature beneath His feet, they recognized Him who spreadeth out the heavens and walketh upon the waves of the sea. Throwing themselves on their faces before Him, they worshiped and adored Him, saying:

"Truly Thou art the Son of God!"

No sooner had Jesus descended from the vessel than He was known and greeted; and instantly the rumor flew from lip to lip, until the land of Genesareth was made aware that He had returned. The multitude which was just dispersing now collected together once more, and brought with them other ill and maimed folks, beseeching Him to let them only touch the hem of His robe. This prayer recalled the faith of the poor creature with the issue of blood, and Jesus healed all who approached the divine Presence with such simple hearts of faith; afterwards He reentered Capharnaum, welcomed on every hand with cries of delight and gratitude—the last which it was given to Him to hear in this His City by adoption.

PROMISE OF THE EUCHARIST

The crowds they had left behind them on the other side of the lake, in the neighborhood of Bethsaida, had watched the ship of the apostles making off from the shore, and knew that Jesus had not embarked with them. Somehow in the night they had lost all trace of the Master, but at dawn seeing that no other ship had

quitted its moorings they made sure of finding Him speedily. So all the morning they searched over fields and plain, but of course in vain; then they concluded that He had proceeded by land, intending to rejoin His companions by some unfrequented road. In the meantime several other craft hailing from Tiberias, but now flying before the storm, had put into this harbor; and many of the Jews availed themselves of this opportunity to reach Capharnaum.

On their arrival they found the Lord seated in the synagogue, instructing the people.

"Master!" they exclaimed, "when did You come here?"

Jesus looked deep down into those hearts that yearned so after earthly goods, now plainly told them the nature of their longings.

"Amen, amen, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you have seen signs, but because you have eaten of the loaves and have been filled. Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for that which endures unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give you. For upon Him the Father, God Himself, has set His seal."

By these last words Jesus quickened and ennobled the hopes of the Jews, by lifting them from thoughts of earthly refreshment, setting before them that nourishment which is of the spirit. Hence He declared that it was not His design to establish a temporal kingdom, but rather to reign in the souls of men; it was to this end that God had imprinted a divine character upon His Holy One, the Christ, confirming His mission by miracles without number. And therefore this food of which He spoke was a certain spiritual food, which He alone would impart. This the Jews comprehended, though they were too stubborn and settled in their own notions of their law to believe that God Himself could confer upon it any more perfect dignity.

"What shall we do," they said in their amazement, "in order to labor for the works of God?"

"This is the work of God," replied Jesus, "to believe in Him whom He hath sent."

Nor does this faith, to which the Master here reduces all His precepts imply merely a belief on our part in the word of the Christ; it means that we must likewise give ourselves to Him without a shadow of reserve. It is faith, quickened by charity,

fastening mightily upon the object of its love and diffusing through all humankind the gracious gifts of God.

It is evident that the Saviour repeated this explanation more than once, and that in even clearer and simpler terms than would appear from this short summary of Saint John; for we know that His listeners understood well enough that He demanded of them a devotion and self-sacrifice which was unlimited and well-nigh unparalleled. He would have them follow Him as blindly as of old Israel followed Moses, leaving Egypt and its pleasures behind them.

"Our fathers," they began to say, "ate Manna in the desert, as it is written: He hath given them bread from Heaven to eat. But what miracle will You work so that we may see and believe in You? What will You do?"

Had not all the traditions asserted that the second Redeemer would renew the wondrous deeds of the first? And besides, how could anybody compare those loaves of barley bread, multiplied so simply under their very eyes, with that nourishment which long ago fell about the plains of Sinai? If He would prove Himself in deed and in truth the Messiah, it were needful that He too should bring down from the skies that Manna which David had called the bread of Heaven and the food of angels.

These objections Jesus accepted very graciously; only He explained to His listeners that it was not Moses, but God Himself who had rained down Manna in the desert; telling them, too, how that perishable bread was figuratively called the bread of Heaven. So divinely did He speak of this celestial food, and of the life which it would diffuse throughout the world that the Jews cried out in their delight—

"Lord, give us this bread always!"

"It is I," continued Jesus; "I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

Certainly this answer was not so mystical but that the Jews might have easily grasped its inner meaning; indeed they had often read in their sacred Books that man lives not alone by bread, but by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God; often they had heard the voice of wisdom calling to their souls in words like these: "Come, eat the bread which I will give you;

drink the wine which I have prepared for you." Thus to eat and drink the truth, to satisfy one's heart with the taste and fullness of holy words, and by study to assimilate and digest the teaching of the Master—this was a figure as familiar to their way of thinking as it is foreign to ours.

So they at once comprehended that by calling Himself the Bread of Life Jesus offered them His heavenly doctrine as the granary wherein is stored every good gift that they could desire; and this promise once more made their hearts beat high with brave hopes. But what was still to follow did not accord with their preconceived ideas. Proceeding at once to develop His thought, Jesus declared that hitherto they had only beheld Him with their eyes, without understanding who He was. Because He had descended from Heaven, He can have no other will except that of His Father, and therefore He receives only such as come to Him from God. Now the will of the Father is that all those who believe in the divinity of His Son should partake of that Bread of Life (which is the Christ Himself), and thereby have part in the life everlasting.

MURMURINGS AMONG THE PEOPLE

At this new revelation of His Godhead the synagogue broke out into murmurs of stern disapprobation; more than all else those words, "I am the living Bread which is descended from heaven," aroused the deepest antagonism and disgust of which they were capable.

"Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph?" the townsfolk of Capharnaum exclaimed. "Have we not known His father and His mother? Then how does He dare to say that He has descended from heaven?"

Jesus did not stop to answer these malcontents. He deemed it enough to reiterate what He had communicated to them already, only with a more luminous simplicity, leaving it for indwelling truth itself to quicken and enlighten their souls. Again He told them that faith is a gift of grace; and He repeated that no one can come to Him who is not prompted by the heavenly Father. They must be touched from on high, their souls drawn by a secret influence inherent in the truth of His word.

Still more clearly did He disclose the mystery of His Incarna-

tion, showing them that God is too high, too holy an object for our earthbound senses to encompass through human wisdom; for truly "no one can see the Father save Him alone who liveth in God." So Christ became Man that He might unite Himself to mankind for love of humanity—His divinity taking upon itself a dwelling of mortal flesh in order to communicate its own life unto all men.

This was the Master's exposition of the divine economy, whereby He sought to show us the way of faith which leads us unto salvation. And in order to engrave this lesson within the hearts of those who hearkened to Him, He condescended to put forth the same great thoughts over and over again, reproducing them under such manifold phrases that it would seem He did but hesitate in His speech, as though He were striving to utter the language of paradise before this wondering throng of earthbound mortals. This is why the evangelical text contains so many repetitions, and hence arises the difficulty which we experience in tracing the connection between the various ideas.

Nevertheless the Master had one more mystery to unveil on that same day. When the Son of God was made man the wonder was not wrought among us that He might dwell in a human body merely for the time of His earthly pilgrimage; rather it was His will to apply the fruits of His Incarnation unto all mankind, thus being made fresh for each one of us, by nourishing us with His blessed Body. It is, therefore, when we feed upon His flesh that Jesus takes possession of these bodies of ours; it is by the mystic union of all that He is in His humanity with all His divinity that salvation is assured unto us of the faithful. Jesus only asked these people of Capharnaum that they love Him enough to entrust themselves implicitly to His guidance, and then, through the thick clouds which must ever shroud this divine mystery, they should walk forward encompassed by the presence of their guide and friend; and so, led onward by the Christ, they would surely find life everlasting in faith—faith which reveals the gracious fact of the Eucharist as being in a marvelous manner inherent in the Incarnation itself. "The bread which I will give," He added, "is My flesh for the life of the world."

At this surprising announcement that they should eat the flesh

of Christ there was a louder murmur of dissent arising from all parts of the synagogue; on every hand the Jews began to dispute with each other, the majority arguing, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" Evidently they could only comprehend that they were bidden to take a human body and feast thereon, that they must shed human blood and drink thereof.

Yet, far from abating this literal interpretation by one whit, Jesus saw fit on the contrary, to enforce it by a double oath:

"Amen, Amen, I say to you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and do not drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has life everlasting, and I will raise him up on the last day."

He well knew what horror the Jews felt for any such idea of blood, and how strictly they were forbidden the use of any such food; and notwithstanding, He did not hesitate to assail and overturn every most cherished belief of their lives, if by so doing, He might more surely establish the reality of His Body, which is eaten by the faithful, and His Blood which is their drink.

"My flesh is truly meat, My blood truly drink, and he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in Me and I in Him. Whosoever eateth Me shall live by Me."

And now, having so clearly set forth the meaning of the Eucharist, He spoke to them of its effects; for though an ardent faith could make eternal life certain for the soul of man, and for his body obtain a glorious resurrection, yet it is the Eucharist alone which unites Jesus with the Christian who receives Him; in one only body and one only soul commingles the lives of two under one form, and thereby in each one of us is consummated that union of Christ with humanity, even as aforetime by the Incarnation "He dwelt amongst us."

EVEN DISCIPLES PROTEST

The earnestness and persistency with which Jesus reaffirmed a doctrine so shocking to the notions of His hearers resulted in open expressions of their impatience and dislike. It was not long before the citizens of Capharnaum were joined by the pilgrims and all the rest, while even the disciples themselves finally uttered

strong protests. "This is a hard saying," they said; "who can listen to it?"

And certainly, after the fashion in which they understood it, it would be an unbearable thought; for they imagined that they were bidden to tear the body of the Master limb from limb, and make a horrid feast of its members.

Jesus strove to drive away this unholy vision from their mind by adding that, though He was to give Himself to be their Bread of Life, yet would He none the less rise with glory into heaven, even in such wise as He had descended to our earth, clad in this His living tabernacle of flesh; He said, too, that "His flesh," broken and dispersed among us for our food, "would avail us nothing, if we do not partake at the same time of the spirit" and the Godhead, which quickens the flesh and diffuses its life through our souls. As to the manner and the mode which He would take in order to communicate this gift to us, being an ordinance far beyond the ken of sensual man, He saw fit to await some future day for revealing it more fully. So for the present, it was enough to prepare their minds by repeating that "His words were spirit and life," whereby He would teach them that His faithful followers must find the spirit of holiness and the life divine in the surpassing mystery of the Communion, wherein His flesh is really eaten, though in a manner more spiritual than material.

These explanations did not dispel all disquietude from the hearts of His disciples, and among those who rebelled against this truth Jesus must have marked one of the Twelve, Judas Iscariot; for "from the beginning He knew those who did not believe in Him, and He knew him who was to betray Him." The sight of these obstinate mortals still muttering against Him, so easily shocked at His word, and already prepared to declare their outspoken disbelief, was very grievous to the heart of Jesus.

"There are some among you who do not believe," He exclaimed, "and it was for this reason I said to you, 'No one can come to Me, unless it be given him by My Father.' "

And yet this last appeal to their nobler feelings was rejected; still they would not understand this urgent warning to ask their heavenly Father for the faith which comes from Him. Humility and obedience for them were at an end. "After this many of His

disciples drew away from His company, and walked no more with Him."

However, the apostles were still with Him. Turning toward the Twelve He said—

"Will you too go away?"

Peter loved his Master too well to doubt His words, however incomprehensible they might seem; indignant at the very thought of deserting Him, he straightway replied for all:

"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of everlasting life, and we have come to believe and to know that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God."

Dear and comfortable as this confession was to the heart of Jesus, it could not quite console Him nor distract His thoughts from the traitor in their midst.

"Have I not chosen you the Twelve?" He said. "Yet one of you is a devil."

"By this He meant Judas, son of Simon, the man from Kerioth, who was to deliver Him up, even while he was still one of the Twelve." It is evident from these words, as we have noted before, that Judas took some part in these murmurings of the citizens and pilgrims. Long since the struggle between greedy avarice and his heavenly vocation had been going on within him, and hence every allusion to a spiritual kingdom filled him with vexation and anger; for it all seemed to him more visionary and foolish every day. The discourse just now delivered in the synagogue of Capharnaum completed the destruction of his faith. Hereafter, though he remained in the intimate companionship of Jesus, he had already betrayed Him in his soul. By this rebuke the Saviour graciously sought to stir the soul of the thief. Finding He could only get silence in return, He wended His way sadly out of the synagogue.

BOOK FIVE

Third Year of the Ministry of Jesus

THE SOJOURN OF JESUS IN TYRE AND DECAPOLIS

ONLY ONE YEAR lies between Jesus and death; its opening days are dark and threatening. Judea, the foremost object of His care, now treats Him as if He were its bitterest foe. He would no longer walk there, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Jerusalem was closed against Him; they were celebrating the Pasch there now, yet He could not show Himself among His people. Galilee, in its turn, had withdrawn from Him, and Capharnaum had broken out into angry murmurs against Him. The Lord had no other alternative except to wander through a pagan territory, across the kingdom of Philip and into the lands lying beyond the Jordan. Meanwhile we shall see Him still pursued from town to town, from one wilderness to another, even to the day when, with His mission accomplished, of His own will He saw fit to deliver Himself into the hands of His executioners.

However, although Capharnaum had lost its first faith, it never conceived any such violent hatred for the Master it had so recently honored and loved as that displayed toward Him by Jerusalem. Jesus still dwelt there in safety until the return of the pilgrims who had gone up to the Temple; but once the Paschaltime was over, He could see that new numbers of spies were dogging His footsteps. These were some of the Pharisees and certain Scribes who had come down from the Holy City, full of the discussions to which they had been listening from their famous doctors, and thereby nerved with greater zeal than ever to maintain the perfect observance of their cherished ordinances.

The freedom which the Lord displayed in dealing with their

Pharisaical precepts, was, as we have said, a shocking and scandalous thing to those sectaries. Now we are well aware to what excesses, in the matter of ablutions particularly, the Jews of this period, and notably the Pharisees, carried their scrupulosity. Saint Mark tells us how, before each meal, they were accustomed to wash their hands with the greatest care, scrubbing their clenched fists one against the other, immersing their whole body in water on their return from any public places, forever cleansing their cups, water-jars, brazen pots, and the wooden parts of the couches on which their guests reclined. And these interminable pains were not mere practices which one was free to observe or not; but, being taught as the traditions of their ancient rabbis, they were as rigidly enforced as any precepts of the Law. To abide in the faithful practice of all these, it behooved one to go any distance for the necessary water, and the Rabbi Akiba was praised for incurring the risk of dying of thirst in prison rather than drink without having first purified his hands. It is true the Sadducees ridiculed this slavery to trifles, and often asked the Pharisees if they would not end by sprinkling the sun with lustral water; but all their ridicule could not rob the Scribes of their ascendancy; and, in the people's eyes, to violate one of their observances still continued to be regarded as a heinous crime.

PHARISAIC ABLUTIONS

The apostles, reared from childhood in reverence for the doctors of the Law, now trembled before them; consequently, they were vastly disquieted when they saw some of these personages approaching Christ with words of cold disapproval.

"Why do not Your disciples follow the traditions of the ancients? Why do they eat with unclean hands?"

Jesus would not allow these hypocrites to practice upon the simplicity of the apostles. He straightway took up the defense of His own, and withstood them, meeting reproof with reproof.

"And you," He said, "why do you transgress the law of God in order to follow those traditions of yours? God has said, 'Honor thy father and thy mother.' And yet you say: If a man says to his parents, I have vowed to God that which I might have bestowed upon you; the word 'Corban' once uttered, the vow is

irrevocable, and you no longer permit the son to do anything for his father and mother. Thus you set the law of God at naught by your traditions. Hypocrites! verily it was of you that Isaias prophesied:

"With their lips do these people honor Me,
But their heart is far from Me,
In vain do they honor Me,
Teaching the doctrines and the precepts of men."

It was the first time that Jesus had so severely scourged the Pharisees, openly treating them as hypocrites and laying bare the inherent weakness of their doctrine. Hitherto He had said nothing as to their claim that they were justified in giving the same force to the teaching of their rabbis as to the commands of God; until now He had never tried to dissuade the people from believing that these observances also came from Moses, and thus formed a second Law. But it was time for Him to tell them plainly that only upon the ruins of the Commandments could the Pharisees succeed in establishing their traditions. And this Jesus did with such overwhelming authority, swaying all minds with such convincing power, that His enemies retired in confusion.

But the astonished crowds were also for withdrawing in their turn. Jesus called them back to Him.

"Listen to Me, all of you," He said, "and understand. There is nothing from without a man which, by entering into him, can defile him; but whatsoever proceeds from a man, that it is which renders a man impure. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." And leaving the people there, He re-entered His dwelling.

This saying of Christ was at once reported to the Scribes. It touched them to the quick, discrediting as it did their interminable ablutions, which had no power to cleanse the sin-stained soul; leaving the people to infer that even those Mosaic purifications, which thus far Jesus had treated with respect, would soon have to give place to simple counsels of an inward purity of heart. Deep was their indignation; indeed, their anger was so threatening that the frightened disciples hastened back to the Lord.

"Do You know," they said to Him, "how much the Pharisees were scandalized at this saying?"

Jesus met their anxiety with imperturbable serenity, and repeated that these regulations, invented by man and reprobated by God, must disappear.

"Every plant," He said, "which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up; if a blind man guide another, both of them shall fall into the same pit."

His firmness restored peace among the apostles, but their slow and uncultured minds could not manage to decipher the hidden meaning of those words which had so shocked and offended the Scribes.

"Lord," said Peter, in the others' name, "explain this parable to us."

Though yielding to their request, the Master replied:

"What! are you too, then, devoid of intelligence? Do you not understand that there is nothing from without which, by entering into a man, can render him unclean, because it does not enter into his heart? For it is from within, and from the heart, that there arise all wicked thoughts—adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, avarice, malicious deeds, cheating, lewd thoughts, a covetous eye, blasphemy, pride, folly. These are things which defile a man; but not to eat with unwashed hands, for that cannot defile a man."

Jesus had not succeeded in discomfiting the Pharisees without embittering their hearts with a fiercer dislike for Him. Very soon they had arrayed such a formidable host of foes against the Master that He saw it would be impossible for Him to remain in Galilee, or even to return thither, except at rare intervals. Crossing over the frontiers of Zabulon and Nephthali, for the time being He sought an asylum in the pagan provinces, and stayed there almost six months, devoting all His care and attention to the apostles, thereby finishing the instructions He had come to bestow; giving them more knowledge of His Church and tracing out before their eyes its divine plan.

The Evangelists mention but a few of the incidents of this journey. They merely state that upon leaving Galilee, shortly after the Pasch (April), the Saviour passed from Tyre into the Decapolis, made a brief sojourn on the shores of Genesareth, went back immediately to the valley of the upper Jordan, and did not return to Capharnaum until about the Feast of the Taber-

nacles (the last of September). During this voluntary exile, the Master for the most part sought solitude, probably changing His place of abode as soon as His presence in any region came to be remarked, for He had not been sent to enlighten the Gentiles in His own person; therefore, faithful to the terms of His mission, He endeavored to remain unknown in these wealthy countries.

However, His coming could not continue always entirely unnoticed; for a long while now the renown of His deeds had exceeded the boundaries of Israel; long since, out of Tyre and Sidon, people had journeyed to hear His words and to beg the cure of their sick, so that all Syria was now well aware that a prophet, the Son of David, was once again conferring a heavenly splendor upon the land of Juda.

THE CHANAANITE WOMAN

Now as He was passing along the road not far from either Tyre or Sarepta, a woman who had overheard much talk concerning Him hurried out of the house where her daughter lay struggling in the throes of a furious delirium.

"Have mercy upon me," she cried, "my Lord, Thou Son of David. My daughter is cruelly tormented by the devil."

The Gospel informs us more at length as regards the poor petitioner. A Greek by language and manners, she belonged to the Phœnician provinces of Syria, and was a descendant of the race of Canaan; hence it was a disowned and reprobate blood which flowed in her veins. The Lord answered her not a word.

Without heeding this silence of the Christ, the woman set out to follow Him, never ceasing to implore His mercy. Jesus entered a dwelling in order to remain in seclusion there, but the Chanaanean begged with no less earnestness, and did but redouble her supplications when the door was shut and she was left outside in company with the apostles. Wearying of her cries and furthermore fearing lest the knots of curious spectators now collecting around her should attract attention to them, and so betray the identity which the Master desired to conceal, coming in to Him they said:

"Send her away, for she keeps calling after us."

At no time had Jesus ever dismissed anyone who thus besought

His aid without first granting their prayer, and the apostles had no idea but that in this instance He would act as usual; yet as it happened, He only vouchsafed the reply:

"I am not sent except to the lost sheep of the House of Israel."

Yet, when they repeated His words to her, the Chanaanite was not disheartened one whit by this rebuff. She determined to renew the strife again with the Lord Himself, trying to wrest the will of Heaven and so prove herself worthy, pagan though she was, to be treated as though she were a true child of Abraham. And so she crossed the threshold of the house, made her way to where Jesus stood, and casting herself at his feet, cried out:

"Lord, help me."

The Master continued to display the same hardness; nothing seemed to move Him, neither her tears nor the sympathy of the apostles, now quite amazed at seeing Him for the first time insensible to compassion.

"Let the children be filled first," he said, "for it is not fitting to take the children's bread and throw it out to the dogs."

Still the mother would not yield. She bowed beneath this bitter rebuff, which rated her as of less worth than an unclean beast; nay, she would even endeavor to bend this reproach to her own advantage, and so manage to turn His own words against the Christ.

"It is true, my Lord," she answered, "but even the little whelps eat the crumbs of the children's bread which fall beneath the table."

FAITH CONQUERS

At this Jesus suffered Himself to be overcome; thus far He had resisted only that He might invigorate that faith which He saw burning so steadfastly within her, thereby exalting it to the point of heroism. The tender mercies of His heart, now repressed too long, suddenly overflowed in a cry of joy.

"Ah, woman, your faith is great; let it be done unto you as you will."

The Chanaanite hastened back to the home where she had left her child; the demon had disappeared, and the little one was lying upon her bed.

The Gospel makes no mention of other miracles performed in these pagan lands. It only adds that Jesus departed from the

border-land of Tyre, returning by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee. Making His way through the Valley of the Leontes, He came out at the Jordan near its source, and by this route descended to the Decapolis.

HEALING THE DEAF MUTE

The Decapolis lies to the east of the Sea of Tiberias, extending in a northerly direction toward Damascus, and to the south as far as the cataract of Jabbok. As its name implies, it formed a confederation of ten free towns, half pagan, which the Jews had not been able to subjugate after their return from the Captivity. Jesus was not a stranger nor entirely unknown here in these Greek cities, for the possessed persons of Gerasa had published the power of their Saviour on all sides, and hardly had His coming been noised abroad before they brought a deaf and dumb man to Him. Those who had guided him there besought Jesus to lay His hands upon Him. The gift of mercy was not refused them, but hoping to find in the Decapolis the same seclusion which He had enjoyed in Phœnicia, He desired to perform the cure in privacy. Therefore, He took the feeble man's hand in His own, led him away from the throng, and there laid His fingers lightly upon his ears to denote that they were to open, and with a little saliva touched the tongue which was soon to be loosed; then He raised His eyes heavenward and groaned, sighing not merely for the sad condition to which sin has reduced mankind, but, for the many hearts still hardened to the truth.

"Ephpheta," He said. "Be thou opened."

"And his ears were at once opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak correctly."

Jesus enjoined secrecy upon the witnesses of this marvel, but they only listened to the promptings of heartfelt gratitude. "The more He forbade them to speak, the more they published it abroad: 'He doeth all things well,' they said; 'He hath made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.' " In vain did the Master retire into the wild and desolate highlands lying to the east of Genesareth Lake, wishing to avoid their eager demonstrations. From the hill-slope whereon He found a resting place soon He saw a great crowd of countryfolk pushing their way up to where He sat. On every hand they were bringing all manner of dumb, and blind,

and lame, and maimed, and many others, and these they put down at His feet, fully confident that they would rise up sound and well. Touched by their faith, Jesus granted the petitions of each and all, so that the people were struck with wonder when they saw the dumb speaking, the cripples made whole, the blind seeing, and in their joy these pagans of the Decapolis loudly glorified the God of Israel.

SECOND MULTIPLICATION OF LOAVES

However, the concourse was growing greater from hour to hour; in a short time four thousand men, without counting their women and children, had all gathered together in this far-off wilderness. For all of three days they stayed close about the Saviour, only desiring to follow Him; but such little food as they had soon disappeared, and being remote from any village, they began to suffer the weakness of hunger. Once more Jesus was minded to spread a table for His people in the midst of the wilderness, and He called the apostles.

"I have compassion on this throng," He said, "because for three days now they have remained with Me, and they have nothing to eat. If I send them back thus to their homes, their strength will fail them, for some have come from far away."

The Twelve were surprised at any such plan. Unquestionably they had not forgotten the miracle performed near Bethsaida a few months earlier, but the answer given to the Chanaanitish woman was still fresher in their memory—how that it is not fitting to cast the children's bread to dogs—and they had no notion that their Master would lavish upon these pagans any such bounties as He had been wont to bestow on the sons of Israel. So they answered:

"How are we to find enough bread in this desert place to satisfy so great a multitude?"

"How many loaves have you?" asked Jesus.

"Seven," was the reply, "and a few small fishes."

Upon that He bade the throngs sit down upon the ground. Then taking the seven loaves and the fishes, He gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. The four thousand men, the women and the children ate and were filled. This time, without waiting

to be prompted by Him, the apostles gathered up all the fragments that were left, and they filled seven large baskets. Afterwards He dismissed the concourse whose faith had made them intrude upon His solitude. However, from this gathering Jesus had not to encounter either that obstinacy or those ambitious cravings which His former miracle had excited among the Jews at Bethsaida. All showed their willingness to obey His behests, and readily departed.

THE CONFESSION OF PETER

When the crowds had all disappeared Jesus walked down the moorlands to the shore, whence a bark bore Him across to the opposite bank. What design could have moved Him to revisit these places which from now on were destined to be so hostile to Him? Was it the desire once more to sow the fields of Genesareth with the holy seed of His word, or did He hope to find, further inland, in the hill country of Zabulon, a still more profound solitude? The latter hypothesis seems the most likely after all; for the Master ordered them to land, not at Capharnaum, but upon the desolate shores of Magdala, and Saint Mark tells us that He set out immediately for Dalmanutha, an obscure hamlet lying among the mountains which separate Magdala from Tiberias.

But despite the care which Jesus took to conceal His presence, He could not escape the persecution of the Pharisees and Sadducees. For a considerable time they had appeared to be indifferent to the movements of Christ. So absorbed were they by the schemings of their political life that they bothered themselves but little as to this Galilean prophet and His Kingdom of Heaven; but the Jewish Scribes had at last managed to arouse them from their state of indifference. Tiberias, where Herod had a royal residence, was nearby, and the courtiers and high officials of this prince belonged mostly to the sect of the Sadduceans; accordingly it is some of their number whom we find here, mingling with the emissaries of the Sanhedrin. In former years the Saviour had found it sufficient to withdraw for a short space, in order to quiet the mistrust of the Tetrarch; but since the time the blood of John the Baptist was upon Herod, destroying his peace, his courtiers and ministers were readily instigated against Jesus, and promptly joined the zealots of the Law in their relentless pursuit.

JESUS WARNS THE PHARISEES

This time the attack of His sworn foes took a new turn. Until now the Pharisees had been content to depreciate the miracles of the Christ by attributing them to Beelzebub, persuading the people that no wonder performed upon earth can be regarded as proof of a divine mission, because there is none which is beyond the power of the devils. But here at Dalmanutha they loudly challenged the Saviour, defying Him to work some sign upon high—to cause the sun to halt as Joshua had done, or, like Samuel bring the thunderbolt crashing down from out the cloudless sky, or encompass Himself about like Elias in the days of old, with lightning and flame.

Jesus disdained this provocation as once before in the desert He had spurned the demands of Satan. All power was given to Him in Heaven and upon earth—this the poor and the suffering of Judea knew well; but to be so conciliatory to His enemies and to triumph over them by a profitless display of His divine attributes—as far as this the Master could not condescend. He was content to turn His face westward, pointing to the sun, whose last rays were veiling the distant mountain peaks in a mantle of gold.

"In the evening," was His answer, "you say: 'It will be fine tomorrow for the sky is red.' And at dawn: 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and lowering.' Hypocrites! you discern what the face of the heavens portends, and yet you know not how to recognize the signs of the times in which you live!

"What!" He exclaimed, "does this wicked and adulterous generation seek a sign! There shall be given it no other sign but that of Jonas the prophet." And leaving the Pharisees with this prophecy of His Resurrection, Jesus returned into their little vessel.

Once more He left the shores of Galilee and set sail for the northern part of the lake; and as they drew away from the land, He watched the bank fading away and vanishing in the soft shadowy haze: Capharnaum, Bethsaida, Chorozain, one after another, had rejected Him—had abandoned Him to His enemies! Now as it happened, in the haste of their departure, the apostles had forgotten to renew their store of provisions, but one loaf of

bread remained, and they made the discovery only when their bark was far out from land. As they were grieving over their neglect, Jesus spoke to them in words which were meant to turn their minds from these material cares:

"Take good heed," He said, "and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

The disciples, thinking that the Master shared their anxiety about their daily food, inquired of each other what He would have them understand by this speech. Was He reproaching them for coming on board without stores, or did He mean to forbid them to partake of any food along with Sadducees and Pharisees? Not one of them was reminded of that unseen leaven which, fermenting in the human heart, sours and corrupts its life; although Jesus had employed a metaphor often used by the Jews to describe the effects of sin, still they understood Him not.

"Men of little faith," He exclaimed, "why do you think that you are without bread? So, then, are you, too, devoid of either sense or reason? Are your hearts blinded? Have you eyes only that you may not see, and ears that you may not hear? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand men, how many baskets of fragments did you take up?"

"Twelve," they said.

"And when I broke the seven loaves for four thousand men, how many large baskets did you gather up?"

"Seven," they replied.

"Then how is it that you do not understand that it was not of bread I spoke when I told you to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?"

From the rebuke the apostles began to see how they had wounded the heart of the Master by thus disregarding His loving care, and even His power. Their higher thoughts aroused once more, they finally glimpsed His hidden meaning: it was not of the leaven which is put into bread wherof He told them to beware, but of the doctrine of His enemies.

CURING THE BLIND MAN

The morning of the next day they landed in the kingdom of Philip, and Jesus wandered along the Jordan until they were not

far from Bethsaida-Julias, whereupon some people brought a blind man for Him to lay His hands upon him. Studious as ever to refrain from manifesting any striking proofs of His power outside the land of Israel, the Lord took the poor sufferer by the hand and led him away from the busy town in order to perform the cure unnoticed. But He did not accomplish this miracle (as He had done many others, which we have witnessed so often in Galilee) easily and without effort, with a word or by the mere movement of His will; for it was part of the hidden counsels of the Godhead that the effects of His supernatural power should be proportioned to the faith of those who implore His aid. Just as the unbelief of the Nazarenes had stood in the way of His working any miracle for them, so here at Bethsaida-Julias the faith of the blind man was still so weak as to hinder his being cured at once, and accordingly we see Jesus gently opening the eyes of his body, little by little, in proportion as He dispelled the darkness from his soul. For this reason now He multiplied the exterior acts, as though He wished to quicken the suppliant's desire for salvation—the firm hands laid over his eyes, the spittle of Christ moistening them like a heavenly balm.

"Do you see anything?" Jesus asked.

Glowering about him, the poor man suddenly cried, "I see men walking, yet they look to me like trees!" And in his delight he turned toward the Master again.

A second time the Saviour's hands touched his eyes, and at once they saw all things clearly. Jesus imposed strict silence upon the man, bidding him:

"Go to thy house, and if thou enter the village, tell nobody."

In this instance it would seem as if the Lord were better obeyed than a little while before in the Decapolis, for we see Him shortly afterwards leaving the village accompanied by His disciples alone. In this way He reached the sources of the stream and arrived at the capital, called Cæsarea-Philippi. He passed through the outskirts of the city to seek a resting place at the foot of Mount Hermon—in the valleys which the springs of the Jordan fill with heavy coverts and the rustling of numberless brooks.

Among the rest there is one memorable fact which will ever make this forest-country illustrious. Here, while Jesus was praying in solitude, all at once, breaking off from the prayer which

was His only repose here below, He called to His disciples, who had now drawn aloof from Him, and began to question them.

"Who do men say the Son of Man is?"

Sorrowful was the answer. His apostles confessed that as yet no one in Israel had acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah. Some, like Herod, overmastered by their guilty fears had taken Christ for a resurrected John the Baptist; others believed they were listening to Elias; others called Him Jeremias. Many imagined He was some new prophet, but none had seen in Jesus that which He is unto all time. And although certain stupendous marvels had manifestly declared His Messiahship, these were no more than flashes of lightning for an instant glittering through the gloom of night; throughout the land of Juda, the Light shone amid darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.

Jesus said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

PETER ANSWERS A QUESTION

Put to them at a time when the Master was wandering afar from His native land, this question was nothing less than a decisive trial of His apostles. Simon stood the test without flinching. Instantly he took up the word, in the name of his brethren, and addressing Jesus in his straightforward fashion said:

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The faith of Peter, quick and living as of old whether amid the howlings of the storm, or in the disapprobation of Capharnaum, now lifted the veil which overhung the divinity of the Saviour, and, raising above all that which is of man, proclaimed Him Son of God, equal and consubstantial with His Father, God Himself.

Listening to this profession from the lips of His apostle, Jesus responded.

THE PRIMACY OF PETER

"Blessed art thou Simon, son of Jonas, because neither flesh nor blood has revealed this unto thee, but My Father who is in Heaven. And now I say to thee: Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of the Kingdom of

Heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

These words conferred the primacy upon the son of Jonas, and upon Him established that masterwork of Christ, which is His Church, a name we find here mentioned for the first time. Simon, the weak mortal of flesh and blood, became the foundation stone, destined to brave all assaults of hell. In making this apostle the base of His eternal Church, Jesus assured him the same stability which He gave the holy edifice, transmitting the privileges of Peter to his successors. Like him they should all be seated in the chair of infallibility and hold in their hands the keys, symbol of supreme authority. All who were to come after him, even as he, must give laws to the Church, guiding in the paths of salvation kings and peoples, pastors and their flocks; they must judge without appeal, bind and loose upon earth and in heaven, opening and shutting the gates of the celestial kingdom. Such powers are divine, but they are the natural consequences of that promise made to the son of Jonas:

"Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church."

But these surpassing splendors of the Church were only as yet a fair and distant prospect; for Peter and his companions there was still in store the fierce struggle which precedes the victory, and straight before Jesus Himself there stretched a weary way of sorrows. For, with a price set upon His head, harassed and hunted down by spies and informers, hereafter He must needs keep silence as to the unconquerable kingdom He had come to establish. So, scarcely had He uttered the divine promise to His apostles, out here alone in the forest, when He commanded them authoritatively to observe the strictest silence as far as concerned what they had just heard from Him. The confession of Peter, his primacy in the Church, his privileges and prerogatives were as a sacred confidence which must not go beyond the apostolic college; and the reason He gave them for this was that His enemies would shortly put Him to death.

THE PASSION FORETOLD

It was the first time that the Master had spoken so openly of His death; hitherto He had only made mysterious allusions to it. And indeed in this instance He did not go so far as to unveil the

utter ignominy of the Cross, deeming it enough to declare that He must go up to Jerusalem, there to suffer many things at the hands of the ancients, the chief priests, and the Scribes, and to die. As yet He did not add that He was to be delivered by these men into the hands of the Gentiles, and until the very time of the passion He forbore to tell them that He was to be spit upon, scourged, and bound to a Cross. Knowing by experience the weakness of His disciples, He was careful to shield them against despair. So then, that He might reawaken their courage, He now foretold that after three days He would rise again.

Consoling as this promise was, it could not satisfy the sturdy ardor of Peter. The great praise bestowed upon him, and the joy he felt at having confessed, in the others' name, the divinity of his Master, had now excited all his vanity. In his eager self-sufficiency he took it upon him to withstand the Lord Himself, and to bid him proceed no further along paths which would lead to death. Grasping His hand, he drew Him to one side and began to chide Him for His words.

"Far be it from Thee, O Lord; this will never happen to Thee."

Jesus turned away from him, and looking toward the apostles He spoke in a tone so loud that those who had listened to His eulogy of Peter should likewise hear this stern rebuke:

"Get behind Me, Satan! Thou art a scandal to Me, for thou dost not mind the things of God but those of man."

While Peter stood there, humbled and silent, Jesus recalled their minds to His approaching sacrifice, and drew from the thought a powerful lesson which the Twelve were not the only ones to hear. Meantime, many of the countryfolk had collected together at a short distance from this youthful rabbi who was as yet a stranger to them. The Saviour bade them come nearer; then, with that same tone of authority which He used in Galilee, He began to instruct them; telling them that the great duty of life is to renounce one's self, to sacrifice everything in the pursuit of truth and righteousness, forgetting the body and its cravings, the soul and its most intimate promptings. Once more He repeated what He had already said, that along this rough and perilous pathway they had but to follow in His footsteps, and, like Him, bear their cross by mortifying their passions. This was what the Master had called losing one's soul in order to save it.

PROFIT AND LOSS

"For what does it profit a man," He exclaimed, "if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

This saying threw a chill shadow of foreboding over the apostles' spirits. In order to reinvigorate their faith, the Lord forthwith announced His future coming, surrounded by angels, to reward His tried and tested followers; then before their eyes He set forth the splendor of that great day, when His Church in its triumph would supplant the earthly realm of Israel; and finally He told them of the hour, now near at hand, when three of His apostles were to be brought face to face with the Divine Being.

"There are those among you," He said, "who shall not taste death until they have seen the Kingdom of God."

Six days later this prophecy was accomplished in the persons of Peter, James, and John, who fell down at the feet of their transfigured Master. But even in the crowds which listened to these words there stood more than one disciple who was to survive the ruin of Jerusalem, and with the eyes of the flesh would behold the new reign of the risen Christ.

JESUS ON MOUNT TABOR

Since this instruction a week had elapsed, during which the Master descended to the valley of the Jordan, then quietly and unheeded took the mountain track which leads across the hills lying along the eastern shore of Lake Genesareth. On the eighth day the evangelists show Him wending His way up the steep sides of a tall mountain, which they do not mention by name, yet it is none other than Tabor, if we may trust the testimony of tradition.

It was twilight when Jesus began the ascent. Three apostles bore Him company—Simon and the two "Sons of Thunder," James and John. As they were destined to behold the Agony of the Lord it was fitting that their faith should be fortified beforehand, and their eyes illumined by the effulgence of the Godhead. They climbed the rocks wearily without any presentiment of what they were to witness, and once on the summit, seeing the Master wrapped in prayer, according to His nightly custom, they

stretched themselves along the ground close at hand, and here upon Mount Tabor, as again only a little later in Gethsemani, soon yielded to their need of sleep.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

And, lo! while praying, Jesus is transfigured: a glory all divine streams through the veils of flesh, His face shines like the sun, a whiteness as of glistening snow envelops His garments. "Never fuller upon earth made whiteness like unto this," says Saint Mark. At the same moment two figures appeared at either side; they were Moses and Elias, one coming up from the valley of Moab, whence he had vanished in the cloud, the other alighting from his flame-girt chariot. The vision thrilled the air with its glories, shedding such strong pulsations of light that the apostles were aroused from slumber; their eyes opened upon these dazzling rays, their ears caught the words wherewith Moses and Elias addressed Christ. They were talking of His departure from the world, which was to be accomplished at Jerusalem.

The splendid spectacle was about to fade from their sight. Rapt and awestruck, Peter cried out:

"Master! it is good for us to be here. And let us set up three tents, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias!"

What had he in mind when uttering these words? Did the apostle's spirit dream of long days of happiness like this upon the heaven-kissed heights, with Israel's yearning hopes all gratified, with Moses and Elias to add a supreme splendor to the new Kingdom of Christ? Or was it as a refuge from the pleasures of earth that he was fain to raise these three leafy tents? The Gospel scarcely allows us to indulge in such conjectures, for it goes on to tell us how the disciples were, for the time being, bewildered with fear, and Peter not knowing what he said.

VOICE FROM HEAVEN

Even while the latter was still speaking a radiant cloud encircled them, and from the silvery mist came a Voice saying—

"This is My beloved Son; hear Him."

Then they fell with faces to the earth, and when, upon recovering somewhat from their terrors, they dared at last to lift their eyes they saw no one but Jesus. Still the apostles would not ven-

ture to stand before Him; but the Saviour stepped toward them and touched them, saying—

"Arise, and do not be afraid."

Indeed it was not to inspire their souls with fear that Moses and Elias had appeared on this mountain peak; it was to adore the divinity of Christ; for, in their person, both the Law and the prophets did homage to Him. They had entered within the cloud the instant that the Voice of the Father commanded man to hearken to His Son, and by this departure proclaimed that their mission was concluded, and that they yielded their places to the one and only Master.

The Lord did not expect that the apostles would at once grasp the full meaning of the marvelous show; it was enough for His purpose that they should treasure the memory of the fact in order to testify to its truth, later on, in the presence of the Church. And so, when in the cool of early dawn He made the descent of the mountainside with them, He did not explain the significance of this apparition, but rather, with grave words, bound them to tell the vision to no one, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Then only, enlightened from on high, they were to reveal to their brethren that the majesty of Jesus had been unveiled before them, that before their very eyes He had received all honor from God the Father, and that a voice had come from out that magnificence of glory proclaiming Him, Son of the Most High.

The three apostles obeyed, though they had no clearer insight into the purport of the Saviour's words than they had had into the meaning of His Transfiguration.

How will He rise from among the dead? they kept asking themselves; and why had Elias disappeared again? The Scribes say that he must go before the Messiah, and once more set all things in order. Is not this our Lord also the Christ?

These questions troubled their minds so much that they finally laid them before the Master.

"It is true that Elias must first come, and that he will restore all things," He answered them. "But I tell you that Elias is already come and they have not known him, but have dealt with him in all things as it pleased them; in like manner the Son of Man must suffer at their hands." Then he explained the oracle

of Malachy so clearly to them that they were enabled to distinguish between the two forerunners whom the Scribes had confounded. There was that Elias of old, whose return will betoken the last days of the world; while the other Elias, the first herald of the Christ, is John the Baptist.

As they were nearing the foot of the mountain Jesus perceived the rest of His disciples surrounded by a great concourse of people. They had been endeavoring to heal a possessed youth, but their efforts had been of no avail, and the Scribes, gloating over their discomfiture, were pushing the argument against them in gleeful triumph, when of a sudden the multitude became aware of the approach of the Lord. Apparently His countenance still burned with the afterglow of its recent splendor, for, after a momentary thrill of awe, with one accord the people flocked about Him to give Him greeting.

"What are you arguing about among yourselves?" He inquired. The Scribes' faces had fallen; the disciples were too much abashed to tell of their failure; but a man's voice arose from the midst of the bystanders.

"Master, I have brought to Thee my son, who has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth; and he is wasting away. And I told Thy disciples to cast it out, but they could not." And pushing his way through the bystanders he flung himself at the Saviour's feet.

In a glance Jesus saw all the eager faces surrounding the poor suppliant; saw among them His relentless foes; saw a crowd more curious than compassionate, above all, saw that His own apostles were still fainthearted and wavering in their faith.

This spectacle wrung from His heavy heart the cry—

"O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you?"

Then turning to the man who had invoked His help: "Bring thy son here to Me," He said.

The boy was brought; hardly had he seen Jesus when, seized with the frenzy, he was dashed to the ground, and writhed in foaming delirium. Thereupon the Lord asked the father:

"For how long a time has this been going on?"

"From his infancy," responded the latter; "and oftentimes the

spirit has thrown him into the fire and into the water in order to destroy him. If ye can do anything, come to our aid—have pity on us!"

THE POWER OF FAITH

"If you can believe," replied Jesus, "everything is possible to him who believes."

Disquieted by these words the man began to fear lest he had shown too little confidence in the Master, and in his distress the tears came, as he cried, half-weeping—

"Lord, I believe: help Thou my unbelief."

The Saviour, noting how the curious folk were pressing around Him, turned toward the little lad lying in agony at His feet.

"Thou deaf and dumb spirit," He said, "I command thee, go out of him and enter him no more."

The demon, raising up the poor possessed body, wracked it once more fiercely, then came forth with a great cry. Like one stunned the lad fell back to the ground; but with no foam about his lips, with no convulsion in his limbs.

"He is dead!" exclaimed the witnesses of this miracle.

But Jesus took him by the hand, raised him up, and the child, now whole and sound, stood erect before them.

After this Jesus lost no time in seeking shelter from the curious within the walls of some dwelling; the apostles accompanying Him felt ashamed of their public failure, and cast about for something to account for it. At the time when the Master first gave them their mission, had He not also endowed them with all power over the devils? Why was it, then, that they had been unable to cast out this one just now?

When questioned in secret He replied that the cause was their own unbelief; for the prediction of His approaching death had destroyed their faith to such a degree that Jesus seems to be at a loss for some object small enough to be compared with the poor residue of their belief in Him.

"If you have faith like a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Remove from here'; and it will remove. And nothing will be impossible to you."

But in addition to this first cause of their powerlessness, He told them that their souls were still far from seeking that heav-

enly help which alone can prevail over the hosts of hell; and that such dominion is bestowed only upon those who, with hearts cleansed by prayer and fasting, rise above this body of flesh.

Jesus withdrew from Tabor at once, taking the road to Capharnaum, careful that no one along the journey should know of His presence. Nevertheless He continued His instructions to the disciples, telling them: "The Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him, and after having been put to death He shall rise again the third day." But the apostles understood nothing of what He told them on this subject; His words seemed, as it were, veiled to them; they indeed dreaded to be forewarned of the coming evil, and so followed their Master in sadness, not venturing to question Him.

THE RETURN TO CAPHARNAUM

This time the re-entrance of Jesus into Capharnaum was very different from those homecomings of former days: the little band of companions which was now left to Him traversed the streets almost unnoticed by the indifferent passers-by. Only the tax-gatherers came after them and asked Peter:

"Does your Master not pay the didrachma?"

This tribute was the ransom which every son of Israel owed to Jehovah as the "Price of his Soul." Ordinarily it was taken up in the month of March. That it was not demanded until autumn in this instance was because Jesus had been absent from Judea for some six months; or it may be that, since He had been regarded hitherto, as by rank, a doctor, He was considered exempt from this charge laid upon the people.

But now the apostle, sore pressed for an answer by the collectors, assured them that the tax should be paid; yet, almost immediately, he realized that he had been somewhat rash in pledging his Master's word in this offhand manner, and his embarrassment was very evident as he followed Him into the house. Jesus did not wait for Peter to unburden his mind.

JESUS PAYS THE TRIBUTE MONEY

He said to him, "What dost thou think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth receive tribute or customs; from their own sons, or from others?"

"From others," was Peter's reply.

"The sons then are exempt," responded Jesus.

In this way He chose to remind the apostle, who had been a witness of His glory on Tabor, that Christ, the Son of God, was by this same title freed from the necessity of human laws, and thus exempt from the didrachma, the ransom of sinners.

"Nevertheless," He added, "that we may not give scandal to anyone, go to the lake and cast a hook. The first fish which you shall draw from the water, take it and open its mouth. There you will find a stater; this you will take, and give to them, for Me and for you."

Jesus, the Son of Man, would obey the laws and pay the tribute; but He paid it even as God, by a miracle.

The Gospel does not tell us in whose dwelling this reply was uttered, but it gives us to understand that Jesus had accepted the hospitality of some faithful family, for on this occasion we see a young child close by His side. Very graciously did the Master greet the timid approach of such little ones whose gentle frankness always gladdened His heart; and now He drew this baby nearer to Him, in order to enforce another lesson upon the minds of His apostles.

"What were you discussing on the road?" He asked them.

This abrupt question disconcerted them, for, seeing the Master walking at some distance ahead of them, they had been disputing among themselves as to which one of their number was to be considered the greatest. Probably the preference shown to the three companions of Jesus upon Tabor had excited some jealousies and given rise to this wrangle. Crestfallen at finding themselves detected, all stood before Him without a word.

JESUS REBUKES THE APOSTLES

The Master sat down and gathered the Twelve around Him. "If any one wishes to be the first," He said to them, "let him be the least and the servant of all." And he took up the child, folded it in His arms; then, still holding it, He told the apostles that this was to be their model.

"Whoever," He said, "receives one such little child for My sake, receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but

Him who sent Me." The Lord could not bestow higher praise upon the innocence of little children than this, for He described Himself as of their nature, and commanded that they be received even as Himself, even as God, His Father.

Yet the disciples did not realize the full force of His words. John himself, usually more clear-sighted than the rest, now only gathered that Jesus was speaking of those who present themselves in His Name. At once he remembered that recently the Twelve had forbidden a man to drive out devils in the name of Christ, because this man was not one of them, and here he broke in upon the Master, desiring to know whether they had done rightly.

"Do not forbid him," Jesus replied; "because there is no one who shall work a miracle in My Name, and forthwith be able to speak ill of Me. For he who is not against you is for you."

Then He reverted to His first thought, to the young child still nestling in His arms—to those little ones whose "angels in heaven always behold the face of My Father in Heaven."

BEWARE OF SCANDAL

"If any one," He said, "shall scandalize one of these children who believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should he hung about his neck and that he be plunged in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of its scandals! It must needs be that scandals come, but woe to the man by whom the scandal comes!"

With words like these Jesus talked to them in this house at Capharnaum; the conversation lasted much longer than this; for the Master was no longer, as of old, thronged upon by crowds eager to hear His every word; all alone with His disciples, He could adapt His words to their needs. So it was that He made them glimpse the terrors of hell, adjuring them to sacrifice everything, were it their limbs, or their sight, in order to escape that Gehenna of fire, where the worm gnaweth and dieth not, where the flame burneth and is not quenched. And then He alluded to an altogether different fire, the flame of love, which, once lighted, purifies all things which it touches. But among all the conversations of that day, there is none more memorable or mo-

mentous than their talk about the rules which He gave His disciples for the adjustment of their differences.

Christ had decreed that the Church is to be the arbitrator for her children. It belongs to her to interpret the moral law, to determine the rights and the duties of her children, and to disown the unruly, treating them as the Jews treated pagans and publicans. Indeed Jesus had given her the power of binding and of loosing upon earth, and had promised her His never-failing assistance, not simply of the instructing and sanctifying of men's souls, but that they might be maintained in true obedience. Let but two or three persons invested with the authority of the Church be gathered together in the Name of Christ, the Father who is in heaven will grant them all that they shall ask, and Jesus Himself will be in the midst of them.

Peter hearing these first rules of the Christian Law pronounced, wished that the Master would enunciate them with more precision.

"Lord," he asked, "if my brother sin against me, how many times shall I forgive him? As much as seven times?"

The apostle believed that he was going to great lengths in his indulgent mercy, since the rabbis taught that to pardon three times was the height of perfection; but under the gracious sway of Christ, forgiveness, like love, must be infinite.

BROTHERLY CORRECTION

"I do not say: Until seven times," answered the Lord, "but until seventy times seven times." And to make it better understood how rigorously His law of loving kindness must bind our actions, He set before the apostles' eyes one of those oriental courts where the lightest fancy of their monarch can, in an instant, raise up or demolish the most splendid fortunes.

A king, He told them, set about procuring a reckoning from his ministers; then one of them was brought before him, as powerful a personage as any of their number, who owed his sovereign ten thousand talents. He succeeded in winning the pity of this lord, who forbore to sell him upon the spot, him and his wife and his children. Yet, even before he had passed out from under the palace gates a free man, he flung himself upon one of his

comrades who owed him a trifling matter—only one hundred denarii. Clutching him by the throat, half-strangling him, he repeated—

"Pay what thou owest."

The wretched fellow fell at his feet, begging him: "Have patience with me and I will pay you all."

But the other would not listen, and dragged him to prison until such time as he should pay the whole. The king, having knowledge of all this, bade them call the officer once more.

He said to him, "Wicked servant! I forgave thee all the debt, because thou didst entreat me. Shouldst not thou also have had pity on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" And his master, being angry, handed him over to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. "So also My heavenly Father will do to you, if you do not each forgive your brothers from your hearts."

So then charity, much more than justice, should be the foundation of Christian righteousness, or rather one must be blended with the other! "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other," even as two sisters.

"But if thy brother sin against thee," said the Lord once again, "go and show him his fault, between thee and him alone. If he listen to thee, thou hast won thy brother. But if he do not listen to thee, take with thee one or two more so that on the word of two or three witnesses every word may be confirmed. And if he refuse to hear them, appeal to the Church,"—for her to settle all differences, even as a mother does among her little ones, reviving sweet accord in estranged and angry hearts, oftentimes rebuking us but always loving—ay, most loving when she hurts us, that she may bring back health and salvation to our souls.

FEAST OF THE TABERNACLES

Autumn had come upon the land, and in every direction caravans were forming for the journey to Jerusalem, for it was the season for the Feast of the Tabernacles, the gladdest of all Israel's solemnities. As it was instituted to be a memorial of their march through the wilderness, it lasted seven days, and during that time all the people lived under leafy shelters woven of boughs, just as

their fathers had sojourned in tents. The olive, the pine, the myrtle, and the palm trees were now stripped of their branches; little tents of green foliage were raised all along the streets, through the squares, upon the level housetops and above the city ramparts; and for the space of one week Jerusalem bore much the appearance of a verdant forest. On all sides there was nothing to be heard but songs of joy answering the blare of trumpets which re-echoed from the terraces of the Temple, and every Jew in token of rejoicing, bore either a branch of palm or some other fresh bough, laden with citrons or peaches, or any rich fruit of the season. The gaiety was the more heartfelt and real, because their great Day of Expiation immediately preceded the Feast of Tabernacles, and consequently they considered themselves purified and freed from sin.

The kinsfolk of the Lord were on the eve of their departure from Capharnaum to go up to this solemnity. Some of their household sought Him; with thoughts and views of Him just as low and groveling as when formerly they treated Him like a madman, so now they had nothing but complaints and reproaches upon their lips.

Why so much mystery; why keep Himself concealed in this way, so discouraging to His would-be partisans? How many Jews about Jerusalem were ready to receive Him well, from the beginning, if He had only been willing to make Himself plainly understood!

"Leave here," was the family advice, "and go into Judea that Thy disciples also may see the works that Thou dost; for no one does a thing in secret if he wants to be publicly known. If Thou dost these things, manifest Thyself to the world."

Such words as these were only another justification of the Evangelist's sad reflection that even His brethren did not believe in Him.

Jesus showed no surprise.

"My time is not come as yet," He said, quietly; "but your time is always ready, for the world cannot hate you; but Me it hates, because I bear witness that its works are evil. Do you go up to this feast; as for Me, I do not now go thither because My time is not yet accomplished."

There was good reason for the Lord's speaking so obscurely,

since it was important that Jerusalem should be unaware of His approaching visit: the Sanhedrin would certainly have profited by the interval to arouse the populace and prepare some pitfall against His coming. So He left His kindred to depart without Him, and while the caravans were filling the routes along the highway of the Jordan, He with His apostles turned aside toward Samaria, taking that road up to the Holy City.

JESUS REFERS TO HIS DEATH

His farewell was a sorrowful one, for He was taking leave of Galilee. He loved to go to Jerusalem, where only ingratitude and persecution awaited Him. All this Jesus knew beforehand; evermore His gaze rested on the last six months of His ministry as they stretched out interminably before His eyes: His departure from this world, the Cross, and the tomb. Wherefore He steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem.

Following the road across the plain of Esdralon, they reached the hill-country which forms the northern frontier of Samaria. At its base lies the little town of En-Gannim, "The Fountain of the Gardens." It was the first Samaritan village they encountered; and Jesus sent some of His disciples on ahead to prepare lodgings for them. James and John, charged with this duty, set out confidently enough; for remembering the crowds which hastened to meet Jesus at Jacob's Well, they promised themselves a kindly welcome. But while Israel's festivals were going on, the animosity of the Samaritans knew no bounds; now "inasmuch as the travelers had turned their faces toward Jerusalem," every door was closed against them, and they returned without having found either shelter or food. Their indignation was intense; like true "Sons of the Thunder" their first thought was to call down vengeance from on high.

"Lord," they exclaimed, "would You have us bid fire come down from Heaven and consume them, even as did Elias?"

They forgot that Heaven has other powers beside thunder in its gifts, and gives light much oftener than it lightens, so was it to be under the new reign of Jesus, when zeal and charity alone would inflame the heart of man.

Looking at His disciples, the Master answered them:

"You do not know of what spirit you are; the Son of Man is not come to destroy souls, but to save them." And without blaming these people for having spurned them, He passed on to another hamlet.

As they walked along the highway a Scribe came forward, touched by what he had overheard of their talk.

"Master," he said, "I will follow Thee wherever Thou goest."

The Lord took no heed either of the words or of the rank of the one accosting Him; far down in this man's heart He beheld an overmastering attachment to the good things of earth; He knew that his inconsiderate fervor would fail him at the first foretaste of the poverty of Jesus, and therefore He answered:

"The foxes have dens and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

The thought of following a homeless Master cast a chill over the Scribe's courage, and he dropped back and disappeared.

That same day and upon this same highroad the Saviour passed before a house of mourning: a son was weeping over the death of his father. Looking up he too knew the presence of the Master, and felt himself drawn to leave all and follow Him. So too Jesus read his heart; then, as quick and ready to help the weak as He was prompt in repressing the presumptuous, He stepped toward him.

"Follow Me!" he said.

Surprised at so sudden an appeal the son hesitated, and asked that he might at least be allowed to bury his father. But the Saviour, seeing that any delay, even the most legitimate, would destroy all resolution in this wavering soul, caught him away in His company, with that saying which so many Saints have repeated since, when breaking away from all dearest ties of affection—

"Let the dead bury their dead, but do thou go and proclaim the Kingdom of God."

One other disciple, called in like manner, also wanted to linger and bide his time.

"Lord," he began, "I will follow You, but first allow me to take farewell of my kindred."

"Whoever," was the reply of Jesus, "puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God."

The zeal of the true apostle must rise to that height of perfec-

tion which makes not only a step, but even one single backward glance impossible.

And this is all the Gospel tells us of their journey across the hills of Samaria. Jesus walked still more privately and quietly the nearer they approached the Holy City, and thus they found their way within its walls without anyone having recognized Him, or even so much as suspecting His presence.

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

From the first of these festival days the absence of Jesus had been remarked; everyone was speaking of Him. The princes of Jewry were on the lookout for His coming; their spies were inquiring on all sides as to where He was staying, and whether He would appear shortly. There was much whispering going on among the worshipers, some of whom were now timidly upholding him. "He is a good man," they urged, while others would answer, "No, He is leading the people astray"; and, as His antagonists showed the boldest front, no one dared to declare himself openly in His favor for fear of the Jews.

They were almost in the midst of the feast-making when Jesus entered Jerusalem; repairing at once to the Temple, He seated Himself in one of the halls which surrounded the porches and began to teach.

His presence there was another surprise to the people, and at first they listened to Him in wonderment; it was not long, however, before some of the prominent Jews present broke the silence with muttered criticisms.

"By what right does this stranger venture to teach? No rabbi has ever instructed Him in sacred literature; this man was brought up at Nazareth—in a carpenter's shop. How should He know the scriptures? He has never studied them."

Jesus heard these detractors, and answered them that His doctrine was not His, but His Heavenly Father's. It rested altogether with them whether they too would share His knowledge of celestial things; they had but to do the will of God, laying aside all self-seeking and pride, and they would become truly wise. Thus purified, their eyes would be enabled to see that He spoke not of Himself, was not seeking His own glory, and did nothing wrongfully in speaking as He had done. But far from hearkening

to the voice of God, they did not even observe His Law, for which they made such show of veneration. Then, changing the defense into an attack, Jesus unmasked their secret motives.

"Why do you seek to kill Me?" He demanded suddenly.

The princes of the people kept silence; but the crowd of onlookers could not catch the drift of this question, and at once assumed that the Christ was beginning to rave in His talk.

"You are possessed of the devil," they told him. "Who is it that is seeking to kill You?"

His only reply was a reference to the miracle of Bethesda, still fresh in their minds. He disclosed how at that time the Sanhedrin had resolved to put Him to death, and thus showed the iniquity of their plots against Him. That it was no violation of the sacred rest to heal the suffering upon the Sabbath day—this the Master had already proved before the Council; yet here again He gave the people an argument which they could easily comprehend.

Moses had received the commandment given to Abraham by God, that they should circumcise the newborn babe upon the eighth day. Now when this day fell on a Sabbath there was never any Jew who would hesitate to overlook the rules of Sabbath-rest in order that his child might be consecrated to Jehovah by the spilling of blood, together with all holy rites. If the precept of circumcision could render such an infraction lawful, how was it that the Sabbath had come to outweigh in importance the divine law of charity? If it was legal to perform such deeds, and to shed the blood of man in order to purify the body, and that only in part, how was it criminal in Him to heal the whole body with only a word?

"So then do not judge according to appearances," Jesus concluded, "but according to justice."

This vindication discomfited the enemies of the Lord and delighted the multitude; the citizens of Jerusalem especially, better informed than the visitors as to the malice of their leading men, could not repress their amazement.

"Is not this the man they want to put to death?" they asked. "And now He preaches publicly and no one has a word to say to Him. Have the Sanhedrin councilors recognized Him as the Christ?"

This, however, was little more than a glimmering of the truth which now flashed upon some few Jews of the town, and for an instant; but it was as quickly overshadowed by their hasty prejudices. The instructions of the Scribes recurred to their mind, how the Christ was to appear unexpectedly—His very origin was to be hidden—and thus He should remain unknown in Israel, until suddenly He would reveal Himself on the day when He should receive His Anointing at the hands of Elias.

"As for this man," they said, "we know whence He is; but when the Christ shall come no one will know whence He comes."

CHRIST MAKES HIMSELF CLEAR

Jesus would not permit this misleading tradition to delude the popular mind any longer. To those who would deny Him the dignity of the Christ, because they knew His home and kindred, He replied that over and above His earthly origin, He had a mysterious beginning.

"I am not come of Myself," he said to them. "He that sendeth Me does truly live; you do not know Him, but I know Him, because I am from Him and He has sent Me."

This sublime refutation greatly irritated the Jews; from dumb, unreasoning resentment they passed to acts of violence and endeavored to seize Jesus. But no man laid hands on Him, because His hour was not come. Moreover, there were many among those present who believed, and said:

"When the Christ comes will He work more signs than this man works?"

The respect shown Him by this section of the populace, their ever-increasing faith, the things which were whispered about in favor of Jesus—all these taken together soon alarmed the Sanhedrin people, and they determined to act at once. Some of their satellites were dispatched to lay hold upon the Galilean; but all that they were able to do was to mingle with the crowd of listeners, and discover that, though He was well aware of their intentions, He showed no signs of fear. It was useless for His enemies to try to precipitate the fatal hour. He declared that He was to be with them for yet a little while, until the day when He was to return to His Father. Then indeed they would seek Him, no longer

with wicked intent, but repentant and despairing, amid the ruins of Jerusalem.

"You will seek Me and will not find Me," He said; "and where I am you cannot come."

THE WATER OF SILOE

"Where will He go," they murmured among themselves, "that we may not find Him? Will He go to the Gentiles dispersed over the world? will He become a doctor among them?" And they were at a loss to imagine what Jesus meant by saying this.

Meanwhile the festal celebrations were still progressing, and for the last time the Holy Waters had been poured out within the Temple. It may be well to recall something of the significance of this symbolic rite, for on the morrow Jesus would allude to it. Every morning during those seven days a priest descended to the well-spring of Siloe, and in a golden vessel drew up three measures of water from the fountain with which he returned, bearing it before him in solemn state. Upon his entrance within the porches the trumpets sounded, accompanying him with the wild clash of their symphonies, while he mounted to the highest step of the Altar; there two great jars had been already set forth, one made of silver, into which the ministering priest poured the water brought from Siloe; the other of gold, which he filled with wine. These libations once performed, the whole people intoned the Hallel, waving their rustling palm branches, and giving way to such glad transports of feeling that the rabbis tell us it is impossible for one who never witnessed it to conceive the universal sense of joy.

FOUNT OF LIVING WATER

But on the eighth day this ceremony no longer took place; those who in the early morning ascended to the Temple to offer sacrifice, instead of the joyous songs and the chanting, found a religious stillness brooding over the sanctuary. This was the moment Jesus chose to explain the meaning of their sacred rite.

Standing in the center of the porches He cried aloud:

"If anyone thirst let him come to Me, and drink. He who be-

lieves in Me, as the Scripture says, 'From within him there shall flow rivers of living water.'"

He was speaking of the Holy Spirit which His disciples were to receive; and this, He promised the Jews, would no longer be like that weak spring-water, but like a mighty river which should fill them with overflowing gifts of grace.

This utterance made a great impression upon the people. Some were already saying, "This is truly the Prophet!"

"This is the Christ!" others shouted.

But the Scribes sternly repressed these tokens of homage, everywhere objecting: "Can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that it is of the offspring of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David lived, that the Christ is to come?"

The multitude of common people knew not how to answer this argument, and began to share something of their teachers' resentment against Him; some indeed, much disquieted, by the strong language of the doctors, were eager for arresting Christ at once; others, however, took up the defense and the latter must have been the more numerous because no one ventured to touch Him. Even the guards commissioned to seize Him comprehended clearly enough that any act of violence would be likely to arouse this great concourse of people; they therefore returned to the pontiffs and the Pharisees. These frowned upon the officers in stern displeasure.

"Why have you not brought Him here?" they said.

"Never man spoke like this Man," replied the guards; and they went on to explain what command He exerted over the crowds. But in their vexation the members of the Sanhedrin loaded them with sarcastic queries.

"Have you also been led astray? Has any one of the rulers believed in Him, or any of the Pharisees? But this crowd, which does not know the Law, is accursed."

NICODEMUS SPEAKS UP

Only one member of the great council ventured to utter a protest against this iniquitous action. It was Nicodemus, the Scribe who once came by night to seek the Lord. Ever since that time, when his heart was first touched by grace, though too weak-

souled to give himself up to its innermost promptings, he had always retained a secret love for the Master; now he spoke out with some feeling.

"Does our law allow us to condemn a man without having heard him, and without knowing what he has done?"

Timid and mild as this defense was, it enraged the Sanhedrin.

"Are you a Galilean, then?" they shouted at him. "Examine the Scriptures, and learn that no prophet ever came out of Galilee."

Amid the storm of excitement, these doctors of Israel forgot that the country which they so despised had been, in truth, the fruitful mother of Prophets; for out of Thisbe had come Elias, and from the regions of the north, Jonas, Nahum, and Osee. Such a season of blindness and heated passion left no opportunity for wiser counsels, and they broke up the meeting without determining upon anything definitely, each one returning to his own home.

THE ADULTERESS

When dusk had settled over the city, Jesus walked outside the walls, directing His steps toward the Mount of Olives. This was the spot where He had been accustomed to pass the night during the several times He sojourned in Jerusalem, whether because He had been invited to take shelter in some dwelling-place thereabouts, or, it may be, not having where to rest His head, He sought slumber under cover of the spreading groves. At daybreak He wended His way back to the Temple; at once all the people came to Him, and having seated Himself, He taught them. The Sanhedrin had not in the least renounced the pursuit; but comprehending that, more than anything else, it was expedient for them to draw the multitude away from Him, they turned their whole attention to this end. Something occurred immediately to further their projects.

The seven days spent beneath their sylvan huts were not without peril for the uprightness of the Israelites; oftentimes merriment degenerated into license, and it so happened that during this very night a woman had been taken in adultery. The custom of stoning a guilty wife had ceased to be enforced for a long time now; divorce alone satisfied the vengeance of the wronged hus-

band; and at this period especially, when the Roman authorities reserved to themselves all rights over life and death, no other punishment was possible.

None the less did the Sanhedrin councilors drag the sinning woman up to the Temple, and pushing her into the presence of the Lord—

"Master," they said, "this woman has just now been taken in adultery. Moses commanded us in the Law to stone the woman guilty of this crime. What say you as to this?"

They meant to oblige Him either to put Himself in opposition to Moses by rescuing the sinner, or else force Him to consign her to the death torture. Now they foresaw that the latter decision would not only destroy His great renown for gentleness in the people's eyes, but would moreover expose Him to the vengeance of Rome.

Jesus, at a glance, detected the snare; beneath this zealous exterior of piety, He saw clearly that there was nothing but hypocrisy. Hence he deigned no reply, but stooping down toward the ground, He began to write with His finger in the sand. This He did to indicate that any profitless occupation, such as this of tracing letters in the dust, disconnected and meaningless signs though they were, yet in His eyes seemed worthier of attention than the query proposed by these fanatic doctors.

And on their part they chose to act as if unconscious of the Master's disdain; they persisted in attracting His notice to the shame-struck, wretched woman, and waxed the more urgent with look and voice. At last Jesus drew Himself up.

"Let him who is without sin among you," He said, "cast the first stone."

Without decrying the law of blood, still He would not have any hands essay the execution of its mandates save such as were worthy of the charge. Not a finger was lifted in this assembly, which until now had shown itself so arrogant. Jesus, once more half-kneeling on the ground, began to write again; "it was their sins He was recording in the sand," says a curious reading in an ancient Codex, and each man there understood this mute language, whereby they stood self-convicted. Scribes and Pharisees were alike dumbfounded and silent; their hands crept away from the sinner's garments, their eyes fell; overwhelmed with shame

they slunk away, one after another—first the older ones among them, their souls consumed with evil spite, then the younger men. Soon in all this open space—here in the center of the crowded court—there remained no one else besides Jesus and the guilty woman, "the uttermost misery, and the uttermost mercy," here left finally face to face.

She was still shuddering at the feet of the Master. Once more Jesus stood erect, looking about Him, and seeing no one but her—

"Woman," He said, "where are they? Has no one condemned thee?"

"No one, Lord."

"And neither will I condemn you; go and sin no more."

This pardon was a marvel of charity, yet it so completely overturned the received code of morality that for a long while it continued to be a stumbling-block for the Church. Always pitiless to the adulteress, those Eastern nations who became Christians were loath to believe that Jesus, while so sensitive as to everything pertaining to chastity, would publicly protect a fallen woman, humiliate her accusers, and shield her from punishment. However, this page of the gospel sets the heart of Jesus before us in the truest light; indeed, there is none which teaches in clearer accents that the real triumph of chastity lies, not so much in fleeing any contact with the defiled soul, but rather in purifying it, even as the ray of sunlight penetrates the mire and illumines it without being soiled thereby. And it was this the Master proposed to show by His tender mercy toward the erring woman—that charity and grace are mightier than punishments to prevent wrongdoing; and so, too, He wished to remind men, weakly indulgent as they are as regards their own disorderly deeds yet so severe toward women, that their mutual crime is of equal offense in the eyes of the Divine Justice; most of all He meant to tell the sinning woman, spurned and despised by the world, that there is no dark stain which the hand of Jesus cannot wipe away, no fault which He will not pardon unto the repentant sinner.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Thereupon Jesus proceeded to the treasury, where He sat down and continued to instruct the people. The part of the Tem-

ple known by this name was the court reserved for women, where there stood thirteen caskets, placed there to receive offerings. Within this open space rose two great candlesticks, fifty cubits in height and lacquered with gold. Every night, during the festival season, the glare of its sparkling lights could be seen over the whole town and all round about the populace danced to the sound of flutes and every sort of instruments.

Jesus looking at these great torches, now extinguished, was moved there to say:

"I am the Light of the world, he who follows Me does not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Here again came a new swarm of Pharisees who mingling with the other auditors of all ranks, at once found fault with this statement, declaring that it was worthless regarded as evidence, inasmuch as Jesus rendered it to Himself. The Lord replied that light does not have to prove its existence, it needs only to shine; nevertheless, if, with the Law, they demanded the testimony of two witnesses, in addition to His own self-evident testimony He might add that of the Father who had sent Him into this world.

The Pharisees greeted these words with loud mockery, bidding Him produce this witness whereof He spoke. It was of no avail for Jesus to urge that, if they would but open their eyes, they would see in Him the Father; this allusion to His divinity only the more enraged the muttering lawyers and Scribes, in so far that many proposed to take violent measures against Him on the spot, but this time too, no one stopped Him because His hour was not yet come.

NO FEAR OF DEATH

Without showing any sign of fear Jesus continued speaking; going on to tell them, as He had done more than once heretofore, of His early death and the miseries which it would bring down upon the Jews.

"I go away," He said, "and you shall seek Me and you shall die in your sins. Where I go, you cannot come."

"Is He about to kill Himself, then?" exclaimed the princes of Jewry; "because He says: 'You cannot come where I go.' "

The popular belief held that the man guilty of suicide sunk

himself to the lowest regions of hell. Was Christ about to descend to those dark abysses, so that no one might be able to follow Him? Jesus made these scoffers realize that hell was destined for them rather than for Him.

"You are from below," He said to them, "and I am from on high; you are of the world, I am not of the world. I have told you that you shall die in your sins; for; if you do not believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins."

"Who are You?" was the Jews' reply.

"That which I have told you from the beginning," Jesus answered, and He reiterated what He had declared so many times, that all things pertaining to Him, His teaching, His knowledge of men, His right to judge them, came, not from Himself, but from the Father who had sent Him.

These words merely puzzled without enlightening His antagonists, for they did not conceive that He had God for His Father; and so the Lord added that only His death could dissipate their blindness. Then He spoke of His union with God, of His obedience, of the Cross whereon He was to be lifted up, while even there His Father would not abandon Him in utter loneliness; and so forceful were His words that many, even some of the most headstrong, felt their hearts drawn towards Him.

But it was, after all, only a faint flash of faith, so weak and flickering that the lightest breath would extinguish it. It was put to the test immediately. Addressing these hearts now touched so unexpectedly, Jesus said to them:

"If you faithfully observe My words you shall be truly My disciples and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." His last words reawakened their prejudices.

"We are children of Abraham," they responded, "and we have never been in slavery; why then do You say, 'You shall be free?' "

SINNERS ARE SLAVES

The Master showed them that as long as they were sinners they were the slaves of sin, and could only expect the lowest position in their Father's home; it was for Him, the Son and Heir of the household, to deliver them from this bondage, that they might become really free.

"Abraham is our father," the Jews objected.

"If you are the children of Abraham," replied Jesus, "do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me who have told you the truth which I have learned of God. Abraham did not thus."

They only gathered from this that Jesus was speaking of some infernal powers by which they had been misled, even as their ancestors had been ensnared by heathen divinities, and that therefore He charged them in the figurative speech of Prophecy with having prostituted their souls with lying, so that thereby they were become the offspring of sin.

"We are not born of fornication," they interposed, "we have but one Father—God."

"If God were your Father," answered Jesus, "you would love Me, because I am born of God, and I come to you on His behalf. . . . But you are the children of the devil, and you do his works. He has been a murderer from the beginning, and he has never rested in the truth, because the truth is not in him. Which one of you will accuse Me of sin." Then, showing the falsehood and treachery of him who is a liar and the father of lies He contrasted with this the holiness of His word, and tried to move these doctors, who now for an instant had believed in Him, to accept the truth.

But henceforth their own overweening self-conceit, cruelly wounded by His words, was to render the hearts of these dissenters impervious to grace; they repaid Him with fierce abuses, treating Jesus as though He was a Samaritan and possessed by the devil. The Lord endeavored to calm this tempest of passion, showing them that His only end was the glory of the Father, and promising everlasting life to those who received His doctrine.

"Amen, amen, I say to you, if any one keep My word, he will never see death."

In this the Jews only saw another blasphemy.

"Now we know well enough that You are possessed by the devil," they said; "Abraham is dead, and the prophets and You say: 'If any one keeps My word, he shall never taste death.' Are You greater than our father Abraham who is dead? and the prophets are dead also. Who do You pretend You are?"

Once again the Saviour spoke to them of His union with the

Father who glorifies Him, "this Father," He added, "whom you call your God, and notwithstanding you know Him not; and if I told you that I know Him not, I should be a liar like unto you, but I do know Him and I keep His word. Abraham your father desired earnestly to see My day; he hath seen it, and hath rejoiced thereat."

"What!" shouted the Jews, "You have not lived fifty years as yet, and you have seen Abraham!"

As His only answer to this, Jesus proclaimed Himself eternal even as the everlasting Father:

ATTEMPT TO STONE JESUS

"Amen, Amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I am."

At these words, the wrath of the Jews knew no further bounds; with one accord they sprang for a heap of stones collected for the work of the Temple, intending to stone the Nazarene then and there. But Jesus, profiting by the moment of confusion, disappeared in the crowd and departed without suffering any hurt.

THE MAN BORN BLIND

Once without the Temple walls Jesus regained a quarter of the town where all was quiet, calm, and untroubled; walking unmolested along the city streets He saw a man blind from his birth who was begging, and He stopped near him. The disciples, now reassured by the tranquility of the Lord, gathered around the disabled man.

"Master," they asked, "who has sinned; was it he or his parents, that he should be born blind?"

The belief that God avenged the wickedness of the fathers upon the children led the Jews to look upon every misfortune as a chastisement for some misdeed, and to ask themselves always who was to blame. Charity forbids all such conjectures; it was neither the sin of the blind man nor those of his family which had brought down upon him this affliction, which we must simply regard as one of those trials to which all men are subject. This particular case was the will of God, and intended to be an instrument whereby He chose to manifest His glory.

The night of death was drawing fast upon Christ; but some few hours of daylight were still left to Him, and these He declared He would use in doing the works of Him who sent Him, and wishing likewise to refresh the drooping courage of His apostles by another miracle, "As long as I am in the world," he said, "I am the Light of the world."

After having spoken thus He spat on the earth, made clay of the spittle, and therewith anointed the eyes of the blind man.

"Go," He said to him, "wash in the pool of Siloe."

This spring bore one of the many names foreshadowing the Messiah—"The One Sent, the Siloah"—and hence it carried with it a promise of sweet light and refreshing health to the weak and suffering. The man went down, washed with perfect trustfulness in the Master's words, and returned cured.

His eyes for the first time in his life sparkled with light, brightening up his whole countenance. The folk who lived in the neighborhood, as well as those who had seen him just now asking an alms, were loath to believe him the same person.

"Is not this the man who sat yonder and begged?" they exclaimed.

"Yes, it is he," some responded.

"No," others insisted, "it is someone who resembles him."

But he told them, "I am he."

"How is it your eyes are opened?" they demanded.

"That man," he replied, "whom they call Jesus made clay, anointed my eyes with it, and told me: 'Go to the pool of Siloe and wash.' So I went, I washed and I see!"

"Where is He?" they asked.

"I do not know," was his reply.

Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made this clay, and opened the eyes of the blind man. He had therefore disregarded the dictates of the rabbis, which forbade the application of any remedies upon the sacred day, even the rubbing of an aching eye with saliva; moreover, it was just at the moment when the Pharisees were quite prepared to stone Him that Christ chose publicly to infringe their rules. The witnesses of the marvel hurried away to inform the Sanhedrin of what had just happened. The great council held no regular session upon Sabbath days, but the incidents which had been exciting the town since early morn-

ing were enough to keep a majority of its members gathered together in the porches. The blind man whose sight had been restored was brought before them; at once they proceeded to investigate his case and questioned him as to how the thing was done. The man merely repeated—

"He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

This story disconcerted and puzzled them. There were some among them who said: "This man does not come of God, because He does not observe the Sabbath." Others there were, however, who were more honest and direct; these objected, "How can a sinner do these wonders?" And so there arose a dissension among them. They began anew to cross-question the man who had been blind.

"What do you say?" they asked; "who do you say this man is who opened your eyes?"

"He is a prophet," quickly came the answer.

Noting the firmness of this avowal the Sanhedrin councilors foresaw that there was only one resort left to them; they must immediately convict this man of being an impostor; so then they refused to believe that he had ever been blind and had recovered his sight until they had summoned his parents before them.

The poor couple, of as humble station as their son, appeared before the supreme tribunal in much terror; but despite their distress they preserved that shrewdness which is a characteristic of their race.

HIS PARENTS ARE QUESTIONED

"Is this your son?" they were interrogated. "You say that he was born blind; how is it then that he can see now?"

"We know that he is our son," they retorted, "and that he was born blind. But how he sees now we do not know. Question him; he is of age; let him speak for himself."

In this way they hoped to shield themselves, frightened as they were; for the Sanhedrin had before this publicly decreed that if anyone confessed Jesus to be the Messiah he should be excommunicated and driven out of the synagogue.

The Sanhedrin had no alternative now but to recall the man born blind, and to adjure him to contradict his first statement.

"Give glory to God," they urged, "we know that this man is a sinner."

"If He is a sinner," he returned, "I know nothing about it; all I know is this, that I was blind and now I see."

This response showed them that they had to do with a man who was not only upright, but steadfast and of a generous soul, and that they would not be able to browbeat him as they had just done his parents. Not knowing how to proceed, or perhaps seeking to pick some flaw in his evidence, they recommenced the cross-examination.

"What was it He did to you?" they asked; "how did He open your eyes?" But their man was tired with these useless repetitions.

"I have explained it to you, and you have heard it. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too wish to become His disciples?"

Smarting under this irony they lost self-control, and loaded him with taunts.

"You yourself may be His disciple," they exclaimed, "but for us we are the disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man we do not know where He may come from."

The man born blind, far from being terrified, only began to banter them more boldly.

"It is really astonishing," he said, "that you should not know where He comes from, and yet He has opened my eyes. Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone honors Him and does His will He hears him. It was never yet heard tell that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. So if this man were not from God He could do nothing."

At these words the Sanhedrin rose in mighty indignation; a beggar to dare hold up his head before the masters of Israel!

"Thou wast altogether born in sins," they cried, "and dost thou teach us?" Then they caught hold of him, and had him driven forth from the synagogue.

This outrage put him in the same category with his benefactor, for if Jesus preached in the synagogues no longer it was probably because He was excluded therefrom by an excommunication emanating from the Sanhedrin. The Divine Master could not forget this, the first confessor persecuted for His holy cause. He

sought him out, and having found him, He said to him: "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

"Who is He, Lord," answered the man born blind, "that I may believe in Him?"

"You have seen Him," Jesus said to him, "and it is He who is speaking to you."

"I believe, Lord!" said the beggar, and falling down he adored Him.

Jesus hastened to exalt this strong living faith as the triumph of that light which He had brought into the world, manifesting itself as powerful to enlighten the lowly as it was to dazzle and blind the proud; this the Master proclaimed so decisively that some Pharisees who had mixed with the crowd felt themselves moved by these tokens of authority.

"Are we blind also?" they said.

Jesus answered them that no one is held responsible for being born in darkness; the wrong consists in obstinately persisting therein.

"If you were blind," He told them, "you would have no sin, but you say, 'We see!' Therefore your sin remaineth."

But these haughty sectaries did not deserve to engage the Lord's attention longer; turning from them toward the beggar He began by means of a parable to comfort him for having been put outside the synagogue.

In this new similitude, the Master pictured a scene familiar to every Jew's memory, reminding them of one of those sheepfolds which to this day people the lonely wilds of Juda. Indeed, they still preserve the same general features. A massive wall of stone encircles them and this is crowned with clumps of thorn bushes; herein the shepherd shuts himself up with his flock at nightfall, for in the shadows lurk many and various foes. The wolf prowls round about, sometimes a panther at a bound overleaps the enclosure, or some robber of the night, finding the narrow gate fast barred, climbs up and creeps along the wall. But the shepherd is watching; he wards off all danger; and, with the dawning light, taking up his crooked staff, he is the first to leave their little fortress; one by one he counts his fleecy charge, then leads the way toward the fresh pastures, his gentle company gambolling around him as he walks. Every now and again he utters a

shrill call, and then the scattered sheep huddle panting about his feet; but let a stranger's voice break the stillness, at once all stop short, affrighted, with heads uplifted, then scamper away, for they know not the voice of the stranger.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

After this fashion Jesus traced the likeness of the Church, that fold whose door is the Christ, whereof no one deserves to be called a pastor if he enters not in the name of Jesus, and does not hold commission from Him. Many false prophets had come before Him, who had misled the flock of God's people, yet whatever semblance of truth they might assume they were all, whether priests or Scribes or Pharisees, nothing less than robbers, creeping in to pillage and destroy; or at the best, wretched hirelings, who were at little pains for the safety of the sheep, but took to flight at sight of the wolf, leaving the flock to be scattered and killed. Then said Jesus, "I am the Good Shepherd; and I know Mine and Mine know Me . . . I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly."

Such was the stronghold which Jesus flung open wide to receive this sturdy, humble fellow who had just been hunted out of the synagogue.

But now His glance swept a wider prospect, and straightway there arose that ever-present thought of the Gentiles, cut off from any communion with the Jewish race, and He added: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring; and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd."

"I am the Good Shepherd," said He again; "the good shepherd gives his life for his sheep;" and the Bloody Sacrifice which was ever uppermost in His thoughts forthwith engrossed His attention. He spoke of it to the crowds, openly announcing that no one would rob Him of His life, but that He gave it up of Himself, and would take it up again by His own inherent power. So then He was to die in the fullness of sacrifice, that He might obey His Father, and it is for this that His Father loveth Him with an almighty, infinite love.

These last words left the people divided in feeling. Thus on the

evening of a day when so much malice had worked its will against Him, and so many hands had been uplifted to stone Him, all throughout Jerusalem one heard nothing but whispered slanders mingling with the more favorable voices.

"He is possessed," said some, "He is a madman, why listen to Him any longer?"

"These are not the words of one possessed," others replied, "and besides, does the devil restore sight to men born blind?"

Availing Himself of this division in public opinion, Jesus departed from Jerusalem immediately, for the hatred of the Sanhedrin had waxed too violent for Him to withstand it any longer.

SEVENTY-TWO DISCIPLES

It was toward Galilee that Jesus directed His steps upon leaving Jerusalem. But there He encountered the same coldness as before the feast; only the apostles and a little bevy of disciples persevered devotedly at His side. Thus forsaken, the Lord was constrained to bear the good tidings elsewhere; so choosing seventy-two Galileans who had remained faithful to Him, He deputed them to go before Him into every town and into every place whither He was to come.

Saint Luke notes the fact that these newly elect were not the same as the Twelve first chosen; so, too, their mission was different, and this the Master indicates by the instructions which He addressed to them, for, out of all the advice formerly given the apostles, Jesus here repeated, for the benefit of the seventy-two disciples, only such as would presuppose a ministry of short duration.

For them it was to be limited to a few days' labor in the vast harvest fields. They need have no anxiety for the future, but straightway start forth, without purse, without wallet, shod with only such footwear as they had on; not wasting time along the wayside in overlong greetings, but keeping steadfastly to their appointed end, and, once arrived at the city whither He sent them, there fulfill His commissions without delay.

"Do not pass from house to house," said the Lord, "enter into the first one which opens to receive you, and there remain, eating and drinking whatever they shall set before you."

For one accustomed to the ceremonious forms observed by the Orientals, these precepts are far from surprising. Today, when any stranger enters an Arabian village, invitations are proffered him on every hand, and everybody presses him to pass from one friendly board to another. Jesus warned them not to waste the precious hours in such outward shows of friendliness; these, His evangelists, were not commissioned to take part in worldly feastings, but rather to recall men to repentance, to heal the sick, to prepare the ways of the Lord, and to publish far and wide the Kingdom of God. If any city refused to harbor them, He bade them go into the public squares, and tell the rebellious city: "Against you we shake off even the dust of your town which has cleaved to our feet. Yet know ye this, the Kingdom of God is nigh! I say unto you," added the Lord, "in the day of judgment, Sodom shall be treated more leniently than that city."

Obedient to the orders which they had received, the disciples set out two by two, while Jesus lingered on the shores of the lake. As formerly, so now the Saviour wandered through this border-country but not with the same results, for He found His words resented, and slighted, Himself left in solitude, despised and neglected, while through this land so loaded with tokens of His loving kindness He must needs wend His weary way as though He were an alien and a stranger. Cut to the heart by such ungratefulness, He turned away from these cities of the lake, and spoke words of bitterest rebuke, since He had loved them better than all the rest:

"Woe to thee, Corozain! woe to thee, Bethsaida! For if in Tyre and Sidon had been worked the miracles that have been worked in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And thou, Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted to heaven? Thou shalt be thrust down to hell."

Departing from the lakeside, Jesus took the road going to Perea, so as to rejoin His disciples there. On the way, He saw them returning to Him overflowing with joy. In giving them their commission the Master had only spoken of the dangers ahead, of wolves ravening about their path, of doors barred and cities closed against their approach; He had bestowed on them

no other powers beside that one curing the sick, and lo! at the mere sound of His name all things yielded to them!

"Master," they cried, "even the devils are subject to us in Your Name."

Jesus did not disdain to share their gladness, but it was that He might lift them up to a conception of nobler things.

PRINCE OF DARKNESS

Surely there was nothing surprising in that His Name should prove victorious over the hosts of hell, for in the very first hour of revolt, the guilty angel had been brought face to face with the eternal Son of the Father, nor even then could he brook His glance, but fell from the heavenly heights like flashing lightning. The Word when once incarnated had but increased the awful depth of this fall and stripped the Prince of Darkness of his last weapons. Using the words of the Psalmist, the apostles were to tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon they should trample under their feet. Poison, venom, raging beasts, all baneful things of this world, the consequences of sin and the strength of Satan, had now escaped his foul dominion; the strength of the enemy had been despoiled, and hereafter nothing could harm the disciples of Jesus.

"Nevertheless," added the Master, "do not rejoice in this that the evil spirits are subject to you, but rejoice in this that your names are written in heaven."

Saying these words, the Saviour, rapt in ecstasy, was absorbed in communion with the Father.

"I praise Thee, O Father," He said, "Lord of Heaven and earth, for that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and that Thou hast revealed them unto little ones. Yea, Father, thus it is because such hath been Thy will. All things have been delivered Me by My Father, and no one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father, and who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whom it hath pleased the Son to reveal Him."

MY BURDEN IS LIGHT

What had called forth these rapturous words, whose like have been but seldom heard from Jesus' lips since the day His native

land disowned Him? Evidently it was the eager welcome which those towns had given the seventy-two disciples, going before Him to announce His advent. Overflowing with the strong feelings inspired by His prayer, the Saviour added:

"Come to Me, all of you who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find, in following Me, rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden light."

Uttering this gracious invitation, He broke forth with words of great gladness: "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I say to you, many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and they have not seen it; and to hear what you hear, and they have not heard it."

This joy was to be marred very shortly. No region was so secluded that the Scribes could not find their way there; one of them now pushed forward trying to tempt Jesus.

"Master," said he, "what shall I do to possess eternal life?"

The Lord saw his design at a glance. He referred this lawyer to his authorities and asked him:

"What do you read there?"

Long beforehand Moses had revealed the two great precepts of a Christian life: This Jew could only repeat what from century to century the prophets and doctors had taught to Israel:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy strength and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself."

"You have answered aright," Jesus said to him; "do this and you shall live."

Words which were not likely to satisfy the Scribe, for they humiliated him by exposing the thoughtlessness of his query, and evidenced that Jesus was better versed in the Law than himself. He made shift to quibble and suggest difficulties.

"And who is my neighbor?" he objected.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

The hatred which the Jews cherished against foreigners would have prevented the Lord from extorting any righteous response

from the mouth of such an adversary; He therefore turned for an answer to the very places lying around about them.

At this time the Divine Master was traversing the mountainous stretch of country which extends from Jericho to Jerusalem. The track which He was following, justly named the Highway of Blood, climbs up across the hills whose white crests gleam on either hand like waves beaten into froth by the fierce winds. While passing through this wilderness the wayfarer is often attacked by the Bedouins, and left there wounded and in instant peril of death unless some charitable person happens that way and lends him his assistance.

The Lord set one of these oft-told adventures in the form of a parable; how a man had fallen into the brigands' clutches, who proceeded to plunder his goods, covered him with wounds and left him lying in the road half dead. Between the Holy City and Jericho (which is a city of the priesthood), there are always many Levites going and coming. It so chanced that a priest, on his way down from Jerusalem, noticed the wounded man; taking the other side of the road he continued on his journey. A Levite came next; he stopped, looked at the bleeding body and like the priest went his way. Yet a third traveler came after them—the offspring of a race which Israel held accursed; he was, notwithstanding, a good Samaritan, and a worthy type of the Saviour. At sight of the wounded man he was touched with compassion, drew nigh to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine; then he put him on his horse, brought him to an inn and there tended him. The next morning he took two denarii from his purse and giving them to their host: "Take care of him," he said, "and whatever more you spend I will repay you on my return."

"Which one of these three," Jesus asked, "would seem to you to be the neighbor of the man that fell into the robbers' hands?"

There was no room left him for hesitating; although the Scribe was loath to pronounce even the name Samaritan, he said reluctantly:

"It would be he who took compassion on him."

Jesus had nothing more to add; by one of those innocent stratagems in which Orientals take so much delight, He had constrained His adversary to explain the nature of true charity.

"Go," He said to the discomfited doctor of laws, "go and do you likewise."

Although the highroad which Jesus was now following leads to Jerusalem He did not, however, push on as far as the town. Saint Luke tells us that He rested at Bethany, a village built upon the highlands of Juda, and only separated from the Holy City by the Mount of Olives. In this small town there lived a family that Jesus loved—Lazarus with his two sisters, Martha and Mary.

As it chanced on this day, the Master had not been expected at Bethany, for His arrival evidently put the whole house in commotion. Martha especially was untiring in her efforts to procure everything for His comfort, watching keenly lest anything should be lacking. Mary, in a calmer mood, had seated herself at the feet of Jesus, listening to His words, drinking deep draughts from the wellspring of life. Martha was observing her, and her jealousy was at last aroused; addressing Jesus, she asked Him—

"Lord, do You not see that my sister leaves me to serve alone? Bid her then, to help me."

"Martha, Martha," Jesus answered her, "you harass yourself and worry about many things; yet there is one thing needful. Mary has chosen the best part; it shall not be taken away from her."

Not for having done too much for Him did the Master blame His hostess, but for letting herself be diverted from Him by external cares. Happier far is that friend of Christ who is altogether absorbed in Him! Blessed indeed are those contemplative souls, safe within their quiet cloisters, who, after her example, no longer hear the noise and tumult of the world. Theirs is the one thing needful, the soul that has found peace in love; it is theirs to taste fully the sweetness of this saying of the Master: "Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her."

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY

On leaving Bethany Jesus again crossed over the Jordan to evangelize the mountainous country of Galaad, then under the rule of Herod Antipas, and known by the name of Perea. He is in some lonely locality of this region when Saint Luke proceeds with his narrative. His disciples, drawing a little to one side, were

standing gazing upon Him as He remained in the posture which every Oriental keeps when in prayer—erect, with uplifted arms, and eyes raised heavenward. As soon as He stopped praying one of them approached Him. "Lord," he said, "teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples."

Those who had been in the Baptist's company were numerous in these lands lying alongside the Jordan; apparently it was one of John's penitents who made this request of Jesus. A newcomer among the apostles, he had not as yet learned that prayer which the Lord gave them upon the Mount of Beatitudes; but remembering that the Forerunner had prayed with his disciples, this one longed to have Jesus do the same.

The Master granted his wish.

"When you pray," He responded, "say: Father, hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation."

This second form of the Lord's Prayer is a precious item in our inheritance: as it is given with fewer words in Saint Luke than in Saint Matthew, it shows us that Jesus, even while prescribing certain formulas for our use, left the spirit of prayer free to soar upward unhampered. All that seemed of the highest importance in His eyes was that we should call upon God as a Father, desiring, above all things, spiritual good things, and asking them for others as well as for ourselves, with charity warm at our hearts and with the spirit of forgiveness upon our lips.

Furthermore, of such vital necessity is this duty of prayer that the Master was moved to speak more at length, charging them to pray without ceasing, to pray unwearyingly; for though God may seem sometimes to be deaf to our cries, it is only to make us more sensible of the greatness of His gifts, to render the soul lowlier and to overpower it with loving kindness and tender mercies. As He was wont to do, He put these lessons before them in a figurative form. Now He speaks of a father who would not give his hungry child a stone in place of bread, nor a scorpion instead of an egg, nor a serpent when he is asked for a fish; then again He tells of a poor but hospitable man who has received some wayfarer in the middle of the night; at once he hastens off to knock at the door of a neighbor's house.

"Lend me three loaves," he calls out; "for a friend of mine has just come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him."

But the friend has gone to rest, his children at his side, his dwelling barred and shut for the night, and he has no mind to rise from his bed. But his neighbor standing without in the darkness will not take any refusal; he keeps on rapping, still rapping, until the other yields to his entreaties, giving him what he needs.

"And in like manner, I say to you," the Lord pursued, "ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you."

TWO BLIND MEN

It was about this same time, if not upon the very same day, that we are told of two miracles performed by Jesus. He was betaking Himself to a dwelling whose proffered hospitalities he had just accepted, when two blind men became aware of His passing; forthwith they set out to follow Him, crying out:

"Son of David, have pity upon us!"

At first the Lord appeared not to hear them; publicly to accept this honorable title in Perea within the domains of Herod would have been to proclaim Himself the Messiah, and would have at once reawakened the jealousy of the tetrarch. To evade this danger He therefore sought shelter within a dwelling; but even there the unfortunate men managed to rejoin Him. Their faith moved the Saviour greatly.

"Do you believe," He said to them, "that I am able to do this for you?"

To this they replied, simply—

"Yes, Lord."

Then He touched their eyes, saying—

"Let it be done unto you according to your faith!" and upon the instant they recovered their sight, while Jesus sternly warned them to take care and let no one know of this. But they, listening only to the promptings of this newborn joy, spread the report throughout all that land, and thus, like so many others, only aggravated the dangers and the enmities beneath which the Master was soon to succumb.

In the Saviour's eyes it was more important to drive out the devils of passion than to heal bodily ills; for, after withstanding the blind men's demand so long, we see that He does not delay an instant to deliver a dumb man who was vexed with an evil spirit. This possessed mute was brought to Him at the very moment when the two Jews were leaving the house; and, when the demon was driven out, the man straightway began to speak. All were thrilled with wonder and awe.

"Never," cried they, "has the like been seen in Israel."

PRINCE OF DEVILS

But hereabouts, too, there were Pharisees, some of whom were well informed of those calumnies which had been circulated throughout Galilee, and they repeated them to one and another of these poor people whom they knew so well how to deceive.

"By Beelzebub, the prince of devils," they whispered, "He casts out devils."

Again Jesus withstood this slander with the fact that they themselves and their sons drove out the devil without borrowing the weapons of the fiend, and that, like earthly kingdoms, hell cannot be divided against itself on peril of its own existence. And yet if they acknowledged that the power Jesus had shown over Satan came not from Beelzebub, but from heaven, then surely the hour foretold by Isaias was here upon them, when the Kingdom of God would be established. "Who shall despoil the giant of his prey," the prophet cried; "who shall rob the strong man of his captives?" "The captives of the giant shall be reft from him," Jehovah had made answer, "and those that the mighty man hath taken shall be drawn from his clutches."

The Oracle was now fulfilled. In vain had Satan, the strong man armed, guarded his dwelling and trusted that his peace was never more to be disturbed: a stronger than he had appeared, had stripped him of his armor, and distributed his spoils.

Under such warlike imagery did Jesus proclaim Himself the vanquisher of the devil, and announce to mankind, who by sin are become the prey and bond-servants of hell, that He had come to break the chains of slavery, bestowing upon them eternal goods.

Yet all were not to be gladdened by such deliverance, for the people so long cherished by God had at last stubbornly rejected salvation. Taking a possessed man as a fitting comparison, Jesus showed the headstrong blunders of the Jews and their approaching ruin. He spoke of the devil of idolatry, as it came out from Israel in the time of the Babylonian Captivity, doomed to wander amid waste and waterless places, through those wrecks of time where, in the language of Isaias, their pleasant palaces are filled with dragons, where satyrs lead their dances, and the owls hoot to one another. Not finding repose in any quarter he returns into the land of Juda, formerly his abode, finds it chastened and purified, swept clean of its idolatries, but garnished with a righteousness that is altogether of the exterior. Whereupon, assured of new victories, he makes haste to take seven other spirits all more wicked than himself, and returning into Israel they there set up their abode, and her last state becomes worse than the first.

Did the Pharisees recognize how perfectly this image resembled themselves? There is nothing to indicate that they did; nevertheless, though the bandage still blindfolded their eyes, the people put no restraint upon their own delighted wonderment, so that one woman, as if constituting herself the mouthpiece of the multitude, cried aloud just at this moment:

"Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the breasts that nursed Thee."

"Rather," responded Jesus, "blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

By this He gave Israel of the flesh to understand that there is a blessedness more exalted than that of any earthly motherhood, even though divine—that of conceiving Jesus Christ in the heart by the quickening warmth of faith, and bearing Him outwardly before man in the open fulfillment of His behests and good pleasure.

THE SIGN OF JONAS

Meanwhile the throngs grew denser, for after the healing of the possessed, certain of the Jews had demanded some more extraordinary miracle—some sign coming from Heaven. The Lord, preoccupied with refuting the Pharisees' slanderous attacks, had

not as yet refused their request, and so there were still some hopes lingering among them that they were soon to see a new and startling miracle. Turning toward the men who had excited these vain expectations, Jesus dealt with them as with an accursed and adulterous race, and answered them that there should no sign be given them save only that of Jonas the Prophet.

This was a well-deserved rebuke, for it was but one more insult to Christ that they were still unsatisfied with the marvels which He was forever multiplying on every hand. In order to convince these hardened hearts it would indeed require the voice of Jehovah Himself, sounding from the heavenly heights, to confirm the miracles of Jesus as being divine. What wonder, then, that the Lord left these incredulous men no hope of any sign other than that one He had destined for the whole world—His Resurrection, which long since had been prefigured in Jonas. After three days, passed in the depths of the sea, the prophet had emerged thence bearing salvation to Nineveh: so, too, Christ would rest three days and three nights in the earth's dark bosom, and from thence arise all glorious. But this sign, though so wondrous as to convert whole Gentile nations, would leave the Jews alone in their blindness. This Jesus now foretold to them, and thus beforehand bewailed their reprobation.

"The men of Nineveh," said the Lord, "will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and, behold, one greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and will condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

JESUS AND THE PHARISEES

Toward the middle of the day, the hour in which the Jews take their first meal, a Pharisee approached the Master, praying Him to eat with him at his house. Jesus accepted the invitation. Round about the threshold of the dining-hall a considerable company awaited His coming, composed exclusively of Pharisees and Scribes; for it would seem that, as the apostles were not bidden, the Master found Himself alone in the midst of these doctors who

were as vain of their own learning as they were envious of His glory. One and all, Scribes, Pharisees, and lawyers, went through with their ablutions in the entrance-way, and doubtless in this instance with an even greater affectation of zeal than usual. Walking straight past them without stopping to imitate their ceremonies, Jesus went immediately to the table and took His place upon one of the couches.

Such disdain for their prescriptions pricked the vanity of these fanatics. Soon Jesus saw the eyes of His host were fixed sternly upon Him.

"Why," the Pharisee was muttering, "why did not this man wash along with the rest?" These complaints were at once echoed by the guests, and soon degenerated into such violent expressions that the Lord was constrained to check the rising tumult.

He began by telling His enemies that though they were scrupulous in purifying the outside of the cup they left the inside full of rapine and corruption: that they neglected the duties of charity, the love of God and neighbor, in order to cover over their hard-heartedness and conceit with a mask of religion. Then, giving fuller utterance to His indignation, He launched that threefold anathema upon them—

"But woe to you Pharisees! because you pay tithes on mint and rue and every herb, and disregard justice and the love of God. But these things you ought to have done, while not leaving the others undone. Woe to you Pharisees! because you love the front seats in the synagogues and greetings in the market place. Woe to you! because you are like hidden tombs, over which men walk unaware."

The Pharisees quivered with fury under this censure. Seated near Him was one of the Scribes, who was moved to respond:

"Master in saying these things, Thou insultest us also." But He said, "Woe to you lawyers also! because you load men with oppressive burdens and you yourselves with one of your fingers do not touch the burdens."

After this Jesus rose to depart. Immediately the company jumped to their feet; Scribes and Pharisees pressed about Him, and well-nigh deafened Him with a volley of questions, with the hope of surprising Him in some expressions out of which they

might construct a legal accusation. According to Saint Luke's metaphor it was a fierce, breathless chase, the maddened pack dashing upon their prey and flinging themselves upon Him, bent upon bringing Him to the earth. But the common people had not abandoned the Divine Master, and they were now at the doors ranged in such immense crowds that they trod upon one another. All that had occurred within the hall passed swiftly from mouth to mouth; the excitement evidenced by the crowds made the Pharisees not so loath to part with their guest; and so again this time they let Him go unscathed.

Hardly had He left their presence, when He began to forewarn His disciples against the hypocrisy of the men who had attacked Him. At last the time had come to publish abroad, in the daylight and on the housetops, that which hitherto He had confided to private ears in the darkness.

"But I say to you," He cried aloud, "my friends: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will show you whom you shall be afraid of; be afraid of him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell. Yes, I say to you, be afraid of him." And he exhorted them to confess Him without fear, even when hotly pursued by these same doctors. They should be dragged into the synagogues, before magistrates, and all powers of earth; yet they need put themselves to no pains as to how they should reply, for God's Holy Spirit would teach them in that same hour what they ought to say.

JESUS REFUSES TO JUDGE

The people were listening with speechless interest, when from the midst of the multitudes came the voice of a Jew, calling upon the Lord. Struck by the commanding power of Christ, he conceived it was a most auspicious opportunity to terminate a family quarrel by turning it to his own advantage.

"Master," he called out, "order my brother to give me a share in his inheritance."

Jesus rebuked him, who looked only to gain his own selfish profits from the coming of the Messiah's reign.

"Man," He said, "who has constituted Me to be your judge and to appoint shares for you?"

Such wretched cares were indeed unworthy of Him, for He was come into this world to teach us that life does not consist in that which a man possesses. He was moved to explain His thought more fully by means of a parable:

"There was a wealthy man, whose fields yielded rich harvests. And he thought within himself, saying: 'What shall I do? I have no room wherein I can store my crops.' And he said: 'Ah! here is what I will do! I will tear down my barns, and I will build greater, and there I will gather all my crops and all my goods. And I will say: My soul, thou hast great store of goods for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and have good cheer.' But God said to him: 'Foolish man! this night shalt thy soul be required of thee; and whose shall be that great wealth which thou hast acquired?' "

It was easy to read beneath this imagery another lesson concerning the vanity of riches: still Jesus knew that His hearers were so blinded by their love of earthly goods that He dwelt longer upon this subject. Pointing up to the fast-flying crows hovering over their heads, and to the meadow lilies under their feet, God's creatures which leave the care of food and raiment all in His hands, He bade them not to let themselves be harassed and, as it were, tossed about by the troubles of life:

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms. Make for yourselves purses that do not grow old, a treasure unfailing in heaven, where neither thief draws near nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be."

As we see, the Lord was repeating to the Jews of Perea the same lessons formerly given the Galileans; but now, as the time grew shorter, He added still more impressive counsels—for His mission was fast drawing to its close. He wished them to be ever vigilant, with loins girt, with lamps burning in their hands, like men waiting for their master.

"I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how distressed I am until it is accomplished."

Thus, together with that immense longing to save the world, there was an accompanying host of sad forebodings; for Christ knew what wild storms were gathering against His work and

how, in a few short months, faith in His Name would be the occasion for bitter persecutions.

"Do you think," said He, "that I came to give peace upon the earth? No, I tell you, but division. For henceforth in one house five will be divided, three against two, and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against his father; mother against daughter and daughter against the mother; mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

Yet the multitude listened to these words without comprehending them, without any inkling of the great struggles which Jesus was foretelling, and of how close at hand was the redemption of mankind. With something almost like bitterness, He reproached them for their apathy. Why, since they were so clever at guessing by the storm clouds on the western horizon, or by noting the southerly breezes, whether the day was likely to be showery or warm—why could they not discern the drift of the times wherein they now were? Very soon it would be too late; the acceptable hour of salvation once slipped by, the Lord would become a rigorous creditor, who would deliver them over to the judge; and the judge would cast them into the dungeon, from hence none goeth forth till after he has paid all unto the very last farthing.

MASSACRE IN THE TEMPLE

While Jesus was thus telling the good tidings to the land of Perea a rumor passed from mouth to mouth that another bloody insurrection had purpled the streets of Jerusalem. Certain of the Galileans had striven to shake off the yoke of Rome; but surprised by Pilate's soldiery just in the act of offering sacrifice, the revolutionists all fell in front of the great Altar, mingling their blood with that of the victims. To Jewish eyes it seemed that so baleful an event could but be regarded as permitted by God in atonement for some heinous crime; for it was a deep-rooted feeling with them that the man most grievously afflicted is one who is guiltiest in the sight of God. Anxious to know what awful sins had drawn down such punishment upon the conspirators, some of the disciples hastened to give an account of this massacre to Christ.

Jesus knew their thoughts. "Do you believe," He replied, "that these Galileans were the greatest sinners among their countrymen because they have suffered such things? Nay, I tell you."

Then He recalled how, not long since, at Siloe, a tower had crashed down upon some eighteen persons; and here again He denied that any man of them was more blameworthy in God's sight than the other citizens of Jerusalem. To estimate the wrongdoing of these poor victims by the horror of such accidents is to forget that our present life is a season of trial, in which misfortune does not always visit us as a chastisement for our crimes. And yet what seems like a meaningless jumble of human events does indeed but conceal a marvelous order, a plan full of unfathomable wisdom and goodness, a design which as yet remains the secret of God. Jesus made His disciples refrain from all efforts to sound the depths of God's mysteries, urging them rather to turn their gaze inward upon themselves, and thus mold and fashion their wills to that of the divine justice, while still there was time. Then, the better to convince their minds, He made use of a parable:

"There was a man who had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; thither he came looking for fruit and found none. Then he said to the vine dresser: 'For three years I have come looking for fruit from this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why does it still cumber the ground?' The vine dresser answered: 'Lord, let it alone for this one more year, until I dig about it and dung it. Then if it bear fruit, it shall be kept; if not, you shall cut it down.'"

NEED OF REPENTANCE

In the person of this vintager Jesus represented Himself pleading for Judea, His cherished vineyard, most of all for Jerusalem which rose up in the midst like a barren fig tree. For three years had the heavenly Father sought fruit from its branches, but without avail; at length with His death so near at hand all that Jesus could do was to obtain from God one last year of patience, that year which was to extend from the Passion up to the destruction of Jerusalem. Oh that Israel would but hearken to this final, mighty appeal! Would indeed that she might bring forth the flower and the fruit so long and patiently expected!

In Perea, at least, these earnest words of the Lord continued to meet with a favorable reception, and the synagogues, though elsewhere shut against Him, were here thrown open to welcome Him. About this time, in fact, we find Him teaching in one of them on a Sabbath day, as He used formerly to do in Galilee. "And here, behold a woman coming to Him, who had had a spirit of infirmity for now eighteen years, all bent over and not able so much as to look upwards." The devil which had possession of her had not only enfeebled her body, but had weighed her heart earthward, and while he robbed her of the sight of her Saviour, he likewise blotted out all thought of calling upon Him for help. Touched by so great misery Jesus called her to Him.

"Woman," He said to her, "you are cured of your infirmity"; and at the same time He laid His hands upon her.

Straightening up until she stood erect once more, she broke forth glorifying God; but the ruler of the synagogue could not brook this spectacle of Jesus receiving homage from his congregation; angered alike by the miracle and the joyous chorus of acclamations, he gave utterance to impatient words.

"During six days," he cried, "man may labor; within that time come here to be healed, and not upon the Sabbath day."

Then Jesus replied: "Hypocrites! does not each of you loose his ox or his ass from the manger and lead them to water on the Sabbath day? And ought not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has held fast bound for eighteen years, be loosed from these fetters upon the Sabbath day?" This argument confounded the Master's adversaries, and the people rejoiced for all the things that were gloriously done by Him.

Thus, then, the mission of Jesus on the other side of Jordan had not been altogether fruitless, for men's hearts were turning toward the new reign of the Christ; yet along with this throbbing expectation there were mingled feelings of vague uneasiness. What signified those words of His, when He said that He would come like a thief in the night, or like the master who appears of a sudden to surprise his drowsy household? Why must they all be watching night and day with girded loins, torch in hand? Would the season for entering the Kingdom of Heaven be so swiftly fleeting that it behooved one to lay hold upon it in all haste, for the acceptable time once sped by never more would re-

turn? Thoughts like these disquieted their minds, till at last some of the Jews broached the subject to Jesus.

"Lord," they asked, "are only a few to be saved?"

The Master was at no pains to ease the burden of their fears. He knew well the obstinate self-confidence of these sons of Israel, so ready to believe themselves perfect, if only from the simple fact that they were God's people. Therefore He told them again of the narrow gateway by which His Church is entered, which is opened only by the expenditure of efforts whereof very many are incapable. Then how would it profit them at the last moment to have heard and seen the Messiah, when the soul that has not entered His Kingdom before death will find the door closed and the Father of the family retired within doors?

"When you, standing outside," continued Jesus, "shall begin to knock, crying out: 'Lord, open to us!' and He shall answer you: 'I know not whence you are,' then you shall begin to say: 'We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our public squares.' And He shall say to you: 'I know not whence you are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity.' There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you shall see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you cast forth without. And they shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and they shall have their share in the banquet."

They were now upon the highroad leading to the Holy City, when Jesus prophesied to the Jews that, though first to be called to the heavenly Kingdom, they should be the last to find the way thither. That He purposed going up to Jerusalem for the anniversary festival of the Dedication had come to be known to all, and the Pharisees of Perea were much rejoiced thereat. In their impatience to witness His departure they pretended to fear some outbreak of wrath from Herod, and so pressed Him to fly the country.

HEROD THREATENS

"Leave these parts," they urged; "get away from here, for Herod has a mind to kill You."

These threatening words had little effect upon the Lord. He informed His enemies that nothing would hinder His fulfilling

His mission to the very end, and this He would do by proceeding onward toward the frontiers of Judea, not through any fear of Herod, but in obedience to the mandates of heaven, which were now beckoning Him on to Jerusalem. Then, branding the wretched policy of that prince whose name they had invoked, He responded to the Pharisees:

"Go and say to that fox that I shall cast out devils and heal the sick today and tomorrow, and on the third day I shall have finished; nevertheless, today and tomorrow and the day following I must walk, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."

And so at the time appointed the Saviour left the realm of Herod, passed over the Jordan, and wended His way through the rocky defiles which lead up to the Holy City. Doubtless it was just as He was about to enter within her walls and at sight of the multitudes grouped around her gates, that the heart of Jesus was torn with grief and He wept over the ungrateful city, foretelling that she would see Him only once again, that so she might welcome Him with a first outburst of gladness, and straightway thereafter put Him to death.

"Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" He cried, "thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children as the hen doth her brood under her wings! And lo! your houses shall be deserted, for I say to you: You shall not see Me until you shall say, 'Blessed be He that cometh in the Name of the Lord!' "

This sad foreknowledge did not prevent Jesus from entering the streets of Jerusalem, there to proffer her His gift of salvation for the last time. Just now the town was given over to joyous celebrations, for the Feast of the Dedication was no less brilliant than were those of the Tabernacles or the Passover. For the space of one week the Jews, with palm branches in their hands, surged in crowds through the Temple, with sacred songs commemorating the purification of the sanctuary by the Machabees, while every evening the town was ablaze with lights, in memory of that single flask of oil which for eight days had sufficed for the needs of the divine service.

Leaving His disciples to take part in the feast-making, Jesus withdrew further into the Temple, till He came to Solomon's

Portico. There some of the Sanhedrin's people caught sight of Jesus, and made haste to gather round Him.

"How long," they said, "dost Thou keep us in suspense? If Thou art the Christ, tell us openly."

Jesus avoided the snare they were now laying for Him. To proclaim Himself the Messiah would be to furnish them with an occasion for handing Him over to the Roman authorities. He was content to recall what He had told them as to His mission, and by what wondrous deeds He had given proof thereof. Then, repeating the parable He had given them at the Feast of the Tabernacles, He assured them anew that He was their shepherd, that if they were willing to be His sheep, following Him and hearkening to His voice, having Him for their safeguard and their watchman, they might rest in sweet security, for the Father had communicated unto Him His attributes, that divine power which is above all things whatsoever; yet no one is able to wrest aught from the hand of the Father. And then He added: "My Father and I are One."

The essential vigor of these mighty words would alone have made their meaning clearly manifest. By them Jesus declared Himself their God—not simply united to the Father by faith and love, but having only the one same substance with Him. And it was in this sense the Jews understood His words, for they snatched up stones, thinking to stone Him. With a word Jesus quelled their madness.

"Many good works have I shown you from My Father. For which of these works do you stone Me?"

"Not for a good work do we stone Thee," they made answer, "but for blasphemy, and because Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God."

And the Lord was moved to pity by their blindness; He showed them how, in the Holy Books, Jehovah had Himself announced and foreshadowed this mystery which was so abhorrent to their minds. Not content with having appeared to their fathers under a human form, to prove that He did not deem our flesh unworthy to be united with His divinity, He had even bestowed His incommunicable Name upon the judges of Israel. "You are the gods of earth," He had said; "you are all sons of the most high." Since the voice of infallibility, and the words of Scripture, which

can never perish, had both attributed this title to mere creatures, how dared these enemies of Christ accuse Him of blasphemy for saying: "I am the Son of God"?

Nor did Jesus confine Himself to reducing them to silence by this personal argument; He proceeded to fortify His position by means of those marvels which the Father had worked by Him, in order to evidence that He was with Him and in Him, and so concluded by disclosing His Divinity more plainly than ever before.

"My Father is in Me," He said, "and I in My Father."

Upon these words the Sanhedrin rushed upon Him to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hands and went forth into the Temple.

Once again He had made it appear that the princes of Judea were obstinately determined to reject His proffered gifts; and thereupon He left Jerusalem and returned to the other side of Jordan, into the land of Perea which had formerly given Him kindly welcome. Henceforth it was to be the only part of Israel where the incarnate truth might find patient listeners; indeed, it would appear that this region remained faithful unto the end, for scarcely had Jesus revisited the places where John had baptized when the country people flocked about Him again.

"John did not do any miracle," they said, "but everything that John said of this Man was true." And many believed in Jesus.

MAN WITH DROPSY

Just about this time one of the foremost Pharisees of Perea gave a great dinner to certain of his friends, and in accordance with Jewish customs chose a Sabbath day for this social gathering. After He had been invited to the festivities Jesus found that He was again hemmed about by a circle of hostile guests. From the outset they watched His bearing with malignant inquisitiveness, for they had all noted the fact that in the crowd of onlookers stood a man afflicted with dropsy, upon whom the Lord had fixed His compassionate gaze. The poor invalid, intimidated by the presence of all these doctors, dared not so much as ask to be cured.

Would Jesus venture to take the initiative and violate the Sabbath before their eyes?

Reading aright the evil workings of their minds, the Saviour unmasked them.

"Is it lawful," He demanded, brusquely, "to heal on a Sabbath day?"

Divided between the prejudices of their sect and the fear of appearing devoid of pity, the Pharisees looked at one another and found no one ready to reply. Their silence left the Saviour full liberty of action. Taking the sick man, He healed him and sent him away. Then, addressing the Pharisees, He declared (as once before, in the case of the crippled woman) that He was justified by their own conduct. For, in fact, there was no one among them who, if he saw his ass or his ox fall into a pit on a Sabbath day would not draw the creature out. So, then, if they spared neither trouble nor labor for a poor beast, what reason could they possibly allege for teaching that to heal their fellow man was a violation of the sacred rest? The argument did not admit of any reply; neither the Scribes nor the Pharisees broke the silence, but, as if to conceal their vexation, with great bustle and confusion betook themselves to the festal board.

CHOOSING THE LOWER PLACE

Following the fashion of the times, the table was ranged in the central space and surrounded by couches which accommodated at least three persons at a time; on each the place of honor was in the middle, and the guests rushed eagerly to secure this position. Jesus could not witness such puerile vanity displayed by these doctors of the law without showing them to what humiliations they laid themselves liable. Should any important personage enter during the feast someone must step down and give him place, to his own great mortification. Wiser by far is the humble man, who can only be bidden to go up higher than the low station which he has chosen for himself; for on earth, as in Heaven, he who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted.

Meanwhile the repast was being set out—the object of longing glances from the poor folk who were crowding about the portals of the hall, or passing back and forth at a respectful distance from the diners; there was every sort of human wretchedness collected there—cripples in rags, maimed men, blind beggars, all

attracted there by the sounds of feasting, or perhaps by the hope that the Master would somehow lighten their load of misery.

Jesus called His host's attention to this sorrowful throng, telling him that he would have done better had he bidden these unfortunates to his feast rather than his friends, his brethren, his kindred, and his wealthy neighbors. Truly, the latter would invite him in their turn; but, however sumptuous their entertainments might be, they could never afford him that which God has given into the hands of the poor, to be a recompense unto their benefactors—the gladness of the heavenly banqueting.

To the Scribes there was nothing that savored more of intolerable assurance than such statements as this—that these miserable people, whom they disdained, should ever acquire any pre-eminence or any power of bestowing eternal benefits.

Now one of these scholars, interrupting Christ, asserted that in the coming kingdom of the Messiah his place had been marked out for him beforehand, and he loudly congratulated himself on that account:

"Happy man, who shall sit at the banquet in the Kingdom of Heaven!"

Jesus replied to this boast by describing the heavenly festival by means of a comparison.

He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper, and he invited many. And he sent his servant at supper time to tell those invited to come, for everything is now ready. And they all with one accord began to excuse themselves. The first said to him, 'I have bought a farm, and I must go out and see it; I pray thee hold me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am on my way to try them; I pray thee hold me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

"And the servant returned, and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house was angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor, and the crippled, and the blind, and the lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, thy order has been carried out, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and make them come in, so that my house may be filled.' "

In this parable there was nothing lacking for the feast that could be laid to the master's door; the table was decked with all magnificence, the guests were a goodly company. Not content with the mere formal invitation, but faithfully following the cordial custom of eastern countries, he had dispatched his servant to acquaint them of the hour when the banquet was ready. So, for now three years, the princes of the house of Israel had likewise heard the pleading accents of the Divine Master, but, one and all, they had still refused to listen to Him. The wrath of their heavenly Father was kindled at such contemptuous tokens; and therefore, disowning these great folks of Judea, He had commanded that the poor and the cripples, the blind and the maimed be brought to Him.

Round about the very board at which He uttered this parable, Jesus could point to these outcasts of Israel, who were eagerly hastening to hear His voice and to take their place at the celestial banquet. Nor would they be the only ones to find their way thither; for the master, seeing there were still empty spaces, gives orders to his servants to go outside the town, and bring any strangers into his house. By these words Jesus proclaimed the calling of the Gentiles. And though these Pharisees, so puffed up with their earthly ancestry, did not comprehend Him fully, they at least could not fail to know that the Saviour had disinherited them; for, putting aside all obscurities, He declared to these guests seated around Him that none of those who were invited should taste of His supper.

This sentence is the last which Saint Luke reports as spoken at this meal. Immediately afterwards he tells how Jesus departed from the festal hall, followed by great throngs; doubtless the poor and infirm were with Him, drawn to His side by the promises which they had just heard from His lips. But to their simple minds, the new rule of the Messiah, His throne and His feast-making could not but resemble those for which the world is so greedy. Jesus undeceived them; turning toward them He warned them that in desiring to be His disciples they were aspiring to a life of sacrifice. They must set His love high above all things else, must forego their own most tender ties of affection as soon as they become an obstacle to salvation, breaking with all things else, hating all things else, father, mother, wife and children,

brothers and sisters, everything—even their own soul.

Mad, indeed, is that man who would begin to build a tower without having wherewithal to complete it! The king who would engage his scanty armament in war with a formidable foe would be a madman indeed! The discomfiture of each would be equally certain. So is it with the man who desires to be the disciple of Jesus without renouncing all that he possesses. Very soon he shall become but a traitor and an apostate. Thereupon the Lord concluded with those words which, in His preaching, always denoted that the lesson just uttered contains a truth of paramount importance:

"They that have ears to hear let them hear!"

PARABLES OF DIVINE MERCY

During these last days Christ had given to the precepts of Christian abnegation a severer form, while at the same time He spoke more openly than ever before of the tender mercies of His Father. Whether it was that He felt moved to display a greater sympathy for sorrowful mortals the longer He Himself suffered our infirmities, or whether, seeing His end draw on apace, He was the more eager to hurry the strayed sheep within His fold—at this period His words did indeed breathe an ineffable tenderness, His sighs and His tears were oftener wrung from Him, and the words of His parables grew always more heart-stirring. Those whereby the Master expressed the depth and breadth of divine love deserve to be distinguished from among all the rest.

He proffered them as an answer to fresh mutterings from the Scribes; for these sectaries, after their humiliation at the Pharisee's table, were become in Perea, as much as elsewhere, His implacable enemies; and they now reproached Christ for associating with the vilest sinners.

"Why! in truth, one would think all the publicans in the country were like to gather around Him!"

With a gesture, pointing to the attentive throngs, Jesus replied to the grumblers who were so blind as to make small account of that priceless array of souls:

"What man is there among you," He said, "who, though he has a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them does not leave the ninety and nine others in the wilderness, and go after the one

which is lost, until he find it? And, after he finds it, he lays it over his shoulder with gladness, and coming to his home, calls together friends and neighbors, saying:

" 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep.'

"Even so, I tell you, there shall be more of joy in Heaven over one sinner who does penance, than over ninety-nine just men who need not penance. Or again, what woman is there, who, if she has ten drachmas and she lose one of them, does not light the lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she find it? And after she has found it she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying:

" 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the drachma which I had lost.'

"So I tell you that there shall be joy in the sight of God's Angels over one sinner doing penance."

THE PRODIGAL SON

Evidently these first gracious similitudes scarcely touched the Pharisees, for Jesus proceeded to exalt further the divine loving kindness. This he did in one of His most beautiful parables—reciting the sad misconduct of a spendthrift younger son, who had extorted from his father his own share of the inheritance. Never did the Lord picture the sinner's wanderings with more vivid colors; every touch in the likeness stirs the soul, and brings back the features of our own life story before our eyes.

"While the ruined spendthrift is still afar off, his father sees him; he is filled with pity for his boy, makes haste toward him, falls upon his neck, and kisses him. And the son says to him:

" 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you. I am not worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father says to his servants: 'Bring forth quickly the richest robe and put it on him, and place a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf and kill it: let us eat and make good cheer! For this son of mine was dead and is brought to life again; he was lost and is found.' "

The listening throngs were stirred and thrilled by this narrative, even as, since that day, so many repentant souls have recognized its comfortable power. For a short space the Master left them to revolve His words silently in their hearts, but at length,

looking upon the surly group of His enemies still standing along with the people, He added a word or two for them:

"The elder son of the family was on his way home from the fields just as the merrymaking began; his ears caught the loud choiring of musicians, the dancers' light laughter.

" 'What might all this mean?' he asked himself; and learning that his brother had returned, he grew indignant and refused to enter the house. Then the father came out to him, and began to entreat him. But he, making answer said:

" 'See how many years I have served you and never neglected one of your commandments, yet never have you given me a kid to make merry with my friends. Yet as soon as this other son returns, who has squandered his portion with harlots, you kill the fatted calf for him.'

"And the father said: 'My son, you are always with me, and everything that is mine is yours. But it was fitting that we should make high festival and rejoice, because your brother was dead and is come to life once more; he was lost and is found again.' "

Just about this time Jesus gave the Pharisees further cause for bitter dislike of Him. We know how boundless was their love of wealth; only desirous of temporal blessings they asked for nothing beyond the dews of heaven and the fatness of earth; but though this abundance, of old promised to the Synagogue, had ever been and as yet remained their portion, such was not to be the case in the new realm of Jesus. Wealth was something to be dreaded—so said the Master; for He knew that it spreads an invisible net round about the soul, enmeshing it and dragging it to the earth. Therefore He never let pass any occasion for denouncing it to His disciples as an enemy and a deceiver. The cunning stratagem of a dishonest agent, which had been brought to light, doubtless just at this time and in this very region which the Saviour was now traversing, furnished Him with an opportunity for renewing His warnings.

THE UNJUST STEWARD

"There was a certain rich man," He began, "who had a steward, who was reported to him as squandering his possessions. And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear of thee?

Make an accounting of thy stewardship, for thou canst be steward no longer.'

"And the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do, seeing that my master is taking away the stewardship from me? To dig I am not able; to beg I am ashamed. I know what I shall do, that when I am removed from my stewardship they may receive me into their houses.' And he summoned each of his master's debtors and said to the first, 'How much dost thou owe my master?' And he said, 'A hundred jars of oil.' He said to him, 'Take thy bond and sit down at once and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'How much dost thou owe?' He said, 'A hundred kors of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take thy bond and write eighty.'

"And the master commended the unjust steward, in that he had acted prudently."

That Jesus held up this fellow's rascality for His disciples' consideration was not because He approved of trickery and craftiness, but because He wished to remind them how much more watchful and wary, in compassing their schemes, are the children of this world than are the children of light.

"And I say to you, make friends for yourselves with the mammon of wickedness, so that when you fail they may receive you into the everlasting dwellings."

The hardihood with which Jesus proffered His followers this striking illustration has astonished the world, yet it reveals at the same time that contempt with which the Saviour regarded man's craving for money. In His eyes riches appear, as it were, altogether stripped of any value, except that of being emptied, into the outstretched hands of the poor and thereby commuted into everlasting treasures.

Yet, although the Lord's principal object was to show that great wealth is foreign to the true life of man, He was careful not to leave any false impression upon the minds of the disciples—explaining to them that they are to imitate the prudence, and not the dishonesty of the faithless steward, and that they should prove by their steadfast integrity in little things, whether they are worthy or great. He concluded by repeating His customary maxims concerning the love of worldly possessions:

"No man can serve two masters at one and the same time. You cannot serve God and Mammon."

It was to the disciples He addressed these words; but the avaricious Pharisees who stood among the listeners laughed them to scorn. As usual, Jesus quietly brushed aside the insult.

"God knows your hearts," He told them, "for that which is great among men is an abomination before Him."

And He showed how this abomination was plain to be seen in the disdain which they evinced for the Law given to man, from Moses down to John the Baptist, whereof the reign of the Messiah was but the fulfillment and perfection. Yet what else were the Pharisees doing but violating that same Law by tolerating the adultery which it prohibited? Without mentioning their tetrarch by name Jesus made an evident allusion to his crime, and proceeded to scourge the groveling timidity of these doctors who had sanctioned the evil by their silence. Then reverting to His contempt of riches which had first shocked them, He dwelt still more forcibly upon the dangers besetting earthly goods.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

"There was a certain rich man," He said, "who used to clothe himself in purple and fine linen, and who feasted every day in splendid fashion. And there was a certain poor man, named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. And it came to pass that the poor man died and was borne away by the angels into Abraham's bosom; but the rich man also died and was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes, being in torments, he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.'

"But Abraham said to him, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime hast received good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now here he is comforted whereas thou art tormented. And besides all that, between us and you a great gulf is fixed, so that they who wish to pass over from this side to you cannot, and they cannot cross from your side to us.' "

What could the rich man do except plead his ignorance, and so make shift to cast the blame of his wretchedness upon God? Nevertheless, Jesus would not even allow him this excuse, and thus continued the dialogue across the impassable gulf:

"And he said, 'Then, father, I beseech thee to send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they too come into this place of torments.' And Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hearken to them.' But he answered, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hearken to Moses and the Prophets, they will not believe even if someone rises from the dead.' "

In this manner Jesus designated those numberless Jews who, even after the Resurrection, would persist in their obstinate incredulity. But though by their scoffs and jeers the Pharisees of Perea justified this prediction, the multitude showed themselves much more teachable, and to them the Lord repeated the lessons He had once given the Galileans—warning them of scandals, urging forgiveness of injuries, and telling them of the all-powerfulness of faith. Saint Luke but barely alludes to these various instructions; one of them, however, he records more at length.

"But which of you is there," said Jesus, "having a servant plowing or tending sheep, who will say to him on his return from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table!' But will he not say to him, 'Prepare my supper, and gird thyself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk; and afterwards thou thyself shalt eat and drink'? Does he thank that servant for doing what he commanded him? I do not think so. Even so you also, when you have done everything that was commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what it was our duty to do.' "

This parable is an inestimable treasure which merits a foremost place in our memory, for it denotes that at a time when Jesus was exalting the poor of His realm, when He invited them to His table, bidding His angels transform their death into victory, He, nevertheless, took care not to flatter any man, whatever rank or condition he might be. One and all were reminded that the master husbandman has given to each a task at the tillage—some in this near place, some further afield, and on the day when the plow handle slips from their weary grasp, and the sickle falls

from the listless fingers, they must not pretend to any credit beyond having done what they ought, nor claim the right to any glory other than a share in the boundless mercies of the Lord of the harvest.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

Once more Jesus traversed the land of Perea, when a messenger from Bethany, a village near Jerusalem, came seeking Him, and at once greeted Him with these words:

"Lord, he whom You love is sick."

Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, had been struck down by a grievous illness, and in all haste his two sisters had dispatched their courier to the Master, fully confident that He only needed to be informed of their trouble, because they felt sure they knew His heart. Mary especially had many proofs of its overflowing tenderness since the day when she anointed the Saviour with fragrant spices and wiped them away with her beautiful hair. There was never a doubt but He would hurry to His friend's bedside, and at His mere approach the danger would flit away. But Jesus was content to listen to the message and make answer:

"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, in order that the Son of God may be glorified thereby."

Then He lingered two days longer in this same spot; not from fear, nor from indifference, for He loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus, but to await the bidding from on high.

At Bethany, however, there was only tremulous and eager expectation; from the brow of the highlands on which the village is built, more than once the two sisters with straining eyes scanned the wide outlook, from the mountains of Perea to the footpaths which lead up to Bethany, longingly watching the road which the Saviour must take. Alas, for their fruitless and forlorn hopes! Lazarus, their brother, died.

As is the custom in hot climates, the body was washed, wrapped in perfumes and linen bands, then borne at once to the funeral grotto, and the wail of the mourners began. The event had collected together a considerable concourse for the household of Lazarus being of distinguished rank, very many Jews of note had come down with a large company from Jerusalem. During all

of three days the customary lamentations resounded through their dwelling and round about the tomb. Martha and Mary, with feet bared and their heads veiled, sat upon the ground and moaned, while around them their friends and neighbors with the wailers together joined in the groans and cries of mourning. At nightfall of the third day, according to Jewish beliefs, the soul ceased to hover over the cold body. The sepulcher was then visited for the last time, the winding sheet drawn over the face of the dead, and a stone forevermore sealed up this grave which the rabbis called the Mansion of Eternity.

Thus it seemed that for Lazarus all was finished; but Jesus, who for two days had rested there without speaking of Bethany, of a sudden said to His disciples: "Let us return into Judea."

"Master," they exclaimed, "it is but a little while since the Jews sought for You that they might stone You, and are You going to put Yourself once more into their hands?"

The Lord essayed to calm their fears by declaring that His mission was like the twelve hours of the day, whose duration no one might shorten by human strength; the Father watched over Him with His providence; a divine light guided His footsteps, so that He might neither stumble nor fall, until the hour appointed when the shades of darkness would encompass Him. Then disclosing the motive of His departure He told them:

"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going to awaken him from his slumber."

"Lord," responded the apostles, "if he sleeps he shall be saved."

They forgot the slumbering from which the Master had aroused the daughter of Jaïrus, and as usual slow of comprehension, they believed He was speaking of that physical drowsiness which in certain maladies betokens returning health. Then Jesus told them plainly:

"Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, in order that you may believe. But let us go to him."

These words renewed their terrors—they hesitated to follow Him. Then Thomas spurred their courage with those generous words:

"Come," he said bravely, "let us go and die with Him."

Starting out immediately, Jesus journeyed across Jordan valley and reached Bethany on the morrow. He halted at the outskirts

of the village, for though the company had dispersed after the funeral repast of the third day, there were many friends still lingering beside the two sisters. Jesus knew that these personages were powerful in Jerusalem, bound by many ties to the Sanhedrin and sharing its errors; therefore He desired not to excite their attention, but it was impossible to conceal His presence for any length of time. For, although Mary lingered in the darkened dwelling overwhelmed with sadness, Martha had resumed her active care of household affairs and she was speedily made aware of the Master's arrival. Going out to meet Him she said:

"Lord, if thou had been here my brother would not now be dead. But I know that even now God will grant You whatever You will ask of Him."

"Your brother shall rise again," Jesus said to her.

"I know," she responded, "he shall rise again in the Resurrection, in the last day."

Martha little understood the meaning of the Saviour's promise, and only looked upon it as another consoling thought, such as her friends had been repeating during all of these last three days. Christ recalled her to a sense of who He was who was now speaking to her, with those words which the Church still uses to comfort us in our bereavement.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, although he be dead he shall live. And he that liveth and believeth in Me shall not die forever. Believest thou this?"

"Yea, Lord," she said, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into this world."

It was blind, unquestioning faith, rather than any understanding of the words of Jesus, which moved Martha to this acknowledgment; Mary, the contemplative soul, was better fitted to understand these exalted truths. With this thought uppermost in mind Martha sped homeward to summon her sister. She found her in the great house, still crouched upon the ground, her spirit absorbed in grief. Approaching her as quietly as possible, she whispered:

"The Master is yonder; He is asking for you."

In a moment Mary had risen and was on her way to Jesus. The Jews who were with her in the house comforting her, seeing her depart so speedily, followed her, saying:

"She is going to weep at the tomb."

On leaving the village they descried Jesus with a little knot of disciples still waiting on the same spot where Martha had just met them. At sight of Him, Mary fell at His feet, murmuring the same reproachful words which for these last three days the two sisters had kept repeating to each other.

"Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died!" She could add no more—her tears spoke and she prayed.

Around her the Jews meanwhile seemed to have forgotten their hatred of Christ; like Mary, they too were sobbing. So mightily did these tokens of love and sorrow shake the soul of Jesus that His spirit was stirred and troubled with Him.

"Where have you laid him?" He said.

"Lord, come and see!"

And Jesus wept.

"See how He loved him," said the Jews. But with some there was a feeling of bitterness mingled with their pity.

"And yet," added the latter, "could He not have hindered Lazarus from dying—He who was able to open the eyes of a man born blind?"

This reproach Jesus also overheard, and again shuddering beneath the weight of human sorrows, He halted before the tomb. According to the fashion with wealthy Jews, it was a cavern chiseled out of the rock, and sealed with a stone.

"Take away the stone," He said.

Martha was inclined to withstand this order.

"Master, he is already corrupt; it is four days since he died."

Then the Lord replied: "Did I not say to you that if you believe you shall see the glory of God?"

The stone was rolled away from the sepulcher, and the body disclosed. The two sisters with their friends drew closer about the Master, with tear-dimmed glances riveted upon the gloomy cave. Stepping nearer and raising His eyes towards heaven, Jesus spoke:

"Father," He began, "I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard Me. For Myself, I know that Thou hearest Me always, but for the sake of these people who stand about Me I have spoken thus, in order that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Then He cried with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth!"

And instantly the dead emerged from the grave with feet and hands wrapped with the winding bands, with his face shrouded under the linen kerchiefs, while at the spectacle all stood speechless and white with terror.

"Loose his bands," Jesus said, "and let him go."

The cerecloth fell from off his features, the winding sheets slipped from his limbs, and Lazarus stood there in the sight of his bewildered friends.

Saint John, who was a witness of this marvel, adds that very many of the Jews who had come hither to Martha and Mary, having seen this which Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of the company made haste to inform the Sanhedrin. That assembly was struck with the liveliest alarm. The Passover was close at hand; already from every quarter of Judea the people were starting out on their way to Jerusalem. What did this Nazarene mean by coming up almost to the very gates of the Holy City to work a miracle like this? Was He about to declare Himself king and arouse the Jews against their Roman masters? Fears of this sort reduced them to such a state of perplexity that they forthwith called an assembly of the national council.

Thanks to the members of the Sanhedrin who were afterwards converted, Saint John was made acquainted with what took place in this gathering.

"What are we doing?" the princes of Jewry asked of one another. "This man is working many miracles. If we let Him go on acting thus, all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and destroy our city and our nation."

Their annoyance and anxiety were extreme, and the various counsels contradictory and confusing; at this juncture Joseph Caiphas arose. As high priest for that year, his dignity, however degraded by Roman corruption, still gave great weight to his words.

"You know nothing at all," he began, "nor do you reflect that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, instead of the whole nation perishing."

Caiphas disclosed his whole character in this saying, wherein his pride, his contempt for justice, his unscrupulous cruelty are openly unmasked. But he was also (though without knowing it) making himself the mouthpiece of God—for the gift of

prophecy was in some sort a prerogative of the priesthood; and Jehovah who for long ages had been wont to speak by the Urim and the Tummim of the High Priest, once again upon this day set His oracle on the lips of a descendant of Aaron. This is John's testimony:

"Caiphas said this, not of himself; but being High Priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was to die for the nation and not only for the nation, but that He might gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad."

It would appear that the High Priest's advice did not excite the slightest opposition. The greater number of councilors were Sadducees; doubt and skepticism had frozen their hearts and poisoned every upright and honest tendency of their minds; they immediately seized this politic recommendation and resolved to adopt it, by compassing the death of Jesus.

If we are to believe the tradition, this decision was arrived at, not in Jerusalem, but upon a certain highland in the suburbs which still bears the name of "Evil Council." There Caiphas possessed a country house, and his purpose in assembling the Sanhedrin in this retired spot, was to preserve secrecy in regard to the sentence found against the Nazarene. But Jesus counted several friends in the supreme council; though Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea had not the courage openly to undertake His defense, they at least were not implicated in the conspiracy, and probably it was upon receiving their warning that the Saviour decided to quit Jerusalem.

Accompanied by a chosen band of followers, He set out for the country which stretches between Bethel and the Jordan, and withdrew until well nigh within the borders of Samaria, to a town called Ephrem. There He consecrated the last weeks of His life to intimate conversation with His disciples; and the secret of His retreat was not betrayed, for when, a little later, the Sanhedrin synod ordained that anyone who knew where He was should deliver Him up to them, no one disclosed His habitation.

TEN LEPERS

However much of ungratefulness the land of Israel had shown Him, Jesus dearly loved His native country, as the mother loves

the child of her sorrows, and He would not die without revisiting the places whither He had once carried the good news of salvation. So a few weeks before the Paschaltide, He left Ephrem wending His way northward, traveled across Samaria and Galilee, and when upon their frontier wrought one of His last miracles.

On the outskirts of a little hamlet, shrill cries reached His ears: they came from a group of ten lepers who lived together near this spot. They dared not approach closer, for any contact with them, even their passing breath was a contamination, yet as soon as they recognized the Saviour, they lifted up their voices crying all together:

"Jesus! Master! have pity upon us!"

The Lord granted their hearts' desire:—

"Go," said He, "show yourselves to the priests."

They obeyed instantly, and even as they were on their way to those who could rightfully certify to their cure, they felt a purer life-blood surging up within their veins, the hideous pallor was fast yielding to the swift pulse of health; their malady had disappeared!

But what was it happened by the roadside, and what was the reason they showed such coldness of heart? Was it their own evil natures or some fear of the Jews, or was it the prompting of some foes of Jesus which held them back from Him? We do not know; all that the Gospel tells us is that of the ten lepers only one retraced his steps, with a loud voice glorifying God the while, and that this one was a Samaritan. An inhabitant of that border-land of Judea, he had found no difficulty in gaining admittance among the lepers of Israel; the wretched disease which was the common fate of such outcasts always leveled any barriers of rank between fellow sufferers; but once the affliction was lifted away the barriers arose of themselves. So the nine Jews had left the Samaritan to throw himself alone at the feet of Jesus. Well accustomed as the Saviour was to all manner of ingratitude, this last token of heartlessness dismayed Him.

"Were not the ten cleansed," He said; "where then are the nine others? There was none found who returned to give glory to God, save this stranger!"

Only in this last-named soul could Jesus complete the work of

grace; already He had touched the Samaritan's heart. He now made him one of His disciples.

"Arise," He said to him, "and go your way: your faith has saved you."

The healing of the lepers attracted the attention of the Galilean Pharisees, which for some months had been diverted from the Christ. The youthful teacher reappeared before them with all His wonted marks of power, mighty in deed and in word, as of old, continuing always to publish the approach of God's kingdom although without any token of preparations for the establishment of a terrestrial empire—with no signs of royal pomp or splendid victories; meek, gentle, terrible only to the devils, He everywhere yielded to the violence of man, was hunted from town to town from one land to another. What then was there to hope from such a Messiah along with His fruitless promises? Were the preparations for His much talked of coming to be never ending? Wearied with this prolonged course of deception, as they construed it, the Pharisees approached Him.

"When," they inquired contemptuously, "will the 'Kingdom of God' come?"

The Lord replied that it was needless for them to stand and gaze, waiting for some new marvel to burst upon their ecstatic vision and overcome them "by outward shows." His realm was not like those of earth which are established at the expense of wars and wondrous feats of strength. No glittering court is arrayed around the new King, no wondering throngs, attracted by His gorgeous state, gather about Him shouting "Lo, here He is! Yonder He stands!"

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

"The Kingdom of God," Jesus said, "is within you"—plainly visible to the pure of heart, unseen by the eyes of flesh; a heavenly empire, which, for nineteen centuries, has never yet appeared outside the holy sanctuary of the soul, and until today is still denied by the very men who daily see millions of subjects bowing beneath the invisible scepter of the Christ!

So for the Pharisees, who were strangers to the Kingdom of God, this response was sufficient; but it was not enough for the

disciples who were its true children. The Master warned them that they were to be persecuted and, as it would seem, abandoned by God; that they should greatly desire to behold again one of those days which they had spent in blessed companionship with the Son of Man, but that they should see the like never again. Then would it behoove them to remain steadfast and turn a deaf ear to the blandishments of deceivers who would cry, "Lo, here He is! See! He is here!" Vain and empty clamor! Jesus shall no more return until time is at an end, and then with such flashing and crashing of thunderbolts that the deaf and the blind shall know thereof. This last coming shall be swift as the lightning, wild and furious as those great floods which swallowed up Noe's fellow-countrymen, terrible as the showers of fire in which Sodom was engulfed. Woe to the man, who, in that dread day, finds himself unable to disentangle his heart from the burning wreck of the world, and refuses to turn his back upon it, like Lot's wife longing to cast one more glance on the habitations of evil! That shall be a season of sickening surprises, heartrending separations, the night of eternity, when there shall be two together in the same bed, the one shall be taken, the other left.

Every line in this prophecy applied in like manner to the judgment which each man must undergo, to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, to the last high court which shall doom or deliver the world. At these three awful epochs Jesus declared that God's justice would be equally sudden and unlooked for. But this lofty plane of thought was far above the comprehension of His apostles; with their minds filled with the imagery of Joel, they believed they were already nigh upon the day foretold by the prophet: "Day of clouds and tempests . . . when the sun shall change into thick darkness, the moon to blood, the earth shall be covered with flame and whirlwinds of smoke." Already their eyes were looking for the valley of Josaphat, the valley of slaughter, whither, with a roaring out of Sion, Jehovah shall gather all the peoples of the earth.

"Where, Lord?" they cried.

"Where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together," was Jesus' answer.

Thus the divine justice knows neither time nor place, but strikes down sin wheresoever it befouls the earth. In that hour, when the

measure of the world's wickedness shall be filled to overflowing and naught but the senseless corpse of iniquity remains, then the avenging eagles of divine justice shall sweep down upon their prey. They shall be gathered together in the words of the seer of Patmos, "unto the great supper of God, that they may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of chieftains in battle, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, the flesh of all men, free men and slaves, the little and the great . . . and all the birds were gorged with their flesh."

The vision of judgment froze the disciples' hearts with fear. To reassure them the Master forewarned them that they need not be overtaken by surprise, if they would but look steadfastly heavenwards; and so, by means of two parables, He taught them more in regard to prayer.

The first showed them the power of perseverance, and that they must pray always without ever being wearied.

An unrighteous and prevaricating judge for a long time refuses to hear the case of a poor widow; at last he consents, worn out by her ceaseless complaints.

"Even though I have no fear of God," he says, "and care nothing for man, yet because this widow is burdensome to me, I will grant her justice lest she finally overpower me."

"You hear," added the Lord, "what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God grant justice to His elect who cry to Him night and day, and will He impose a long delay upon them? No, I say unto you, He will grant them justice right speedily."

The theme of the second parable was the humility with which it befits us to pray. The Master could not note the ignorance and the carnal craving of His disciples without sorrowing over them.

"Think you," He exclaimed, "that the Son of Man when He returns shall find faith on earth?"

PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN

Indeed, at this very time when He was fashioning their hearts for prayer, there was nothing but rivalry and dissension in the souls of His followers: each one boasting of his own merits, proud of his own outward semblance of piety; while in their presumption some went so far as even to despise their fellow men. To

these self-conceited spirits, Jesus told a story of two men who went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a publican. In the presence of the Lord, the Pharisee displays all the arrogance of his sect; with his head thrown back proudly, his countenance all complacent and self-satisfied, he stands there, not so much to pray as to sing his own praises:

"O God," he says, "I thank thee that I am not like the rest of men, robbers, dishonest, adulterers, or even like this publican. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I possess." But the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but kept striking his breast, saying "O God, be merciful to me the sinner!"

And Jesus added: "I tell you, this man went back to his home justified, rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

DIVORCE

This lesson was the last which Galilee was to hear from the great teacher. Bidding His native land a last farewell, Jesus crossed Jordan and descended the eastern bank of the stream. Soon Pharisees of Perea crowded around Him again; they no longer came to listen, but to tempt the Master.

"Is it lawful," they began, "for a man to put away his wife for any cause?"

A weighty question this, and one just now engrossing the attention of Jewish doctors, as it turned upon that obscure text in Deuteronomy: "When the man who has married a wife conceives a loathing of the woman because he has found some stain upon her, he shall give her a writing of divorce, and having put it within the woman's hands, he shall send her out of his house."

What were they to understand by the word *stain?* Did any corporal infirmity, or the least lightness of conduct deserve this epithet? In a word, was any slight pretext sufficient to break all conjugal ties? Hillel and his school championed this opinion. Of more rigid views the disciples of Shammai only conceded that divorce was lawful in cases showing scandalous disorders. But their austere principles were little relished by the many; great men of the people, doctors of the law, and generally speaking,

all private individuals treated the marriage bond with a liberty which was not far from license.

For Jesus to take any part in this controversy by answering the Pharisees' question would be to strike at the worst passions of those about Him; at the same time it would be a direct blow at the tetrarch whose territory they were crossing, thus branding his union as incestuous adultery. For just such daring frankness as this John the Baptist had forfeited his head. But no such fears could gain access to the soul of Jesus; alike indifferent to the hatred of the populace and to Herod's anger, His only care was to uplift their hearts to thoughts of less carnal things. And therefore He disdained to pronounce between Hillel and Shammai, content to remind them that the union of man and wife must remain an eternal bond between them. God Himself on the first day of the world had established this order, commanding the man to leave his father and his mother and give himself altogether to her, thereafter being but one with his espoused. It was in token of this fruitful unity that He had created male and female, and taken Eve from the side of sleeping Adam.

"Therefore now," the Lord concluded, "they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

The Pharisees comprehended that Jesus had avoided their pitfall by uttering these words, but they were anxious to involve Him in direct contradiction with the Law.

"But, why, then," they objected, "did Moses command us to give the woman a bill of divorce and so leave her?"

They indeed had transformed the toleration of an act into a positive precept. To lay bare their trickery, Jesus needed only to explain what was the true spirit animating the Law.

"It was because of the hardness of your hearts," He replied calmly, "that Moses permitted you to leave your wives, but at the beginning it was not thus." Whereupon He added those words which have dowered the marriage state with its final perfection: "I say unto you, every man that leaves his wife, except it be for adultery, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries the wife that is thus put away commits adultery."

His enemies realized that Christ had vanquished them; they

dared not as much as contend that this teaching was an open affront to Herod, as well as a drastic measure of reform for all Israel. Discomfited and abashed, they were obliged to let Him withdraw into His dwelling-place unmolested.

Hardly were they within doors when the disciples began to question in their turn.

"If the case stands thus between husband and wife," they said, "it were better by far not to marry."

Far from abating His law, the Master responded that it was only the first step in the way of chastity now set before the feet of His faithful followers; for very soon a heavenly grace would impel His chosen souls to loftier heights.

"All men," added the Lord, "comprehend not this saying, but only those to whom it is given."

And to mark the road to this knowledge, He spoke of the eunuchs in the courts of Eastern monarchs. It must be some inherited misfortune, or perhaps their master's cruelty, which had put them beyond the reach of carnal delights; yet how much mightier and more efficacious is the Christian's holiness, which by spiritual strength suffices to transform the eunuch of the heavenly courts into a man who, while tarrying in these our fleshly habitations, is no longer of the flesh, but partakes rather of the angel than of man. As yet Jesus could not do more than barely lift the veil which concealed this austere continency from the ancient world, and that but for an instant.

"Whosoever is able to understand, let him understand!" He said to His disciples.

BLESSING CHILDREN

Even as He was speaking, the Saviour noted the entrance of a little group of mothers who had brought with them their little ones. Learning that the Master was about to depart from their neighborhood they were eager to have Him lay His hands upon the children's heads and breathe a prayer over them. Indeed it was then a hallowed usage among pious folk to beg a blessing for their babies at the hands of doctors whom they revered; and Jesus all the more willingly sanctioned the old custom because the sweet purity of babyhood always refreshed and gladdened His heart. But the apostles only regarded these newcomers as trouble-

some intruders, and they rebuffed them with harsh words; and thereat Jesus was much displeased with them, saying:

"Let the little children be, and do not hinder them from coming to Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." He took them into His arms, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them.

The disciples stood gazing at this scene, amazed at seeing Him display such tender familiarity with children; they did not know as yet that it belonged to Jesus to quicken these feeble bodies with an invisible life, and make them heirs of a heavenly glory by the gift of baptism. Already He had proclaimed their prerogatives more than once, and again on this day He declared the same truth once more, for, before bidding them farewell, He held these little ones up as the model for His disciples.

"Amen, I say to you," these were His words, "whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God as a little child will not enter into it."

THE RICH YOUNG MAN

Almost immediately Jesus came forth from the dwelling in which He had been giving them these lovely lessons of life and proceeded along the road. At once a young man came running after Him.

According to Saint Luke's account he was a personage of distinction in those parts, a youth of great and noble heart, that could not be satisfied with the righteousness of the Law, but hungered and thirsted for purer and higher truths. All that he had heard about Jesus made him hope that the Master would soon reveal the mysteries which still overshadowed the ancient Scriptures; and he made haste to kneel before Him, asking:

"Good Master, what shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

Jesus did not accept this praise.

"Why do you call Me good?" He said; "why do you question Me concerning that which is good? There is none good save God alone."

His answer plainly implies that this young nobleman sought in Jesus only a man like himself, and it was meant to teach him that, as mercy and goodness are in the gift of the divine being, he must not seek them of any of His creatures—who obtain them by grace—but from God Himself, in whom they abide in their

fullness. But nevertheless, added the Lord, "if you would enter into life keep the commandments."

"Which commandments?" ejaculated the young man in amazement; for he had looked for some new light, and could not believe that the Master would simply refer him to the precepts of the Law.

To make him understand that God esteems humble faith as of higher worth than splendid achievements, Jesus merely quoted from the Mosaic ordinances those duties which govern the everyday life of men:

"Thou shalt not be an adulterer; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shall not defraud anyone; honor thy father and thy mother, and love thy neighbor as thyself."

"Master," replied the young man in his bewilderment, "all these have I kept; what is yet wanting to me?"

Jesus, looking long upon him, loved him, for He saw the lad was of a true and upright heart, sincere and earnest in the pursuit of righteousness; rising above the beaten roads which all must run, He pointed out the narrow track, which leads the saints up to the far heights of perfection.

"One thing is still lacking to thee," He said; "sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven; and come, follow Me."

It was too much; the young Jew's courage failed him; a great sadness fell upon his soul. Grief-struck and with a somber countenance, he went away, for he had great possessions.

Jesus followed him with His eyes, thinking on all the souls that would be ruined by riches and looking about Him at His disciples—

"How difficult it is," He said to them, "for the rich to enter into God's Kingdom!"

It was not the first time the Master had expressed Himself thus before them, but their ears, as well as their hearts, were closed to the truths which offended and shocked them; and they were as much astonished now at this saying as though it were some new thing.

Jesus gave no signs of irritation; yet, without abating in any way its former severity, He repeated what He had often said, but

in the most touching manner; no mother ever displayed greater tenderness in pressing to her baby's lips the bitter drink which will save its life.

"My dearly beloved sons," came the answer, "ah! how hard it is for those that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into God's Kingdom."

Thus the sentence was formal and explicit; it condemned all attachment to earthly goods. The apostles were still more amazed, and, standing there, they began to say to one another—

"Who, then, can be saved?"

Looking at them, Jesus replied still in the same gentle accents:

"With men it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God."

Peter, as hasty and eager as ever, always the first to regain his courage as he was first to despair—Peter here broke in upon his Master.

"Lord," said he, "we have left all to follow You, what shall there be for us?"

The Saviour's response was a succession of promises: for the apostles, there were set twelve thrones whence they should judge the tribes of Israel in the day when, with all things born unto the new life, the Son of Man shall take possession of the throne of His majesty; and for all His faithful disciples, even from this present time, an hundredfold for everything they shall have left, whether it be home, or brothers, sisters, parents, husband or wife, children or lands; a foretaste of Heaven even in the midst of persecution, and in the ages to come life everlasting.

So gracious and glorious were those prerogatives that Jesus feared lest His apostles should be puffed up with pride at the glowing prospect and imagine that such was their rightful inheritance; for this reason He went on at once to add that they were purely the gifts of grace, and that if the sons of Israel were the first to be called, yet the Gentiles should precede them and share all things with them in that celestial kingdom. The heavenly Father in that new realm is like the lord of a vineyard, who hires workmen at different hours of the day; when the night comes he is free to reward the last comers with the denarius promised to those who have toiled since daybreak; for the same denarius

represents eternal life, which is beyond anything man can merit—a gratuitous recompense, born of God's boundless love.

To the Jews who begrudge the Gentiles their portion, to the Pharisees of every age, God will make answer:

"Friend, I do thee no injustice; didst thou not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is thine and go; I choose to give to this last even as to thee. Have I not a right to do what I choose? Or art thou envious because I am generous?"

And Jesus concluded by uttering one of those maxims He so often repeated which were so heartrending to the haughty spirit of the Jews—

"Even so the last shall be first, and the first last; for many are called, but few are chosen."

THIRD ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PASSION

Preaching and blessing His people Jesus descended the eastern bank of the Jordan. Having arrived at the spot where the road veers off Jerusalemward and crosses the stream, the disciples saw that He was taking that direction, and they were seized with such trepidation and dismay that they stood motionless and dumbfounded; the Master, however, walked on before them, and the apostles alone slowly followed at a distance, filled with overwhelming fears.

The Saviour stopped, made a sign to the Twelve to draw nearer, and thereupon announced His Passion for the third time, foretelling clearly (which until now He had not done) that He was to hang upon the Cross.

He said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that have been written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and scourged and spit upon; and after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death; and on the third day He will rise again."

Jesus could not have described in more distinct terms the sufferings by which He must establish His Kingdom; but the disciples were so engrossed in their Judaic visions of the Messiah's advent that they understood naught of all these things, and this saying, plain and unmistakable as it was, remained hidden to

them. They only concluded that their Master was soon to inaugurate His reign, and thus they were as much preoccupied as ever with dreams of wondrous wealth, mighty thrones, and earthly greatness.

Certainly nothing could give us a better idea of the heavy bandage which covered their eyes than the step taken just at this juncture by the wife of Zebedee the fisherman.

JESUS REPROVES AMBITION

Her two sons hurried to her side, overflowing with all they had just been hearing from the Lord's lips; they instructed her that there were great things now close at hand, grievous trials to be followed shortly by a splendid Resurrection and a surpassing glory. Was it not high time to arrange for the foremost places under the Messiah's new reign? Eager and excited as James and John were, they knew with what sternness the Master rebuked anything like selfish ambition; they therefore dared not utter their requests themselves. But their mother Salome, like many other women, had left Galilee to be one of His companions and minister to His needs. Her sons believed that her prayer would be all-powerful to reach the heart of Jesus, and so they made her a sharer in their high soaring hopes.

With the two young men following after she made her way to the Lord, knelt down at His feet, and besought Him to grant whatever she might ask of Him.

"What is it you desire?" Jesus responded.

"Only say," proceeded Salome, "that my two sons here may sit, the one on Your right hand, the other on Your left, in Your kingdom."

The Saviour had compassion upon their blindness; to right and to left of Him but a few days later there would be raised two crosses, and upon them two tortured thieves would meet a dreadful death.

"You know not what you ask," He said, quietly; then openly alluding to the awful pangs of His Passion and bloody death, "Can you drink the chalice which I must drink," He demanded, "or receive the baptism wherewith I must be baptized?"

James and John fancied that all this merely meant whether

they dared to brave some great peril for His sake, and they replied instantly—

"We can!"

Jesus loved the generous souls of these two "Sons of the Thunder," and later on, He would accept their sacrifice; for James did indeed meet a martyr's death, the first of all the apostles, and John survived the rest only that he might fulfill a longer space of suffering. But as for the first seats in His Kingdom, the Master declared that He was unable to show partiality in disposing of them, for God alone dispenses the graces whereby the highest merits are attained, and man himself can alone render those graces efficacious by corresponding to the designs of Heaven.

However secretly the two brothers had preferred their request it reached the ears of the apostles. All were highly incensed; they had already begun to inveigh against the ambitious pair, each boasting of his own great merits, when Jesus called them to Him. Again He set to work teaching them, as He had done so many times before, that in His holy realm the highest rank is reserved for the humblest souls; just the opposite of those earthly empires where the great ones of a day seek only to enhance the splendor of their borrowed authority. "Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be the slave of all; for the Son of Man also has not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Meantime Jesus and His companions had crossed Jordan valley and were approaching Jericho. By this name they designated what was in those days an oasis glittering with the clustered pleasure-houses and gardens of the great, glowing with palm trees and fields of roses. At either extremity of this rich stretch of country two towns had been built: near the fountain of Eliseus stood the Jericho of ancient days, overthrown by Joshua and reconstructed by Hiel of Bethel; at the southern end was the new city of Jericho, a magnificent pile of edifices erected by Herod and Archelaus.

As the Lord was passing along the highway which connects these two cities, He came across a blind man seated by the wayside; it was the son of Timeus (Bar-Timeus), who was begging in company with another unfortunate. A great concourse of people had already crowded about Jesus, and were following Him from town to town, meaning to enter Herod's city of Jericho in

His train. The blind men listened to the clamor of the multitude; learning that it was Jesus of Nazareth they began to cry out—

"Lord, Son of David, have mercy upon us!"

Their shrill shouts kept growing more importunate until those who passed before them began to rail at them, bidding them hold their peace. They only cried out the louder—

"Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

Touched with compassion Jesus stopped and commanded that they be brought to Him. A number hurried to Bar-Timeus.

"Be of good cheer," they told him; "rise up. He is calling you."

The blind man cast away his long mantle, and guided by those who were nearest him rushed towards where Jesus stood.

"What would you have Me to do for you?" said the Lord.

"Lord," he replied, "that I may see!"

"Go thy way," Jesus said; "thy faith has saved thee."

In like manner He called the other blind man; laying His hands upon his eyes they were opened; and the two followed Him in the midst of a multitude that joined them in shouting glory and praise to God.

There were still some six hours of foot-travel before they could reach Bethany. Jesus resolved to spend the night in Jericho. Along these grand streets, through which resounded the shouts of the throngs proclaiming His glory, many doors would then eagerly have been flung open to welcome Him but, even to the last day steadfast in His design of seeking out the lost sheep of Israel, He asked the hospitality of a dwelling despised by all the citizens.

At the head of the tax collectors in Jericho was a person named Zacheus, hated by the populace because of the great fortune he had accumulated in the exercise of his office, and especially because, though by birth a Jew, he lent his aid to their foreign masters. Notwithstanding, he was a generous and upright man, much nearer the Kingdom of Heaven than his enemies.

As it happened, on this day all his efforts to get sight of Jesus were unavailing, for the crowd kept thrusting him aside contemptuously, and his short stature did not allow his seeing very far. At last he resolved to run on ahead and climb into an Egyptian fig tree which overshadowed the road. The Saviour would surely pass by this spot, and so Zacheus would at last get sight of Him who was known as "The Friend of the Publicans." His good

fortune exceeded his brightest hopes; for he beheld the Master, as He trod the dusty highway, halt, raise His eyes, and, meeting his longing look, heard Him call him by name.

"Zacheus, make haste and come down, for today I must lodge in your house."

The publican instantly obeyed, and overwhelmed with gladness conducted Christ to his residence.

The Jews followed after with murmurs of disapproval.

"He is going to lodge in the house of a sinner!" they said, and all were incensed that, while disdaining the Levites and nobility of Jericho, Jesus should reserve His favors for this outcast of the people.

But their insults and jeers had little effect upon the happy host; overflowing with great joy he opened his heart to the Saviour even before he could fling wide the gates of his home, and by such tokens proved his worthiness to be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven. And indeed on the morrow, standing up before the multitude, he made this generous renunciation:

"Lord, behold, now I give the half of my goods to the poor, and for every wrong that I have done I now return fourfold."

In a word, he had risen far above the perfection prescribed by the Law; not content with making reparation for the past, he made sacrifice of his lawful rights and property, offering it to the poor. Moved by this ready self-abnegation the Lord held up this publican, ennobled by his charity, as a model for the people.

"Today," He said, "this household has found salvation, and this man is truly a child of Abraham, for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

As we have said, this took place on the day following Zacheus' reception of his divine guest, and just at the moment when Jesus was taking leave of His host. The crowds had assembled anew about the portals of Zacheus' mansion, and impatiently awaited the departure of the Master; for His reappearance after such a long period of seclusion, the miracle of the preceding afternoon, His avowed intention to show Himself in Jerusalem, all seemed to imply that the mission of the Christ was to come speedily to an issue. Already it had begun to be common talk in Jericho that the Kingdom of God was to be made manifest immediately, and the whole town was absorbed in expectancy. Before withdrawing

from their midst the Lord wished to dissipate these dreams of a temporal glory. High up in sight of all the listening townfolk towered that great palace which Archelaus had built. This monument of fallen grandeur was a perpetual reminder of their exiled prince and the striking features of his reign—his journey to Rome, his investiture with the rule of Judea at the hands of Augustus, the Jews' bitter opposition to this proceeding, his servants' defense of their master's estates during his absence, and the vengeance which he wreaked upon his foes on his return. Out of these reminiscences still burning in the minds of His auditors Jesus saw fit to compose the Parable of the Gold Pieces.

"A certain nobleman went into a far country to obtain for himself a kingdom and then return. And having summoned ten of his servants, he gave them ten gold pieces and said to them, 'Trade till I come.'

"But his citizens hated him; and they sent a delegation after him to say, 'We do not wish this man to be king over us.' And it came to pass when he had returned, after receiving the kingdom, that he ordered the servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him in order that he might learn how much each one had made by trading.

"And the first came, saying, 'Lord, thy gold piece has earned ten gold pieces.'

"And he said to him:

" 'Well done, good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, thou shalt have authority over ten towns.'

"Then the second came, saying, 'Lord, thy gold piece has made five gold pieces.' And he said to him, 'Be thou also over five towns.'

"And another came, saying, 'Lord, behold thy gold piece, which I have kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou art a stern man. Thou takest up what thou didst not lay down, and thou reapest what thou didst not sow.' He said to him, 'Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I am a stern man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow. Why, then, didst thou not put my money in a bank, so that I on my return might have gotten it with interest?' And he said to the bystanders, 'Take away the gold piece from him, and give it to him who has the ten

gold pieces.' But they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten gold pieces.'

"I say to you that to everyone who has shall be given; but from him who does not have, even that which he has shall be taken away. But as for these my enemies, who did not want me to be king over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence."

By its allusions to those current events which were even then changing the face of Judea this parable captivated the crowds, while at the same time it answered another purpose, for it announced to the Jews who looked to find in Jesus a monarch of this world that soon they would disown Him, and in Pilate's pretorium would repeat the very cry once uttered by the enemies of Archelaus: "We will not have this man to reign over us!" The punishment of the rebels would certainly be fearful; but to the disciples, on the contrary, there was a recompense assured which was to be the more magnificent in proportion as their fidelity should show itself more earnest and eager. Nevertheless, let them not expect to receive it altogether in this life, but on that day when Christ shall return invested with Eternal Kinghood.

With this prophetic lesson Jesus left the people of Jericho, and took the road leading toward Jerusalem in company with His apostles. The multitude followed Him respectfully; they watched Him as He led the way through the deep defiles of the mountain, making His way up toward the Holy City. But He did not mean to enter its gates on this day, since He had decided to stop at Bethany, and thus make Lazarus' house His last dwelling place on earth.

He reached their residence on Friday evening about the time when, with the setting sun, began "the sixth day before the Passover." On the morrow all observed the sacred repose, but during the late hours of that Sabbath afternoon the Lord's entertainers celebrated His arrival by a great feast, which took place "in the house of Simon the Leper."

At sight of the Master seated beside Lazarus, and remembering all His benefits, Mary's heart was thrilled and she cast about in her mind for some token of homage, whereby to give evidence of her gratefulness. At once her memory reverted to the repast at Naim; she recalled the floods of tears which had then cleansed her heart of its dark stains and the perfumes which she had shed, moved by a great love. Leaving Martha to care for the needs of

their guests, she sped away in search of an alabaster vial filled with spikenard of exquisite purity; taking this in her hands and leaning over the couch on which Jesus rested, she shattered the fragile vessel. The fragrant stream poured over the head and feet of Christ, and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.

Turning on His arm, Jesus saw this woman lying at His feet as once before, and once more wiping them with her heavy locks. She was generously sacrificing in His honor the most precious possession of her home in Bethany. The Master understood her heart, and with silent approbation accepted Mary's act of adoration. But the Galileans, who were ranged round her, were indignant at seeing a treasure of so much value squandered in an instant, and one of them went so far as to openly utter his complaints against her—it was Judas Iscariot.

"Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii, and given to the poor?"

"Now he said this, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and holding the purse, he used to take what was put in it." Then taking pattern from him the apostles began murmuring and repeated after him:

"To what purpose has this waste of ointment been made?"

But Jesus said, "Let her be. Why do you trouble her? She has done Me a good turn. For the poor you have always with you, and whenever you want you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. She has done what she could; she has anointed My body in preparation for burial."

"For My burial!" Mary realized then the truth which Jesus had already three times revealed without being understood. More detached from the world than the apostles, and faithfully meditating upon the word of God, she had all along a foreboding of the Saviour's end, and fearing that after the execution His blood-stained body might be left without honor she poured balm upon Him beforehand. Jesus bade His disciples everywhere publish Mary's deed.

"Amen, I say to you, wherever in the whole world this Gospel is preached, this also that she has done shall be told in memory of her."

BOOK SIX

Holy Week

TRIUMPH OF JESUS

THE SANHEDRIN councilors had indeed compelled Jesus to fly from the Holy City, but they had not been able to blot out either the memory of His miracles or the authority of His language or His name, now famous throughout the length and breadth of Judea. While the Lord retired to spend His last few days in the Desert of Ephrem, many Jews had gone up to the Temple in order to purify themselves before the Passover, and ever since their arrival they had been on the lookout for Jesus. Their disappointment was lively on learning that He was no longer to be seen in Jerusalem, and that no one knew where He was.

In the porches, where the numerous ablutions and sacrifices necessitated long hours of standing around for these crowds of visitors, the only topic of discussion was the young Prophet.

"What do you think?" they asked among themselves; "is it really true that He will not come?"

The councilors could overhear them speaking such words, could note the agitation of the first comers, and so must have congratulated themselves for having avoided the disturbances with which the festival was threatened, by thus getting rid of Jesus.

Their satisfaction was destined to be of short duration; for just six days before the Pasch, news reached their ears that the Saviour was approaching. The Sabbath prevented the people from hurrying out immediately from the town, but as soon as sunset signaled the end of the hallowed repose, many went out as far as Bethany. They went thither, not only for the sake of Jesus, but

for Lazarus also, bent upon seeing this man once dead but now called back from the tomb. They gazed at him, were thrilled at the thought, and finally, overcome by the power of Jesus' words, great numbers re-entered Jerusalem that same night believing in the Saviour. Now among them were certain princes of the people, a fact which was exceedingly irritating to the excited members of the Sanhedrin. The rulers especially, Sadducees for the most part, with no belief in the resurrection of the dead, were indignant that these nobles should be the cause of such a commotion. To their way of thinking, there was only one means of putting an end to the thing, and that was to kill the resuscitated man; this they resolved to do. But other cares weighed upon their minds, for now the rumor came (as already noised about in Bethany) that on the following day Jesus would enter the town. This news stirred up the entire populace, and all were making preparations to receive the Lord.

And accordingly, on the morrow, Jesus departed from the home of His friends to make His way to Jerusalem. He did not follow the usual highroad for caravans, but took the footpath, which crosses over the ridge connecting the Mount of Olives with Bethany. On passing out from under the long rows of palm trees which shade the village streets, there, just a little to His right, among the stony fields planted here and there with fig trees, the Saviour came in sight of Bethphage (The House of Figs) surrounded by vineyards bearing a plentiful load of fruit.

Bringing the company about Him to a halt, Jesus sent two disciples on ahead.

"Go into yonder village lying before us," He said. "Upon your entrance you shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her, on which no man has ever yet mounted. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone say to you, 'What are you doing?' say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and straightway he will let them go."

Everything took place as Jesus had foretold them; in a byway of the town they found a she-ass, tied with her foal outside a gateway; and they unfastened them.

"What are you doing?" inquired some of the bystanders; whereupon they made answer just as the Lord had commanded them, and they let them go.

The apostles were impatiently awaiting their return; since

now, for the first time, they beheld the Master making ready something which might be likened to a triumph, by preparing to mount the very animal of old devoted to the service of the royal house of Israel, the ass of eastern lands, of solemn gait and noble carriage. Jewish traditions had proclaimed that the Messiah would choose no other equipage on the day of His manifestation.

"And so," thought they, "at last the hour has come when the Master, after so long persisting in concealing Himself, will appear and establish His Kingdom."

The delight and enthusiasm of the Galileans was so great that they tore off their mantles and with them decked the ass as richly as they might; then making Jesus sit thereon, they thronged about Him with shouts of great joy. "They knew not," adds Saint John, "the mystery contained in that which they were doing, but after Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that all these things had been written of Him, and that they had fulfilled them." For it was long ago recorded in the words of Zachary:

"Tell the daughter of Sion: Behold, thy King comes to thee, meek and seated upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of a beast of burden."

Meanwhile the retinue was advancing toward Jerusalem—Lazarus and the apostles nearest to the Lord's side, while the ass walked slowly alongside her foal. The multitude, hastening out from Bethany, shared the disciples' wild transports. Some cast their garments on the ground to beautify the road before Him; others, stripping the fig and the olive trees of their leafy boughs, covered the way with green branches; all vied with one another in celebrating the wondrous deeds of Christ, and Lazarus whom He had brought back alive from the tomb.

WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM

The route along which Jesus was advancing climbs over the crest of the Mount of Olives and speedily reaches its summit. From this point the Holy City suddenly rises in full view, its snowy ramparts towering over the dark ravines. Surprising as this scene is even nowadays to the traveler who climbs up this way from the Jordan, the spectacle was still more thrilling then, when in gazing upon Jerusalem they beheld one of the wonders

of the Oriental world. Girdled with towers and battlements, crowned with palaces, the brilliant town reached out to the east and to the west, as if bent upon marshaling all her splendors before the beholder. In a southerly direction especially, when the sunlight would beat upon the white marbles and golden roofs of the Temple, the dazzled sight was unable to endure such a blaze of fire. As soon as this beloved vision unrolled itself before them, the apostles burst forth into songs of triumph:

"Hosanna!
Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!
Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes!
Hosanna in the highest!"

Amid these cries of gladness Jesus alone was silent. He had stopped and was looking down upon the city wherein He was about to die. At last Sion had heaped up the full measure of ungratefulness, and the Saviour wept aloud over her.

"If thou hadst known," He mourned, "in this thy day, even thou, the things that are for thy peace! But now they are hidden from thy eyes. For days will come upon thee when thy enemies will throw up a rampart about thee, and surround thee and shut thee in on every side, and will dash thee to the ground and thy children within thee, and will not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation."

No one else beside Jesus foresaw this catastrophe at that moment. His disciples indeed saw Him weeping, they heard His predictions, and felt a momentary thrill of disquiet, but the impression was effaced shortly. So many times had the Lord's brow grown sad, and His tears had flowed freely before them so often that they no longer felt much amazement at this spectacle!

Meanwhile, joyous acclamations, re-echoing from afar, had published on every hand the progress of the Son of David. And now, from the houses down in the valley and from the pilgrims' tents, pitched in every available spot in that neighborhood, there came out a great multitude to meet Him, advancing, all having palm branches in their hands. Then straightway the two great companies joined forces and together descended to Jerusalem—one throng going before the Master, the other following after, all waving their green branches and filling the air with hosannas.

"Hosanna!" they cried, while at every step the concourse

swelled in number; loud plaudits, shouts of praise, triumphal chants, nothing was wanting which could lend majesty to this long-looked-for entry of their King.

Some of the Pharisees took alarm at all this. For who would be able to set any bounds to this emotion of the people? Would the Romans look with a favorable eye upon this public proclamation of a Messiah, Son of David—a royalty which certainly promised nothing better than new and interminable seditions? However, as they dared venture nothing openly against these crowds now enraptured with great joy, they only managed to approach Jesus.

"Master," they said, "restrain your disciples."

"If they hold their peace," responded Jesus, "the very stones will cry out!"

Then He entered into the city. Here all was excitement.

"Who is this?" asked some; and those around them were crying:

" 'Tis Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth!"

The while all this great multitude with Him gave testimony that He it was who had recalled Lazarus from the grave and raised him from the dead. It was for this that they flocked about Him, because they heard that He had wrought that miracle.

Then indeed the Pharisees began to say to each other—

"You see, we are gaining nothing. All the world is running after Him!"

In this royal state the Saviour was conducted the length of Jerusalem as far as the Mountain of the Temple; there, doubtless, the great procession dispersed, for Jewish customs did not permit pilgrims to approach the Sanctuary in traveling attire, their feet stained with dust.

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

And so, entering alone into the House of God, Jesus found it once more just as it had been three years back. Again avarice and greed had broken the bounds of respect; cages of doves, herds of cattle and sheep, tables for money-changers, these all blocked up the porches, stretching along beneath the galleries even to the confines of The Holy. Moreover, just as this moment the marketing seemed to wax more shrill and tumultuous than ever, since

somewhere about the tenth day of Nisan the lamb had to be selected, so that everyone was hurrying to buy the Paschal victim.

Jesus scanned it all and on all sides. But He did nothing further on this day; for evening was drawing on, and He must make haste to depart from the city. In fact the Sanhedrin people, who were the more infuriated at losing Him as they saw He was gaining greater power daily, now dogged His every step. Obliged to smother their hatred during this triumphal day, they looked to find facilities for avenging themselves upon Him, come nightfall. In the midst of the sleeping city nothing could be easier than suddenly to seize the Nazarene. Jesus foresaw the danger, and with His apostles withdrew in the direction of Bethany.

HOLY MONDAY

On the morrow, during the early dawn, Jesus left the neighborhood of Bethany and returned with His disciples to Jerusalem; in that out-of-the-way region He had not been able to procure even the little food He required and now He felt the pangs of hunger on the road. The fields through which they were passing, although a sorry enough landscape in our times, were then covered with trees, especially fig trees, which bordered the highways. The Saviour noticed one standing alone in full foliage; He stepped nearer and looked for figs on its branches, but in vain. Then said the Lord:

"Henceforth may never fruit be found upon thee!"

And from that moment the fig tree began to wither away.

Surely a strange anathema this, if we consider it as merely affecting a tree, incapable of meriting praise or blame; but a terrible judgment for the hypocrites, for whom this fig tree was the figure, most of all terrible for the Jewish people who, while boasting of their laws and their ceremonies, used these outward signs only to hide the hollow insincerity of their righteousness.

The Master hardly halted long enough to launch this malediction, for a pressing duty was urging Him onward to Jerusalem. Sorely indignant at the profanations which on the evening before had met His sight, He had resolved to once more raise His arm in judgment against those who had polluted the Temple. Although it was an early hour in the morning He found the courts

already crowded with money-changers and littered over with beasts. Doubtless with blows from a thong, as He had done once before, did He beat the buyers and sellers before Him, overturning the money tables, together with the stands of the dove venders.

"It is written, 'My House is a House of Prayer,'" He cried, "and you have made it a den of thieves!"

Trembling before Him they all took to flight; soon Jesus remained sole master in the sanctuary He had purified. Nor would He so much as suffer a man to pass through the Temple with an unhallowed vessel. Then, while those Jews He had just now expelled made shift to conceal their confusion in the outskirts of the Temple, the blind folk and cripples came hurrying to Him and He healed them. The multitude flocked about Him to hear His words, and were filled with wondering delight.

CHILDREN PRAISE JESUS

A few moments had sufficed to change the aspect of God's holy hill; whereupon, in place of the noisy tumult, there fell a great calm like the spirit of recollection over the courts. Even the children about the Temple were awestricken at the stillness; but then, recalling last night's triumph, forthwith they began to reenact the victorious chants which had then greeted the Christ.

"Hosanna!" sang those little voices, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

Their childish homage angered the enemies of the Lord; they were all there, high priests, Scribes, and chief magistrates of the people, all watching Him with envious looks. At sight of these young servants of God, brought up by them, and now singing the praises of the Nazarene, they could contain themselves no longer.

"Do you hear what these are saying?" they cried.

"Yes," replied the Master, "have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast brought forth a perfect praise'?"

In this manner Jesus passed the day wherein, fulfilling Malachy's prediction, He had appeared in the Temple, therein to exercise dominion. Struck with what they had seen and heard,

certain Greeks, who at this time happened to be in the Gentiles' porches, approached Philip and made this request:

"Sir, we desire to see Jesus."

Where did these men hail from, and what did they want of the Lord? There is a tradition which represents them as envoys from Abgar V, king of Edessa, who had lately been notified of the perils besetting Jesus in Judea, and desired to tender Him an asylum in his states; the Lord, they tell us, recompensed this prince by healing him of his leprosy, and sent him a message which is still to be found in the Annals of Armenia. Uncertain as these facts seem, it is right to recall them here, for they show at least that antiquity regarded these strangers as pagans, come from a faraway country.

As Philip, whose Greek name had attracted their attention, did not feel sure how to proceed in the matter, he addressed Andrew, who was from Bethsaida like himself; the latter, who was of hardier character, bade him accompany him to the Saviour, and so together they repeated the demand of these unknown foreigners.

Evidently the Master had expected the coming of these Gentiles, for He answered immediately—

"The hour is come wherein the Son of Man is about to be glorified."

Thus He indicated that His realm was soon to be extended over the whole earth, and at the same time testified to His own great joy thereat. But, foreseeing also at what cost this conquest must be bought, He felt rising within His soul the horror of death. His fast approaching Passion now appalled Him.

A VOICE FROM HEAVEN

"Now My soul is troubled. And what shall I say?" He cried, as though uncertain of Himself, and in His anguish of spirit He besought Heaven to deliver Him.

"Father, save Me from this hour!"

Yet at once, crushing down the weakness of the flesh—

"No," He added, "this is why I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy Name."

Straightway a Voice came from heaven that said:

"I have both glorified It and I will glorify It again."

It was the Father, who celebrated the triumph of His Son beforehand and did honor to Him, as formerly in the Jordan and again upon Mount Tabor.

This evidence of His Godhead was not comprehended then.

" 'Twas thunder!" cried the crowds, though others added:

"An angel spoke to Him."

"Not for Me did this Voice come but for you," Jesus replied. And He explained the mystery it foreshadowed: inasmuch as the world is judged and convicted of its sins by the Holy Spirit, Satan, the prince of the world, shall shortly be cast out. But as for Christ, He shall be lifted up, like the serpent in the wilderness; and then only shall He draw all men unto Him. Now He said this signifying by what death He was to die.

These lessons were far above the thoughts of the crowd; accordingly they would not listen longer, but began to besiege the Master with questions. What did He mean by saying, "It is necessary that the Son of Man be lifted above the earth?" Did this signify the death of the cross? But then how could He call Himself the Son of Man, since this name was a title of the Messiah, and surely the psalmist had proclaimed that the reign of Christ should be eternal?

Without entering into any long disputes Jesus reminded His auditors that, for yet a little while, they had the Light among them.

"Believe in the Light," He added, "while still you possess it, in order that you may be the children of Light."

These were the words Jesus then spoke to the people, but what occurred afterward between Him and the Greeks? Saint John does not inform us; he is content to tell us simply that these visitors were come up to worship at the feast. A heaven-sprung light, like that which had once illumined the minds of the Magi, at first had revealed to the newcomers the excellence of the Jewish Law; but once arrived in Jerusalem they could find therein nothing greater than Jesus, and, in all simplicity and singleness of heart, they turned to Him. The Eastern world had knelt and adored Him in His cradle; now the West, in the person of these Greeks, came to bow down and worship before His cross.

The interview between Jesus and the Gentiles is the last incident of the divine ministry recounted by Saint John. In closing

his account of this period he stops to cast one sad backward glance at the scanty harvest which the Master had gathered as the fruit of all His mighty labors. His teaching, it is true, had compelled the admiration of many; even here and now His words could hold the multitude spellbound, although without working their conversion. Isaias' oracle was accomplished: for three full years Israel had now looked upon the Messiah without recognizing Him, had listened without understanding, all the time hardening its heart, so that it could be neither healed nor be turned unto Him.

Truly this was what the prophet had predicted when, after having beheld the glory of the Christ, he spoke those words concerning Him. Amid this universal blindness a few princes of the people believed in Jesus, but even these dared not avow their faith for fear of being expelled from the synagogue. Repeating the Evangelist's reproachful words, "the glory of men was dearer to them than the glory of God."

The following morning, after spending this night, like the preceding one, without the city walls, Jesus returned for the last time to the Temple. By the roadside still stood the fig tree He had condemned when passing that way yesterday, now no longer arrayed in glistening foliage, but parched and dry, blasted to the root. Peter was the first to notice it.

"Master," he said, "look yonder! The fig tree which you cursed has withered away."

The suddenness of this death so astonished the apostles that they forgot the lesson which Jesus had drawn from the incident the day before, preoccupied as they were with the overwhelming effects of His lightest word. Accommodating Himself to their thoughts, the Lord now spoke to them of this attribute of omnipotence, and declared that they might rightfully assume a like power.

POWER OF FAITH

"Of a truth," He said, "if you have faith and waver not you shall not only cause a fig tree to whither away, but you shall say to this mountain, 'Uproot thyself, and cast thyself into the sea!' Immediately it shall be done."

The apostles, who had been so amazed at the wonder He had

worked, were even more astounded to hear Him say that they might do as much. In their surprise they stood staring at the Mount of Olives, whither the Lord had just pointed, their minds bewildered at the notion of stirring so huge a mass. Jesus pursued His thought further.

"All things which you shall ask in prayer, do but believe and you shall receive them."

Surely this was to give the soul a partnership in the divine power. But the faith of which the Master is speaking here is worthless without charity, and this truth He inculcated by adding that no prayer is granted which does not spring from love and forgiveness of injuries.

"And when you would betake yourselves to prayer, whatever you may have against anyone, forgive it him in order that your Father who is in heaven may also pardon you your offenses. And if you do not forgive him neither will your Father who is in heaven pardon you your offenses."

JESUS AND THE SANHEDRIN

Meanwhile, conversing in this manner, they had passed under the gates of Jerusalem and ascended to the Temple. The crowds had not yet gathered in any great number. Walking under the galleries Jesus was beginning His instructions to such as He found already assembled there, when a deputation approached Him. It included, if not the whole Sanhedrin, at least representatives from its various divisions—pontiffs, Scribes, and ancients of the people. Filled with wrath, as they watched the Galilean's triumphant reception during the last few days, they now came in person to question Him, making sure that their presence would overawe the multitude; and in fact the people at once fell to one side at their approach.

"By what authority," they demanded, "do You do these things? And who has given You this power of instructing and exercising dominion in the Temple?"

"I also will propose a question to you," said Jesus, "and, if you answer Me, I will tell you by what authority I do these things. From whom was the baptism of John? From Heaven, or from men?"

The Sanhedrin delegation was disconcerted; for, with a word, the Saviour had reversed their respective roles, and obliged His judges to defend themselves.

"Answer Me," He repeated.

But it was without avail. They saw only too well just what His question involved, for John had given testimony in the presence of all Judea that Jesus the Christ was still greater than he.

"If we say: 'It was from heaven,'" they muttered among themselves, "He will answer us: 'Why did you not believe him?' And if we say: 'It is from men,' the people will stone us." For all regarded John as a true prophet, and they would incur great danger by even contradicting his words; so then, dreading any uprising of the multitude, the Sanhedrin's emissaries were forced to acknowledge their defeat, saying:

"We know nothing about it."

They knew nothing about it! they, the masters of Israel, who had arrogated to themselves the right of expounding everything, of judging all things, of alone being able to distinguish the inspired prophet from the seducer of the people—they could not tell what this man was whose voice had startled Judea and attracted to the Jordan, not only the ignorant multitude, but the doctors of the Law and the great men of Jerusalem. They were so publicly put to confusion that Jesus was content to add:

"No more will I tell you by what authority I do these things." Then He turned away from them.

After having thus reduced the lawyers and doctors to silence Jesus continued to teach the people.

"But what do you think? A man had two sons; and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in my vineyard.' But he answered and said, 'I will not'; but afterwards he regretted it and went. And he came to the other and spoke in the same manner. And this one answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?" They said, "The first."

Thereby they unwittingly condemned the Sanhedrin party, for it was to them that Jesus referred under the guise of this son, so ready with his lip service—too insincere to disobey openly, too corrupt either to will or to do what is right. Then He added that publicans and harlots should go before them into God's Kingdom. The latter indeed were converted by the power of John's

words; whereas the princes of the people, on the contrary, had seen all that perfection of righteousness which is of the Law that was in John, yet nothing about him had touched them or moved them to believe.

PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD

But what, after all, was this incredulity when compared with the crimes which they were even now meditating? In order to display its blackness Jesus brought forward another parable. He described one of the vineyards which then covered the suburbs of Jerusalem. This one the master of the household has planted with his own hands, has encircled with a wall and bristling shrubs whereby to ward off the wild beasts; his zealous care has prompted him to have a tower built, and by night and by day a watchman keeps guard from this height; a huge basin, hollowed from the rock, receives the wine which the vine-dressers pour in purple streams from the press. Nothing is wanting to complete this cherished vineyard, and the Lord may well demand:

"What more ought I to have done that I have not done?"

And, notwithstanding, when the vintage season came at last it was of no avail for him to send his servants the prophets to warn them that it was high time to render some fruits. The husbandmen laid hold upon these messengers, beat some, killed and stoned the rest. Others of his retainers sent in greater numbers suffered the same outrageous treatment at their hands.

What else was this but a history of these same Jews, of whom Saint Stephen could truly say: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you have now been the betrayers and murderers."

The rest of the parable still more plainly declared what the Sanhedrin was about to put into effect only three days later.

The master of the vineyard had an only son whom he loved much.

"What shall I do?" he mused. "I will send my beloved son; perhaps when they see him, they will respect him.

"But the vine-dressers, on seeing him, argued with one another, saying, 'This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheri-

tance may become ours.' So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

"What therefore will the owner of the vineyard do to them?" demanded Jesus, and He looked fixedly at these members of the Sanhedrin.

But on their part the sole thought was to divert the attention of the multitude from themselves; accordingly, in order to forestall any such personal application, they stigmatized the crime in unmeasured terms.

"He will come and destroy those vine-dressers, and will give the vineyard to others."

"By no means," cried out the people, who comprehended that this vineyard was Israel, and now heard their leaders launching curses upon their own heads. But Jesus did but confirm the sentence which they now had uttered against themselves.

According to the psalmist's prophecy the stone at first rejected by men for the foundation of God's Church was thereafter to become the mighty basework whereon Jews and Gentiles should together erect a new edifice. This cornerstone was Jesus, whose humble appearance had made Him a stumbling block to these masters of Israel. Woe unto them, for that they had fallen against this rock of offense, and were thereby broken in pieces! Yet, even now, there was space left them to retrieve their fall and rise once more; whereas, if they consummated their crime, the stone would crush them, grinding them into such fine chaff that the lightest wind would sweep them from off the threshing-floor.

"Therefore I say to you, that the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you," said the Lord, "and will be given to a people yielding its fruits."

These last words of the Saviour left no room for misconception; the princes of the priesthood and the Pharisees understood that He was speaking to them, and sought means to seize Him; but still they feared the people, who regarded Him as a prophet. Thus protected from their wrath, Jesus only answered them by forcing them to hear what should be the result of their plottings.

To this end He went on to repeat an illustration which He had used at other times, that of a marriage banquet which the guests refused to attend. But since the day when the Lord first presented

this picture of their reprobation before the eyes of the Jews the aspect of affairs had altogether altered; the hatred, so long repressed, had broken its bonds; the Pharisees, who had formerly invited the Christ to sit at table with them, only gathered about Him here in Jerusalem in the hope of apprehending Him and putting Him to death.

PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

These deplorable circumstances are all reflected in the details of the Second Wedding Feast. For this time the scene is one of imposing richness; it is no longer a private individual who bids them to a dinner—now we have a king celebrating the nuptials of his son. While those invited to the first entertainment excused themselves courteously, these who are called to the second shamefully maltreat the servants of the prince, while some proceed so far as to scourge and kill them. Such heinous crimes cry out for vengeance; accordingly, while only excluded from the banquet in the first parable, in the present one the guilty ingrates are punished rigorously. The king dispatches his armies, destroys the murderers, and sets fire to their city. A threatening prophecy indeed; one, alas! which the Jews did not comprehend even when Jerusalem lay in ashes at their feet.

Turning away from these reprobates, Jesus spoke of the other guests whom the apostles, His servants, were soon to usher into the Church; for He had commanded them to gather in all that they should find, good or evil, in order to fill up the banquet hall. But it would not be enough for a man to have been called to the feast-making with Jesus in order to make him really worthy of such high honor. Indeed it would be with them as when the king, having gone in to see the guests, perceives a man present who has not on a wedding garment. Whereupon he saith to him:

"Friend, how didst thou come in here without a wedding garment?"

And he had nothing to answer.

Then saith he to his servants:

"Bind his hands and feet, and cast him forth into the darkness outside, where there will be the weeping, and the gnashing of teeth."

Jesus could add nothing to this parable but that one cry of warning so often repeated by him:

"Many are called, but few are chosen!"

This He exclaimed now, no longer with the hope of alarming the Jews, but thinking more of His disciples, since even in their ranks and at His Last Supper this saying would find its fulfillment.

TRIBUTE TO CAESAR

The Sanhedrin's embassy had not lingered to hear the end of this parable; they had withdrawn, despairing of conquering the Christ by their own efforts, but more than ever ardently bent upon arraying other enemies against Him. They proceeded at once to take counsel, and, as their fear of the Nazarene outweighed every other feeling, they decided to renew the alliance heretofore made in Galilee, and accordingly courted the cooperation of such Herodians as they encountered in the Temple. Intense as was the aversion usually shown by the Pharisees for these courtiers of the Roman power, they did not scruple at this juncture to make them the instrument of their wily designs.

Now the plan in view was to ask Jesus some question the answer to which, however it might be stated, should involve His ruin. If put to Him by the zealots of the Law any such insidious demand would be likely to awaken the suspicions of Christ, and by this time His foes knew Him well enough to expect that, with a word, He would snap the snares wherewith they wished to entangle Him. But, on the contrary, when conversing with the Herodians, was there not good reason to hope that the young rabbi, no longer on His guard, would fall into the trap? However, dreading lest these courtiers should become engaged in any discussion with Him (for, as they were unaccustomed to religious controversies, their new allies might be easily confounded), the Sanhedrin at the same time commissioned to attend them some of their own disciples who were not so well known as the head men of the Synagogue, but were none the less experts in guile. The part the Herodians were to play in this odious comedy was to counterfeit the actions of honest, upright men, coming forward as if anxious to know the truth, and so lie in wait for an opportune instant to surprise the Lord.

At the propitious season the Herodians probably pretended to be engaged in an argument among themselves; then approached Jesus, praying that He would arbitrate between them.

"Master," they began, with great demonstrations of reverence, "we know that Thou art truthful, and that Thou teachest the way of God in truth and that Thou carest naught for any man; for Thou dost not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what dost Thou think: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?"

It seemed impossible for Jesus to escape them this time. To condemn the tribute would be to run the risk of incurring the vengeance of Rome; to account it legitimate would be to infuriate the Jews, who would construe it as a bit of flattery intended to conciliate these Gentiles. Clearly seeing the ambush, the Master turned toward the Scribes.

"Hypocrites," He said, "why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the coin of the tribute."

Not one among the zealots of the Law could keep in his purse a piece of metal stamped with idolatrous emblems; it was necessary, therefore, to procure one from the neighboring money-changers, or from someone in the crowd. It so fell out that the piece presented to the Lord was not the peculiar coin which the Romans had authorized for Judea—which bore the name without the image of the Emperor—but a real Roman denarius. On one side Jesus displayed to the Pharisees the figure of Tiberius with the inscription: TIBERIUS CAESAR, SON OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS.

"Whose are this image and the inscription?" the Lord demanded of them.

"Cæsar's," they said.

This answer contained their condemnation, for, following the teaching of their foremost rabbis, to accept the money of a sovereign was to acknowledge his power. Now the Pharisees made use of Cæsar's money in all matters of contract and commerce. By what right, after reaping the advantages of imperial protection, could they refuse to meet the common cost, and to pay what they owe according to strict justice?

"Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," added Jesus, "and to God the things that are God's."

This decision determined what falls to Cæsar's share and what

is God's. To the princes of the earth belong obedience and tribute; the soul belongs to God.

This left the Pharisees hopeless of either ensnaring the Christ in His talk or exciting the hatred of the mob against Him; they retired in confusion. Three days later they recalled this scene in Pilate's Pretorium, but only to travesty His words by their calumny:

"We found this Man," they then said, "forbidding the people to pay tribute to Cæsar."

JESUS AND THE SADDUCEES

This new defeat so discouraged the Sanhedrin that a majority of its members immediately renounced the struggle. Some, nevertheless, made of more obstinate stuff, wished to try if they could not have more success. They belonged to that sect of Sadducees who made themselves conspicuous among the Jews by their epicurean tenets and their contempt for the traditions. Although thus far they had disdained to meddle much with the Nazarene, leaving to the Pharisees the task of defending their observances which He condemned, yet during these last few days, they had begun to fear lest some new uprising should come of this to trouble their peace with Rome. Even at this moment it would seem that it was not so much hatred which set them against Christ as it was their own curiosity, along with a certain ambition to succeed where their rivals had lately failed. They counted upon confounding Him with one of the objections they had raised against the resurrection of the body—one which to them seemed unanswerable.

Approaching the Saviour with every token of consideration, they questioned Him, saying, "Master, Moses has written for us: 'If a man's brother die, having a wife, and he be childless, his brother shall take the widow and raise up issue to his brother.' Now there were seven brothers. And the first took a wife and died childless. And the next took her and he also died childless. Then the third took her; and in like manner all seven, and they died without leaving children. Last of all the woman also died. At the resurrection, therefore, of which of them will she be wife? For the seven had her as wife."

This tale, invented to suit their purpose, seemed pregnant with weighty matter to men who could conceive of no life nor any happiness outside and beyond the senses. They ridiculed the Pharisees' decision, that the first of the seven husbands would take back his wife, and therefrom took occasion to conclude that all things die with the body.

How infinitely higher was the reply of Jesus! For an instant, He flung open Heaven's gates and let them contemplate what their dull hearts had never dreamed—the life of the blessed.

And Jesus said to them, "The children of this world marry and are given in marriage. But those who shall be accounted worthy of that world and of the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor take wives. For neither shall they be able to die any more, for they are equal to the angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. Born again into the incorruptible, these elect, like the angels, shall know no need of preserving their race by generations of time or by mortal marriage, for nothing shall perish any more, neither anything of the body, nor anything that is of the soul, but God shall be all in all."

These words showed the different tone which Jesus assumed with the Sadducees from that with which He treated the Pharisees. He knew that there was more self-conceit than malice in the queries of His new opponents; furthermore, taking compassion upon the blindness which led them to decry the possibility of a supernatural world, He pointed out the twofold cause of their error: this, He said, was because they misunderstood the power of God who, out of His love for mankind, can do and has done things far above the reach of our reason; it was also because they had as yet but poorly understood the Scriptures, and had degraded them to the level of their own carnal minds. How came it that they had not read that the dead rise again, even as Moses had revealed to them long ago? Jesus intentionally omitted the prophets, who in the eyes of the Sadducees had not the same authority as the Law, but simply appealed to their great law-giver, as witness of Jehovah and sovereign arbitrator in all cases of doctrine.

"As to whether the dead rise again, have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the passage of the Bush, how God said to him: 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob'?"

If these Patriarchs had been nothing but a heap of poor remains, enclosed in their lonely tombs, Jehovah would not have deigned to take this title and call Himself the God of a handful of cold dust. Therefore something of these men must have outlasted their death and thus still remains in the sight of the eternal; for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Then, extending to all humanity what He had said of the first fathers of Israel—

"He," added the Master, "is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are therefore entirely wrong," He concluded, addressing the Sadducees.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

The people, who had followed this new debate, stood speechless with wonder at such power; some doctors of the Law loudly declared their delight, and one of them, desiring to be better informed as to the school of Christ, approached nearer and put this question to Him:

"Master, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

This, indeed, was one of the questions which occupied every thoughtful mind in these times, disturbed as people were by the futile discussions of the Synagogue. In their worship of the Law the masters of Israel had really rendered the moral law an issueless labyrinth, accumulating precept upon precept without end, concerning its every word. For some, the commandments of Tradition even outweighed those of Moses; for others, the one thing essential was scrupulously to follow the Pharisaic customs. Accordingly, this Scribe asked Jesus to pronounce between them.

The response of the Master did not leave them long in doubt. " 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.' This is the greatest and the first Commandment," said the Saviour, "and the second is like it, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' "

We should have to be living, like the Jews of that day, in the midst of the clouds accumulated by the Rabbis, to appreciate what a holy, beneficent light this speech seemed to shed upon their overflowing hearts. The most simple minds among them easily saw its truth; in two words it expressed the entire Law, or rather it reduced it to one single duty; love—to love God above

all things, and the neighbor for God's dear sake and in His sight. The Lord did not condemn the ignorant and weak to any irksome toil; He did not even exact of them that they should search the Scriptures. For mankind this is the whole Law and the prophets, that they love God and their fellow man.

Enraptured with a doctrine which confirmed all that he had been able to discover in the Holy Books, the Scribe testified openly to his delight.

He cried, "Well answered, Master."

And one by one he repeated the Saviour's words: "Thou hast said truly that He is one and that there is no other besides Him; and that He should be loved with the whole heart, and with the whole understanding, and with the whole soul, and with one's whole strength; and that to love one's neighbor as oneself is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices."

These words of Osee, connected in this way with those of Christ, show what pious heedfulness the Scribe had brought to the study of sacred literature. Jesus was touched at such tokens of earnestness. He praised the wisdom of his reply and encouraged him to take the final steps which yet lay between him and the perfect light.

"Thou art not far," He told him, "from the Kingdom of God."

This conversation reached the ears of the Pharisees, for now, more than ever agitated after the failure of their emissaries, they had gathered together and were inspecting with an anxious eye this man whom they dared no longer openly affront.

Jesus was well aware of their presence, and this time without waiting for them to cross-question Him, He addressed His words to them.

"What think you of the Christ?" He asked them; "whose Son is He?"

"David's," they answered.

"How then," replied Jesus, "did David, divinely inspired, call Him his Lord?

'The Lord said unto my Lord:
Sit Thou at my right hand,
'til I make Thy enemies Thy footstool.'

"If David calls Him his Lord, how then is He his Son?"

They could not answer this question without acknowledging the true origin of Jesus, David's Son, according to the flesh; He was still his Lord and Master, by eternal generation; yet now passion blinded their minds, and they remained silent while the people heard Him gladly. After the controversies of this morning no one dared question Christ. They had discovered at last that it would be far easier to destroy Him than to refute His teaching.

DENUNCIATION OF THE PHARISEES

Jesus then turned toward the assembled crowds, and branding the hypocrisy of these masters of Israel, He spoke their final condemnation.

He said, "The Scribes and the Pharisees have sat on the chair of Moses. All things, therefore, that they command you, observe and do. But do not act according to their works; for they talk but do nothing. And they bind together heavy and oppressive burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders; but not with one finger of their own do they choose to move them. In fact, all their works they do in order to be seen by men; for they widen their phylacteries, and enlarge their tassels, and love the first places at suppers and the front seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the market place, and to be called by men 'Rabbi.' "

How far removed was this Judaic society, where such affectation and haughtiness prevailed, from the new rule now announced by Jesus! Here there is only one Master, the Father, who reigns in Heaven; one only Doctor, the Christ; one only nation of brethren, among whom the greatest is He who makes Himself Servant of all, and where the first places are reserved for the most humble. And this was the perfection which the Pharisees spurned, that they might entrench themselves in that hypocrisy which was now destroying them and their nation! Jesus would not suffer such depravity to go unrebuked, and, for eight distinct times, standing in the center of the listening throngs, now dumb with astonishment, He launched His anathemas upon the princes and doctors of Israel:

"But woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut the Kingdom of Heaven against men. For you yourselves do not go in, nor do you allow those going in to enter.

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you

devour the houses of widows, praying long prayers. For this you shall receive a greater judgment.

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you traverse sea and land to make one convert; and when he has become one, you make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves.

"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the Temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the Temple, he is bound.' You blind fools; for which is greater, the gold, or the Temple which sanctifies the gold? 'And whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is upon it, he is bound.' Blind ones! for which is greater, the gift, or the altar which sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar swears by it, and by all things that are on it; and he who swears by the Temple swears by it, and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by Heaven swears by the throne of God, and by Him who sits upon it.

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you pay tithes on mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the Law, right judgment and mercy and faith. These things you ought to have done, while not leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out the gnat but swallow the camel!

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but within they are full of robbery and uncleanness. Thou blind Pharisee! clean first the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside too may be clean.

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you are like whited sepulchers, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear just to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! you who build the sepulchers of the prophets, and adorn the tombs of the just, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been their accomplices in the blood of the prophets.' Thus you are witnesses against yourselves that you are the sons of those who killed the prophets.

"You also fill up the measure of your fathers. Serpents, brood of vipers, how are you to escape the judgment of hell? Therefore, behold, I send you prophets, and wise men, and Scribes; and some of them you will put to death, and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from town to town; that upon you may come all the just blood that has been shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the just unto the blood of Zacharias the son of Barachias, whom you killed between the Temple and the altar. Amen I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation."

Vehement and fierce as these words sound, coming from the gentle Jesus, yet we know He rather bemoaned than cursed the faithlessness of Sion; and He manifests His feelings now more clearly by repeating that tender reproach which we once before heard from His lips:

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou who killest the prophets, and stonest those who are sent to thee! How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her young under her wings, but thou wouldst not! Behold, your house is left to you desolate. For I say to you, you shall not see Me henceforth until you shall say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' "

A mournful consolation this, for the nation of Deicides! Her last seed shall be converted only at the end of time, and then shall mourn the crime of their forefathers. This, then, was the only hope that Jesus could hold forth for the future to these Jews who now listened to Him, and who were to see, before their death, the Temple destroyed and their race scattered over the face of the globe.

PROPHECIES

Jesus was standing not far from the Sanctuary when He anathematized the Pharisees. Before descending from this upper terrace to the Gentiles' porches, He seated Himself in the court that was open to women, just opposite the great coffers in which all offerings for the service of the Temple were deposited. These three caskets were now surrounded by a knot of wealthy Jews,

who were casting in their bountiful gifts with all the ostentatiousness imaginable. Just behind them a poor widow stole up to the box and dropped in her treasure—two small pieces worth the quarter of a Roman *as*. "It was all her living," and Jesus knew it.

Forthwith, calling His disciples, He pointed out the humble soul to them.

He said, "Amen I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who have been putting money into the treasury. For they all have put in out of their abundance; but she out of her want has put in all that she had—all that she had to live on."

JERUSALEM TO BE DESTROYED

The Lord rose thereupon, and traversed the length of the porches. His disciples, following after, were admiring the splendors of the Temple—all the more indeed, because Jesus had just now predicted its destruction. Everything about this edifice enchanted their delighted eyes: mosaics, sculpturing, colonnades, gateways, all gaily adorned with precious metals. High above their heads rose the terraces, like a mountain of white marble, bearing on its brow the glittering façade of the sanctuary, resplendent with burnished gold.

One of the disciples stopped the Lord.

"Master," said he, "see! look at these stones! what a structure!"

Others added that all this magnificence was the free gift of Israel, and each uttered his prayers for this national monument, one of the wonders of the world and the crowning honor of Judea. But the sentence was irrevocable. And now Jesus could only renew it in formal terms.

"Dost thou see all these great buildings?" He said. "There will not be left one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Such was the Saviour's farewell to the Temple. Thirty-five years later the Sanctuary crumbled into dust amid the flames, never again to tower over the town. All in vain did Julian the Apostate try to give the lie to those prophetic words of Christ; from the ruins heaped there by the hand of God, flames shot forth and put the terrified workmen to flight. It was decreed that the ruin should remain complete, and that the Holy Place should be left desolate forevermore.

The little company left the Temple, crossed Kedron Gorge, then clambered up the Mount of Olives. Once on the top Jesus sat down, and before withdrawing farther toward Bethany, lingered to gaze at the town which He was never to enter again except to die. From this high point the whole scene of the Passion was now spread before His eyes: at His feet was Gethsemani; yonder, on Mount Sion, shone the palaces of the high priests and Herod's royal residence; facing Him and nearer the Temple stood Pilate's pretorium, while afar off He could see Calvary and the tomb.

For a time the disciples respected the Master's silent reverie, but soon, disquieted by all they had just been hearing, some of them approached Him. These were Peter, James, John and Andrew; they wanted Him to explain to them personally the mystery contained in His final words.

When shall all these things take place? What shall be the sign of His coming and the end of time?

Jesus did not fully satisfy their queries, for the hour which they desired to know is still God's secret; but He unveiled so much of the future for their benefit as it was fitting for them to know. Jesus revealed, first, what was to precede the fall of Jerusalem: false prophets seducing Judea; a thousand scourges falling upon her, wars, plagues, famines, great earthquakes; then "the beginning of sorrows"—this is to say, the persecution of the newborn Church, wherein the weakest shall succumb beneath their trials, one brother denouncing another, fathers betraying their children, horrible scandals, charity frozen up in their hearts; but all this time faith gaining ground even while evil increases, and the Gospel, as preached throughout the world, made known unto all. Such was to be the earliest age of the Church.

"Thereupon," continued Jesus, "the end shall come. When you shall see the abomination of desolation in the Holy Place, when you shall behold the hosts encompassing Jerusalem, know that its ruin is nigh. Then let them that are in Judea flee into the mountains, let not him who is on the housetop descend to take anything from his dwelling, and let not him who is in the field return in quest of his garment. Woe to the women with child and them that give suck in those days! Pray that your flight happen not during the winter nor on a Sabbath day, for there shall

be then great affliction, such as, since the beginning of the world up to this present, hath never been nor ever shall be aught like unto it."

Every line of this prophecy was a vivid representation of the times which were to come. Never, indeed, was the spirit of seduction so potent with the people as when the siege of Jerusalem was close at hand. Now, at the call of Teudas, the populace rushed to the Jordan, carrying with them their goods, fully persuaded that the stream would stand apart before their approach; again, the dismayed city saw thirty thousand Jews going up to the desert, led by a false prophet, and waiting upon the Mount of Olives for the walls to fall before them as of old the walls of Jericho had fallen.

The fulfillment of the prophecy was not less literal as regards the ruin of Jerusalem. One of their own traditions, recorded by Josephus, foretold that the town would be devastated and the Temple burned as soon as ever the Holy Place should be soiled by Jewish hands. "Although the zealots did not believe in this prophecy, they accomplished it," adds the historian. The Temple became their citadel and the seat of their tyranny. Not content with filling the courts with combats and bloodshed, they mimicked the sacred functions, and drew lots for a sovereign pontiff. Chance chose for them a countryman, not even of the tribe of Levi, this man they invested with the ephod, and, before the eyes of the weeping priests, forced him to go through the sacred rites.

Thus was the abomination of desolation introduced into the Holy Place. At this unmistakable token the disciples took to flight, before John of Giskala closed the gates of Jerusalem. The robber hordes, camping round about, began to massacre the fugitives before Titus, who had wheeled up his troops in haste, hedged the doomed city about, to make it the tomb of Judea. From their hiding places over beyond Jordan the disciples beheld the great wrath falling upon Jerusalem, and in the frightful sacking of the town saw the fulfillment of the desolation predicted by Jesus.

END OF THE WORLD

Thereafter shall come that end of the world predicted by Jesus, when the earth's enticements have worked their last charms, and the stars are veiled from sight, men pining away

with anguish at the clamor of the sea; the powers of heaven shaken from their spheres; the Cross, the sign of the Son of Man, appearing in the sky; Christ Himself descending upon the clouds in great power and majesty; all humankind awakened by the angel's trumpeting; and all this vast scene of terror shall be unrolled before our sight more swiftly than the bright thunderbolt from Heaven.

After this manner shall come the last moments of the universe. Jesus indicated all the signs which are to proclaim its presence, as plainly as the fig tree's leafage marks the coming of the summer; but, far from fixing the day and the hour, He declared that neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, in so far as He is Man, knew aught thereof; it is to remain a secret with the Father. The Jewish race is not to end before these things happen, and as for the Christians, their first duty is to live in expectation of the Judgment—conceiving no anxiety at the thought, but with serene and confident glance scanning the horizon of time in readiness to receive these forerunners of redemption.

"Take heed," He charged them; "watch and pray; for you know not when is the time. It shall be then even as when a man is about to make a far journey, and leaves the care of his household to his servants, appointing for each what he must do, and bidding the gatekeeper be vigilant. Watch ye, therefore, for you know not when the Master will come—if it shall be at even, or at midnight, whether at cockcrow, or in the morning—for fear lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping. And this which I say unto you, I say to all: 'Watch!' "

This, then, was the fruit which Christians must gather from the prophecy of Jesus. Therefore it was that He spoke so much at length of vigilance, multiplying comparisons and parables in order to better inculcate this first requisite.

"Those days shall be like unto the days of Noe, when all men were eating, drinking, marrying wives, and straightway the deluge swallowed them up," "as the spring snaps upon the bird" or "as the lightning rends the thundercloud." Besides these images, He repeated similitudes delivered in former times, but hitherto only as if to remind them that it was their duty to watch and see that His word bore fruit; one was the parable of a steward overtaken in his evil-doing, the other that of the talent con-

cealed by an idle servant. But none touched the apostles more keenly than the Parable of the Virgins, which He uttered now for the first time.

It pictured the marriage merrymakings and the ten virgins, companions of the bride, marching in the nuptial procession. At eventide these girls betake themselves to the home of the betrothed maiden; but five of them are prudent, five foolish. Now the latter, seeing their lamps still burning, do not remember that they will shortly flicker and become exhausted, and so they neglect to procure their portion of oil. In the middle of the night the distant shout is heard:

"Behold the bridegroom is coming, go forth to meet him!" Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." The wise answered, saying "Lest there may not be enough for us and for you, go rather to those who sell it, and buy some for yourselves."

Now while they were gone to buy it, the bridegroom came; and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Finally there came also the other virgins, who said, "Sir, sir, open the door for us!" But he answered and said, "Amen I say to you, I do not know you. Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

THE KING IN JUDGMENT

Then reverting to the prophecy which He had thus interrupted, He completed it by setting before them the scene of the Last Judgment.

In the presence of the celestial King, seated upon the throne of His majesty and encircled by angels, all nations of earth shall be assembled together, and He shall separate them one from another, even as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats—the sheep on his right hand, the goats on his left. Then shall the former be gladdened by His loving words:

"Come, blessed of My Father, take possession of the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

And even at the same moment His malediction shall fall upon the goats:

"Depart from Me, accursed ones, into that everlasting fire which hath been prepared for the devil and his angels."

Then shall there arise between heaven and earth a solemn discourse. God Himself shall disclose the glory of His elect.

"I was hungry," He shall tell them, "and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; naked and you covered Me; sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me."

Overwhelmed by such praises and feeling that grace alone has been all-powerful in them, the righteous in their humility shall cast about how to account for this their great merit.

"Lord," they shall say, "when did we see Thee hungry, and feed Thee?"

"Amen, I say to you," saith the Great King, "as long as you did it for one of these the least of My brethren, you did it for Me."

And the just shall go into eternal life and the damned into punishment eternal.

Thereupon Jesus brought His long discourse to a close.

"You know," He said, "that after two days the Passover will be here; and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

By His words He recalled to the disciples' minds what was being plotted against Him at that very hour in Jerusalem. In fact the departure of Christ had left the field free to His vanquished and humiliated foes; they could not wait for the morrow to deliberate upon their schemes of vengeance. Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, Scribes, ancients of the people, all were resolved that this audacious Man, who had made an open show of their shame, and was a perpetual menace to their peaceful relations with Rome should be cut off from Israel.

To the south of Mount Sion rose a large palace, the residence of the high priests; it was there that the enemies of Jesus held their assembly with Caiphas presiding over their deliberations. The Pharisees brought with them all their habitual fanaticism, the high priests evidenced their contempt for all belief in spiritual things, while Herod's courtiers hoped only to further their own political schemes. The resolution passed was worthy of such a council.

Out of fear of the populace they decided to temporize until just after the festival ceremonies were completed, and

then seizing Christ suddenly, to put Him to death, but an unforeseen incident altered these first plans and precipitated events.

Judas had not followed Jesus up the Mount of Olives; lingering in the porches he overheard a group of Temple guards discussing how they might manage to arrest this troublesome reformer who was powerful enough to hold in check the princes of the people.

"What are you willing to give me," he asked them, "for delivering Him to you?"

They recognized him as one of the Twelve who accompanied the Nazarene, and they at once proceeded to report this proposition to the Sanhedrin members.

The latter welcomed the idea with great joy. Judas, immediately introduced into their meeting, confirmed his offer, extending his hand to receive the wages of his crime. He was treated indeed like a common huckster, for the Jews, after much haggling over the sum, allotted him only thirty shekels, which was but the price of a slave. Pitiful as this sum seemed, the apostle seized it. From that moment, says Saint Luke, "Satan entered into him." Two days later Judas betrayed his God.

JUDAIC RITUAL OF THE PASSOVER

Before recounting the doings at that evening meal, when Jesus celebrated the Pasch for the last time, it is quite important to recall its symbolic rites; for the Saviour made such frequent allusions to them that His words scarcely can be comprehended by the reader who is not initiated into the customs of the Hebrew people.

Israel's Great Festival was now no longer distinguished by the simplicity of earlier ages. We should search in vain for the Jewish household, all standing, with staff in hand, loins girded and sandals upon their feet, eating in haste the lamb garnished with bitter herbs, and the unleavened bread. Had these olden customs been altered even before the Captivity? Or did the change take place only during the Jews' sojourn in Babylon? This we do not know; still we cannot doubt but that the new schools of the Scribes, which became so numerous after the return to Jerusalem, must have exercised as profound an influence upon the rubrics of the Paschal Supper as they did upon very many other Mosaic institutions.

On the evening of the fourteenth day of Nisan the different families gather together to partake of the legal repast. The lamb baked in the furnace must preserve a form whose prophetic significance was manifest. It was attached to two branches of pomegranate, whose wood is less sensitive than any other to the action of heat; one of the branches penetrated the whole length of the creature, while the other, shorter than the first, fixed the front feet, which were stretched out in form of a cross. These preparations were the object of scrupulous precaution, for they must needs beware of breaking one of its bones; the least infraction of this law was punished by forty blows from a thong.

At nightfall the guests, whose number varied from ten to twenty, reclined on couches slightly raised from the floor, the left arm supported upon a cushion, the right hand free to reach the food. To lie at ease during their meal was the distinctive privilege of all freemen; hence it was fitting that upon the anniversary of that great deliverance Israel should conduct itself as a people unenthralled by any servitude.

The father of the household first took up a cup of wine mingled with a little water.

"Blessed be the Lord," he said, "Who hath created the fruit of the vine!"

Whereupon each guest, in his turn drank from this cup. Undoubtedly this was the same cup which Saint Luke speaks of as blessed by Jesus at the beginning of the Last Supper.

A basin full of water and a napkin were passed around the assembly immediately afterward, that all might purify their hands; the washing of the feet narrated by Saint John is probably connected with this rite. When these ablutions were completed each one took his place at the table among the rest of the guests.

The board was spread with sundry dishes; at one side of the lamb were set bitter herbs, such as cresses and parsley, in remembrance of the sorrows of Egypt; then the azyme bread, thin and tasteless, like the paste which the yeast had not time to leaven before the precipitate flight of Israel; one last symbolic dish completed the repast; it was called the Charoseth, a compound of various fruits—apples, figs, and citrons—cooked in vinegar; by the use of cinnamon and other spices they gave it a ruddy tint like that of bricks; this color together with its long, flat shape, recalled

to their minds the mortar pits of Phithom and Ramases. Often they added several viands prepared and blessed at the same time as the lamb; there were, according to the commandment set down in Deuteronomy, a young kid or a sheep roasted, which later on became the Chagigah; but generally they reserved this sacrifice for the fifteenth of Nisan and the days following. The master of the house, as soon as the food was put before him, took the herbs, dipped them in the Charoseth, while thanking God for having created the good things of earth, whereupon all ate thereof a portion not less than the size of an olive.

A second cup was then poured out, and the youngest of the company requested the father of the family for an explanation of these rites. The latter, to lend a more solemn significance to his response, lifted up in succession before the eyes of all the different dishes forming their repast, and while so doing recalled what memories of past times were attached to each—the lamb, immolated to turn away heaven's anger, whereat the angel of death passed over Israel without striking their firstborn; the bread of anguish, eaten during the terrors of their flight; the herbs, bitter as the slavery from which they had come forth triumphant.

"And for such wonders as these," he added, "it behooveth us to praise and exalt Him who hath changed our weeping into gladness, our darkness into light; unto Him alone doth it behoove us to sing 'Alleluia!' "

Then at once the whole company intoned the Hallel:

"Sing praises, O ye servants of Jehovah
praise ye the name of your God!
Blessed be the name of the Lord
from this time forth and forevermore.
From the rising unto the setting of the sun
the Lord's Name is to be praised!"

So they continued on to the end of the following Psalm, chanting their song of triumph over the deliverance out of Egypt:

"O Sea, wherefore didst thou flee away?
and thou, Jordan, wherefore turn backward?
Ye Mountains, wherefore skip like kids?
and you, little Hills, like young lambkins?
In the presence of the Lord, tremble O Earth
In the presence of the God of Jacob.
For He changeth the rocks into fountains,
and the stones into springs of living water!"

During these canticles of joy they drank the second cup. The father of the family then took the azyme cakes and broke them before blessing and distributing them. In order that all might recollect that this was the bread of sorrowfulness no one might eat more than a morsel, along with a few herbs and soaked in the Charoseth. Then came the time for the lamb; when once carved and distributed to each guest it must disappear entirely, and no other meats were served thereafter.

Then the father of the household poured out a third cup—the Chalice of Benediction—and this probably was that which the Christ changed into the Blood Divine. As soon as they drank it they intoned the final hymns of the Hallel, wherein their grateful hearts burst forth into transports of joy:

"Not unto us, Lord, not unto us,
unto Thy Name belongeth glory,
O source of mercy and truth!
Now let the nations come unto us, saying:
'Where is your God?'
Our God is in the heavens:
that which He willeth that doeth He.

* * *

Then what shall I render unto Jehovah
for all His benefits?
I will lift up this cup of salvation
and I will invoke His Name.
Yea, I am Thy slave, Jehovah,
Thy slave and the son of Thine handmaid.
Thou hast broken my chains in pieces:
to Thee will I offer a sacrifice of praise,
praising I will call on the name of the Lord!"

Then appealing to the whole world, Israel, in a holy ecstasy, endeavors to entice them all to the service of the true God:

"O all ye Peoples, praise ye Jehovah:
ye Nations exalt His Name!
For His love is mighty amongst us,
and the truth of Jehovah endureth forever!
Alleluia!"

A fourth cup hereupon passed from hand to hand and marked the end of the repast.

Such was the Jewish Passover when Jesus celebrated it for the last time. With this description before our minds it will be easy for us to supply what is omitted in the Evangelist's narrative, while, too, by this means we may decipher the allusions and understand the transformation of this figurative rite into that holiest function of religious worship—the most Holy Mystery of the Mass.

FEAST OF THE PASSOVER

All Wednesday Jesus had not appeared either in the Temple or in Jerusalem. On the morning of Thursday the apostles inquired of Him where they were to eat the Paschal supper, for they were now in the first day of Azymes.

Leaving Judas unnoticed, though ordinarily he was the one entrusted with the care of their larder, the Saviour called Peter and John.

"Go," He told them, "and prepare for us the Passover that we may eat it." But they said, "Where dost Thou want us to prepare it?" And He said to them, "Behold, on your entering the city, there will meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house into which he goes. And you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Master says to thee, "Where is the guest chamber, that I may eat the Passover there with My disciples?"' And he will show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready."

Peter and John obeyed; at the city gates they met a man who was coming up with some water drawn from the fountain of Siloe, and following in his footsteps they found the householder described to them. It was some disciple of the Lord, hitherto unknown to the apostles. Finding Himself constrained to prepare for the event of the Passover, the Saviour had warned this friend to hold his residence in readiness for His coming.

Once consecrated by the Eucharistic sacrifice, this Upper Chamber was ever dear to the newborn Church which found a first shelter under its roof. Here their resurrected Lord once more found His disciples assembled in the midst of their despondency; hither the apostles also betook themselves to await the Holy

Spirit, and after Saint Peter had been delivered by the angel, he had no need to look elsewhere for his brethren at the hour when they were usually gathered together in prayer. Today the traveler coming toward Jerusalem from the south descries a minaret which still marks the location of that guest chamber. It towers over a vast hall which, although much altered during the Middle Ages, is still the same which Saint Cyril of Jerusalem venerated in the fourth century, and which Saint Epiphanius pointed out as one of the few edifices spared at the time of the demolishing of the city.

THE LAST SUPPER

But in Jesus' time and on that day of the Pasch it was far from having any such splendors as the fanciful pictures with which our artists have decorated it. What we now know of Jewish dwellings makes us imagine it as a room with white walls; in the center stands a low table, embellished with bright colors and with one side left free for the servers, while along the others couches are arranged. This was the general disposition of the dining hall on the evening Jesus entered it. The Twelve followed and took their places about Him. John who lay at His right only needed to turn his head to rest it upon the Master's breast. Peter was near the beloved disciple, and Judas reposed not far from Jesus.

The hour was come, and the heart of Jesus was thrilled with gladness.

"I have greatly desired to eat this Passover with you," He said, "before I suffer."

Nevertheless, to make the apostles comprehend that it was no figurative rite for which He had longed so keenly but rather, indeed, the accomplishment of a real sacrifice in the Eucharist, He added:

"For I say to you that I will eat of it no more until it has been fulfilled in the Kingdom of God."

Meanwhile the cup which indicated the beginning of the repast had been prepared. Taking it from the hands of His disciples, Jesus pronounced over it the accustomed blessing, moistened His lips therewith even as the master of the household was wont to do, then offered it to His disciples.

"Take this and share it among you;" He said, "for I say to you

that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the Kingdom of God comes."

Here Jesus was not so much speaking of the Eucharist as of heavenly blessedness.

The thought of that eternal Paschaltide could not absorb the Saviour's mind so far as to make Him forget those He was to leave upon earth. "Knowing that His hour was come, that He should pass out of this world to His Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end"—loved them even to excess, and therefore taxed His almighty attributes for one last miracle of charity wherewith forevermore to gladden all human hearts. The circumstances surrounding the gift were most solemn.

Saint John delights to recall every detail of the scene: the Paschal feast had commenced, Satan was there as master of Judas Iscariot; high above the supper room heaven opened for Jesus' vision; therein clearly He beheld that all has been delivered into His hands by His Father; yes, all the blessed members of the Church marked with the seal of the elect; knowing that He came forth from God and that He was returning unto God, there remained nothing now but to give mankind the uttermost token of His love. But first He desired to so humble Himself before them all as to show forth the infinite self-annihilation whereby He was made flesh, whereby He would likewise give Himself to be their meat and drink.

Just at the moment when the ritual of the sacred feast commanded the guests to purify their hands, Jesus, rising from table, laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded His loins; then, pouring out water into a basin, He made ready to wash the feet of His disciples, wiping them with the towel which served Him for a girdle.

Peter was the first to see the Master kneel down before him.

"Lord," he exclaimed, "dost Thou wash my feet?"

"What I do thou knowest not now," replied the Saviour, "but thou shalt know hereafter."

Thus He gave him to understand that this allusion was only a symbol—a figure of the redemption which washes away our sins. But Peter refused to see anything but the humiliation of his Master.

He repeated, "Thou shalt never wash my feet."

To overcome this impetuous resistance, Jesus said to him:

"If I do not wash thee, thou shalt have no part with Me."

At once Peter comprehended all that this threat implied, and, unbounded as usual in his fervor—

"Lord," he cried, "not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

Tempering the apostle's fiery spirit, Jesus said:

"He who has bathed needs only to wash, and he is clean all over."

So was it even now with the apostles. Their greater sins all washed away, they needed but to cleanse the lighter spots from off their souls before approaching the table of their Lord. Nevertheless, there was one impure spirit among them, and, without mentioning Judas by name, Jesus forewarned him, by a hidden allusion, that He was aware of his crime.

"You are not all clean."

Notwithstanding this the traitor did not take alarm; he permitted the Lord to approach him, pour water upon his feet, and press them between His hands, while he still remained unmoved.

The ablution finished, Jesus resumed His garments and again took His place on the couch.

"Do you know," He asked "what I have done to you? You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If, therefore, I the Lord and Master have washed your feet, you also ought to wash the feet of one another. For I have given you an example that as I have done to you, so you also should do."

"As I have done to you," said the Lord, not "that which I have done." Thus, in fact, it is not so much the action which we must copy as it is the self-renunciation of Jesus. The washing of the feet, as a symbol of His mission, displays Him unto us just as He appeared upon earth, despoiled of His glory and clothed with the form of a servant that so He might purify the souls of men. To deny one's self thus far is the law which Christ left to His apostles. And truly, added He, I have good right to give this law; "for no servant is greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed shall you be if you do them."

Yet all the apostles were not to know this gladness. Once more

Jesus repeated that all were not clean, and the saying of Scripture was to be fulfilled:

"He that eateth at table with Me shall lift up his heel against Me."

Speaking in this way, the Lord made allusion to the crime of Achitophel, David's councilor, who was not afraid to involve himself in the revolt of Absalom; for this sage of Israel had been his master's table companion many a time before that day when, with his plottings discovered and defeated, he went out and hanged himself in his despair. Jesus recalled this fact to the apostles' minds for fear lest the defection of one of their own number should in after days shake their faith.

"I tell you now before it comes to pass," He said "that when it has come to pass you may believe that I am He."

THE BETRAYER

Jesus could not divert His mind from this treason. Dwelling longer upon the dignity which Judas once possessed but had now so degraded—a dignity so lofty that to receive one of His apostles was to receive the Christ; thereby receiving the Father who hath sent Him—He was troubled in spirit and for the moment remained silent, as though He hesitated before lifting aside the veil from the future. But shortly He said aloud:

"Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."

The astonished disciples looked from one to another, not knowing of whom He might be speaking, and in their grief each one began to ask—

"Is it I, Lord?"

Judas alone was silent.

"It is one of the Twelve," Jesus answered; "who dips into the dish with Me."

Undoubtedly many of the disciples had touched the dish at that very moment; hence the traitor was only vaguely designated. Yet one last time the Master warned that guilty soul of what was to come, showing him the dark abyss ready to engulf him.

"The Son of Man indeed goes His way," He said, "as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It were better for that man if he had not been born."

Terrified by these menacing words, the apostles dared no

longer question the Saviour, but asked among themselves of whom He was speaking; and still no one thought of Judas. At last the traitor repeated after the others—

"Is it I, Master?"

"Thou hast said it," responded Jesus.

INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST

The meal was drawing to its close. And whilst they were still eating, Jesus took one of the loaves of unleavened bread and having given thanks He blessed it. The ritual of the Passover ordained that all bread should be broken before it could be eaten. Therefore Jesus parted that which was in His hands and offered the fragments to the apostles.

"Take ye and eat," He said; "this is My Body, which is being given for you."

Deep silence ensued upon these words—the silence of awe and amazement doubtless, but also of humble and submissive faith; for everyone there well remembered the promise made to them long since on the lakeside: "The bread which I shall give you shall be My Flesh, for the life of the world. My Flesh is truly meat and My Blood is truly drink." This saying of Jesus was neither a figure barren of meaning nor an obscure comparison. It declared that here, in their presence, under the appearances of bread, was the flesh of their God made Man.

The bread, broken and changed into the Body of Jesus, rested now on the dish upon the table. Each one received a portion, and so in this, the first of all Communions, side by side with the sacrilegious spirit were pure souls exulting in this chaste union, overflowing with the delights of its holy harmony.

But it remained for Jesus to tender them a more complete representation of His Death by showing them that, after His Body was immolated, His Blood must be shed. Mark in what manner He chose to do this.

The repast was concluded. The Chalice of Benediction, which must be drunk before singing the final hymns, was now poured out. Jesus took it, blessed it, and presented it to the apostles.

"All of you drink of this," He said; "for this is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is being shed for many unto the forgiveness of sins."

Therefore within this cup there was a Blood which soon must gush forth to consummate the new Covenant. Full of these thoughts Jesus beheld nothing now but that fast approaching death, and found no words wherewith to consecrate this sacrificial wine better than the words of Moses, when he likewise sealed in blood God's alliance of ancient times! Yet at the same time the Lord offered unto His own, in this His Chalice, a source of eternal life.

"But I say to you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I shall drink it new with you in the Kingdom of My Father. But for you, as often as you drink thereof do it in remembrance of Me."

As Jesus finished speaking these words He met the eyes of Judas.

"But behold the hand of him who betrays Me is with Me on the table."

Then, condemning the sacrilegious act, He repeated:

"For the Son of Man indeed goes His way, as it has been determined; yet woe to that man by whom He will be betrayed."

At this anathema the apostles shuddered with alarm, asking anew which of their number was to commit this crime.

Now one of them, he whom Jesus loved, while leaning upon his Master's breast, tried to read the answer in His eyes. Peter remarked John's attitude, familiar as of old, and thought that he at least must know all—that, perchance, by some gesture or word he had rather divined than heard the name.

"Who is it?" he whispered.

But John was still as ignorant of the truth as he.

"Lord," he asked, "who is it?"

"It is he for whom I shall dip the bread, and give it him," Jesus replied, and having moistened it, He gave it to Judas, son of Simon, the man from Kerioth. "And after the morsel, Satan entered into him."

"What thou dost," Jesus said to him, "do quickly."

The apostles heard these last words; but as Judas kept the common purse, they believed that Jesus was telling him to "buy what we need for the feast, or to give certain alms to the poor." John alone understood what had taken place; he saw the traitor, straightway upon receiving the bread, rise up and at once dis-

appear from the hall. "It was night," he adds. And Judas went forth to be lost within the blackness of an everlasting gloom.

As soon as Judas was gone Jesus had no further thought for anything but the salvation of the world, the glory which God would gain even from this awful act of treachery, and His Soul was fain to exult in the joy of this perfected work of redemption.

"Now is the Son of Man glorified," He said, "and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him at once."

Though they could not wholly grasp the significance of these words the apostles felt that they presaged the death of their Master, and at the thought their sorrow was unrestrained, the while Jesus comforted them with a gentleness most like the tender talk of a mother.

"Little children," He called them, "yet a little while I am with you. You will seek Me, and, as I said to the Jews, 'Where I go you cannot come,' so to you also I say it now. A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: that as I have loved you, you also love one another. By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

A divine lesson this, whose importance the apostles rightly esteemed when, in after days rising above the Mosaic Law, they welcomed all mankind as their brethren, showed a greater love for them than for themselves, and in such god-like charity found a peace and gladness hitherto unknown on earth.

PETER'S FALL FORETOLD

Jesus left His disciples to gather the meaning of this new law in silence; but Peter soon broke the thoughtful quiet. In all that he had just heard one thing alone stood out sharply before his mind—the idea that the Master was about to separate Himself from their company.

"Lord," he said, "where art Thou going?"

"Where I am going," responded Jesus, "thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow later."

Those words unveiled the future before Peter's eyes—his fall in the time of headstrong self-confidence; his self-denial and his

martyrdom in the days of his humility. But as yet he could not comprehend all this.

"Why cannot I follow Thee now?" he replied. "I will lay down my life for Thee."

PETER'S DENIAL FORETOLD

"Wilt thou lay down thy life for Me?" answered Jesus. "Amen, amen, I say to thee, the cock will not crow before thou dost deny Me thrice." Then once more the Lord was silent.

This prediction humbled Peter's spirit; he sunk back overcome, as though struck down from the lofty rank to which the Master had raised him. Thus, too, the other apostles understood this saying, for they began immediately to ask which one of them should succeed to the primacy, of which Simon was no longer esteemed worthy. This rivalry soon involved them in a dispute, and at the very table where He had but now united His apostles in blessed Communion, Jesus must intervene to curb their selfish ambitions.

"The kings of the Gentiles," He began, "lord it over them, and they who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. On the contrary, let him who is greatest among you become as the youngest, and him who is the chief as the servant. For which is the greater, he who reclines at table, or he who serves? Is it not he who reclines? But I am in your midst as he who serves."

Evidently this allusion to the humility of which He had given them such an example hardly moved these carnal-minded men at all, for the Lord went on at once to set before their sight the recompenses assured to the companions of His trials. A kingdom was prepared for them; in this kingdom there would be much feasting, whereat all should eat and drink; there would be thrones likewise, where seated with Him they should judge the twelve tribes of Israel.

The apostles received these promises in silent delight. Peter listened with them, but still overwhelmed by the prediction of the Master. Jesus marked his sadness.

"Simon, Simon," He said, "Satan hath desired to sift thee as wheat is sifted. But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. And do thou in thy turn confirm thy brethren."

The Lord spared nothing to revive the spirit of the prince of the apostles; not content with praying for him in a special manner He promised him an impregnable faith, so steadfast and constant that it would suffice to strengthen his brethren, and make him the infallible mouthpiece of truth. In return for such gifts of grace He only demanded that His servant should assume a humility commensurate with his unequaled greatness.

Once again Peter could not comprehend all this; he was only the more obstinate in his presumption, boasting of his courage, insisting that he was sure of himself.

"Master," he cried, "I am ready to go with Thee to prison and to death."

Then once more Jesus foretold his fall.

"I tell thee, Peter," He said this time, by that symbolic name reminding him of the firmness which he was to look for without avail from him—"a cock will not crow this day until thou hast denied three times that thou knowest Me."

But the chief of the apostles was not the only one thus threatened; the flock was to be scattered and bereft of their shepherd. Of this Jesus forewarned them now.

"When I sent you without sack, without scrip, without shoes," He said, "did you want for anything?"

"Nothing, Lord."

"But now whoever hath a purse or scrip let him take them, and let him that hath naught sell all, even his garment, that he may buy a sword. For I say unto you, that which Israel hath foretold of the Messiah is now to be fulfilled in Me; He shall be reckoned in the ranks of the wicked."

This was only meant as a warning to bid them be in readiness for a spiritual struggle, but the apostles understood it as referring to some pressing danger.

"Lord," they exclaimed, "see, we have here two swords."

Grieved to the heart at finding His disciples, just as formerly, ever prone to misunderstand His thought, Jesus put aside the swords.

"It is enough," He said.

And breaking off the theme of their converse He no longer endeavored to do anything but fortify their souls against the future.

DISCOURSE AFTER THE LAST SUPPER

Toward the close of the first century John the Evangelist completed the testimony of his predecessors by relating the instructions given them after the Passover was eaten. The first of the conversations which he now records took place in the supper room. The Lord, whose object it was to prepare His apostles for the events about to follow, now bade them feel no alarm nor trouble, but believe in God—to believe likewise in Him, for He was going to leave them now only that He might prepare a place among those innumerable mansions which await them in their Father's house.

"Were it not so," He added, "I should have told you, because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again, and I will take you to Myself; that where I am, there you also may be. And where I go you know, and the way you know."

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where Thou art going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me. If you had known Me, you would also have known My Father. And henceforth you do know Him, and you have seen Him."

"Lord," replied Philip, ingenuously, "show us the Father and it is enough for us."

What did this apostle expect, his mind absorbed in dreams of Jewish glory? Some celestial apparition doubtless, some glimpse of Jehovah's footstool, sparkling with the flames of sapphire, some fiery vision which would crown their brows with a splendor like that which Moses wore returning from the mountain peak. For all these three years, during which he had followed the footsteps of God's Son, Philip had not yet comprehended that Christ was one with His Father.

This blindness wrung from the Saviour an exclamation of grief.

"Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me? Philip, he who sees Me sees also My Father"; and He went on to show that His words and His deeds are so manifestly divine that they alone would reveal in Him the Almighty's presence.

Then addressing them all He promised that He would not leave them orphans, that He would return to them, and through the Father, bestow the Holy Spirit upon them to be their aid. This Spirit of truth would remain forevermore in their midst, communicating unto them such mighty powers that they should do the same works as their Master, and greater works still, and thereafter everything that they should ask in His Name should be granted them. Moreover, He promised them that after His Resurrection, they should live, like Him with a life divine.

"I live and you shall live. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."

The sole condition on which they were to receive these gifts of grace was that they observe the commandments of the Lord, and thereby testify their love for Him.

"For he who loves Me," said Jesus, "will be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and manifest Myself to him."

Here one of the Twelve again interrupted the Lord; it was Judas (not the man from Kerioth, but Judas Lebbeus, a cousin of Jesus).

"Lord," he asked, "how is it that Thou art about to manifest Thyself to us, and not to the world?"

Evidently a grandeur destitute of the pomp and circumstance which appeal to the senses did not satisfy the notion which Judas had conceived of the Messiah's coming; his fancy had pictured a Saviour robed in glory, the nations' awesome judge, a king and a conqueror, whose empire should dazzle the wondering eyes of men.

Jesus did not stop to shatter these illusions, but preferred to pursue His thought, simply saying:

"If any one loves Me, he will keep My word and My Father will love him and We will come unto him, and will make Our abode in him."

Indeed this indwelling of God in His holy people was one of the wonders which were to mark the coming of the Messiah. The Jews had awaited this signal and, instead of the cloud which so long had overshadowed the Holy Place, they had always looked to see Jehovah Himself, appearing in His heavenly splendor to abide in their midst, according to the promise delivered by the mouth of Moses. Jesus, giving this prophecy at last its true signifi-

cance, revealed that God thus abides only in the hearts of those who love Him who, for their faithfulness, deserve that He should disclose Himself to them.

The Master, however, could hardly have hoped that His apostles would as yet understand such lofty truths as these and, therefore, He added: "These things I have spoken to you while yet dwelling with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your mind whatever I have said to you."

FAREWELL OF JESUS

Now at last there was nothing more for the Saviour to do before separating Himself from His own, and accordingly this farewell fell from His lips: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, or be afraid. You have heard Me say to you, 'I go away and I am coming to you.' If you loved Me, you would indeed rejoice that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I, and because I go to find in Him the power divine which shall assure you of your triumph. And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it has come to pass you may believe. I will no longer speak much with you, for the prince of the world is coming."

It was Judas whom the Lord denounced in this manner. He beheld him, making his way toward that quiet upper chamber, now finally possessed and mastered by Satan.

The Saviour exclaimed, "The prince of this world is coming, and in Me he has nothing. But he comes that the world may know that I love the Father, and that I do as the Father has commanded Me."

Then rising, He said to the apostles, "Arise, let us go from here."

The final hymns of the Hallel were chanted, all standing; then Jesus, followed by His disciples, started out toward the city gates.

Jesus conducted His little company in the direction of the garden of Gethsemani where He was accustomed to pray. Starting from the supper room, which lay on the southern side of Sion, He must have taken the shortest road to reach the Mount of Olives, and hence passed under one of the gates which stood

open in the southern quarter of the town; from that place they could ascend Kedron valley. All along this wayside, the neighboring hill slopes of Mount Ophel were in those days covered with gardens, and at every step were to be seen those vineyards which inspired the Saviour with His last discourse to His disciples.

Once they had left the city gates behind them Jesus could taste the sweets of silence and solitude for a little longer; and so, upon the way of sorrows, He halted for a moment, standing still to look at one of these vineyards, to which He was fond of likening the Kingdom of Heaven. At this season of the year the vines were still arrayed in their leafy dress; the branches, already pruned for the second time, were strewn about the ground, some dried by the sun and piled up ready to be burned, the remainder preserving some tokens of their lusty greenness. The moon, which was now high in the heavens, or in any event the bonfires, which were always lighted at the approach of harvest time, shed a clear light over the country. Gazing at the vineyard, Jesus began to speak to His disciples:

UNION WITH CHRIST

"I am the true vine, My Father is the vine-dresser . . . you are the branches. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it remain on the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me."

Dwelling further upon this comparison, Jesus pointed to the barren branches, cut off and thrown out of the vineyard, heaped in bundles for the fire and therein burning forevermore. But for the branch that is laden with fruit, the heavenly vine-dresser prunes it, quickens it to sturdier life, purges it, trims it even of its flowers when the heavy blossoms exhaust the plant and consume the sweetness necessary for its fuller fruitage. Again Jesus conjured them to remain forever united to the parent-stem divine, His Holy Church, giving them the most vital reasons therefor: first of all, the glory which they would thus repay His loving Father; then the blessed assurance that all prayers uttered in this unity of spirit would be granted; and finally the joy they should

taste in this dear and intimate communion with their Saviour.

So, too, He bade them love one another, after His example, even to dying for each other. This, indeed, was above all things His commandment, for "greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends." Proclaiming this gracious message, the Saviour declared that He had now revealed unto His own all that He had learned of His Father; that He no longer treated them as servants, but as dear friends, as the chosen ones of God, His elect set in His vineyard to grow and bring forth fruit everlasting.

BRETHREN IN CHRIST

And yet, though the Christian must needs love all mankind as his brethren, his love must not look for any requital; for they shall be the object of never ending hatred from worldlings. Jesus foretold to the apostles that this hatred which, since His coming was robbed of its last excuse, would thenceforth fasten itself upon all who bore His Name, and in them would wickedly pursue His Father and Himself.

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before you. If you were of the world, the world would love what is its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I have spoken to you: No servant is greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you also; if they have kept My word, they will keep yours also."

After having thus forearmed them against persecutions, Jesus disclosed something of the fierceness and fury of the future trials; the hatred, born of hostile religions, more implacable than any other, madly bent upon exterminating them; the synagogues shut against them, all men believing that in compassing their destruction they would be offering an agreeable sacrifice to God; and these excesses were to be committed with all the blindness of fanaticism.

"But these things I have spoken to you," concluded the Master, "that when the time for them has come you may remember that I told you. These things, however, I did not tell you from the beginning, because I was with you. And now I am going to Him who sent Me."

Certainly this was not the first time Jesus had told His flock of their future persecutions, but never yet had He revealed that the whole world was to be arrayed against them; that not only the Gentiles, but the children of Israel, would hold them in abhorrence, and that it would be deemed an act of religion to put them to death. So overwhelmed with grief were they at this prediction that the Lord speedily changed the tenor of His conversation to comfort and revive their souls. He repeated "And now I am going to Him who sent Me, and no one of you asks Me, 'Where art thou going?' But because I have spoken to you these things, sorrow has filled your heart. But I speak the truth to you; it is expedient for you that I depart. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."

Then He explained the mission of this Divine Spirit, who would come to convict the world of sin, for that it had not believed in Jesus, and to establish the justice of that same Jesus Who is returned unto His Father, there to find in His bosom a glory, such as the eye of man hath not conceived; and to confirm the judgment of the world, long since condemned in the person of Satan, its prince.

"Many things yet I have to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will teach you all the truth. For He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He will hear He will speak, and the things that are to come He will declare to you. He will glorify Me, because He will receive of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. That is why I have said that He will receive of what is Mine, and will declare it to you." Words which, while they reveal something of the inner life of God, likewise set before our eyes the whole order of the Trinity, the distinction of the Persons, and their interior communications.

Jesus dwelt no longer upon such exalted truths, He was content to disclose but a few beams of the heavenly light, and then ended this long talk with reminding them that a time of trial, as well as a season of consolation, was near at hand:

"A little while, and you shall see Me no longer; and again a little while and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father."

At this point, doubtless, He resumed the journey toward Gethsemani. But the apostles, following in His footsteps were ab-

sorbed in great perplexity over these words He had just uttered.

"What does He mean to say?" they whispered among themselves: " 'A little while, and you shall see Me no longer; and again a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father.' "

This "little while" puzzled and disconcerted them; and, indeed, how were they to foresee that the Cross of Jesus was to be His triumph? Wearied with fruitless conjecture, they approached the Master to question Him further: but He forestalled their words.

"You inquire about this among yourselves because I said, 'A little while and you shall not see Me, and again a little while and you shall see Me.' Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman about to give birth has sorrow, because her hour has come. But when she has brought forth the child, she no longer remembers the anguish for her joy that a man is born into the world. And you therefore have sorrow now; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one shall take from you."

HOPE OF RESURRECTION

Then, describing that gladness which was to spring up in their souls after His Resurrection, He revealed the perfection of their joy in terms which seem to refer rather to the glorified hosts of heaven than to men living on this earth of ours.

"And in that day," He said, "you shall ask Me nothing. Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, he will give to you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."

This prayer in the Name of Jesus, though impossible before His glorification, was indeed one of the graces reserved for all Christian souls, who should hereafter own the sway of the Holy Spirit, and thus it would crown their gladness by giving them all power over the heart of God.

And after telling the apostles the meaning of that saying, "that they should see Jesus no more and a little after should see Him again," the Lord proceeded to explain what was implied in that "return unto His Father."

"These things," He said, "I have spoken to you in parables. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in parables, but I will speak to you plainly of the Father."

This He did by repeating what He had taught so many, many times, that, though He had come as a Man upon earth, He nevertheless abode always, as God, in the Father's bosom, and that, having come forth from Him, He might no longer remain separated from Him. The risen Jesus would, therefore, resume the glory which is essential to Him whereby also He would draw humanity unto Himself, having re-established it in the grace of God. And this reconciliation would be so complete that there would be no more need for Him to pray to His Father for them: the Father Himself loved them, because they love Christ and do believe that He came out from God.

"I am come forth from the Father," Jesus concluded, "and have come into the world. Again I leave the world and go to the Father."

Whether or not the disciples comprehended these words more than imperfectly, their joy was great, however, at hearing the Master praise their faith. They believed that surely the time had come when all truth would be made self-manifest and certain.

"Behold," they said, "now Thou speakest plainly, and utterest no parable. Now we know that Thou knowest all things, and dost not need that anyone should question Thee. For this reason we believe that Thou camest forth from God."

"Do you now believe?" asked Jesus, sadly, knowing all that it had required to arouse a spark of faith within their breasts at this last moment. "Behold the hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each one to his own house, and to leave Me alone." But speaking these words with uplifted eyes His glance rested upon the mighty heavens. "But I am not alone," He said, as though replying to Himself, "because the Father is with Me."

This prediction, to which Saint John devotes only a passing word, is recorded much more at length by the other witnesses. It was while they were on the road to Gethsemani, says Saint Matthew, that Jesus addressed these words to the disciples accompanying Him. "You will all be scandalized this night because of Me; for it is written, 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the

flock will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go before you into Galilee."

Peter, already oblivious of the denial whereof the Master only now had pretold him, straightway cried out:

"Even though all shall be scandalized because of Thee, I will never be scandalized."

One last time did Jesus warn him to beware of presumption.

"Amen, I say to thee, this very night, before the cock crows, thou wilt deny Me three times."

Far from humbling himself, Peter continued his protestations, as if he would even belie the words of the living truth.

"Even if I should have to die with Thee, I will not deny Thee."

And all the apostles, prompted by this sturdy example, re-echoed his words.

Seeing that nothing could shake their eager self-confidence Jesus endeavored at least to forearm them against the discouragement with which the knowledge of their own weakness would soon overwhelm them, and therefore He urged them, however lonely and forsaken they might seem in after days, to trust always in Him.

"These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have affliction. But take courage, I have overcome the world."

PRAYER OF JESUS

Jesus and His apostles had now nearly arrived at the lower bridge over which the road to Gethsemani crosses Kedron. This was where the conversation took place which we have next to recall, for we see Jesus immediately after the prayer which followed it crossing the brook. At this point the Valley grows narrower, makes a rapid descent between Mount Moriah and the Mount of Olives, and thereafter is nothing but an arid gorge.

Out of the darkness of this deep and gloomy gorge Jesus lifted His eyes to His Father on high, giving utterance to a prayer in which He reveals all the movements of His Soul as the hour of sacrifice draws nigh. In it He depicts Himself standing between that last Paschal meal and the final offering of Calvary, as a victim made ready for the sacrificial knife; wherefore He offers

Himself, His apostles, and all those who by faith are made one with Him in one common oblation to God.

"Father, the hour has come. Glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may glorify Thee, even as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, in order that to all thou hast given Him He may give everlasting life. Now this is everlasting life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou hast sent, Jesus Christ. I have glorified Thee on earth; I have accomplished the work that Thou hast given Me to do. And now do Thou, Father, glorify Me with Thyself, with the glory that I had with Thee before the world existed."

Here Jesus ceased to pray for Himself. As their victim he had only to complete His sacrifice; but could He forget that all might not leave the land of sorrows with Him? His eyes fell again upon the apostles as He reminded the Father of all that they had grown to be through His loving care.

"I have manifested Thy Name," He pleaded, "to the men whom Thou hast given Me, out of the world. They were Thine, and Thou hast given them to Me, and they have kept Thy word. Now they have learnt that whatever Thou hast given Me is from Thee; because the words that Thou hast given Me I have given to them. And they have received them, and have known of a truth that I came forth from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me.

"I pray for them; not for the world do I pray, but for those whom Thou hast given Me, because they are Thine; and all things that are Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I am coming to Thee. Holy Father, keep in Thy name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one even as We are. While I was with them, I kept them in Thy name. Those whom Thou hast given Me I guarded; and not one of them perished except the son of perdition, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, in order that they may have My joy made full in themselves. I have given them Thy word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not pray that Thou take them out of the world, but that Thou keep them from evil. They are not of

the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth. Thy word is truth. Even as Thou hast sent Me into the world, so I also have sent them into the world. And for them I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth."

JESUS PRAYS FOR UNITY

Whereupon the Saviour in His prayer swept the wide limits of His whole Church, beseeching three gifts of grace for her—unity in faith and love, the Eucharist, and the glory of heaven.

"Yet not for these only do I pray, but for those also who through their word are to believe in Me, that all may be one, even as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory that Thou hast given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them and Thou in Me; and that they may be perfected in unity, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and that Thou hast loved them even as Thou hast loved Me."

It was the Eucharist to which Jesus alluded in these mystical terms, and it was His good pleasure that those who are given to Him to be His own should be likewise partakers of His blessedness.

"Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me; in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me, because Thou hast loved Me before the creation of the world. Just Father, the world has not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have made known to them Thy name, and will make it known, in order that the love with which Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

There was now naught that Jesus could give them which He had not given them; accordingly, having ended His prayer, He crossed Brook Kedron.

BOOK SEVEN

The Passion and the Resurrection of Jesus

JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES

ON THE FURTHER SIDE of Kedron, at the foot of the hillside, there lies a garden overshadowed by olive trees, called Gethsemani because of an olive press which formerly stood there. Nothing disturbed the solitude of this region, where the Saviour was accustomed to pass the night-time whenever He did not return to Bethany in the early evening. Judas was well aware of this secluded retreat, for a few hours later he led the band sent in search of the Divine Master unhesitatingly in this direction.

Hardly had Jesus entered the garden when He felt the awful throes of an anguish, like the first icy chills of the death struggle.

"Sit down here," He said to His disciples, "while I go over yonder and pray." There is still a rock near the gateway of the garden where tradition says the apostles found a resting place.

The Saviour took with Him Peter, James, and John to whom He had promised that they should drain the cup of His grief; so now He led them under the black shadows of the olive orchard into the dimmest corner of the garden. Never had His apostles seen Him plunged in such sadness as this; terror, dejection, something like a stupor, says Saint Mark, seized his soul. And here He stopped His companions.

"My Soul," He groaned, "is sad even unto death! wait here and watch with Me."

Then withdrawing from them about a stone's throw He fell upon His knees, His head bowed down till His face pressed the ground, while He prayed that if it were possible this hour might pass from Him.

"Father, all things are possible to Thee. Remove this cup from

Me," this cup of anguish, wherein He tasted beforehand all the bitterness of His Passion. So greatly did Jesus suffer that He shrank from enduring any more as yet, and so for a long while He remained motionless, only beseeching the Father to grant Him sufficient strength and comfort. And, at the last, His words were words of resignation.

"Yet not what I will, but what Thou willest."

Then He returned to the disciples, craving some relief for His trouble; yet it only resulted in making the sense of His loneliness and abandonment more vivid and overpowering. There was not one human heart to watch with Him or to take compassion on His anguish. Peter, the intrepid champion of a few hours back, James, despite all his sturdy courage, and John, the well-beloved, every one of them was sleeping, notwithstanding all the love they bore Him, who was racked with anguish almost before their very eyes—who had besought them not to leave Him alone, but to uphold and sustain Him by their presence!

Addressing the most presumptuous of those three:

THE SPIRIT IS WILLING

"Simon," He said, "dost thou sleep? Couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

The disciples saw Him withdraw from them again, once more casting Himself down, and in the dust exhausting Himself in the throes of His awful agony while His lips still murmured the same prayer as before.

"My Father, if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done."

Soon weariness once more overweighed their eyelids, and returning Jesus found them for the second time asleep. They knew not what to answer Him. The Saviour left them for the last time; it was to engage in that mightiest combat of all, the one which Saint Luke has recounted.

What transpired in that dread hour within the Soul of the Christ? Was hell let loose upon the Lamb who bore the sins of the world? Did it hope, with the weight of all wicked deeds, past and future, to crush this Jesus before whose eyes was now mar-

shaled the whole empire of evil, far up and down the ages? But this is no place for such conjectures. All that we may know is that in this trial not only were the Saviour's eyes wet with bitter woe, but tears of blood poured from His limbs. "And, as He was torn with His agony, there came a sweat upon Him, like drops of blood trickling down upon the ground."

Jesus did but pray the more ardently, evermore repeating the same words:

"Father, if this cup cannot pass except I drink it, let Thy will be done!"

This blood, these tears, His suppliant cries, ascended unto God. At the voice of the spotless Victim of love, heaven, which had been closed against sin-stained humankind since Adam, now threw wide its gates, and an angel descended to strengthen and console the Saviour. And Jesus rose up, once again stronger than His sorrow, knowing all things that were to come upon Him, yet none the less calmly awaiting the hour of torture and death.

Then He returned to His slumbering disciples. They had failed in the duty entrusted to them of watching beside their Master in His agony, and this their sole privilege was lost to them forever. But the Saviour addressed them in words wherein tenderness is marvelously mingled with reproachfulness.

"Sleep on now, and take your rest." Then, as tokens of the arrival of Judas began to break in upon His words—

"Behold," He added; "the hour is at hand when the Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go. Behold, he who betrays Me is at hand."

JUDAS KEEPS HIS BARGAIN

Jesus was still speaking when at the foot of the garden appeared an armed band bearing swords and staves. It was a Roman tribune with his legionaries, accompanied by a crowd of Jews of every rank and condition, officers of the Sanhedrin, temple guards, the serving people of the high priests—a motley assemblage at whose head marched Judas, "one of the Twelve." Torches flared and lanterns glimmered in every direction over the heads of the multitude.

Arrived at Gethsemani they halted near the garden, to check

their plans. Judas reminded them that a kiss was the sign agreed upon to indicate the Saviour, whom they were forthwith to seize and hurry away—cautiously, however, for fear of His supernatural powers.

While they were thus lingering in consultation, suddenly the Master appeared; at sight of Him, Judas hesitated; all his plot seemed to fall to the ground.

"Whom do you seek?" said Jesus.

The apostle and those who like him knew the Saviour were silent and dumfounded at finding their purpose anticipated. But the rest, seeing Judas speechless and motionless, in the midst of them and perchance thinking that the newcomer was only some stranger, responded at once—

"Jesus of Nazareth."

"I am He," the Saviour said.

Terrified they one and all recoiled and fell at His feet.

"Whom do you seek?" again Jesus demanded.

At last they knew who He was, that stood before them; still they dared not say, "Thyself," but answered only—

"Jesus of Nazareth."

"I have told you that I am He."

For the second time the Christ delivers Himself into their hands by these words, but even now He does not forget His own:

"If therefore you seek Me," He added, "let these go their way."

In the depth of His humiliations and in the clutches of His foes, He still decrees how far their violence may venture, and this limit they must respect. Thus was fulfilled the Saviour's promise to His flock, when He said, "Father, I have lost not one of them that Thou hast given Me."

But there must be an end to this indecision and hesitation; the soldiers and the tribune, dismayed at what had just occurred, now looked at Judas, as if waiting for the covenanted signal. Hastily the traitor approached His Lord.

"Hail, Rabbi," he said, and his lips touched the cheek of Christ.

The Saviour replied, "Friend, for what purpose hast thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss!"

Immediately the soldiers came up and seized Jesus. The apostles were still around Him and holding their two swords drawn and ready; seeing what was about to happen, one of them cried—

"Lord, shall we strike with the sword?"

At the same instant the blade in Simon's hand flashed in the torchlight, and glanced above the head of a servant of the high priest, named Malchus; swerving to one side, the fellow received the blow upon his right ear which was cut off.

Fierce feelings were beginning to surge in their hearts, but Jesus quelled the storm with a word.

"Bear with them thus far," He said, and perceiving that Malchus was bleeding, with His own hands, which were not yet bound, He touched the servant's ear and healed it.

Then turning toward Peter, Jesus rebuked him for thus disturbing His Passion and degrading the dignity of His estate to the likeness of some criminal apprehended in an act of revolt.

"Put back thy sword into its place; for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or dost thou suppose that I cannot entreat My Father, and He will even now furnish Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then are the Scriptures to be fulfilled, that thus it must take place?"

Such abnegation as this confounded Peter; nevertheless he at least understood that, in this very hour of humiliation, the Saviour called God His Father and that, instead of the twelve trembling apostles, He might summon as many legions of angels to overwhelm His foes.

No longer hoping to fathom the Master's designs, he dropped back in silence.

Hereupon Jesus perceived coming toward them some members of the Sanhedrin. Among them were certain Temple officials, leading men of the priesthood, with some ancients of the people, who had followed after their satellites at a distance. Addressing them in a tone devoid of anger, Jesus protested against the violence of which He was the victim.

"As against a robber have you come out, with swords and clubs. 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."

Thus Jesus declared, in the presence of His enemies, that they had been obliged to wait for the hour marked out by God wherein He should be apprehended.

"But it is so," He said, "that the Scriptures may be fulfilled."

Hearing these words, the disciples took to flight, and left the armed band to surround their Master unhindered. The soldiers with their tribune, together with the mass of Jews, all rushed upon Him, in order to see Him securely bound; for they still trembled before Him at whose least word they just now had been dashed to earth. Forsaken by His own, Jesus was dragged and pushed along to Jerusalem. One young man alone clung close about His footsteps; dwelling in Kedron valley doubtless and wakened by the uproar, he had had only time to throw a light mantle about him. His eagerness in following the Saviour gave rise to suspicions, and the guards made some effort to detain him, but he left his garment in their hands, and with naked limbs fled from them into the shadows of the night.

THE TRIAL OF JESUS

From Gethsemani, the road leading to Sion crosses the Brook, scales the steep ascent of Ophel and conducts the traveler into the city by one of its southern gates. The soldiers followed this route in order to bring Jesus to the palace where dwelt the two high priests, Caiphas and Annas.

Thus, then, the Saviour was brought in the first place into the presence of Annas; and he, in order to give the council time to assemble, questioned Him at some length as to His disciples and concerning His doctrine. The very order of these questions indicates the spirit which dictated them. It is easy to see that, in the eyes of the high priest, the main object in view was not so much to give judgment touching a system of teaching, as it was to discover and frustrate a plot. He treated the much talked of Kingdom of Jesus as one of those visionary movements which were forever agitating the East at this period, especially Judea—and thus, by linking the adventurers participating in it under the bonds of secretly cherished hopes, had kept the country continually involved in the dangers of a new uprising against Rome. And it was for this reason they desired to find some of His accomplices, that they might extort from their confessions a condemnation of the Nazarene, and so overwhelm Him with one well-aimed blow.

It was not meet that Christ should assume this character of a conspirator before the world. Without making any answer as to

His disciples, He rose straightway to a plane of thought of which Annas had little conception.

He said, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in the Synagogue and in the Temple, where all the Jews gather, and in secret I have said nothing. Why dost thou question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; behold, these know what I have said."

By its bold inversions, its repetition of words, the original text alone can portray the power of these few sentences; showing how Jesus withdrew the high priest's mind from every foreign object, to fasten it solely and singly upon His Divine Person. "It is I, and I alone," He tells them, "whom it behooves you to know. My doctrine is—Myself. And of Myself have I spoken to the world, freely, without any dissimulation, Myself—this everywhere and at all times, in the Synagogues, beneath the Temple-porches, everywhere where Jews assemble, this has been My teaching. Why speak of secrecy? I have never concealed anything I said. Why then do you question Me? Do not examine My disciples, but ask those who have heard Me. See, even these men here," He added, pointing to those who surround Him—"they know what I have said."

These last words of Jesus amounted to a refusal to justify Himself. This the bystanders comprehended, and one of the officers of Annas' suite, standing almost beside the Saviour, gave Him a blow, saying at the same time—

"Is that the way Thou dost answer the high priest?"

"If I have spoken ill," Jesus was content to answer, "bear witness to the evil; but if well, why dost thou strike Me?"

Annas, unable to contend with this calm, broke off the examination at once and dispatched Jesus bound to Caiphas, thereby instructing Him that he delivered Him over as a victim, not so much that He might be examined, but only in order to have Him condemned.

JESUS BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

Jesus was brought away and introduced into the presence of the Sanhedrin over whose deliberations it would seem that Caiphas was presiding during this long all-night session.

The gathering before which Jesus appeared was the High Court of Justice in Judea. In full conclave it numbered seventy-one members, but the presence of twenty-three was sufficient to constitute a tribunal and give authority to its decrees. The Nasi, or "Patriarch," of the Sanhedrin, seated upon a platform, presided over their deliberations; around him, upon cushions arranged in a semi-circle along the ground, were seated the other judges. The Nasi had, at his right hand, a vice-president who directed the debates, and close at hand the sages, who were the usual legal councilors of the court. At either extremity of this space were posted two secretaries, occupied in recording in order, one everything charged against the accused party, the other, anything favorable to his cause.

Besides these there were various subordinate officials who surrounded the accused, armed with ropes and thongs with which to bind or beat him at the first order from the court. Such was the general aspect of the tribunal before which Jesus was now conducted.

From the beginning it was easy to see just how far the prejudice entertained by the judges against their prisoner was likely to carry them. There is nothing to indicate that they in any way respected the rules of the Sanhedrin, which commanded that for capital offenses everything in favor of the accused must be exhibited first. No counsel, not a single witness for the defense was engaged in this case. Then, too, the accusation was of a different tenor this time; it was no longer a question of some secret doctrines but of His public instructions and His blasphemies against religion.

FALSE WITNESSES

As if in derision of the Lord's request that they should interrogate His hearers, the chief of the Sanhedrin replied by producing various perjured witnesses, who asserted that they had heard Him uttering scandalous sayings—these were some of His expressions, either misunderstood or distorted, of which we find numerous examples in the Gospels.

The regular formalities were gone through for the benefit of

these informers, the oath was proffered them and they listened to the solemn voice of the Nasi:

"Know ye, that the blood of the innocent man and of his posterity shall return upon their heads now and for evermore."

Nevertheless, determined as they were to utter their calumnies they were unable to plan together upon all points; and before this tribunal, where they now appeared one after the other, their depositions did not agree. Thus Jesus had simply to listen in silence, and behold the artifices of His adversaries annul themselves.

But in the end two men testified that they had heard Jesus say, "I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and in three days rebuild it." This testimony Saint Mark reports under another form:

"We ourselves have heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple, built by hands, and after three days I will build another, not built by hands.' "

Even upon this point they could not manage to agree.

The prosecution was falling to the ground amid all this contradictory evidences; moreover, the falsity of the whole thing was manifest, for it was in public and in the open courts of the Temple that Jesus had said: "Overthrow this Temple," as by your faithlessness and your crimes you are doing, and "in three days I will build another." And thereby, we must bear in mind, He referred to His body, destined to become the Holy of Holies of a New Covenant to mankind.

Mighty in the testimony which the simple truth had tendered to His cause Jesus stood there silent and still, and let the confusion have free sway about Him. Caiphas realized how eloquently this silence spoke for the defense. Suddenly he stepped down from the judicial daïs and advanced into the center of the hall, until he was face to face with the Prisoner.

"Dost Thou make no answer," he said sharply, "to the things these men prefer against Thee?"

Still Jesus was silent.

The disconcerted Caiphas perceived now that he must bring matters to an issue. Accordingly, thrusting aside technical shifts and captious questioning, he administered a solemn oath to Jesus which, according to the Law, obliged Him to make answer.

"I adjure Thee, by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou art the Christ, the Son of God."

Caiphas' language really anticipated his thought; he did not say: "Tell us if you pretend to be really the Son of God"; his words were "whether you are Christ, the Son of God."

"Thou hast said it," replied Jesus, and, with this declaration, He spoke some few words following upon the thought, of which the Evangelist has preserved only this single noteworthy utterance:

"Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming upon the clouds of heaven."

The Scribes could not fail to recognize how, in these words, there was a two-fold reference to the Prophecies of Scripture; on one hand, it recalled the Psalm which foretold the Divinity of Christ: "The Lord hath said to my Lord: 'Sit Thou at My right hand' "; and on the other it contained an allusion to Daniel's vision, where the Messiah advanceth upon the clouds of Heaven unto the ancient of days. And therefore Jesus thereby proclaimed that He was the Christ for whom Israel had so long been waiting; that His place was on the right hand of God, and His mission to come at the end of time to judge the world.

But the Sanhedrin council turned a deaf ear to this testimony, and the high priest's sole answer was to rend his garments.

"What further need have we of witnesses?" he cried aloud. "Behold you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

"He is liable to death!" they all made answer.

Forthwith commenced a scene of unspeakable outrages. It seems, following Saint Mark's account that even here, in the center of the national council, some of these high functionaries, as if to give a signal for the indignities which ensued, were the first to spit full in the face of Jesus; then when they had so covered His face they struck Him with the flat of their hands, while others, says Saint Matthew, smote Jesus, and at every blow shouted—

"Prophesy to us, O Christ, who is it that struck Thee?"

When their rage and fury had spent itself the Sanhedrin councilors handed Jesus over to their servants and the underlings of the court. This throng received Him with a shower of blows

from their sticks, according to the reading of the sacred text; while in another place we are told that they drove Him before them, maltreating Him in every manner.

PETER'S DENIAL

During this same night was accomplished what was foretold to them by the Lord; while He stood for His trial before Annas and Caiphas, Peter, the chief of the apostles, denied Him thrice.

Two of the apostles, after recovering from their first terror, retraced their steps in order to follow the road taken by the Saviour. Peter, who was one of them, lingered at a distance, but the other disciple drew nearer the troop of armed men; it was John, henceforth steadfastly exposing himself to every peril at the Master's side, and never quitting His sight. As he was known at the pontifical palace he managed to enter there with Jesus, not noticing that his companion no longer followed him. The latter, fearing to appear inside the courtyard, hung back in the darkness without. Perceiving his absence John went out, spoke a word to the servant-maid who tended the gate and so introduced him into the house.

Casting a curious glance at the stranger, the portress asked sharply: "Aren't you too one of this man's disciples?"

"No, I am not!" replied Peter, and hurried quickly out of her way.

At this season of the year the night-time in Judea is all the cooler in proportion to the extreme heats of the day. To protect themselves from the cold the guards and men servants had lighted in the lower court a small pile of such thorny brushwood as grows in abundance about Jerusalem. Seated in this little circle Peter was warming his trembling hands, "awaiting the end," when for the second time he encountered the keen glance of the portress.

She was scrutinizing him fixedly by the aid of the firelight.

"Certainly," she said, "you were with Jesus of Nazareth."

Then before all present Peter denied Him, saying, "I do not know what you are saying."

But she persisted that she was right, telling the others:

"Certainly, I know he was with Him."

Peter retorted again, "I do not know the man."

Then in great trouble of mind he walked away from the group of curious bystanders; and at that moment was heard the first crow of the cock.

As he neared the great door he met with another maidservant, to whom it would seem the portress had confided her suspicions. She too said to the waiting men and the rest standing about—

"This man was with Jesus of Nazareth."

And Peter denied it with an oath.

The other maid in charge of the door had persisted in following after him; and at this she spoke up again:

"Surely," she said, "this is one of them."

Again he denied it.

One of the spectators in this scene addressed the apostle with the query: "What! are you one of that set yonder?"

"Man," retorted Peter, "I am not one of them."

John had heard the first denial at the entrance-way of the palace, but altogether bent thereafter upon watching the trial of Jesus he was not a witness to the scenes just enacted, and related by the synoptic writers only. When he glanced out into the court the servants were stirring up the fire and warming themselves, for the night air was growing exceedingly chill. Peter, stationed near them, still stood there warming himself. Driven back from the door by his harassing questioners, he had returned to his former standing place. John overheard the voice of someone saying to him:

"You too are one of His disciples"; whereat he replied:

"No, I am not."

Tired at last of questioning him they left him unmolested for nearly an hour, but at length, after he had been drawn into a moment's conversation with his neighbors, they exclaimed:

"Surely thou also art one of them, for even thy speech betrays thee."

One of the High Priest's servants, a kinsman of Malchus whose ear Peter had cut off, added:

"Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"

Once more Peter's courage failed him.

"I do not know what you are talking about," he cried; "I do not know this man of whom you speak." And his fear betrayed

itself in a stream of curses and oaths. He was still fiercely protesting when the cock crew for the second time.

It was then that Jesus turned and looked at him.

This was more than Peter could bear. Suddenly he remembered how the Master had said to him:

"Before a cock crows twice, thou wilt deny Me three times."

Overwhelmed with despair and beside himself, he had no further thought of the danger which threatened his steps. At his great outburst of grief the crowd fell back in surprise, leaving him a free passage. Rushing by them all he found his way out of the palace, and, thinking upon the words of Jesus, he wept bitterly.

Handed over to the Sanhedrin guards, Jesus had to endure still greater indignities. Saint Luke, who omits the account of that night-session before Caiphas, first depicts the Saviour in the center of this crowd of lackeys and grooms, insulted, beaten and buffeted. "They blindfolded His eyes," he says, "and smiting Him on the face challenged Him to prophesy, and they uttered many other taunts and insults against Him."

Jesus remained for more than an hour at the mercy of their pitiless hands, for not until morning and broad daylight did the members of the Sanhedrin summon Him again before them.

ROME'S POWER IS WELCOMED

Ever since early dawn they had been closeted, consulting as to the best means of executing the sentence which they had just pronounced against Jesus. The first requisite was to obtain the approval of the procurator, Pontius Pilate; for since the exile of Archelaus and the final subjugation of Judea the Sanhedrin had no longer any power to punish its prisoners with death. Rome, tolerant though she always was toward the religion of the vanquished, nevertheless reserved to herself the administration of justice, and charged the proconsuls to study local customs, in order to make them, if possible, accord with the Roman Code, and so form a body of laws peculiar to each region. It is true the general control of affairs was left to the ordinary judges of the province; but matters of appeal, any important suits and espe-

cially all cases of capital offense, remained subject to the governors. So, however jealous of their authority these councilors might be, they were obliged to bend beneath the yoke which at present held the world in check; yet in this instance they resigned themselves to necessity more willingly, because the concurrence of Pontius Pilate, by relieving them of all responsibility, would prevent any possible conflict with the people. For suppose that in a throng like the one which, five days ago, had cheered the Saviour's entry—suppose that some one of the sick folk, cured by His word, should utter his indignation at the condition to which their hatred had reduced Him; would not this be enough to excite an uprising, in the hope of rescuing Jesus? This was quite reason enough for their eagerness to have Him put into the safe keeping of Roman power, with the further hope of inducing the Governor to ratify their condemnation.

Their negotiations were destined to meet with considerable difficulties, for Pilate, however ready for bloodshed in moments of confusion and riot, in matters of public business cherished all a Roman's reverence for juridical forms. Now everything of the sort had been set at naught in the present procedure. There were certain prescriptions, wise as they were humane, which ordered that the judges should observe a fast, not pronouncing sentence until after mature consideration, and in cases of capital offense they must even defer decision until at least one day after the examination. Furthermore, by these same rules the Sanhedrin was forbidden to assemble during the night, or to hold any sittings before the early sacrifice, which was offered at sunrise. Caiphas and his colleagues could not have been ignorant either of these statutes or of the contempt displayed toward them by such actions as they were now committing.

Anxious above all things to cover up any such irregularities on their part, they thought to accomplish their object by causing Jesus to appear before them again just at daybreak. The short interval which elapsed between the night-sitting and that of the morning did not alter the fact that the rule which commanded a day's delay was in reality infringed; for the Jewish law counted the day from evening to evening. Yet this distinction between night and day gave some slight semblance of legality to their proceedings.

Accordingly Jesus was haled before His judges, and Caiphas began by repeatedly inquiring:

"If you art the Christ, tell us."

"If I tell you," He replied, "you will not believe Me, and if I question you, you will not answer Me, nor let Me go."

Thus He reminded these councilors of state that, only a few hours earlier and in their presence, He had proclaimed Himself the Messiah, and that they had refused to believe Him. Why, then, should they believe Him now? Every question which since His return to Jerusalem, He had addressed to them, whether it concerned John's baptism or had reference to the Christ, was still left unanswered. They did not intend to answer Him now any more than hitherto they had done; as for releasing Him, that they would never do. And notwithstanding this, Jesus consented to repeat once again and in the same terms, what He had said during the night just past—that He was the Son of Man and Son of God. Vainly had they struck and bruised Him, covering Him with spittle and vile abuse; thereafter, even as before this opprobrium, He revealed to His executioners how afar off their victim was to appear all triumphant in the panoply of celestial glory, seated at the right hand of the Most High.

"Art Thou, then, the Son of God?" was the demand of the Sanhedrin.

"You yourselves," replied Jesus; "say that I am."

"What further need have we of witnesses?" they cried instantly, "for we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."

Springing to their feet at these words they ordered Jesus to be bound still more closely and hurried Him away to the pretorium immediately.

DEATH OF JUDAS

By a righteous retribution of human nature, the first victim of this iniquitous judgment was the very man who had been its prime mover and first cause. Standing unheeded among the rabble of onlookers, in silence Judas had looked long and intently upon his victim, now finally separated from Him; disquieted at heart, uneasy, still cherishing some secret hope perhaps that Jesus would overwhelm His judges and escape them in the end. But when he had witnessed His condemnation and had followed

Him as far as the Governor's Palace, remorse was at last fully aroused in him. The life of Jesus, as he had witnessed it day by day, seemed to pass before his eyes in one mighty but distinct whole, and the last words of the Master resounded in his ears like an audible rebuke. Crushed and distraught with shame, possessed with a sort of madness he started at once, not in search of Jesus, who would have repaid him with peace and salvation, but bent upon finding the priests who had been his accomplices in crime.

He had noted that, upon leaving the palace of Caiphas, they turned down a street leading to the Temple; there he repaired and mounted the stairway which divides the Sanctuary from the Gentiles' court. Between the priests' porches and those of the Jews stood the hall of Gazith. Although it was no longer the regular assembly chamber for the Sanhedrin, everything leads us to presume that it was here Judas found the priests and ancients gathered together.

"I have sinned," he cried; "in betraying innocent blood," and his shaking hand held out the thirty pieces of silver before their faces.

Their only reply to this wretched appeal was disdainful enough:

"What is that to us? See to it yourself."

Judas drew back the silver; then, in a frenzy of despair, as he crossed the great entrance of the Holy Place, he flung down the price of his treachery, there on the threshold, and disappeared.

The priests picked up the coins; near by stood the huge coffers destined to receive the alms gifts.

"It is not lawful," they said, "to put them into the treasury, seeing that it is the price of blood."

O marvelous scrupulosity of these doctors of Israel, so accustomed to listen to nothing but their own evil passions, yet requiring so much deliberation before deciding as to the disposition of thirty pieces of silver! Happily Judas came to their aid.

On quitting the Temple, he took the road which descends toward the Fountain of Siloe. Judas came to a halt in a clay field belonging to a potter thereabouts. From this point his eye could sweep the whole pathway, along which they had last night dragged his victim from Gethsemani to the palace of the high

priest; and, as he gazed, his mind altogether gave way under the burden of mad despair. Then, says Saint Matthew, "he went and hanged himself." When informed of his death the Sanhedrin councilors hastened to dispose of their accomplice, whose conscience-stricken end would go far toward witnessing to the innocence of Jesus. The thirty pieces of silver which were once Judas' still lay in their hands; with them they purchased the potter's field, in order to bury the body on the very spot where its bowels had gushed forth; then, hoping to efface the memory of his crime, they consecrated this region as a burial place for such foreign proselytes as should thereafter die in the city. But the citizens of Jerusalem were informed of the tragic end of Judas, and, as this accursed ground had drunk the blood of the traitor, they called it Haceldama—"The Field of Blood."

The Sanhedrin, as we have seen, had determined to deliver Jesus to the jurisdiction of Pilate; the priests, however, because their presence was demanded at the Temple for the morning sacrifice could not accompany Him; but the rest of the assembly formed a lengthy retinue around Jesus, which, after crossing the town, conducted the Prisoner within the precincts of the pretorium.

The Roman governors were accustomed to take up their residence in the palaces of the princes whom they had supplanted, and, generally speaking, the procurators occupied Herod's royal seat on Mount Sion; but during the Paschaltide, Pilate resided in Antonia, the fortress erected north of the Temple and overlooking the porches. From the steep heights of this citadel, he could beat down any tumult of revolt, while at the same time he enjoyed its large and kingly appointments, its lofty galleries and baths, with the immense courts where his legionaries could all comfortably be encamped.

Borne along into one of these halls, Jesus stood at last in Pilate's presence. He was not altogether a stranger to the Governor, for although Galilee and Perea, the usual field of His ministry, were not subject to the Roman jurisdiction, yet His preaching had so deeply stirred Jerusalem that reports of these events must have reached Cæsarea long before now. Beside this, Pilate's wife had come to be secretly drawn to the worship of Jehovah, and thereafter touched by the virtue of Him whom she called "The Just,"

she had often conversed with the procurator concerning Him. Accordingly we see him fully informed as to everything concerning Jesus—His title of Christ, the relentless spite of the Sanhedrin, and the bitter fanaticism which had hunted Him down.

The captive was alone; His accusers, despite their animosity, could not venture to cross the threshold of the pretorium. The dread of being contaminated, and thereby debarred from participating in the Passover, could even overmaster the longings which now filled their breasts to support their denunciations in person. However, if only by the shackles which pinioned Jesus' arms Pilate would easily understand that the Sanhedrin desired His death, it being their custom to deliver up in this condition such condemned felons as they judged worthy of the most extreme penalty of the law.

At sight of Jesus, the first feeling of the judge was one of pity; there was nothing in His attitude which could be attributed to the pride of a seditious brawler, nothing which in any way invited punishment. Naturally endowed with the keenness common to all Roman politicians, Pilate suspected some plot and began to think that perhaps he would find occasion to revise rather than to confirm the Sanhedrin's sentence. Nevertheless, out of respect for the Jews' scruples who refused to enter within the house, he went forth and met them in the outer court.

"What accusation," he inquired, "do you bring against this man?"

The Sanhedrin had hoped that their eagerness and the moment at which they presented themselves would have prevailed with Pilate. Their disappointment found its utterance in bitter terms.

"If He were not a criminal we should not have handed Him over to thee."

This arrogant answer pricked the Governor's temper, and he responded in turn with an accent of irony and disdain.

"Take Him yourselves," he said, "and judge Him according to your law."

Would not excommunication, with the thirty-nine lashes from the whip, administered in the Synagogue, be enough to punish any infringement of their rights?

"It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death," replied the Jews, disclosing in this manner how far they wished to proceed.

Mysterious disposition of providence! God had deprived them of all power over human life only that they might not stone the Christ, according to the law, but that Rome should lift Him up upon the Cross, whereby He shall draw all men unto Him. Thus it was necessary that the saying of Jesus wherein He foretold by what death He was to die should be fulfilled.

PILATE IS CAUTIOUS

Evidently Pilate was not inclined to ratify the condemnation of Jesus, but intended to review the whole procedure and judge the case for himself. Summoned to produce the leading points in their accusation, the Sanhedrin resigned themselves to necessity. The title, Son of God, which the Saviour had attributed to Himself, though the real cause of His ruin, was left unnoticed; but since by declaring Himself the Christ He thereby proclaimed Himself King of Israel, the latter claim was urged against Him, as of itself crime enough. The accusation, reduced to these three charges, was so framed in order to stir Pilate to vengeance.

"We have found this man," they said, "perverting our nation, and forbidding the payment of taxes to Cæsar, and saying He is Christ a king."

But Pilate knew the Jews too well to be duped by their sudden zeal to avenge the wrongs of Rome. And besides this, his officers had not informed him of any signs of an incipient conspiracy, nor of any refusal to submit to the taxes. Hence he lent scanty credence to rumors of a sedition which would have given him little trouble to repress; but the word Christ caught his attention. What was the significance of this title which seemed to involve at once a civil and a religious dignity? What royalty could the prisoner now in his hands lay claim to? Determined upon getting some light upon this question, Pilate re-entered the pretorium and summoned Jesus.

Thus, then, the Saviour was left alone with His judge—far removed from the Jews, whose distant cries of "Death to the Nazarene!" still reached His ears. Pilate, by screening Him from their furious clamor, had already let it be seen that his heart was not indifferent to the spectacle of such misfortunes. Jesus, far from profiting by this to plead His own interests, was altogether

absorbed in the cause of eternal truth, and sought only to make it descend within the soul of this man now standing before Him—puzzled and uncertain, still in the darkness, yet catching a glimpse of some celestial radiance. Pilate was the first to speak.

"Art Thou the king of the Jews?" he asked Jesus.

Always more attentive to the thought than to the words of His questioners, the Saviour answered him:

"Dost thou say this of yourself, or have others told thee of Me?"

Surprised at finding his mind so easily penetrated, the Governor responded, brusquely.

"Am I a Jew? Thy own people and the chief priests have delivered Thee to me. What hast Thou done?"

This question drew forth no reply. Altogether intent upon the inward struggle which was now agitating Pilate, Jesus beheld with infinite compassion that he was trying to crush down the movements of grace, which were calling him to the truth, his conscience assailing him evermore with that persistent question:

"What, then, is this kingdom of His?"

Accordingly it was rather to this unspoken and secret question that Christ made answer—

"My Kingdom is not of this world. If My Kingdom were of this world, My followers would have fought that I might not be delivered to the Jews." But—as you may see from My fetters, from My forsaken state—"My Kingdom is not from here."

"Thou art then a king?" exclaimed Pilate.

"Thou sayest it," answered Jesus, "I am a King," and He added words which Saint John has not recorded at length, but certainly they were sufficient to confirm this declaration:

"This is why I was born, and why I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice!"

"What is truth?" queried Pilate, and then at once turned away to escape the power which Jesus was exerting over him.

And with this thought he went out to the Jews and spoke to them again, with the assertion—

"I find no guilt in Him."

At this answer to their appeals, the cries of rage burst out more wildly than before. The priests and ancients persisted with great violence, besieging the Governor's ears with accusations which

grew ever vaguer, more contradictory and often entirely incomprehensible to him. He had Jesus brought forth. His very presence excited a new fury of abuse and it would seem, from Saint Matthew's text, that the Sanhedrin councilors began to cross-question Him directly, but all to no purpose.

"Dost Thou not hear," Pilate said, turning toward Him, "how many things they prefer against Thee?"

Still Jesus answered not a word. This silence, this peaceful calm in the midst of a raging rabble, filled the Governor with admiration.

He was now casting about for some escape from his predicament, while still the Jews pleaded with fiercer persistency this time asserting—

"He is stirring up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee even to this place."

The name "Galilee" was a ray of light—thrown out with the design of reminding the judge of the uneasy character of that province and the blood of its conspirators lately shed in the Temple; but, on the contrary, it only suggested an expedient whereby he might extricate himself from all responsibility in the affair. Immediately Pilate asked whether Jesus was a Galilean, and having learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he remanded Him to the Tetrarch immediately.

JESUS BEFORE HEROD

This Prince's suite was quartered in the ancient residence of the Machabees, to which Herod's sons had retired when their father's palace was occupied by the Roman governors. There the legionaries conducted Jesus, surrounded by His enemies. We shall not try to follow the Saviour over this portion of His sorrowful journey; but it is hardly probable that His guards would have forced Him to descend the steep side of Moriah and then reascend the Hill of Sion, when by crossing from the western portico of the Temple and over the bridge of Tyropœon, they could at once reach the Prince's palace.

The appearance of Jesus before him excited only a frivolous pleasure in Herod's mind, for his depraved soul was now incapable of even such anxieties as were troubling Pilate's con-

science. For a long time he had been kept informed of all the reports concerning Christ and he was only too anxious to be an eye-witness of some of His miracles. Undoubtedly the young physician, to escape execution, would satisfy his curiosity by performing some miracle. Full of such ideas, Herod at first treated the prisoner with some show of respect, plied Him with questions, and pressed Him to display His supernatural power.

But Jesus had sounded the shallow depths of this prince's mind; and He, who had had only words of tender mercy for Pilate, deigned not so much as a word in reply to Herod. This silence disconcerted the Tetrarch; the Sanhedrin's party, on the other hand were not less deceived. They had counted upon recovering their ascendancy with a prince of their nation, and, without urging any false pretexts, had expected him to strike immediately at what was most hateful to them in Jesus, His doctrine and His pretensions to the title of the Messiah; but all their furious entreaties and chiding were thrown away on Herod.

Of Idumean ancestry, though a Jew by birth and inclining naturally toward the skepticism of the Sadducees, the Tetrarch had long ago stifled his conscience too thoroughly to admit of his now taking any interest in questions of religion. And, further than this, by condemning Jesus would he not run the risk of a popular movement in His favor? Or at any rate, there was the possibility of incurring such terrors as had assailed him after the execution of John the Baptist! Anxious above all things not to endanger his own comfort, the despotic egotist lost no time in returning compliment for compliment, by remanding Jesus back again to Pilate. Provoked, however, at having been set at naught, he desired on his side to display his disdain for Christ and in token of derision had Him arrayed in a white robe. What was this garment meant to caricature? Perhaps the consul's toga or that of the Roman candidates, thus disguising Jesus as though He were some puppet sovereign of the stage; or was it perhaps the garb assumed by Jews acquitted of capital offense, Herod indicating by this that he regarded the prisoner as a fool, incapable of any crime? The procurator appears to have interpreted it in this last sense, for, in arguing with the people for the life of the Christ, he urged in His defense this burlesque acquittal.

JESUS IS SENT BACK TO PILATE

Distasteful as it was to Pilate to resume a trial of which he had thought himself unburdened, yet he took considerable satisfaction from this mark of courtesy on Herod's part, and their mutual deference put an end to all resentment between them. The Governor's undertakings, until now, hostile to the Tetrarch's authority; the blood of the Galileans shed in the Temple—everything in fact was forgotten, and on this same day they became friends.

Once again Jesus was hurried along the road to Antonia. The insulting magnificence with which He was attired rendered His wretched state more striking. On that account Pilate was touched, and, fortified by Herod's dismissal, endeavored to wrest their victim from the Sanhedrin's clutches. Accordingly he assembled the princes of the priesthood and the magistrates; but they, on their part, bent upon forcing his consent, had collected a mob of the populace in order to influence him further.

With Jesus at his side, Pilate addressed them.

"You have brought before me this Man, as One who perverts the people; and behold, I upon examining Him in your presence have found no guilt in this Man as touching those things of which you accuse Him. Neither has Herod; for I sent you back to him, and behold, nothing deserving of death has been committed by Him."

Whether a threatening silence or a fresh outcry greeted these words, Pilate, at all events believed it was best to make amends for them somehow, so he added:

"I will therefore chastise Him and release Him."

Lightly as he regarded the penalty referred to in these words, it was none the less a piece of iniquitous acquiescence on his part, and a sign of weakness which could not escape the Sanhedrin party. They resolved to push their advantage with all their strength.

Meanwhile the crowds were beginning to ascend the approaches to the fortress Antonia, attracted either by the assembly drawn up before the pretorium or to take part in a ceremony which was always performed just at this time. During the morn-

ing of the Parasceve, the Roman governors, in order to heighten the solemnity of Passover time, had always granted a pardon to some prisoner designated by the Jews. This custom, of which we find no trace either in Scripture or in the rabbinical traditions, had doubtless been introduced by some procurator anxious to conciliate his new subjects. Rome, always ready to extend amnesties, either in public calamities or at the anniversaries of the Cæsars, afterwards consecrated this favor accorded by one of her magistrates, and we see Pilate respecting the observance as though it had all the force of a law.

The sight of the multitudes thronging the square of Gabbatha, and with loud shouts demanding this privilege, suggested a new expedient to Pilate's mind. Among the condemned who were to be executed according to custom during the Paschal season, there was a man named Barrabas, notorious for his wickedness. At the head of a riotous herd, he had caused bloodshed in Jerusalem itself, and headed a revolt, not only against the authority of Rome but against that of the Sanhedrin as well; for it was from their prison that the Governor was about to release him. Saint John's exclamation, remembering how the Divine Master was compared to him, is testimony enough as to the contempt with which the criminal was popularly regarded.

"Now Barrabas was a robber!"

Pilate hoped that between this scoundrel and the innocent One whom they were pursuing, the Jewish populace would not hesitate to give the latter preference.

"Whom do you wish that I release to you?" he cried, "Barrabas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" And so speaking, he ascended the steps of the tribunal, set before the pretorium.

No sooner was he seated than some of his servants came in search of him, sent by his wife.

From her apartments in the fortress she was now looking down upon this scene. Tradition tells us that her name was Claudia Procula, and that she was a pious lady, one of the proselytes of the gate so numerous just then in the ranks of the Roman nobility; a divine light had shown her that the doctrine of Jesus was still more perfect than the Law of Jehovah. All the night previous a strange uneasiness had taken possession of her at the first report that the young teacher was to be arrested; nor

had sleep in the least calmed her anguish of spirit, for all night long terrible dreams had disturbed her slumbers. Consequently, when she saw Jesus encircled by the furious mob, with Pilate hesitating and half prepared to condemn Him, she bade some of her people bear this message to her husband:

"Have nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things in a dream today because of Him."

Alone against all these wicked judges, these false witnesses, these inhuman wretches, a pagan woman found, deep down in her heart, enough strength and tenderness to plead the cause of Jesus. Of this deed Christians have ever cherished a grateful memory, while the Greeks have given her a place in their calendar of the saints.

But these few moments had been turned to their own advantage by the priests and magistrates. Spreading their views through the multitude, they finally had succeeded in inflaming them with their fierce passions, persuading them to choose Barrabas in preference to the Saviour.

And so, when Pilate demanded for the second time: "Do you wish that I release to you the king of the Jews?" one unanimous shout rose from the surging populace: "Rid us of Him and release Barrabas!"

"What then am I to do with Jesus who is called Christ?"

"Crucify Him, crucify Him!" responded the crowd with one voice.

"Why, what evil has He done?" persisted the judge, now become advocate for his prisoner. "As for me, I find no crime deserving of death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him."

But then the multitude repeated with wilder tumult—

"Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

And their horrible efforts against Him grew in strength evermore, clamoring that He might be crucified, while still the shouts continued to increase.

Seeing that he gained nothing, while on the contrary the uproar was only swelling, Pilate wished to declare plainly that he looked upon Jesus as a just man, and that he intended to disclaim any responsibility for His death. There was a custom in Israel which ordained that the magistrates of any city where the

author of a murder remained undiscovered should wash their hands over the corpse of the victim, in witness of their own innocence. This deed, prescribed by Deuteronomy, served the Governor in place of further speech with the people who were sharply watching his every action. He therefore ordered water to be brought, and washed his hands.

"I am innocent of the blood of this just man," he said; "see to it, yourselves."

Whereupon all the people answering said:

"His blood be on us and on our children!"

Pilate had not courage to resist further, and discharging Barrabas, released from his chains, he delivered Christ into the hands of the soldiery. Doubtless he did not mean as yet to abandon Him but, because scourging was the first preliminary for crucifixion, he hoped that the blood of Jesus would appease His enemies and enable him, even yet, to rescue Him.

THE CONDEMNATION OF CHRIST

The scourging inflicted upon Jesus was a cruel torture. Stripped of his garments and fastened by the wrists to a low column, the condemned person offered his back to blows which tore his flesh. The instrument of punishment for foreigners was not the rod of elm wood reserved for Roman citizens, but a leathern thong, with knobs of bone and balls of lead. At every cut from the horrible lash the skin was raised in ragged furrows, blood streamed forth, and frequently the victim would fall at the lictors' feet, thereby exposing every portion of his frame to their attacks. Often the sentenced man succumbed under this preliminary torture; for the Roman law had not set any limits to the duration of their sufferings, like those fixed by the Sanhedrin. No rule determined the number of blows; everything was left to the caprice of the lictors, who stopped at nothing short of a surfeit of cruelty or from sheer muscular exhaustion.

JESUS IS SCOURGED

The Gospels record this scourging without entering into its details; but the silence of Jesus which acted as a savage spur to the

fury of the executioners, Pilate's plan to move the sympathies of the Jews by the spectacle of their victim, the condition to which the Saviour was reduced, so that He could not afterwards carry His Cross—all the facts, indeed, make us conjure up a scene of prolonged agony. It all took place in the pretorium and under the eyes of the people, for we see that immediately after the flagellation the soldiers brought Jesus back into the court of Antonia.

And there, renewing the insulting farce enacted by Herod in their presence, they shouted to the others of their cohort, and together the soldiers offered their mock homage to the new "King of the Jews." Jesus, mounted in derision upon a throne, was covered with a mantle of red cloth such as the legionaries wore. In the meantime some of the ruffians had woven a crown of thorns with which they encircled the Saviour's head; then, taking a reed strong as wood, they set it in His hand. With a throne, a crown, a scepter, nothing was lacking now to the regal state of the new monarch, save the worshipful fealty of His subjects; accordingly such tokens were lavished upon Him:

"Hail, King of the Jews!" they shouted, reverently bending the knee before Him, but rising again only to load Him with rough blows and with spittle discharged full at His face.

During this series of outrages the reed slipped from the hand of Jesus, who was still bound tightly and utterly helpless; suddenly they seized it, and striking that sacred head, drove the thorns fast into His brow. The compassion which Pilate always displayed for Jesus makes it impossible to believe that the Governor was a witness of this scene. However, his orders had been faithfully executed, even exceeded, and he desired to profit thereby to excite the sympathy of the people. Once more appearing upon the square of Gabbatha he bespoke their attention.

"Behold," he said to the Jews, "I bring Him out to you, that you may know that I find no guilt in Him."

And Jesus came forth, the crown of thorns upon His forehead, the red robe hanging about His bloodstained body. Then they forced Him to mount the steps of the tribunal.

"Behold, the man!" Pilate cried to the throng.

But their hearts were shut now against pity.

"Crucify Him, crucify Him!" they shouted.

Their cruelty stirred the Governor's indignation.

"Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him."

The Jews could not construe this as meaning a permission in any serious sense; and this was why, upon seeing all their accusations were of no avail, they at last unmasked the real reason of their relentless hatred of Jesus—His so-called blasphemy, whereby He made Himself equal with God, a crime which the Law punished by stoning the guilty man. Rome respected the religious customs of its subjects; they therefore hoped that the Governor would end by yielding to their wishes.

"We have a Law," they said, "and according to that Law He ought to die; because He made Himself the Son of God."

Son of God! The words threw Pilate's mind into a state of still greater uneasiness. In vain did he turn away from the Victim whom his soldiers had been disfiguring with their heavy whips. A King just now, Jesus had suddenly risen above the ranks of mankind. Yet had not this Jew, whose sole crime it was that He said He was the Son of God—had He not, perhaps, justified His high claims by His calm bearing amid the brutality of His torturers? All the mythological dreams in which Pilate's childhood had been cradled, the soldiers' own story, how last night they had been flung back to earth at His word, the vision appearing to his wife, these all came crowding back upon his mind.

"What did they mean by this 'Son of God?' Whence came He?"

More troubled than ever, he bade them bring back the Saviour; then alone, and face to face with Him, he said:

"Where art Thou from?"

Jesus made no reply.

Pilate exclaimed, "Dost Thou not speak to me? Dost Thou not know that I have power to crucify Thee and that I have power to release Thee?"

"Thou wouldst have no power at all over Me," responded Jesus, "were it not given thee from above."

Then comparing Pilate's crime with that of the Jews, He distinguished between the guilt of hatred and that of weakness—

"Therefore, he who betrayeth Me to thee has the greater sin."

Yielding finally to the voice of conscience the Governor determined to release Jesus; again he stepped forth from the

pretorium, whereupon a new storm of crisis assailed him.

"If thou release this man, thou art no friend of Cæsar; for every-one who makes himself king sets himself against Cæsar."

Terrible threat, for the Cæsar of that day was Tiberius, and no one there but knew what powers lay in the reach of informers. Straightway losing sight of Jesus, Pilate pictured only that suspicious master of his world who made the earth tremble; saw in a flash the Jews summoning him before this inexorable judge—the crime of high treason charged against him—his fortune plundered—then exile and death. He could make no stand against these phantoms of his imagination; fear of the future overmastering every other feeling, he commanded Jesus to be brought out, and himself ascended the judgment-seat. It was the eve of the Pasch, about the sixth hour (between half-past ten and eleven in the morning); the Jews were surging wildly about the high tribunal where Pilate, although become the tool of their hatred, strove still to command respect by veiling his terrors under a semblance of haughty contempt.

"Behold, your king," he began again.

But his voice was drowned by the cries of the multitude.

"Away with Him, away with Him!"

"Crucify Him!"

"Shall I crucify your king?"

One last word gave the spur to his tardy resolution.

"We have no king but Cæsar," shouted the chief priests.

Vanquished at last, he delivered Jesus into their hands.

THE ROAD TO CALVARY

A long road, hallowed by the veneration of centuries as the Via Dolorosa, now opened before Jesus. But is it possible, in our day, to still discover any footprints of the condemned God, or to retrace step by step that Way of the Cross now followed daily by so many Christians? No, we think not; however, the criticisms which have been leveled against the traditional stations have not succeeded in overthrowing them altogether. The pretorium, rising just north of the Temple, unquestionably marks the beginning of the Via Dolorosa; the Church of the Holy Sepulcher whose walls enclose Calvary indicates its end; so that at all events these were the two farthest points between which stretched the

road trodden by Jesus on His weary journey to execution and death.

According to Saint John's narrative, after His condemnation Jesus passed into the hands of the Jews: "Pilate," he tells us, "delivered Jesus to them to be crucified; then they took Him and led Him forth to death." However, we need only complete this evidence by comparing it with that of the Synoptic writers to feel sure that some of the Roman soldiers, with a centurion in command, acted as the executioners of a sentence never in use among the Jews. The high priests were content merely to countenance the proceedings by their presence.

The execution followed immediately upon the sentence. This was Roman usage, while the Jews were in haste to see everything finished, for fear lest the body should be left upon the cross, and thereby profane the sanctity of their festival. Accordingly the procession was formed at once; at its head rode a centurion on horseback, behind him walked four soldiers surrounding Jesus, and the two criminals sent with Him to their death. The Saviour no longer wore the red robe; His executioners had taken it from Him, and again covered Him with His own garments. But His head still bore the crown of thorns, and about His neck they had hung a tablet, whereon was written His condemnation.

The instrument of torture was now produced; its form, as preserved by tradition, is known to us by the name of the Latin cross—a long wooden post intersected near the top by a shorter cross-beam, intended to hold the hands, while the upper part was intended to bear the legal inscription. Although this Cross had not the dimensions often given it by Christian images, yet it weighed heavily upon the Lord's lacerated shoulders. Condemned criminals dragged their own gibbets to the place of execution, and however cruel might have been the scourging so recently suffered by them, ordinarily enough strength was spared them to support this load; but it was not so with the Saviour, altogether exhausted after the Agony of Gethsemani, the sweat of blood, and the lashes at the hands of the lictors.

All was ready; the procession marched rapidly toward Golgotha. Stared at by an insolent crowd of sightseers, Jesus dragged that heavy badge of infamy across the rough streets of Jerusalem and up the road which climbs to Calvary. He was all but reach-

ing the gates when His powers failed Him; no gibes and curses, no blows from pike and javelin, were spared to spur up such unfortunates as fell under their burden; but they soon saw that violence would be useless here—that their victim was incapable of carrying His Cross any farther.

SIMON OF CYRENE

Just at this juncture a man happened to be entering the town; he was a Cyrenean Jew returning from the country. From his dress and the provisions he had with him in readiness for the Pasch, the soldiers saw at a glance that he was a stranger employed at servile labor; to their minds this was ample excuse for obliging him to perform one of those forced services which the caprice of the legionaries was continually imposing upon provincial inhabitants. They therefore compelled him to carry the Cross after Jesus.

This compulsory service rendered to the Saviour has sufficed to preserve the-name of Simon the Cyrenean from oblivion. Was he a disciple of Christ? The Gospel does not say so, but Saint Mark recalls that Simon was father of Alexander and Rufus, names known among the early Christians as belonging to brethren in the faith.

As for Jesus, the soldiers must help Him to rise, and even keep Him up along the way as far as Calvary. At sight of the Man of Sorrows dragged to execution a shudder of pity swept through the throng, and a group of women who were close to Jesus lifted up their voices in cries of lamentations, wailing and beating their breasts. The Law forbade them to render any such tokens of sympathy and regret to those about to die, but the compassion to which they gave utterance upon beholding Christ was one of those movements which no ordinances can crush out altogether.

Moved by the great grief of these women Jesus turned toward them, saying, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, days are coming in which men will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and breasts that never nursed.' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall upon us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' For if in the case of green wood they do these things, what is to happen in the case of the dry?"

This response could not fail to surprise the women of Jerusalem—its tone, so grave, so solemn, and well-nigh severe, savoring not so much of gratitude for their tears, but sounding rather like an exhortation to penitence. Thus indeed Jesus displays greater anxiety for them than for Himself.

Forty years later these same maidens who now heard the words of Jesus were to be enveloped in the desolation of Jerusalem. These young mothers were to behold the sword and the torch consume the flower of the harvest of Israel; the underground causeways of the city incapable of shielding their children against the insatiable rage of their conquerors; the corpses of the citizens heaped therein by thousands; while in the delirium of famine they themselves would actually devour the offspring of their wombs. Need we marvel, then, that, at beholding the swift approach of such mighty woes, the Saviour trembled for these women, beseeching them to do penance?

And that He might make them more fully realize their need thereof, He borrows from the holy books that example of the evergreen tree, symbol of virtue in its integrity, whereof He, the Just One, is the perfect Model. Bidding them mark His torn and wounded body, and the thorns which pierced His brow—

"For if in the case of the green wood they do these things," He exclaimed, "what is to happen in the case of the dry?"

Bereft of His strength and powerless, Jesus at last reached the place of execution. The soldiers offered Him wine mingled with myrrh and poppy which the Jews were accustomed to give to condemned criminals, thereby producing a sort of lethargy and so lightening their sufferings. Charitable ladies of noble rank were accustomed to prepare this themselves and carry it to the prisoners. So, complying with the Jewish usage, the soldiers presented this beverage to the Saviour.

Jesus, having tasted of it, would not drink, but steeled Himself to accept all the bitterness and hardships of His execution; His gaze was riveted upon the necessary preliminaries—the Cross driven into the ground, hammers and the nails got ready, ladders raised aloft, cords knotted and prepared. And so, at the nearness of His hour of torment, although a shudder may have shaken His limbs, His soul stood steadfast waiting the approach of death.

THE CRUCIFIXION

Finally the executioners seized Him and stripped Him of His garments; the crucified captive must hang naked upon the gibbet. The cords, pulled up by the soldiers, dragged His body up to the spike protruding from the midde of the Cross. This piece of wood which passed under the legs of the condemned was strong enough to hold him and prevent the weight of the body from tearing the hands from the iron nails. Doubtless it was necessary to bind the limbs to the cross-pieces in order to keep the feet and hands from slipping off the nails with which they were pierced. First the hands were fastened, the iron being driven through the palm or wrist. Sometimes the feet were only bound with cord, but usually the executioner nailed them to the post, and this was what was done with Jesus; for after the Resurrection we see Him showing His disciples His feet pierced even as His hands, while tradition with one accord has applied to Him the psalmist's prophecy—

"They have pierced My feet and My hands."

In that same hour was accomplished the words of Isaias:

"He was numbered with transgressors."

Two crosses had now been set up, one on the right, the other on the left of Jesus, bearing two thieves condemned to death with Him. It only remained for the soldiers to affix above the head of Christ the inscription dictated by Pilate, written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin:

"Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

At this derisive title, and at sight of the two convicts ranged about Christ, as though forming His rightful court and they His true people, the Jews at once comprehended the satire thus levveled against them. Too weak, indeed, to uphold his authority against the excited multitude, Pilate had regained at last a glimmer of courage and immediately cast about for some occasion to avenge himself; so when he was handed the tablet designed to publish the crime of which Jesus was found guilty, he wrote thereon this insult to the Jews, and, that it might be better understood, he inscribed not only Latin, the official language, but Greek as well, since that was more familiar to the Jews of the Dispersion, and also the Aramean dialect, because it was generally under-

stood by the populace. And furthermore, as if he feared that the outrage might still not be obvious enough to all beholders, he commanded that, on either side of Jesus two robbers should be conducted and crucified with Him—thereby showing the Jews plainly in what contempt he held both their nation and their dreams of royalty.

During the anxiety and rapidity of the march this superscription had not been noticed; but hardly was it affixed to the Cross before the affront was well understood. Soon the whole city was aware of it; for Golgotha lay at the gates of Jerusalem and crowds passed all day before the gibbet. Straightway the high priests, laying aside their preparations for the Pasch, acted again as the people's spokesmen and went in search of the Governor.

They demanded that he should change the inscription and write, not: "The King of the Jews!" but "He said, I am the King of the Jews!"

"What I have written, I have written," responded Pilate.

DEATH OF JESUS

The soldiers had finished their work of fastening Jesus to the Cross; the last spike had been driven through His limbs. Thereupon the Saviour's first thought was to plead for them.

"Father, forgive them," He said, "for they know not what they do."

Touching words, yet scarcely heard by those brutal soldiers; for other cares already absorbed their attention. Since the Roman law allowed them such spoils as they could take from the prisoner's person, they now proceeded to divide among themselves the tunic and mantle of Jesus. The latter garment, being made of many pieces, was quickly separated into four equal shares; but the tunic was without seam, "woven in one piece from the top"; to divide it would have been to destroy its value.

"Let us not tear it," said the soldiers, "but let us cast lots for it, to see whose it shall be."

And so they appealed to chance for a decision as to who was to wear Christ's robe.

"This," says Saint John, "was in fulfillment of those prophetic words: 'They divided My garments among them, and for My vesture they cast lots."

Now when all was settled, the soldiers seated themselves at the foot of the Cross and kept guard, lest anyone should try to remove the crucified before they expired.

JESUS IS MOCKED

Generally, when upon the scaffold, criminals are given some last tokens of pity and respect. Jesus had not even this consolation. His enemies, after being so long balked of their prey while He was protected by the pretorium, now crowded about the Cross and revenged themselves by loading Him with vile jeers and hideous abuse. Foremost in the ranks of the rabble were those lying witnesses produced by the Sanhedrin the night before. They passed and repassed continually before the gibbet, wagging their heads in token of contempt, blaspheming and reminding Christ of the calumnies to which He had fallen a victim:

"Aha, Thou who destroyest the Temple, and in three days buildest it up again, come down from the cross, and save Thyself!"

Others hurled at Jesus the selfsame challenge which He had once heard in the days of His first temptation:

"If Thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross!"

However, the multitude still stood motionless, regarding the Saviour with more curiosity than hatred. This silence irritated the Sanhedrin party, for even such neutrality might be enough to allow the voice of justice to become audible in the depth of the people's heart. Accordingly we soon see these princes of Israel taking part in the clamor, along with their slaves and menials. There were the same taunting invectives, the same senseless fury, with nothing but their more spiteful arrogance to distinguish them from the poorer mob. They disdained even to turn towards Christ and insult Him to His face; but priests, Scribes, and ancients scoffed and jeered among themselves at His speechless agony. Not daring to deny in the presence of the people the miracles of the Galilean, they tried to blacken their renown, by contrasting them with the powerlessness to which He was now publicly reduced.

"He saved others," they sneered. "Himself He cannot save!"

Then, lifting their eyes toward the inscription, whose humiliating irony was Pilate's most offensive thrust, they cried:

"If He is 'the King of Israel,' let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him!"

Still their rage waxed fiercer; now it even ventured to attack the love which Jesus bore His Father and, in its blasphemy, it dared to defy the Almighty.

"He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He wants Him, for He said 'I am the Son of God.' "

Nothing could check this fresh outburst of abuse; in a short time the contagion spread through the masses until the soldiers themselves had caught the spirit. They, standing before Him, held up with mock sympathy the wine cup from which they had been drinking among themselves and shouted at Jesus, with the crowd:

"If You are the king of the Jews, now save Yourself!"

And yet the insulting tumult had not reached its culminating point. Jesus had been given companions in His sufferings, and He now beheld even these turn against Him, and from those crosses set up at His either hand, He heard this blasphemy re-echoed:

"If Thou art the Christ, save Thyself and us!"

But only one of the robbers had spoken; the other gazed upon the Saviour, filled with admiration at His patient fortitude and feeling his own heart drawn toward Him. So when he heard his comrade scoff, he rebuked him, saying:

"Dost not even thou fear God, seeing that thou art under the same sentence? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what our deeds deserved; but this man has done nothing wrong."

Then, his faith springing up as if in quick response to his own testimony:

"Lord," he exclaimed, "remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom."

THE GOOD THIEF

Never did grace so suddenly transform a criminal into a martyr, but surely never was confession of faith more meritorious for it was in the very hour when, deserted and betrayed by all, Jesus hung in death upon the tree that the good thief paid homage to His divine Kingliness.

At this moment the Saviour could not make the slightest move-

ment without intensifying His own anguish, yet as He heard this prayer, He bent His head toward His companion and said:

"Amen I say to thee, this day, thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

The humble penitent had only begged a place in His memory, and lo, this rich boon is granted him—even the blessedness of God's Presence. He had been contented with a ray of hope but from this same day a never ending happiness had become his portion. Saint Matthew and Saint Mark seem not to have been aware of this episode, as recorded in the third Gospel, for they only speak in vague terms of blasphemies having been uttered by the two brigands. We know how much Saint Luke was indebted to Mary; doubtless it was from her lips he learned these words which passed from one to the other of those high crosses, only overheard by the Mother who stood so steadfastly beneath the gibbet of her expiring Son.

Meanwhile the storm of passion which His foes had raised around the silent Christ had grown less violent; though now and then the uproar would swell, as it was caught up again by the populace, renewed shouts bursting forth here and there. But by this time a mass of dank and murky vapors which had been rising over the earth began to mount upward towards the cross, enveloping it as in a funeral pall. Terror speedily thinned the ranks of the throng; soon the space encircling the three crosses was left bare, and a little group drew nearer; it numbered only three women, with one of the disciples. There was the Blessed Virgin with her sister Mary, Cleophas' wife; close beside them was Magdalene, the sinner, while John followed in their footsteps. His name indeed is not inscribed here in the inspired history, but everything betrays his presence—not only the reticence he shows in mentioning his own part therein, but even this very position beside his Lord, whither the Beloved Disciple could not have failed to find his way.

Face to face with the Cross, they halted, transfixed, their gaze riveted upon Him whom they loved. And Jesus, after having first remembered His torturers only to forgive them their share in His sufferings, after remembering the companion of His anguish that He might open to him the heavenly gates—Jesus at length allowed His eyes to fall upon His own friends who came

to ask one last farewell; and looking, He beheld His Mother pierced with the sword of which the aged Simeon had years ago forewarned her.

The tenderest of all the Church's hymns, our *Stabat Mater*, does but feebly express the poignant grief within her Mother's heart at such a woeful spectacle. Better than anyone else Jesus realized what it meant for her; it was death He beheld drawing down upon Himself, but for His Mother He could see only present grief and future loneliness. Of all His apostles, John alone remained by Him, and, growing more faithful in proportion as the danger increased, he now stood close at her side, protecting Mary.

Careful not to utter her name, fearing lest He might expose her to insults by revealing who she was, Jesus said, gently—

"Woman, behold thy son!"

And then to John—

"Behold thy Mother!"

From that moment the disciple received Mary into his dwelling and regarded her as his Mother.

This last link binding Him to earth now broken, Jesus cast Himself upon God's bosom, that so His Passion might be consummated. It was noonday when the first shades crept round about Golgotha; thereafter they had still continued to float upwards shrouding Jerusalem, Judea, and the entire world in a black winding sheet. No natural cause could be sufficient to account for this phenomenon, for the moon, just now at the full, rendered an eclipse of the sun impossible. But the ground is wont to be swathed in murky vapors at the approach of earthquakes, which tear asunder the bowels of the earth, and now the world was wrapped in the trappings of woe, to bemoan the sufferings of its God. The Cross, whereon Christ hung in death, was hidden in a thick, black cloud; all human noises were hushed and died away, and the cry which antiquity has put into the mouth of Dionysius the Areopagite expresses that mighty fear which shook the souls of men:

"Either the Divinity suffers, or He is moved to pity at some great woe!"

In this death of the Cross, the torture grew each instant more unendurable; the lacerated feet and hands, the shattered body

wrenched so violently apart, the involuntary contraction of the muscles, the thirst, the delirium of fever—everything intensified each separate pang to such a point that the crucified criminal cried upon death as a deliverer.

THE AGONY OF THE CROSS

Thus, during three hours Jesus battled without uttering a single complaint. What took place in the midst of those impenetrable shades? The Evangelists, who have described the Agony in the garden, are silent concerning this of the Cross. Yet in the end a great cry pierced the gloom, revealing the mystery of these hours of anguish. Saint Mark has preserved these words just as they came from the lips of Jesus, in the familiar Aramean tongue which as a child He had learned at Mary's knee:

"Eli! Eli! Lamma sabachthani?"

"My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

This lament is the opening of the psalm wherein the Messiah's Passion is all predicted—His strength ebbing away in streams of blood, His burning wounds and that parching thirst of whose fierceness the dying man alone has any knowledge. But what were those bodily torments compared with the suffering which racked His soul? Indeed it was a mental agony which found an utterance in that cry of distress—

"My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Yet never did any dying soul feel as Jesus felt when now forsaken by God, because none but He alone has ever lived with God and in God. Hanging there, reviled by earth and rejected by Heaven, He lingered in lonely conflict with another agony like that which passed over Him in Gethsemani; yet this time He drained the cup to the very dregs. To gather any faint idea of the wretchedness which seized Him in His present abandonment, we must remember that despite His own innocence, Jesus when upon the Cross, bore the actual load of our crimes—that He actually had taken upon Himself the wickedness of the world. And now that God had transferred to Him all sins committed from the beginning unto the end of time, these all stood forth distinctly before His dying eyes together with their very least circumstances. Every treacherous and revengeful deed, the lewd

and adulterous works of shame, blasphemies, slanders, and lying —all together surged their foul floods into His Soul, and every other sense was swallowed up under these torrents of iniquity. And it was in this same hour wherein Christ was, as it were, overwhelmed in that first wild onslaught, that God saw fit to withdraw His Presence from Him, as if to crush Him beneath the weight of His vengeance. Jesus, having become sin for our sake, being made a curse and an execration (according to Saint Paul's expression), Jesus suffered at the hand of God such unutterable horror as no human tongue can declare. In that hour heaven drew away from Him into the darkness; hell alone remained before the Saviour's sight—wherein was disclosed that never-ending despair, eternal, infinite, even as is the God whose penalty it is.

One lowermost depth of sorrow had still to be reached: it was the knowledge of how scanty was the number of souls who would profit by His Passion. The multitude of the damned were all marshaled before His eyes; however unworthy, they were the members of His mystical Body, so closely united to Him that they could not be separated from Him without violence. And as He saw this dearly loved portion of Himself about to be wrested from Him, Jesus felt that He indeed, like them, was left destitute and reprobate forever.

"He mourned," says Arnaud de Chartres, "that the fruit of His struggles should be torn from Him; He cried aloud that His sweat, His toils, and His death, were thus bereft of their reward; since those for whom He had suffered so much were abandoned to everlasting perdition." This, then, was what wrung from Him that mournful cry:

"My God! My God; dost Thou abandon Me?"

But how can we make this moment of apparent despair to which Jesus yielded harmonize with the blessedness essential to His divine personality? Herein again there is involved an unfathomable mystery, the Mystery of the Incarnation. To comprehend how the Son of God could speak of Himself as forsaken by His Father, we should first need to explain how the Infinite Being could take upon Himself a finite nature; for between these two humiliations there is only a difference of degree—the abandonment of Jesus upon the Cross only continued what was first

accomplished in the Incarnation, and in these two Mysteries the Godhead remains equally inviolable. With Christ in His anguish it was even as with those mountain chains whose white crests pierce the clouds. Often the tempests do havoc with their rugged sides, strewing them with the wreckage of the storm; yet naught can trouble the snowy peaks, which, far, far above the whirlwind's reach, stand ever serene and crowned with light.

In that same hour, the darkness disappearing, and with it the mists of fear, at once the Jews found courage to re-echo those words of Jesus—feigning to mistake the divine Name of *Eli* for that of the prophet.

"He is calling upon Elias," they said.

Yet even by this jibe they confessed to the throes of terror they had just felt; for all Israel knew that the awful seer was to reappear upon a day of terror and blazing fire, beneath cloud-hung skies and a moon like blood, when all the heavenly powers would tremble in their spheres.

All at once another cry was heard.

"I thirst," Jesus said, giving tongue to the most excruciating pangs of crucifixion.

One of the bystanders hurriedly dipped a sponge into the soldier's bitter drink and offered it to the Saviour; and as his arm could not reach as high as the head of the Sufferer, he took a reed, set the sponge upon the end of its stem, and put it to the lips of Christ. His deed of mercy drew forth a shriek of hatred from the mob, "Wait, let us see if Elias is coming to save Him!"

The Saviour pressed his lips to the sponge soaked with vinegar; then, with quickened powers, He fixed His gaze upon the world of men below Him. In a trice His glance swept the whole duration of time and all His work. He beheld the righteous who had gone before Him, and all those who in after days were to believe in Him who would find their way to His Cross and there obtain their salvation.

LAST WORDS ON THE CROSS

"It is finished!" He said; "everything is consummated— My Passion, My Life, and the Salvation of mankind."

Having spoken this last farewell to earth, He gave Himself into His heavenly Father's keeping.

"Father," He cried with a loud voice, "into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

It was the voice of a Son throwing Himself into the arms of His Father, yet it was likewise the utterance of "Him from whom no one taketh His Soul, but who layeth it down whensoever it pleaseth Him."

Most of the disciples who were gazing upon this scene from afar, only heard "the great cry" mentioned by Saint Matthew and Saint Mark. So, then, it must have been from some witness standing closer to the Cross, perchance from Mary's own lips, that Saint Luke learned Jesus' last words. John, too, was there, gazing upon the Saviour; and he saw that He had bowed down His Head upon His breast and that He was dead.

"And behold, the curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent, and the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep arose."

The Roman centurion was the first to bow down before the evidence of these wonders. With his soldiers he had remained on Calvary, standing "facing Jesus"; but when he felt the earth trembling beneath his feet, and saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, "Truly this was a just man," he cried, "truly He was the Son of God."

And thereupon his faith affected the frightened legionaries, and the cry arose:

"Truly, this was the Son of God!"

That confession from the lips of heathen men in the presence of the expiring Christ sealed the condemnation of the Jews. And they, seeing what had come to pass, withdrew, striking their breasts. Soon upon Golgotha two little groups of men and women were left clustered together, though separated according to sexes as is the Eastern custom. On one side were the disciples of Jesus, all those who had known Him so well, finally united together in the common love they bore their Saviour; somewhat farther away stood the women who had followed Him from Galilee, with many others who had accompanied Him from Jerusalem. In silence all were watching Him whom they had loved so dearly. Among them we once more meet the Magdalene and Mary, mother of James, whom we had left at the foot of the Cross, and

with them Salome, the mother of Zedebee's sons. The gaze of everyone there was fixed upon the body of the Master, for they clung to the hope, seeing the marvels at which even the Jews were confounded, that all was not ended even yet.

Jesus had succumbed about the ninth hour, but the two companions of His sufferings, if nothing shortened their torments, had still several hours of agony before them. Now the law prescribed that no condemned person should be left upon the gibbet longer than one day, and for the day before the Passover this commandment was more imperative than ever, since it was not fitting that that Holy Day should be desecrated by the spectacle of such crucified bodies. The Jews therefore went in search of Pilate, and requested him to have the legs of the condemned men broken, so that they might be removed the sooner.

The Governor dispatched another band of soldiers to Calvary. Taking heavy clubs they broke the legs and thighs of the two thieves; but coming to Jesus, they found only a dead body. To break His limbs would be an unnecessary labor; so one of the soldiers in order to make certain that Jesus was altogether lifeless, buried his lance in His right side.

Saint John who was at the foot of the Cross saw a stream of water and blood flow forth from His breast.

"He that saw it," he says, speaking of himself, "gave testimony thereto, and his testimony is true, and he knows that he says true, that you also may believe, for these things were done that the Scripture might be fulfilled: 'You shall not break a bone of Him'; and furthermore, the Scripture saith also: 'They shall look upon Him whom they pierced.'"

To Saint John's eyes, this last act of the Passion was at the same time the fulfillment of a prophecy and a symbol of future grace. The thrust of the spear which prevented a bone of Jesus from being broken made Him truly the real Paschal Lamb, the veritable food of the New Israel; while the water and the blood now spilled from His wound foreshadowed on the one hand His Baptism, with the life-giving ablutions of grace, and on the other, His Blood divine in the blessed Eucharist.

As evening crept on, a Jew who had not before appeared upon Calvary, suddenly presented himself among the soldiers. His name was Joseph of Arimathea, and he was a member of the

tribunal which had condemned Jesus. Rich, powerful, and of noble mien, he had hitherto lacked courage to declare himself in favor of the Lord for fear of the Sanhedrin, and consideration of his own rank had held him back. Nevertheless he was a good and just man, who was awaiting the Kingdom of God, and had made himself one of the Lord's disciples. Moreover, he had allowed his feelings to be known abroad by firmly refusing any assent to his colleagues' counsels and actions. The Master's death had finally conquered him; at the time when all were shuddering with fear, a sudden courage sprang up in him.

He came to Calvary, and there found the soldiers preparing to take down the corpses, so as to bury them together with the instruments of execution; but he obtained assurance from the centurion who had just now confessed his belief in the Christ's divinity that he would allow him such delay as he deemed necessary. Joseph then boldly presented himself before Pilate and asked for the body.

The Governor's first thought on learning of the death of Jesus was one of astonishment; so sudden an end to this torture was a thing unheard of. Having had the centurion brought before him, he inquired of him whether Jesus was already dead. Upon hearing his account he no longer hesitated to put faith in Joseph's word, and willingly granted him the Saviour's body, for it was Roman custom never to refuse this consolation to the friends of the condemned. The stars whose first beams would announce the beginning of the Sabbath had not as yet shone out through the twilight, so Joseph had still sufficient time to purchase the linen shroud, with the winding sheet, in preparation for the burial. Accordingly with these he returned to Calvary, where aided by the disciples he lifted Jesus down from the Cross.

BURIAL OF JESUS

The time of humiliation was now passed. His body, nailed to a criminal's gibbet, was to be entombed with becoming decency. Another prince of Israel now helped to prepare His resting place. It was Nicodemus, the famous Scribe who once went by night to converse with Jesus. Trembling before his fellow councilors of

the Sanhedrin, he had until now dissembled his real faith; but the sight of those wonders and Joseph's example had triumphed over his weakness, and he followed fast upon his footsteps to Calvary, eager to lavish his wealth upon the Master whose fate he was now bewailing. Perfumes and spices to the value of a hundred pounds, were brought there by his orders; it was a compound of myrrh and aloes ground and mixed together. With this the bleeding wounds were covered, while they passed the long linen bands about the body, the arms, and the legs; according to Jewish custom, the winding sheet enveloped His head—and thus swathed in costly ointments, Jesus was borne to the tomb. They must hasten for the Sabbath was almost upon them; they had only these swiftly fleeting moments of eventide wherein to complete the burial of the Lord.

They found the sepulcher already prepared; for near the place of the Cross, Joseph of Arimathea owned a garden where there was a tomb hollowed out of the rock which had never been used for anyone. This he now consecrated to the Master's service, since the nearness of the Sabbath made it impossible to carry Him farther. Such burial caves, chiseled out of the cliffside, were made in the form of narrow halls, wherein niches or rows of benches were arranged to receive the bodies. You entered these tombs on a level with the ground or by a gentle decline, and the entrance was closed with a stone, difficult to stir from its solid base. Jesus was laid upon one of these funeral couches. With the help of their companions, these pious Sanhedrin councilors hurriedly pushed the heavy door across the entrance; then all returned homeward to the city, over which the calm of a Sabbath night had fallen, subduing all mankind to silence—the holy quiet of the night of the Great Sabbath.

Meanwhile the saintly women had followed Joseph all the way; they had noticed with what haste the two noble councilors had fulfilled their task and noted what was lacking to make the burial worthy of Christ. So, having observed carefully where they had laid Jesus, the weeping women returned to prepare their aromatic ointments; "and on the Sabbath day rested, according to the commandments."

Nevertheless, after their departure the garden was not left entirely deserted; two women still lingered there, sitting opposite

the sepulcher. They were Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the Blessed Virgin's sister.

In vain had the enemies of Jesus hoped that His death would bring them respite from all future anxiety. Hardly was He safely housed in the grave before they recalled His predictions. Had He not proclaimed that upon the third day He would rise again; that He meant to vouchsafe them but one sign—the sign of the prophet Jonas, buried three days beneath the waves only to come forth with a fuller life; that a mystic Temple should be destroyed only to be built up again in three days?

Recollections like these robbed them of their night's rest; their anxiety and fearfulness were so overpowering that we see them in the early dawn already assembled. And this although it was the day after the Parasceve, as Saint Matthew remarks—the morning of their great Paschal Sabbath. But everything must yield before these urgent fears, even the hallowed repose of this day; thus they risked a sacrilege in order to hold conference with a pagan, on the most solemn day of the year.

The chief priests and Pharisees immediately went in a body to Pilate's residence.

"My Lord," they began, "we have just remembered that this impostor, while He still lived, said: 'After three days I will rise again.' Give orders that the sepulcher be guarded until the third day, for fear that His disciples should come, and steal Him away, and tell the people: 'He is risen from the dead.' For then the last error would be worse than the first."

"Take some of the guards," answered Pilate; "go, guard it as well as you know how."

They started off at once, and, to make more sure that no one should secretly open the sepulcher, they sealed up the huge stone and stationed before it their guard of Roman soldiers.

THE RESURRECTION

While the Sanhedrin party were busy taking precautions against Jesus, the great middle class of Jews had deserted Calvary to devote themselves to preparations for the Paschal ceremonies.

The last to leave His grave, the women who had followed Him from Galilee were the first to return to the tomb, eagerly desirous

to embalm the Saviour's body with greater care than Nicodemus had been able to do. Most of them had had time to prepare myrrh and sweet spices after the Crucifixion; but having returned from Calvary later, Mary Magdalene, with Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, were unable to purchase their perfumes till the evening of the next day, after the hallowed time of rest. By midnight of that next day everything was in readiness, whereupon they arose and set forth to fulfill their last pious duty to the dead.

It was still dim and misty when, before dawn of the first day of the new week, they passed the city walls.

"Who will roll the stone back from the entrance of the tomb?" they kept murmuring to each other as they hastened along.

Listening to these words, we may presume that Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome were at this juncture still alone; for with their united strength the holy women together would have foreseen no difficulty in pushing away the heavy door of the tomb. Doubtless their companions were following them, though they were still some distance behind them.

The three women of Galilee were nearing the garden, when suddenly the darkened earth quivered beneath their feet. An angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and drawing nigh rolled back the stone which blocked the mouth of the sepulcher. It was long since empty, for Jesus had risen before the dawn, in a great stillness and all unseen. And the angel sat upon the stone; his countenance glowing brighter than lightning, his garments of a whiteness like the dazzling snow; whereupon the guards were struck with such fear that they became like dead men, and as soon as they were able one and all fled back to town.

Too far away from the tomb to witness what had just happened, the holy women were inclined to hesitate for an instant, but reassured by the ensuing quiet they pushed their way within the shadowy garden. Looking about they saw that the stone had been rolled back, and it was very large.

At this sight the Magdalene made all haste to Jerusalem.

She calls with hurried words upon His friends; these friends were John the Beloved and Peter who, finding his way before this to the latter's abode, had fallen down at Mary's feet bewailing his own fault. Thereupon together they mourned the death of Jesus.

"They have taken the Lord from the tomb," cried the Magdalene, "and we do not know where they have laid Him."

At once the disciples sped away to the tomb, but found no trace either of Mary, the mother of James, or of Salome; they had just hurried away, "with fear and great joy."

These two women, lingering there alone after Magdalene's swift departure, had finally decided to enter within the tomb. An angel was seated at the right side of the dark cave; he bore the outward aspect of a young man clothed in a white robe.

They trembled much at seeing him, and fear enchained their tongues but he reassured them:

"Do not be terrified. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee; there you shall see Him, as He told you."

The two women went forth from the sepulcher, their hearts divided between happiness and terror; but soon their fear overpowered them and they fled without daring to repeat what they had just now seen and heard.

Meanwhile the two apostles were hastening on their way toward the garden. Both of them were running, but John was first to reach the spot. He stooped down to scan the inner gloom, but his eyes could only discern the linen cloths lying on the ground. Peter rejoining him, entered unhesitatingly and noted, not only the linen cloths, but also the napkin which had been wrapped about the Lord's head, now folded and laid apart in a place by itself. Reassured, John followed his companion and shared his glad surprise. Within the empty sepulcher there were no traces of violence; the burial vestments had been neither snatched away nor hastily left behind, but folded with decent care. At this token the eyes of the apostles were opened; at last they believed what a profounder knowledge of the Scriptures would have revealed to them long before—"that He must rise from the dead!" And they returned straightway to their homes, overflowing with gladness, marveling among themselves over what had come to pass.

The holy women and the two apostles had believed upon the angel's testimony, but to Mary of Magdala was reserved the privilege of first beholding the risen Jesus. Coming back to the tomb,

she stayed without, while, ever and again through her tears she would peer through the dark mouth of the cave. Suddenly she saw two angels, all in white array, seated there where the body of Jesus had been laid, one at the head and the other at the feet.

"Woman," they said to her, "why art thou weeping?"

"Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I do not know where they have laid Him."

And, as she was uttering these words, she turned, perceiving the presence there of a man and hearing Him say:

"Woman, why art thou weeping? whom dost thou seek?"

"It is the gardener," she thought; "perhaps he may have taken the body, to protect it from any insult."

"Sir," she made answer, "if thou hast removed Him, tell me where thou hast laid Him and I will take Him away."

Jesus spoke but one word in answer.

"Mary!"

And the Magdalene recognized the voice which had so many times comforted her soul. She threw herself at the feet of Jesus, crying:

"Master!"

But Jesus, while reminding her that she was to behold Him again more than once before the Ascension, now bade her return immediately to the apostles.

"Do not touch Me," He said, "for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them:

"I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and to your God."

Sublime message, whereby the Saviour tells all those whom He came on earth to redeem that henceforth they have no other Father but His, and that one day they shall follow after Him to His home in the skies.

Mary Magdalene rose up and hastened to carry His words to the disciples.

"I have seen the Lord, and these things He said to me!"

As yet neither Peter nor John had returned to their comrades; Magdalene therefore found them overwhelmed with mourning and tears. In vain did she proclaim that Jesus lived and had appeared to her; her thrilling tones, her glowing certainty and all the great rapture with which the sight of her God had stirred her

soul, were powerless to touch them; they would not believe her.

Even while the messenger chosen by Christ was meeting with such a doleful greeting in Jerusalem, there were other women of Galilee approaching the tomb. They came, after the example of the two Marys and Salome, to anoint the body of the Lord, and numbered among them besides certain of the disciples, Joanna, wife of Chuza, the Intendant of Herod Antipas.

At sight of the open sepulcher, they quickened their steps but, when they had pressed forward within the narrow tomb, they looked about in vain for the body of Jesus. And as they stood spellbound with consternation, all at once, two angels stood by them, in shining garments. Seized with great fright their eyes fell before the glory of the heavenly visitants.

"Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise."

Recalling those words of the Master at last, they sped back to bear these tidings to the eleven and to all the disciples; but even while they were hastening along the garden path Jesus Himself appeared to them.

"Hail!" He said.

They drew near, all trembling, and kissed His feet and worshiped Him.

"Do not be afraid," pursued the Lord, "go take word to My brethren that they are to set out for Galilee; there they shall see Me."

The holy women obeyed and declared before the apostles that they had seen and touched the risen Body of Jesus; but they credited their words no more than those of Mary Magdalene. All that they said seemed but wild fancy and they obstinately refused to believe.

Hatred, however, had given the enemies of Jesus a clearer insight than theirs. Warned by some of the guards as to what had occurred, the high priests called together the ancients of Israel, and took counsel as to what it behooved them to do, in order to avert any popular belief in this new miracle. But there was no time left to concoct any clever explanation; they must content

themselves with collecting a considerable sum of money and giving it to the soldiers, telling them:

"Say 'His disciples came by night and stole Him while we were sleeping.' And if the procurator hears of this we will persuade him and keep you out of trouble."

The soldiers, taking the money, did as they had been bid, and from mouth to mouth, adds Saint Matthew, this story has been spread among the Jews even to the present day.

DISCIPLES AT EMMAUS

Meanwhile the day was slipping away and, outside of Peter and John, not one of the disciples yet believed in the Resurrection of their Master. Toward evening two of their number started out for a walk outside the city walls, taking the road leading to Emmaus, a village situated some sixty stadia from town in a westerly direction. The Crucifixion, the wondrous doings at the sepulcher, these rumors noised about by the women, formed the whole theme of their earnest talk. And while their minds were absorbed in these thoughts Jesus drawing near walked beside them, but "their eyes were held that they should not recognize Him." They became silent, thinking He was a stranger.

And He said to them, "What words are these that you are exchanging as you walk and are sad?"

But one of them, named Cleophas, answered and said to Him, "Art Thou the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?"

"Concerning Jesus of Nazareth," they responded; and immediately both, amazed as they were, began to vie with each other in recalling what manner of man was this Jesus—a prophet mighty in work and word before God and all the people.

"Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people; and how our chief priests and rulers delivered Him up to be sentenced to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who should redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, today is the third day since these things came to pass. And moreover, certain women of our company, who were at the tomb before it was

light, astounded us, and not finding His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that He is alive. So some of our company went to the tomb, and found it even as the women had said, but Him they did not see."

All this was indeed nothing short of an avowal that they no longer believed in Jesus, and now only recognized in Him a prophet who, after blazing forth for an instant in their midst, had disappeared into the vast unknown like so many others. Putting no further trust in a dead leader they were for withdrawing, saddened with the thought of such sweet hopes deceived.

But He said to them, "O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things before entering into His glory?"

And beginning from Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them that which was spoken of Him. Throughout this masterwork of inspiration, wherein are given the great outlines of that prophetic figure of the Messiah, it was an easy matter for Jesus to display how, line by line, every feature of His Passion, His Death, and His Resurrection, had been foreshadowed. And yet by themselves what can the Holy Books effect, even when interpreted by lips divine? They can only brighten our eyes with the first rays of faith; to enlighten and convince the soul, God's grace must penetrate it altogether.

The three travelers had reached the hamlet of Emmaus. Jesus made as though He would go farther, but the disciples, glowing with what they had heard of the truth, urged Him to abide with them.

"Stay with us," they begged, "for it is getting towards evening, and the day is now far spent."

Yielding to their entreaties, Jesus entered their stopping place with them, where the place of honor was set aside for Him, and then as He sat with them at table, He took bread, blessed, broke, and gave it to His companions. But, in the hands of the Priest eternal, the grain grown from the ground became the Bread of Heaven, while at once a mighty flood of grace filled to overflowing the hearts of these two disciples; their eyes were opened; at last they recognized Jesus, and though indeed He vanished from them at once, their faith in His Resurrection remained none the less firm.

They cried to one another, "Was not our heart burning within us while He was speaking on the road, and explaining to us the Scriptures?"

And they rose up that same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, to acquaint the apostles with what had happened.

CHRIST APPEARS TO THE APOSTLES

They found the apostles gathered together in the Supper Room, and as they entered were greeted with these words:

"The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon."

Thereupon they in their turn related what had occurred by the wayside, and how they had known Him in the breaking of bread. But their tale did not obtain the same credence as had that of Peter; this wayfarer, walking along beside them, and breaking bread at table with them, this was no longer Christ in His triumph whom Simon and the holy women had adored. Far from confirming their newborn faith, this new testimony only contributed to increase the doubts still springing up in their unsettled minds; and so among those gathered around the table where the apostles sat at supper, unbelief continued to be predominant, when all at once Jesus stood in their midst.

"Peace be to you," He said.

Their first feeling was one of great fear. It was indeed the Lord they beheld with their own eyes. His familiar features, the tone of His voice, even His customary greeting, everything precluded the possibility of mistake.

But how could He have entered with no noise, though the doors were shut for fear of the Jews? Might it not be a spirit? And their terror increased.

Jesus reassured them.

"It is I," He said; "do not be afraid. Why are you disturbed and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and feet that it is I Myself. Feel Me and see; for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

And showing them His pierced hands and His feet, uncovering His side, He bade them contemplate and handle His flesh and His wounds.

Overwhelmed with wondering awe, the apostles still stood amazed. One last sign was needed to convince them.

"Have you anything here to eat?" asked Jesus.

A piece of roasted fish and some honeycomb were lying upon the table. Of these He ate—not that He was hungry, but to show that His risen body had kept its nature unchanged. Thereupon taking the fragments, He gave them to the apostles.

Peace being restored within their troubled minds, Jesus reproached His own for the hardness of their hearts because they would not believe those who had beheld Him risen from the tomb. Yet at once He was moved to compassion for these earthly-minded mortals, and only strove to strengthen their courage by comforting promises.

"Peace be to you," He said again; "as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

Then, breathing upon them, as a sign that He communicated unto them His power, "Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

Never was any higher authority conferred on man; for by these words Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Penance and gave to mortals the power of disposing of eternal treasures, the right of opening and shutting the gates of heaven.

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus appeared in the supper-room. Of all he was most prone to doubt; so when the joyous disciples greeted him with the words, "We have seen the Lord!" he only answered them:

"Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Nevertheless, distrustful as Thomas showed himself to be, he was none the less deeply attached both to the Master whom he now mourned, and to his brethren whose renewed faith and gladness he envied. Eight days later we find him again in their company, though as ever incredulous, and consumed at heart with sad regrets.

Then, just as formerly, the doors of that upper chamber being fast closed, Jesus came and stood in the midst of the disciples.

"Peace be to you!" He said. Then speaking to Thomas:

"Bring here thy finger, and see My hands; and bring thy hand and put it in My side, and be not unbelieving, but believing."

"My Lord and my God," cried out the apostle.

He no longer asked to touch the wounds of the Saviour, but prostrate at His feet worshiped Him and implored His forgiveness.

As a rebuke, Jesus contrasted this tardy submission with the great merit and happiness of those many souls who should believe in Him without having seen Him:

"Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

JESUS IN GALILEE

As now the last days of the Paschaltide were over, many of the disciples set forth from Jerusalem to return home to Galilee. It was there the Master had declared even before His death, that He would precede them; and now the angels and the resurrected Christ Himself had reiterated this promise. Accordingly they all hastened toward that country selected by Jesus not without special design. Indeed, by this withdrawing His Presence to that region He avoided any collision with the Sanhedrin people; any solemn manifestation of Himself there was much less dangerous than at Jerusalem, where hatred kept His foes ever watchful, and ready to instantly exterminate the newborn Church, had she ventured to publish abroad the triumph of her Head.

The apostles were the first to obey the Lord's behests, and shortly after this seven of their number chanced to be gathered on the lakeshore of Genesareth. There were together Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the two sons of Zebedee. The two other disciples are not named, but the presence of Peter makes us think at once of Andrew, his brother, and also of Philip, their fellow townsman and Andrew's usual companion.

The community funds, whereby their daily needs had been provided for, had disappeared with Judas. Peter's eyes fell upon his boat and nets.

"I am going fishing," he said.

All started up at once, replying:

"We also are going with thee."

It was near the twilight hour, the most propitious time for fishing; they started, pushed out with their boat, and for a long time trailed across those waters, whose most likely spots they knew so well; but their efforts were fruitless; all that night they took nothing.

At dawn they were still dragging along near the banks, when they saw a man standing upon the beach.

It was Jesus, but as yet they did not recognize Him.

"Young men," said He, "have you any fish?"

"No," they answered Him.

"Cast the net to the right side of the boat," He said, "and you will find them."

The grave authority of the words struck the apostles; the remembrance of a similar miracle, happening on these same waters and at this very hour, after another night of barren toil, at once darted across their minds. Instantly they cast the net, but were unable to draw it up again, so loaded down was it with fish. At this token the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter:

"It is the Lord."

And Simon Peter, when he heard it was the Lord, snatched his coat and girt it about him (for during the work he had thrown off his outer garments), and that he might rejoin the Master sooner, sprang into the lake. The other disciples followed in the boat, dragging the net with them toward shore which was now only about two hundred cubits distant.

As soon, then, as they had set foot on land, they saw a fire of lighted coals with a fish laid upon it, and bread.

"Bring here some of the fishes that you caught just now," Jesus said to them.

Simon Peter again got into the boat and hauled the net to land, now filled with one hundred and fifty-three large fishes; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.

"Come!" then said Jesus; "and breakfast."

The disciples sat down around the fire; then the Master stepping forward, took up the bread and the fishes, and passed them about among them.

Thus, the apostles found themselves once more in the same familiar spot and at the Master's side, just as formerly when in the olden days after long hours of teaching and preaching, He

would take them off by themselves and explain to them the hidden meaning of His public discourses. But there could be no longer on their part the same free fellowship, for now more than before He might well say that He was no longer of this world. This thought, the very sight of their resurrected Lord, overwhelmed the minds of all present, and the morning's meal was finished in silence.

Hardly had it come to an end, when Jesus turned toward Peter.

"Simon, son of John," He said to him, "dost thou love Me more than these do?"

"More than these?" what a reproach for the apostle, ever mindful of his presumptuous boast—

"Even though all should deny Thee, yet not I!"

Simon understood—in Jesus' eyes he seemed now only the son of John; "Peter" and the firmness once foretokened by that name had disappeared. Thinking thus, he bowed his head in grief.

"Yes, Lord," he said humbly, "Thou knowest that I love Thee."

"Feed My lambs," replied Jesus, confirming him in his functions as the shepherd of souls.

But for a power so lofty as this, there must needs be assured and solid foundations; wherefore Jesus again sounded the depths of Peter's heart.

"Simon, son of John," He repeated, "dost thou love Me?"

This time the Master spared His apostle any further comparison with his brethren, nor did He make allusion to his fall. And Peter humbly bowed his head once more:

"Yes, Lord," he reiterated, "Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Then, as though the greater the trial, so much more confidence could be placed in his humility, Jesus said once more: "Feed My lambs."

But a third protestation of his sincerity was requisite to complete the expiation of Peter's threefold denial.

"Simon, son of John," his Master demanded once again, "dost thou love Me?"

Jesus no longer asked the apostle whether he adored Him as his God, but whether he loved Him passionately with the real warmth of charity.

Grieved at heart to hear Jesus still questioning him thus for the third time, Peter was sadly troubled. Yet having learned at last

to distrust his own strength, he threw himself upon the tender mercy of Him who searches the reins and the hearts.

"Lord," he cried, "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

COMMISSION TO PETER

Thenceforth the humility of the son of John was proven beyond doubt, and his love accounted worthy of the highest favors of God. Wherefore one last sentence from the lips of Jesus made him once for all the infallible teacher, the judge from whom there is no appeal, the supreme Shepherd of the Church.

"Feed My sheep," Jesus saith; no longer the lambs only, but both the lambs and the sheep—the mothers as well as their little ones, and the pastors likewise, shepherds as regards their own people, but sheep also in the eyes of Peter. And these sheep, these pastors of the nations, must receive all things from the Prince of the Apostles; from him they must obtain jurisdiction, power, doctrine. In a word, all that Jesus had been to them hitherto Peter hereafter was to be, and, according to the expression consecrated by centuries of faith, was even now become the Vicar of Christ on earth. Yet truly this commission was dearly bought; for to walk in the likeness of Jesus it would be necessary for the apostle to make his life the reflection of his Master's sufferings, and carry the imitation of his Model even unto the death of the Cross.

"Amen, amen, I say to thee," added the Lord, "when thou wast young thou didst gird thyself and walk where thou wouldst. But when thou art old thou wilt stretch forth thy hands, and another will gird thee, and lead thee where thou wouldst not."

By these words, Saint John says, He meant to refer to the death whereby Peter was to glorify God; while at the same time they represented the entire life of the apostle—his fiery spirit in youth eager to plunge into action, yet only on condition that he be allowed to gird his loins at his own good time and pleasure; then his riper age, destined to endure the heaviest toils, wherein he would be required to renounce himself altogether, to suffer long and patiently, to bear all contradictions and opprobrium; finally his death on the Cross after the example of his Divine Master.

And all this conformity to the Saviour's life and death is comprised in the final utterance of the Christ:

"Follow Me!"

Having spoken thus He rose up and withdrew from the circle of the apostles. But Peter, accepting this bidding literally, walked close behind Him. Nor was he alone; the disciple whom Jesus loved, he who during the Last Supper had leaned upon His breast and said to Him: "Lord, who will betray Thee?"—this disciple followed also.

Peter, turning about, saw him.

"Lord," he asked, "and what of this man?"

"If I wish that he remain until I come," replied the Saviour, "what is it to thee? Do thou follow Me."

These last words ever remained an enigma to the early believers, and gave rise to the strangest fancies; the saying soon spread abroad that the beloved of Jesus would never die. John in his extreme old age, seeing how great credit had been placed in this fabrication, when writing the closing lines of his Gospel protested that the Lord had said: "He is not to die"; but "If I wish him to remain until I come what is it to thee?" But it was useless for the apostle to try to correct the popular misapprehension and even his death and the sight of his tomb could not undeceive them.

"John but sleepeth in his sepulcher," they said; "there he waiteth the coming of the Lord, and the clouds of dust whirling above his grave bear testimony that a living breath ever quickened his ashes."

All that was now left for the Saviour to do on earth was the fulfillment of His promise that He would manifest Himself to all His disciples assembled together. For the holding this first council of all Christendom, He had designated a certain mountain; and here were gathered not only the eleven apostles, but all that Jerusalem, Judea, and Galilee could furnish of faithful followers, because the Lord's message had been addressed to the whole body of disciples:

"Take word to My brethren that they are to set out for Galilee; there they shall see Me."

From Saint Paul's testimony we have it that more than five hundred met there together.

When Jesus appeared the apostles fell down before Him, but even in that congregation there was a movement of hesitation and some doubted. Neither the voice from Heaven which had summoned them, nor the sight of the apostles worshiping the Master, could chase away the trouble which filled their souls at witnessing this apparition. Still they remained standing, speechless, not daring to believe their eyes.

Jesus came forward to this anxious flock.

"All power in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world."

And it was not only unto men, but to every creature He sent them forth, thus to be the bearers of the good news; for all creation, fallen with Adam, groans and travails in pain until now. Jesus had forgotten nothing He had made; extending the redemption bought for them by the Cross unto every created thing. He held forth hope and peace for all in His overflowing hands. Saint Mark's account shows us how that regeneration is consummated by the preaching of the Gospel—devils flying before the very name of Jesus, serpents and poison powerless to injure the apostles, every ailment disappearing at the laying on of their hands.

"Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned. And these signs shall attend those who believe: in My name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak in new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands upon the sick and they shall get well."

This appearance was but one of many manifestations which Jesus made of Himself during these days. We know, likewise, that He showed Himself to James, the brother of the Lord. Unfortunately the memory of what occurred at this event soon came to be distorted and finally grew into the legend which Saint Jerome read in the "Gospel of the Nazarenes."

"James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, did make an oath after the Last Supper, neither to eat nor to drink aught until he beheld

Jesus risen again from the dead. On the morning of the Resurrection, a table appeared before him furnished with food; and the Lord blessed the bread and gave it to James, saying: 'Eat of this bread now, My brother, for the Son of Man is risen from the dead.'"

THE ASCENSION

Forty days had elapsed since the Resurrection; the time had come for Jesus to leave the earth. Whether warned by their Master, or perchance drawn there by the Feast of Pentecost, the apostles returned to Jerusalem, and there He gathered them about Him once more, probably in the hallowed supper room. For the last time He took His place at the table consecrated by the Eucharistic banquet, and while eating with them, He charged them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father.

"Even that which you have heard," saith He, "by My mouth; for John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.

"These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled that are written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." Then He opened their minds, that they might understand the Scriptures. And He said to them, "Thus it is written; and thus the Christ should suffer, and should rise again from the dead on the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. And you yourselves are witnesses of these things. And I send forth upon you the promise of My Father. But wait here in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high."

Then Jesus rose up and walked toward the Mount of Olives. The apostles followed, filled with brighter dreams of glory and earthly happiness than ever before; for the sight of the risen Lord proceeding before them rekindled all their old-time hopes. They began to believe that even now the moment so long expected when they were to triumph with Christ had come at last, and pressing nearer they ventured to question Him.

"Master," they asked, "wilt Thou even now restore again the sovereignty of Israel?"

Once more, and for the last time, the Saviour checked the surging ambitions of His children, and renewed His former commandment for them to await the coming of the Holy Spirit, that so they might carry the Gospel tidings unto the whole wide world.

"It is not for you," He told them, "to know the times or dates which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be witnesses for Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the very ends of the earth."

Now they were come to the brow of a hill which marks the outskirts of Bethany and the outer limits of Jerusalem. There Jesus stood still, and lifting up His hands He began to bless His apostles. And behold! while blessing them, He was raised up above the mountain tops. A cloud caught Him away out of their sight, and He disappeared into the blue depths of the sky.

The disciples lingered awestruck and overwhelmed with glad wonderment, when all at once two angels formed like men, arrayed in garments of surpassing whiteness, stood at their side.

"Men of Galilee," they also said, "why do you stand looking up to heaven? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall come in the same way as you have seen Him going up to heaven."

These words recalled to the apostles' minds the promise of their Lord, that He would not leave them orphans, but would return shortly to take them with Him. Then having adored Him, they returned filled with great joy to Jerusalem, and they were without ceasing in the Temple, praising and blessing God.

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